The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires annual Major Donors Celebration is going virtual this year with a special "Cocktails & Community" theme on Sunday, July 19 at 7:30 p.m.

This special celebration will highlight the tremendous impact major donors have on building and sustaining Jewish life in the region. Major donors support the Federation with a minimum gift of $1,000 to the Annual Campaign.

“We are blessed to have such a diverse group of supporters who understand the unique challenges a small community faces,” says Executive Director Dara Kaufman. “This event is special every year, but this year in particular we are celebrating! Our major donors have invested in strengthening our community, and it is that strength that is helping our community navigate this unprecedented crisis.”

The annual meeting will feature a report on the state of the Federation and board elections, followed by a special live performance by American-Israeli comedian Benji Lovitt.

The meeting will be recognized for their contributions and the nominated slate of 2020-2021 officers and directors will be elected.

On this beautiful and sun-filled May morning, it is difficult to capture the magnitude of the emotional and practical life changes that have taken place in our personal and communal worlds since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. Physical and social distancing, new concepts for us in our lives, are for many of us antithetical to our way of being. Our congregational lives have also been altered in ways we surely disdained months ago... Zoom services, NO WAY!!! Seeing each other for one-on-ones and small group gatherings on a screen bound by little boxes, not able to hug a greeting in our sweet shul, building on a Shabbat morning... no hugs at all? Nightmare-ish!!!

Benji Lovitt
Continued on page 5

Local Rabbis Respond to the Coronavirus Crisis

Inside this issue of the BJV, spiritual leaders representing all of Berkshire County’s synagogues reflect on how recent events have transformed their rabbinic work. For more from our local rabbis, see page 3 and pages 6 & 7.

On the Road Again...
By Rabbi Barbara Cohen / Congregation Ahavath Sholom

It’s summertime, and the live music... okay, hold that thought. As a Berkshires summer like no other commences, Elisa Spungen Bildner and Robert Bildner’s The Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook arrives just in time to suggest a different way to experience the beauty and bounty of these hills, while also fostering connection with the neighbors who work hard and creatively to feed us so well. For more on the Bildners’ new book, please see page 20.

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And yet, this is where we are. Gladly signing into Zoom (or some-thing like it) to meet up for just about everything in our daily existence that involves more than the people we may live with or have decided we can’t live without. We may venture out to the supermarket, masked and gloved, hand sanitizer waiting for us in the car, the welcome coolness of being. Our congregational lives have also been altered in ways we surely disdained months ago... Zoom services, NO WAY!!! Seeing each other for one-on-ones and small group gatherings on a screen bound by little boxes, not able to hug a greeting in our sweet shul, building on a Shabbat morning... no hugs at all? Nightmare-ish!!!

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Stronger Together

Outgoing Federation president reflects on four years of changes and challenges

By Judy Usow / President, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

I'm an obsessive planner. I can't sleep at night unless I've resolved the particulars of whatever I'm working on. As a kid, when I would describe to my parents an ambitious, detailed plan, my dad would smile at me, encourage my aspirations, but caution me to be flexible. He used one of those perfectly appropriate Yiddish sayings that, in English, means, "man plans, God laughs." I think of my dad's knowing smile now while I write my last column as president in the midst of a global pandemic. You see, it is not a coincidence that my youngest daughter's bar mitzvah is this June 28. We planned it that way. I've been anticipating my newfound freedom as an empty nester and I thought I had figured out the details of the next phase of my life. I planned to stay active in the Federation but I hoped to embark on a second career, downsize our home, visit my parents in Florida more often, and travel the world with my husband.

My horizon looks different now, not only because I find myself adjusting future plans due to the current world-wide pandemic, but also because I did not anticipate feeling sad to end my time as president of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. With all my planning, I don't think I considered the possibility that I might actually enjoy being in this position of leadership and that I would feel so grateful for having had this opportunity. As I look back on the last four years of my presidency, I feel incredibly lucky to have met so many members of our community who are dedicated to creating and preserving Jewish life here in the Berkshires. I feel deeply grateful for all the support I've received over these years, and proud of all that we have accomplished.

During these times of vulnerability and uncertainty, I have faith that the Jewish Federation has the right leadership and foresight to continue to guide our community through whatever lies ahead. I know our community will come out of this stronger.

One area I am particularly proud of is how our Federation has taken a proactive leadership role in helping local schools address the growing concern of bias that has manifested itself in various forms, including racism and anti-Semitism, over the years. I am grateful for the strong support and partnership Federation has received from across the Jewish and broader community to help bring the Anti-Defamation League's A World of Difference® anti-bias education program to thousands of students in middle and high schools throughout the county. I am also very proud of the Federation's continued and expanded commitment to the needs of our community, demonstrating our ability to care for one another. If the last few months have taught us anything, it is that we are stronger together.

With all the feedback we gathered at the town hall meetings, focus groups, individual interviews, and an online survey affirmed that the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires enjoys a high level of trust from our donors, as well as from the individuals we serve and the organizations we work with.

I want to conclude my last few words as Federation president by expressing my gratitude to all of you, our donors and supporters. Thank you for your generosity, for your participation, and for sharing your heart with our community. To the Federation staff, who always work hard, but who have worked tirelessly from home these last few months, providing the needed lifeline to the most vulnerable members of our community - thank you! Thank you to the Federation's board of directors for your support, hard work, and commitment to achieving our mission each year. I am also grateful to our rabbis and my fellow lay leaders in our community for their dedication and commitment to achieving our mission each year. I am also grateful to our donors, as well as from the individuals we serve and the organizations we work with.

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Mazel tov to Amy Lindner-Lesser, who will be taking on the presidency at our annual meeting on June 30. I also look forward to working alongside Amy and the rest of our board as I continue to serve our community and the Federation in the role of treasurer.

ANNUAL MEETING, continued from page 1

The proposed slate is listed in the side bar at left.

About Benji Lovitt

Benji Lovitt’s observations on Jewish community and Israeli society, combined with his lifelong involvement in Jewish education, create a hilarious narrative that has brought smiles to faces all over the world. Since making aliya in 2006, Lovitt has been sharing his insights into cultural differences as he translates both the challenges and marvels of life in Israel with audiences around the world, including Hillels, Birthright Israel, and Jewish Federations and JCCs.

His perspectives on Jewish community and life in Israel have been featured on Israeli television and radio and in publications such as USA Today, Time, Huffington Post, the Times of Israel, and more.

Register Online

Berkshire Jewish community members are invited to email the Federation at federation@jewishberkshires.org to receive registration link to participate in the meeting and enjoy Lovitt’s comedy show.

Scholarship Winner Announced

Alexandra Hochfelder is this year’s recipient of the Henry Simkin and Frances Simkin Schiller and Dr. Stanley and Faye Simkin Scholarship. The award is given to Jewish high school seniors who have demonstrated high academic achievement and leadership in the Jewish and broader communities.

Alexandra, who grew up in Pittsfield, attended Pius X Memorial Middle and High School, where her extracurricular activities included editorship of the school’s literary magazine and participation in performing arts. She trained in early childhood education at the University of Massachusetts, where she mentored elementary school students through the Anti-Defamation League’s A World of Difference® anti-bias education program, and was a member of the Student Senate and the High School Literary Magazine.

Alexandra will be a freshman at Wesleyan University in the fall. For more on Alexandra, please read her Young Judaism essay on page 15.
Rabbi Reflection

“Gam Zeh Ya’avor” – This Too Shall Pass

Trust that together we will overcome these challenging times

By Rabbi Levi Volovik

Being isolated at home during these unprecedented times gave us all a chance to recharge our batteries and tune up our real priorities in life, focusing on the sacred and the meaningful and letting go of the petty and unnecessary. As life threw us a curve ball and lockdown disrupted our routines seemingly secure lives, we began to recognize that we are not the macro-managers of our lives; there is a Guiding Hand above that is in control. We had time to search within us and realize that while we rush around in circles, the center of life, literally, can be “ufy” without purposeful and meaningful goals that transcend the material and the mundane.

Though we are still in lockdown, isolation is not the hallmark of holiness. We were not meant to be alone. We are all part of one Jewish family. We have thrived as Jews because of our ability to unite, as we did at Sinai, standing together as “one person with one heart.”

We find that one of G-d’s instructions to Moshe was to take a count of the Children of Israel. Not a numerical count, but a count by name. This reminds me of the census-taker who was making his rounds in one of the neighborhoods. At one specific home, he asked his usual question to the woman of the house: “What is the number of children living in this home?” Without thinking twice, she sharply responded, “Sir, there are no numbers here; every one of them has a name!” And saying that, she quickly ran through the names of her ten children!

We recently began Sefer Bamidbar, the Book of Numbers (or Book of Countings), the third count of the Israelites in a span of thirteen months that followed our becoming a nation. Obviously, G-d knows how many people are in quantity. Why the count? The reason for the frequent count, as Rashi commentary explains, is G-d’s love for each individual. Each one is cherished in His eyes. He counts us to tap into our soul, to remind us that we are not just a number. Each one carries a precious name as one of His children, possessing inherent value and unique potential to play a significant role in His cosmic plan.

Modern technology today has given us options for unknown identity and provides us with ways to remain nameless and faceless. This is not the relationship G-d either has or desires with His people. The G-dly spark within us does not permit us to opt out. We were not counted to simply arrive at a number; G-d needed to be reminded during His difficulties that “this too shall pass” and trust that we will overcome!

While scientists are still searching for a vaccine, Torah is our time-tested antidote. And as someone wisely added, “our booster shots” are Shabbat, Yom Tov, prayer, tzedakah, tefillin, and Torah study. We, at Chabad of the Berkshires, are providing candles for Shabbat and Yom Tov, and free mezuzot to affix on doorposts for extra safeguard. If anyone would like to purchase a letter to be affixed, please place your order with the BJV.

—Rabbi Levi Volovik

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Purchase $50 worth of taxi vouchers for $5

[($5 if requested via mail]

Vouchers are valid for three months and can be used with Tunicki 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

Thank you volunteers Ellen Rosenblatt and the BJV delivery team, Mitch Greenwald, Roman Rozenblyum, Colin Ovitsky, Pattie Lipman, Amy Cott Filson, and Chris Kelly

Though we are still in lockdown, isolation is not the hallmark of holiness. We were not meant to be alone. We are all part of one Jewish family.

ours and share our G-d-given gift with others. But not only did it become our personal inheritance, it enabled our true oneness as a people. We achieved the highest level of unity at the time we received the Torah, and it is this unity that elicits G-d’s protection today.

Since the coronavirus pandemic began, many have asked what can or should I do to make a difference?

In the times of the Baal Shem Tov, when there was a devastating plague, he was asked what could be done to elicit Heavenly mercy. The Baal Shem Tov advised collective participation in the writing of a Torah scroll that ultimately saved the community. Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, at different pivotal moments during his years of leadership strongly advocated the mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah. The Rebbe addressed this need back in the 1970s, saying that being united in a Torah scroll, where every Jew is represented by a letter, is the vital energy for protection and creates a safer world. And just like one missing letter invalidates an entire Torah scroll, every Jew is indispensable to the wholeness of our people.

There is no denying these are challenging times. It is well-known that King Solomon used to wear a ring with three Jewish letters, ‘gimmel,’ ‘zayen’ and ‘yud’ These three letters are an abbreviation of three words “Gam Zeh Ymonary” – this too shall pass. Although none of the smartest Jews, king Solomon needed to be reminded during his difficulties that “this too shall pass” and trust that we will overcome!

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Addressing Unmet Needs in a Time of Crisis

The Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County, which operates under the auspices of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, allocated emergency funds to local non-profits working to combat food insecurity.

Dear Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County:

As the global pandemic continues, food pantries such as ours have seen a marked increase in clientele. More and more community members are losing jobs while still trying to feed their families. The generosity of neighbors such as yourself goes a long way to make sure that those in need are fed.

Warmly,
Stazannah Van Schaick, President, Board of Directors
The People’s Pantry

July 1, 2020

Yad LaKashish – Supported by Our Federation at a Critical Time

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thank you so very much for the generous donation to Yad LaKashish/Lifeline for the Old from the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

Your wonderful support comes at a pivotal time as we begin to prepare to welcome back our artisans. The opportunity to reengage with society, be productive, and regain one’s self-assuredness will be embraced by the elderly men and women at Yad LaKashish.

Thank you for helping them through this difficult and anxious period. Challenges remain but with your encouragement and support we will continue to protect their health, safety, and wellbeing.

We are grateful for the warm relationship with the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and look forward to reporting on our transition from isolation to inclusion. I hope you and your families are well.

All the best,
Ariela (Relly) Schwartz Zur
Executive Director, Yad LaKashish
Jerusalem

A Moment Providing Us With Unprecedented Opportunity

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Our Federation enjoys great respect from the Berkshire Jewish community’s congregations, member organizations and many part-time residents. The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is the hub around which so much revolves.

Whatever the new “normal” will be, it may not resemble anything we’ve known or experienced before. This moment provides an unprecedented opportunity for Federation to convene and to work in concert with all the affiliates and with creative thinkers and doers, both to sustain vital programs and to introduce innovations that will help the Berkshire Jewish community flourish in the decades to come.

Many of us do things this way or that, because, well, because that’s the way we always did them. In the era of COVID-19, we are all in a learning mode, some in shock, trying to react as best we can. We need to do more than react. We need resilience to work together, to promote innovative, creative rethinking, to recognize that, along with challenge, there is great opportunity.

Let’s be creative, innovative, and work together to make the most of the opportunities we encounter. Our Berkshire Jewish community is home to so many wonderful people. It is up to us and to Federation to assure that we remain healthy and thriving.

Dr. Stuart Masters
Executive Director, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Bringing Big Smiles to Our Seniors

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thank you so much for the notes, pictures, and cards for those of us residing in Berkshire Place. They brought big smiles to everyone and we are very grateful. THANK YOU – and be safe during this time.

The Residents of Berkshire Place

Pittsfield

Letters to the Editor

Do to each car. Walkers are served at a separate station. St. Joseph’s Kitchen, our Wednesday/Thursday morning breakfasts and Wednesday dinner are now “bag and go” meals, serving more than 200 people each week.

Your very generous donation will be used to provide staples and food directly to Pittsfield families and individuals for whom consistent wholesome nutrition is an ongoing concern, especially during this time.

With warmest appreciation and blessings,
Mary Wheat, Volunteer Director
On behalf of the Food Ministry at South Church
Pittsfield

It is a pleasure to thank you for your donation to The People’s Pantry in April. Food insecurity is a serious issue in our community. Your gift will help ensure that those in need are fed.

Warmly,
Stazannah Van Schaick, President, Board of Directors
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Dear Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County:

During this time of COVID-19 restrictions, our food pantry has become a drive-through pantry with masked and gloved volunteers carrying food boxes (packed according to family size) to each car. Walkers are served at a

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Bringing Big Smiles to Our Seniors

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thank you so much for the notes, pictures, and cards for those of us residing in Berkshire Place. They brought big smiles to everyone and we are very grateful. THANK YOU – and be safe during this time.

The Residents of Berkshire Place

Pittsfield
COCKTAILS & COMMUNITY, continued from page 1

Says Development Officer Lesli Kozupsky: “Donors will have the chance to see all that this small community accomplishes, and really understand the impact their support has on sustaining the vital programs Federation provides — care services and social engagement for area seniors, Jewish education for our children, camp and Israel experiences for teens and young adults, and engaging programming to enrich Jewish identity and connection for people of all ages.”

Joining us will be renowned inspirational speaker Maria Sirois and violinist Yevgeny Kutik.

Please request a registration link by emailing Leslie Kozupsky at kozupsky@jewishberkshires.org.

Our Major Gifts Co-Chairs

– Larry Frankel and Elisa Schindler Frankel

“We could not possibly accomplish all that we do to meet essential needs across the Berkshires, and beyond without the inspiring compassion, generosity, and leadership of our donor donors,” says Dana Kaufman. “That’s why we are so grateful to Larry Frankel and Elisa Schindler Frankel for stepping up as our Major Gifts chairs this year.”

Elisa serves on Federation’s board of directors, and this year is stepping up to serve as a vice president on Federation’s executive committee. She is also active in the Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County, where she serves as secretary. Elisa and Larry were also Super Sunday chairs in 2018.

“With all of this uncertainty surrounding us, I truly care anyone of cladding certain things. It makes me proud to be associated with the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires,” says Larry. “That certainty is that throughout all of this hardship, Federation will meet the needs of all the various segments of our community that are in crisis or in need of assistance. Federation is the pillar that our Jewish community relies on — and, with our help, it will always be here.”

Host Committee

Thank you to everyone on this year’s host committee:

Elisa Spungen Bildner and Rob Bildner
Barry and Marjorie Berg
Judy and Jeffrey Cook
Jane Glaser
Liz and Alan Jaffe
Jane Karlin
Marlilyn and Eilhu Katzman
Pommy and Gerry Levy
Ellen and Stuart Mast
Penny and Claudio Pascual
Elaine and Bernie Roberts
Anne Schnessel
Susan and Judd Shoval
Zelda Schwab
Elene and Ben Silberstein
Hope and Gene Silverman
Judy and Mark Usow

About Maria Sirois

Maria is a master teacher, facilitator, and author. As a positive psychologist (Psy.D.) and international consultant, she focuses on the resilience of the human spirit when under pressure and/or during significant transitions. Known for her wisdom, authenticity, and rampant humor, Maria brings a depth of experience in leadership and development stress management for corporate and non-profit professionals alike. Her work builds capacity and engagement around stressors such as conflicting goals, diffi- cult conversations, unrealistic expectations and moments of failure — using such moments to leverage sustained positive shifts in perspective and ability. She is the author of two books: A Short Course in Happiness After Loss and Every Day Counts. Her topic will be “Resilient Strategies: Why Positivity and Generosity Matter,” about the significant impact that practices of grounded optimism, appreciation and generosity have upon our wellbeing.

“To build individual and communal resilience requires an understanding of what sustains us in the moment and what builds capacity over time,” writes Maria. “Research in the fields of resilience and positive psychology point toward a strategy known as a growth mindset and prac- tices that nurture any one of us and the communities we seek to support.”

For more on Maria, visit her website: www.mariasirois.com.

About Yevgeny Kutik

Yevgeny Kutik was four years old in 1989 when members of his family relocated from Belarus (then still part of the USSR) to Pittsburgh, beneficiaries of this Jewish community’s passionate mobilization on behalf of Soviet Jewry. The violinist has performed around the world with major orchestras and has recorded noteworthy albums that have appeared on Billboard’s Classical album chart. In 2019, in released Meditations on Family, for which commissioned eight composers to translate a personal family photo into a short musical miniature for violin and various ensembles, envisioning the project as a living archive of new works inspired by memories, home, and belonging.

For more on his work, visit his website www.yevgeny kutik.com.

Unpacking the Miniseries Unorthodox

Meet the protagonist’s first cousin, who will share her own story of leaving her Hasidic community

Deborah Feldman’s 2012 autobiography Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots chronicles a young woman’s journey from an ultra-Orthodox upbringing in New York’s Satmar community to a secular life. The miniseries based on the series Unorthodox portrays correctly and incorrectly about the Jewish community, although one that has attracted much controversy.

For more information, please call Chabad of the Berkshires at (413) 499-9899.

Your Federation Presents

For 51 years, my family has called Stockbridge its second home. My sisters and I spent formative summers working in restaurants, day camps, and at the Stockbridge Town Beach. When my parents’ home became too crowded, my husband z”l and I found our own cottage. Today, my husband and grandchildren love the Berkshires as much as I do. They call it our spiritual home. That is why I contribute to the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. Sustaining Jewish life is important to me. So is supporting those in need in the wider community. I can trust that my gift will reflect my priorities – and let me express my gratitude for all that the Berkshires has given me and my family.

Jane Karlin

We support the work of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires because it helps to make this community an outstanding place to live. It gives the Jewish community its vibrancy through its support of the synagogues, summer camps (when they are held), and other programs of Jewish content. It also helps the rest of the community through its support of food insecurity programs – of particular importance during this difficult time. When an issue of anti-Semitism rears its ugly head, the Federation is in the forefront of combating this problem. We think our Federation does so much to engage with and help the community, and it deserves everyone’s support.

Liz and Alan Jaffe

Even during these terribly scary times, when we don’t know what will happen tomorrow, I feel blessed to be part of this Jewish community. The compassion, concern and support that the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires has for our community is comforting. We take care of each other.

Ellen Masters

While the world is expressng concern about COVID-19, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is working to help local people who are affected, and others who continue to need help. The Federation also helps support the local religious schools and other activities in the community. Your donations make this possible.

Marylin and Eilhu Katzman

During these very difficult times, the Federation figured out how to make it work. It is very important to support our Berkshire Jewish community. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the Major Donors Celebration.

Zelda Schwebel

It’s reassuring to know that Federation can continue to serve Berkshire County during this COVID-19 crisis. It is only through community support, volunteers, religious leaders, and staff that we can sustain our mission. Please help us continue by financially supporting Federation.

Anne Schnessel

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Finding Integration and Balance Though All the Lines are Blurrer

By Rabbi Rachel Barrenblat / Congregation Beth Israel

Life during the pandemic has new rhythms. I’m learning a new balancing act, how to serve the northern Berkshire Jewish community while also homeschooling my ten-year-old son.

Shul-wise, my days include Zoom teaching, Zoom-based pastoral care, Zoom services, and email conversations about what needs to happen before we can “re-open.”

Parent-wise, I’m relearning about fractions and number lines. Sometimes we do “word problems” from the workbook he brought home from school, and sometimes we create cross-word puzzles using Scrabble tiles. I’m reimagining myself with the Oregon Trail, and I’m reading a young adult novel by Bill Nye (the Science Guy) so we can discuss it.

My favorite homeschool activity has turned out to be making videos for my son’s YouTube channel, in which he, his four-year-old brother, and I are exploring the concepts of life and home-life are blurrer, because everything happens in the same space. The downside of all that is obvious: I can’t leave work behind, and there is no longer a physical boundary between shul and home. But there are hidden upside, too.

My dining room table shifts from being a four-grade classroom, to being the place where I study (and make videos about) Pirkei Avot with my son, to being our Shabbos table, to being the place where I lead Kabbalat Olam, and my son and I lead services over Zoom for the community.

Ordinary space becomes holy space because the lines are blurred, and this is true, I think, all depending on my kavanah (intention and heart). Now that we can’t congregate in the synagogue, we have to build the Mishkan (the dwelling-place for God) in the places where we are: our homes, our offices, our cars, our computer screens. And we have to figure out how to integrate spiritual life and physical activity with ordinary life. The laundry, the dishes, the homeschooling are juxtaposed with the pastoral visits, the spiritual direction sessions, the Shabbat songs.

Then again, those things were always juxtaposed, even before the pandemic. In some ways, the work of this moment is the same as it ever was: integration and balance. Between parenthood and the rabbinate, between sacred and secular, between the home-school classroom and the Shabbos table.

Ordinary space becomes holy space becomes ordinary space again, all depending on my kavanah (intention and heart).

This summer will be unlike any we have ever seen in the Berkshires. Our beloved arts and cultural events are canceled or virtual, and our typically chock-full schedules are looking more open than ever before. While the public health situation concerning COVID-19 continues to unfold, we know that we may not be able to gather in person in typical ways for some time.

In past summers, Temple Anshe Amunim of Pittsfield has welcomed all who are interested in joining us for hikes, yoga, meditation, and more on Shabbat mornings. We take advantage of the beauty of nature and the luxury of time, of pausing, of resting and reflecting. But for many of us is an ideal way to spend Shabbat. In past years, we’ve hiked at Canoe Meadows, Parsons’ Marsh, Olivia’s Overlook, and more. This summer, we were looking forward to adding opportunities to run and bike together, and to do yoga in our backyard.

We’re inspired by the many ways that organizations and individuals are adapting to change in these challenging times. We also understand that even if we cannot physically gather for an event, we can still be united in other ways. We have drawn strength from our virtual Shabbat services, Torah study, and classes. We subscribe to thought-leader Pirya Parker’s sentiment that we can be “Together Apart.” Separated by distance, we can either join in a synchronous group experience, or we can do the same thing at a different time, asynchronously.

To that end, we’re pleased to invite the community to join us for a Summer Spiritual Physical Challenge for the month of July. Throughout the month, we’ll encourage all those participating in the challenge from all over the county to set a goal to get out in nature, to look inward to discover the embodied activity that enables connection to spirituality and reflection.

Everyone’s spiritual practices look different. You may decide to participate in the Spiritual Physical Fitness Challenge, we’ll be posting a new trail every Shabbat morning. You may commit to meditating for 10 minutes each day. You may be a spiritual gardener, finding meaning by tilling and tending the earth. We will be offering a wide range of suggested activities that would fulfill the intent of our Spiritual Physical Fitness Challenge.

By July, we may be able to gather for socially distant outdoor activities. If it is safe to do so, we’ll announce where and how to safely meet up and participate in a Spiritual Physical Fitness Challenge, we’ll be posting a new trail every Shabbat morning. You may commit to meditating for 10 minutes each day. You may be a spiritual gardener, finding meaning by tilling and tending the earth. We will be offering a wide range of suggested activities that would fulfill the intent of our Spiritual Physical Fitness Challenge.

Even if we cannot physically gather for an event, we can still be united in other ways.
By Rabbi Jodie Gordon / Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

In the beginning of March, I attended a retreat for faith leaders at Kripalu. It was led by Maie Brinna, and over those two days, we focused on the ideas of spirituality, creativity, and resilience in the face of adversity. The realities of COVID-19 were just beginning to show themselves: we washed our hands a bit more, looked at the news with worried curiosity. I don’t know that any of us imagined that months later, we would lead, pastor, teach, pray, and meet from the hastily constructed “office spaces” in our homes. These last eight weeks have been a crash course in flexibility, grace, and creativity. One of the prevailing lessons still ringing in my ears from that retreat was the idea that hope is to consistently “live in the ‘and’.”

To have hope is to hold multiple, competing truths simultaneously, and find ways of existing in the space between. Between the Purim carnival and the Purim carnival was only the first of missed milestones for our community, as we moved through Purim, Passover, and now, the end of the school year together without the usual markers and celebrants. By the very beginning, we have worked hard to model “living in the ‘and’” – speaking with honesty and honoring the emotional experience of our families.

One of the great blessings of this shutdown has been an affirmation of who our community is: from our teen madrikhim (teaching assistants), to our families. Our teaching faculty has been blown away by the willingness to try something new, and to keep showing up. From the very beginning, I have been heartened by how our families have met us in the middle, as we experimented with different ways to gather. For some of our teachers, Zoom and other digital platforms were the midbar – a new wilderness to navigate as they sought to connect with their students. For others, finding ways to distill significant learning into shorter, more focused class gatherings forced their creative hands. Our teaching faculty has Stepupped with love, commitment, and talent for connecting with their students, and we’ve been fortunate enough to see them adapt further in this new wilderness by finding joy in Jewish life, even as the sense of “oy” is there, and is real.

One final lesson of “living in the ‘and’” – hope is not only about holding multiple, competing truths at the same time. It’s also about having a sense of grounded optimism. So here is my “living in the ‘and’” statement: I miss seeing our community in person. I miss the chance to gather, to teach, to listen and watch for the impact that our learning has had on our students, and their families, in person. I am heartened by how we are using this new technology for our teaching. I am grateful for the insights into how they are coping, and for the commiseration of another person when I may feel like I am walking the path of grief, exactly as envisioned by the psalms. The bereaved find that their walk through the valley of the shadow of death has been anything but lonely, for those who are. I guess I can even imagine a funeral and Zoom as well. I can prepare a funeral with a bereaved family over a conference call. We have no choice. But we should not pretend that it is the same, that the internet can make up for what we cannot do. Grieving in solitude, without a community, is not the Jewish way.

One of the great lessons of this shutdown has been: is not the Jewish way to grieve in solitude, without a community, is not the Jewish way of the school year together – from a truncated image of them or a truncated image of them in the gallery view box on my computer? We have no choice. We have no choice. The impact that our learning has had on our students, and their families, and we can maintain that connection through virtual events. We will make it through this challenging time, eventually, especially if we continue to support each other and the institutions that sustain our communities. Many of the resources we would use to face any other sort of calamity or loss – social support, gathering in person, singing, even hugs – have simply evaporated. Jewish practice is full of wisdom, and our approach to finding joy in Jewish life, even as the sense of “oy” is there, and is real.

To “live in the ‘and’” is an act of creativity, sensitivity, and resilience in the face of adversity. The realities of COVID-19 have simply evaporated. We have lost social support, gatherings for us to reclaim our confidence to gather in safety to honor our dead and comfort our grieving. I have now presided over three only small funerals. It is hard to describe their intensity, yet it is deeply exhausting. We have no choice. But we should not pretend that it is the same, that the internet can make up for what we cannot do. Grieving in solitude, without a community, is not the Jewish way.

I have now presided over too many small funerals. Before March, they only happened when someone really had no connection in the community. Now they have been in a routine. Though we keep our distance from each other, a tiny funeral is very intimate. I begin by speaking to the deceased, asking forgiveness for all the things we could not do on their behalf – the walking, the shoving, the gathering of a community befitting their honor and legacy, the accomplishments of their family in their time of need. A short service follows, and then burial. The community committee wears masks, lest they exhale on each other while lowering the casket. Everyone brings a shoveling into the hole. The mitzvah of burial spread among us. Emotions run high in these small funerals. It is hard to describe their intensity, yet it is deeply exhausting.

I should offer something uplifting at the end of such a reflection. All I can find the heart to say is this: When all this is over, I hope we will recall that, once upon a time, we used to come together in person to grieve, and to comfort. And that we will remember that it is important, and comforting, to embrace. May we know no more sorrow.

In the ‘And’ & Speaking with honesty and honoring our community’s emotional experience

By Rabbi Jodie Gordon / Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

RABBI REFLECTIONS

Honorizing Our Dead and Comforting Our Neighbors During an Unprecedented Health Crisis

By Rabbi David Weiner / Knesset Israel

By Rabbi David Weiner / Knesset Israel

At Ahavath Sholom, we are making our way through this new wilderness with the resilience and courage of our ancestors and honestly, our share of grappling. Like them and all of us, we have no real idea where this is going and how long. We have adapted to the new technology for everything that we do as a community: board meetings, coffee hours, study sessions, services, and upcoming annual meetings and... okay I’ll say it... probably High Holy Days, too. Personally, these challenges are calling for a new level of creativity, sensitivity, and spaciousness in... familiar paths of being much more and different effort do I now need to put into my relied upon intuitive reading of another’s needs and when I may only have their eyes to offer myself into how they are... a truncated image of them in the gallery view box on my computer? I also experience the loss of the blessing of the energy exchange between me and another or the congregation... that wonderful flow that fills and sustains us with warmth and spirit as we sing, pray and share our thoughts and feelings. And... not but... I am, and the rest of us are, forging new paths. Like the Israelites, we cannot go back by the old routes. We must find ‘work arounds’, listen and watch for signs signaling when it is safe and right to move forward, stay nimble and above all, help each other through this with compassion, patience, strength, and the commitment to not let this crisis rob us of our highest ideals and values. May we have truly lost our way for good.

These challenges are calling for a new level of...
Anti-Semitic Incidents in Massachusetts Remained High in 2019

ADL annual report found more than 114 acts of anti-Semitic hate in MA; anti-Semitic incidents in Jewish institutions and public spaces increase

BOSTON – According to new data released in the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents, anti-Semitic incidents in Massachusetts remained historically high in 2019, with 114 recorded incidents – 128 percent higher than the total for 2015.

Across the United States, ADL recorded a total of anti-Semitic hate, the highest number since tracking began in 1979. Incidents in public areas in Massachusetts increased by 14 percent, reflecting a larger national trend of rising anti-Semitic incidents in public areas (655 incidents nationally, an increase of 38 percent from the 476 incidents in 2018). Anti-Semitic incidents in Jewish institutions and schools increased by 36 percent.

Included in the statewide count are multiple arson attempts targeting Chabad houses in Arlington and Needham, the vicious desecration of a Jewish cemetery in Fall River where 59 headstones were vandalized and knocked over; and a proliferation of online anti-Semitism targeting Massachusetts middle and high schools.

Sixty-one cities and towns in Massachusetts recorded at least one anti-Semitic incident last year. Massachusetts recorded the fourth highest number of incidents per state in the country (114), topped by New York (430), New Jersey (340), and California (330).

“The data tells the story that anti-Semitism continues to permeate American society,” said Robert Trestan, ADL New England Regional Director.

“People are feeling increasingly emboldened to let their hate come out of the shadows and display their anti-Semitism in public. Particularly concerning is the specific targeting of Jewish institutions and schools and the 61 cases of harassment recorded statewide. The alarming manifestations of anti-Semitism in 2019 instill fear and are stark reminders that much remains to be done. ADL is committed to focusing on confronting anti-Semitism through educational programs and resources, community outreach and law enforcement engagement.”

Incidents

The majority of 2019 incidents reported to ADL were incidents of harassment (521). Harassment incidents increased by 3 percent with 61 reported incidents, as compared to 59 in 2018. This figure represents a larger national trend of increasing incidents of harassment (1,126 incidents nationally, a 4 percent increase from the 1,066 reported incidents in 2018).

Incidents in public areas increased by 14 percent, reflecting a larger national trend of rising anti-Semitic incidents in public areas (655 incidents nationally, an increase of 38 percent from the 476 incidents in 2018). Anti-Semitic incidents in Jewish institutions and schools increased by 27 percent.

Incidents in Schools

Anti-Semitic incidents continue to proliferate in K-12 schools. In Massachusetts, there were 40 reported incidents in schools across 30 cities and towns, a decrease from 59 incidents that occurred in K-12 schools in 2018. Reported incidents on college campuses decreased from 20 in 2018 to 13 in 2019.

Next Steps in New England

In response to the high number of anti-Semitic incidents, ADL is relaunching its Anti-Semitism Peer Training program in New England to combat the escalation of hate. ADL’s school and community resources are providing guidance on preventing and responding to hate incidents. ADL is leading the effort to make Holocaust and genocide education mandatory in Massachusetts and New Hampshire public schools, and will convene The Good Fight, an annual community forum on confronting anti-Semitism, virtually.

Aleinu, Fitness Shabbaton, Book Discussion, Open Mic

Temple Anshe Amunim This Summer

Aleinu – It’s On Us

On Wednesday, July 8, 15, and 22, from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., join Rabbi Liz Hirsch for “Aleinu – It’s On Us.” Says Rabbi Liz: “With the Ahuva program as our jumping-off point, we’ll explore social justice, theology, choice, chosenness, and peoplehood in modern Jewish life. This course is open to all; no Hebrew or prayer experience required. Come with curiosity, questions, doubt, faith, and an open mind!”

Join via https://tinyurl.com/taazoom and be sure to check ansheamunim.org for up to date information about the event.

Please see related article on page 6.

Book Discussion: The Book of V.

On Tuesday, July 14 at 10:30 a.m., all are welcome to a discussion of The Book of V. by author Anna Solomon. Writes Rabbi Liz: “Why does every little girl want to be Esther, but never Vashti, at Purim? How have women’s lives changed, or not changed over thousands of years? We will be discussing the three contemporary characters Solomon created as she sought her own answer to these questions, and perhaps finding answers of our own.” This conversation will be hosted by Barbara Viniar. Register to for the event on https://tinyurl.com/BookDiscussion-BookofV and be sure to check ansheamunim.org for up to date information about the event.

Havdalah and Open Mic Night

On Saturday, July 18 at 7 p.m., celebrate the end of Shabbat and then stay to enjoy an Open Mic Night hosted by Mike Duffy. All are welcome to join in the fun, whether to enjoy the performances or share your talent. For more information contact the Temple office at templeoffice@ansheamunim.org. Register for the event at https://tinyurl.com/TAAHavdalah-OpenMicNight and be sure to check ansheamunim.org for up to date information about the event.
“The Jewish Road to Character: A Taste of Mussar,” with Rabbi Eric Gurvis

Plus other Zoom learning opportunities with Hevreh

“The Jewish Road to Character: A Taste of Mussar” is a free online course led by Rabbi Eric Gurvis and presented by Hevreh of Southern Berkshire. Classes will be held at noon on the following Mondays: June 22, June 29, July 6, July 20, August 3, and August 17.

From Hevreh:
In our confusing and challenging time, many are seeking to find a greater sense of grounding in core virtues which can guide us, uplift us and inspire us to become the best persons we can be.

For the Jewish world, asking such a focus is hardly new. Yet, in our time, we have been uncovering of a rich part of our Jewish heritage which was nearly lost to our people—the study and practice of Mussar. In large part inspired by the work of The Mussar Institute and other contemporary efforts at reclaiming Mussar for our day, an ever-expanding number of communities and individuals are bringing the study of Mussar teachings and their accompanying practice into their lives.

In this six-week series, we will delve into the study and practice of some of the Mussar tradition’s wisdom for our lives in this challenging time. Come travel the “Jewish Road to Character” along this journey into what will be a profoundly meaningful and nourishing spiritual practice for our Jewish souls, hearts and minds.

Rabbi Eric Gurvis is a graduate of SUNY-Albany with a BA in Sociology and Judaic Studies, and was ordained at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. He has served congregations in New York City; Jackson, MS; Teaneck, NJ; Newton, MA; and is currently rabbi of Sha’arei Shalom in Ashland, MA. In addition to his congregational work, Rabbi Gurvis works with The Mussar Institute as Director of Chaverim and Community Engagement. He facilitates Mussar groups throughout the greater Boston area, as well as in Western Massachusetts. He is also a Senior Rabbinic Fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, and has trained with The Mussar Institute as a Mussar Va’ad leader.

Modern Hebrew Class
At 3:30 p.m. on Thursdays starting on June 25 and continuing through September 10, Hevreh offers free classes in Modern Hebrew. They will be offering two levels of Hebrew reading (beginner and intermediate) for all learners. Beginner’s Hebrew will begin with letter and vowel recognition, and move into decoding for reading skills. Intermediate Hebrew will begin with simple reading review, and move into reading with fluency and understanding.

There is a $25 course fee to cover the cost of textbooks.

Lunch N Learn
On Wednesdays at 11:45 a.m. on June 17 and 24 and July 1, 8, 15, and 22, join Hevreh for online learning. “Our tradition teaches that when two (or more) sit together and discuss words of Torah God dwells with them,” writes Rabbi Neil Hirsch. “Study is one of the many ways we as a Jewish community experience the sacred and the spiritual.”

For links to all courses and registration information, please contact info@hevreh.org.

Thank You!

The Federation extends its deepest gratitude to our many volunteers and to the many people who are serving on the front lines during this uncertain and challenging time.
Celebrating Shavuot in the Berkshires

A mountain of blintzes (572 to be exact!) helped community members kick off Federation’s sweet celebration of Shavuot which also included “Torah Across the Berkshires,” in collaboration with local congregations, and a Shavuot-Shabbat Pizza Party for young families. Special thanks to Federation staffers Cindy Bell-Deane and Ken Conlow for packing the sweet treats and Shopie Lane, Chris Kelly, Rabbi Neil Hirsch, and Rabbi Jodie Gorden who helped with their distribution!

“Whoever saves a life, is as if they saved the entire world”

-Talmud

Thank you to the dozens of community members who participated in our Jewish community blood drive!

Shavuot-Shabbat Pizza Party!

14 young families enjoyed pizza and a virtual holiday program including lighting Shabbat candles, making kid-filled blintzes, and listening to a story, A Mountain of Blintzes, sponsored by PJ Library and the Jewish Federation.

For every family selfie shared Federation is paying it forward by sending pizzas to healthcare and frontline workers!
When Our Community Needs Us, We Are There

For over 80 years, in times of triumph and times of despair, the Jewish Federation’s Annual Campaign has sustained our community and provided the resources to care for those in need and ensure a safe and strong Jewish community today — and in the future.

Help Us Be There! Donate to the Annual Campaign Today!

**Jewish Life for Young Families**
You help young families in the Berkshires embrace Jewish values and traditions while building a supportive community with Jewish peers through family programming, PJ Library, and volunteer opportunities.

**Dignity & Compassion**
You provide older adults and homebound individuals with nutritious meals and stimulating programming served up with a side of companionship and compassion through our Connecting With Community program and Kosher Meals on Wheels.

**A Sense of Community**
You strengthen, sustain, and connect our community through hundreds of educational programs, holiday celebrations, and the Berkshire Jewish Voice, which bring people together and engage them in meaningful Jewish life.

**Emotional Support and Emergency Assistance**
You help individuals across the Berkshires who are facing unexpected challenges and life transitions receive the support they need through the Federation's social worker. You also provide a safety net of emergency assistance when needed.

**A Safe Place to Call Home**
You help tens of thousands of new immigrants, who are fleeing anti-Semitism in Europe and fighting in the Ukraine, build better lives for themselves and their families in Israel through job training and support services that ease their transition.

**A Strong Jewish Identity**
You help young people across the Berkshires and at UMass Amherst build strong Jewish identities and become future leaders through scholarships for Jewish camp and Israel experiences, as well as leadership development and holiday meals on campus.

**Resources to Fight Anti-Semitism**
You help young people stand up against hate through anti-bias education in our public schools. You also combat anti-Semitism and the BDS movement through community programming, national advocacy, and security resources.

**Jewish Education and Values**
You nurture a strong Jewish future by providing a high-quality, meaningful and affordable Jewish education for hundreds of children through critical grants to all of our local Jewish religious schools.

**Food Security, Healthcare, and Winter Relief**
Winters are long and cold in the Ukraine, but you help the most vulnerable prepare with warm clothes, blankets, and heaters. You can bring food cards, home health aides, and medicine to those who need it most.

**Caring in Times of Crisis**
When crisis hits, in the Berkshires or around the world, we join with Jewish communities across North America to rapidly mobilize local resources to help. From support during COVID-19 to whatever the future holds, you help deliver an SOS response.

**A Close and Caring Relationship with Israel**
You help connect the Berkshire Jewish Community with Israel and you also help provide programs for at-risk students, shelter for abused women, and support services for disabled youth.

**Community Relations and Advocacy**
You help provide a proactive voice in our community, public schools, media, and government, addressing anti-Semitism, religion, Israel, justice legislation, and other issues important to our community.

We Need Your Support Now More Than Ever! Donate Online at Jewishberkshires.org.
**Traveling with Jewish Taste**

**Baking — and Breaking Bread with Wheat**

By Carol Goodman Kaufman

"Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." (Genesis 37:6-7)

While wheat may seem to be a rather boring food to write about — it’s not sweet and luscious like the date, or "in" like the pomegranate — it is such an important part of our ancestors’ diet that it’s mentioned at least 39 times in the Tanach. And our guy Joseph certainly spent a lot of time thinking about it, both in interpreting his own dreams and those of the Pharaoh for whom he worked.

One of the world’s earliest cultivated grains, wheat was well known in the ancient Land of Israel. Parched grains were used for food, perhaps much as we eat popcorn today (Ruth 2:14; 1 Samuel 17:17; 2 Samuel 17:28). And wheat was such an important part of the economy that the festival of Shavuot, also known as the Day of the First Fruits, was such an important part of the economy that the festival of Shavuot, also known as the Day of the First Harvest to the Temple as an offering to God. Joseph’s dream of the sheaves, from a 1547 etching in the British Museum

Wheat isn’t been ours alone, for sure. For millennia, wheat has served as a basic foundation of both the human and animal diet. We know this because archaeologists have unearthed fragments of ancient wheat at digs in eastern Iraq, dating back 9,000 years and at different sites in Egypt’s Nile Valley around 5000 BCE, not to mention digs in Syria, Turkey, and Jordan. Even today, wheat supplies between 20 and 30 percent of the food calories for people around the world.

Wheat, a member of the genus Triticum is actually the product of a cross between three different grass species that experts believe came about over 10,000 years ago. It grows on more land on Earth than any other crop — in 128 countries, including Israel — second only to rice and corn, probably because it can adapt to difficult growing environments.

Although wheat was a staple grain in the East for millennia, until the 15th century, when explorer Christopher Columbus landed in the West Indies, it was unknown by the natives of the New World. Spanish explorers brought the grain to Mexico just a few decades later, expanding its reach. However, not until 1602 did Americans begin cultivating wheat, and they did it right here in Massachusetts, on Martha’s Vineyard. Almost two hundred years later, colonists, including one by the name of George Washington, added wheat to their farm acreage. Then, in the late 19th century, almost 350 years after Columbus landed, Mennonite immigrants from Russia brought a variety of wheat seeds called Turkey Red to Kansas, where they harvested the first crop at the Shaeemee Methodist Mission. Turkey Red is now the primary wheat variety grown in the Central Plains of the U.S.

Of course, we no longer eat wheat straight from the field. It has to be processed, and the result of that process is flour. Wheat flour has probably been used more than any other grain as the main ingredient in bread. In fact, London’s Petrie Museum features an exhibit of various Egyptian food products, including 3,500-year-old bread loaves made of wheat. But it is also used in foods ranging from pasta to pastry, crackers to crumpets. Bread is such an important food throughout history and with so many peoples that it has rightfully earned the sobriquet “the staff of life.” And “breaking bread” with others is so ingrained in our social life and culture that the current pandemic quarantine has us Zooming and Skyping and FaceTiming our meals with family and friends.

In Jewish tradition, the word “kemach,” flour, is used to denote food. *Perek Avot*, the Sayings of the Fathers, goes so far as to state, “Im akan kemachayan Torah; im akan Torah akan kemach,” translated as, “If there is no food, then there is no Torah; and if there is no Torah, no food.” The rabbis meant that if there is no sustenance to support our physical being, then it is impossible for us to absorb the words of Torah. Conversely, if we have no spirituality from Torah in our lives, then our souls are starved. Research about children’s learning correlated with having a good breakfast seems to support the adage.

What makes wheat flour unique is that it contains gluten, the protein that enables a dough to rise by forming carbon dioxide during fermentation, thus producing light and fluffy bread. (And just FYI, if you’re baking with whole wheat flour, be aware of the lower gluten count. Your bread will be denser and somewhat drier.)

It’s the gluten that can cause problems of another sort, particularly among Ashkenazi Jews. But despite the prevalence of celiac disease and gluten intolerance for some, wheat-based breads are still basic items on our daily menus. From bagels to bialys to boulou, the variety of breads our Tribe offers is vast and delicious.

### Laffa

Makes 8 pieces

The majority of Iraq’s Jewish population arrived in Israel following the establishment of the state, and they brought with them laffa, a bread that can best be described as being a softer, pocketless pita bread. You can use the slightly chewy Iraqi flatbread as a wrap for your shwarma, for scooping up your baba, or soaking up the sauce in your shakshouka.

While laffa is traditionally baked in a taboon, a clay-walled, wood-fired oven, I suspect that most of us don’t actually own one. I certainly don’t. But you can still get good results in your home oven with either a pizza stone or an upside-down cookie sheet heated in a very hot oven.

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup all-purpose flour, sifted
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 package active dry yeast
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1/4 cup warm water

**Directions:**

1. In the bowl of a food processor, add in the following order: water, olive oil, salt, flour, sugar, yeast. Take care not to let the salt anywhere near the yeast! Set to the dough setting and press start.
2. When the dough cycle has completed, or when the dough has doubled in size, turn out onto a floured work surface.
3. With well-floured hands, divide dough into 8 equal pieces.
4. Make a circle with your thumb and middle finger and push each piece through, making a ball. (Yes, this really works.)
5. Cover the dough balls with a towel and let rise again until almost doubled, 20-30 minutes, depending on the weather.
6. Set the temperature to 500° F — or as hot as your oven goes. When the bell rings, place the pizza stones or 2 upside down cookie sheets into the oven and allow to heat for about 10 minutes.
7. On a well-floured surface, roll each dough ball into a thin 8-10 inch round. Prick all over with a fork.
8. Quickly transfer 1 or 2 pieces of shaped dough onto each baking sheet or stone, depending on their size.
9. Bake for 4 to 6 minutes, or until the laffa begins to turn golden brown in spots.
10. Reheat the foil-wrapped laffa before serving.

**Rendition of an ancient Egyptian bakery scene (original in the tomb of Ramses III, ca. 1150 BCE)**

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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.
The Ones Who Go Up the Stairs
By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

Moving through the throng of bedraggled airport travelers at the end of a long concourse in the San Diego airport, the military man attired in an immaculate dress uniform stood out like a figure from the illuminated Gothic manuscript Le Trés Riches Heures du Duc de Berry, a nobleman amid huddling peasants. Though my knowledge of the military’s way of doing things is limited, I knew enough to identify him as a Marine and a sergeant, but could not fathom why he would be so impressively turned out to travel on a commercial flight on a weekday morning.

I soon found out. As I boarded my flight to Chicago, I noticed him seated in first class, still wearing same smart uniform. As our plane taxied toward the runway, the pilot identified the Marine sergeant on board by name, and shared that he was on our flight to accompany the casket bearing a fallen Marine “on his final trip home.” The pilot added that we should expect a detail of military personnel, police officers, and firefighters outside the gate when we arrived at O’Hare Airport, and that we remained seated when we arrived so that the Marine sergeant could deplane first.

The slow descent over snow-covered flatlands (it was mid-autumn 2019) into grim, grey Chicago, combined with the knowledge of what awaited us when we landed, was enough to keep the sunny Southern California calm out of me. After we landed, the pilot reminded us of the commotion we could expect when we pulled to our gate and asked again, with perhaps a touch of firmness in his voice, that we remain seated so the Marine sergeant could get off first.

About a dozen official vehicles, blue and red lights flashing, awaited us at the gate, along with a silver-toned hearse and the usual complement of airport service equipment. The police officers, firefighters, and airport security lined up alongside the aircraft as we rolled in. The ground crew and baggage handlers set up their equipment and shut down from their work. Onlookers inside the multi-storied terminal pressed against the windows trying to get a look.

After we arrived at the gate, the pilot gave the Marine sergeant his cue to leave and thanked him on behalf of all on board for his service. Most of the passengers started to clap, respectfully but tepidly, as if we were uncertain whether a round of applause was the appropriate expression of support for the Marine’s unfailing duty.

And then everyone started to gather up their carry-on bags and prepared to exit into the terminal to catch their connecting flights. I settled into a window seat, watching those smartly uniformed men and women in uniform, standing at attention alongside their vehicles with flashing lights.

My essential 9/11 memory – after the North Tower collapsed at 10:28 a.m., I'll never forget the first thing she said when she arrived home, after the hugging and weeping. “As we were going down the stairs, there were firefighters going up the stairs. They were still going up,” she said with amazement. And then, on a dime, her expression turned bleak. “They’re all dead,” she said matter-of-factly, yet with boundless sorrow.

On 9/11/2001, an enemy clarified what it thought of us and what lengths it was willing to go to express that hatred, but that enemy also made clear who had been standing guard between us and their evil, and who would continue to do so – people in uniform who go up the stairs when called.

As I watched the ceremony unfold on the tarmac at O’Hare Airport, I felt deeply weary of the strife that has metastasized in the nearly 20 years since that day – not only the seemingly endless combat and incidents of murderous terrorism worldwide, but also the vehemence and had faith displayed in our cultural and social wars, in our ideological wrangling, and in our increased inter-faith, inter-communal, and interreligious strife. Those “aha!” moments broadcast triumphantly on air and online when a tragedy, adversity, or failure appears to validate a particular worldview. And as I revisited my experience of last autumn now in early June, more than two months into a global crisis of confidence brought on by COVID-19 and a week into a spasm of nationwide multi-violence, I feel that weariness all the more acutely.

What I learned from having been present at so many commemorations with good people whose job it is to keep going up the stairs – they are all part of the same thing, a line between us and chaos, sometimes a bulwark, sometimes gossamer, but a line nevertheless. From my experiences after the 9/11 attack, I learned the humane virtue of just showing up at the appropriate time, keeping one’s mouth shut for a few minutes, acknowledging that there are big things going on, and then demonstrating that one can respond to them with a bit of dignity, empathy, and selflessness.

The Marine who was killed was Pfc. Christian Bautista, 21, of Cook Island, CA, who enlisted in September 2018. As reported by Stars and Stripes, he was killed in a training accident "at about 7:15 a.m. on October 20 in a M-1151 Enhanced Armament Carrier vehicle at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif. Two Marines in the vehicle attempted life-saving measures before the arrival of paramedics, who pronounced him dead at the scene."

I’ll never know what his motivations were for signing up for military, or what he accomplished in a too-short life lived almost entirely during wartime – knowing the risks, he took on the job of going up the stairs.

May his memory be a blessing.

Pfc. Christian Bautista
Doing Our Best (Even When It Doesn’t Feel Like Enough)

By Suzanne Sawyer / Special to the BJV

Not long ago, the week was continuing during the days we were getting ready for a Zoom Shabbat with my parents and not at home with kids. I was looking forward to “seeing” my parents, who we usually visit with beyond one month. But who I have not seen in person since early February. Several times over the last two months we joined Hevreh for Zoom Shabbat, but to be completely candid, after a full week of remote meetings and phone calls, welcoming Shabbat on the computer is not what refuels and recharges me, or prepares me for what should be a day of rest.

And yet video is the only way to see most people right now, even though many are not that far away. We are grateful that two of our girls are in the house, but two are not, and video is the only way to see them with their faces uncovered.

The lesson I am learning is it’s okay to acknowledge how hard this is and that we need to be gentle with each other.

We’ve been in it for over 2 months now, and I tell people we’re fine and blessed that we are all healthy and doing okay, that we’re fine and blessed that we are in this together. But it’s not fine. Each time we reach a new milestone by the Union for Reform Judaism – most recently, the announcement that URJ took the lead in making a first to close down in March for the first time in March for the first time for the new school year and transition to the next. And it’s another blow to the frayed parents who have been juggling remote work and family, or onsite work in vulnerable situations while trying to keep their homes clean and safe.

I am grateful that the URJ took the lead in making this decision, as the Jewish community was among the first to down in March for the first time for the first time for the first time in March for the first time for the first time for the new school year and transition to the next. And it’s another blow to the frayed parents who have been juggling remote work and family, or onsite work in vulnerable situations while trying to keep their homes clean and safe.

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Young Judaism

Bringing Our Community’s Wonderful Jewish Values With Her to College

By Ali Hochfelder / Special to the BJV

Ali Hochfelder, who graduates from Lenox Memorial High School in June, is the recipient of the 2020 Henry Simkin, Frances Simkin Schiller, and Dr. Stanley and Faye Simkin Scholarships.

As a child I went to Knesset Israel preschool, which, like all the Hebrew schools in Berkshire County, is supported by Federation. I have fond memories of singing about apples and honey for Rosh Hashanah, twirling around like a sevivon, and braiding challah on Friday. I looked forward to dressing up for Purim more than I did Halloween.

My elementary school class consisted of both Jewish and non-Jewish children. My neighbors ate challah on Friday and then went to church on Sunday. Being Jewish was, for me, a source of pride and something that could be shared. It didn’t even occur to me that there was an alternative to this upbringing until I entered the “real world,” so to speak. The “real world” didn’t seem to know the difference between a matzah ball and a tennis ball. This was shocking to me, and so I found comfort in going to Hebrew school, where I felt understood and everything felt certain. I knew there’d always be a cup of grape juice and challah to dip waiting for me. I knew my friends would be there with me. I knew who liked the outside of the challah and who liked the fluffy center. I knew who liked leading shacharit and who wrapped their tefillin too tight. We all knew the thrill of discussing ethics with the rabbi. My Jewish friends became like cousins and the congregants were aunts and uncles.

In order to give back to this wonderful community, I worked for several years as an assistant Hebrew teacher at Knesset Israel. I feel as though it is my moral obligation to pass along the values of tikun olam, mitzvot, and tzedakah to the next generation of young adults. I have worked to teach Hebrew, prayers, and lessons underlining the core Jewish ideals to kids from ages 3 all the way to thirteenth grade. I showed my students to foster positive peer influence and create a more inclusive, respectful school community. Through the ADL program, I worked to spread the messages of kindness and strong morals. When I head off to college in the autumn, I will be anxious to contribute to my new Jewish community, both in traditions and outreach. I intend on studying to become a psychologist to do my part in helping others and repairing the world.

Three of the grounding principles of Judaism are the concepts of tikun olam, mitzvot, and tzedakah. These words are truly at the heart of Jewish tradition. Despite its small size, the Berkshire Jewish community constantly demonstrated these concepts through their hours of volunteer work and sheer dedication to others. The Jewish community has always defined many different aspects of my life, so naturally, these concepts are ones that I try to emulate in my daily life.

As I once again become a small gefilte fish in a big pond, I find it important to bring these wonderful Jewish values with me. Especially because there is so much division in our world right now, I think it is crucial to teach the importance of kindness and strong morals. When I head off to college in the autumn, I will be anxious to contribute to my new Jewish community, both in traditions and outreach. I intend on studying to become a psychologist to do my part in helping others and repairing the world. I hope to one day establish a home somewhere and to help people and teach Jewish values like my mentors from the Berkshire Jewish community.

Thank you to the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for playing such a big part in making possible my Jewish experiences growing up this community.
OBITUARIES

Jay S. Zief, civic-minded, volunteer, storyteller, performer

SOUTH EGREMONT — Jay S. Zief, a member of the NYSE for over fifty years, passed away on Tax Day, April 15, following a valiant battle against cancer. at the home of his daughter Suzanne Van Schaick. Born during the interlude part of the Great Depression, he earned the nickname ‘Buddy’ derived from the popular song of the time, ‘Buddy. Can You Spare A Dollar?”

Born on March 23, 1933 and raised in Forest Hills, NY, Jay was the son of Samuel Zief and Shirley (Podor) Zief. He was raised in a busy home that saw a constant stream of friends and relatives as well as the characters who played pincushion and poker with his hotelier father. Jay was a graduate of New York University, and married Helen Gold in 1955. The couple had celebrated 61 years of marriage prior to her death in 2016. Jay and Beverly served their family in Harrison, NY prior to living in their retirement home of 16 years, The Mews, by the Red Lion Inn Courtyard

His early married years, Jay and Helen’s family moved to a hotel that remained a key to the Zief family’s hotel business before pursuing interests on Wall Street. Jay was a partner in a boutique firm. In the following decades, Jay was adored by his six grandchildren and several newer family friends. In 2005 he wrote his memoir. From Buddy to Buddy, Reflections of A Life. His family and friends remember Jay as a tireless storyteller, his tones universally related to the many places to which he and Beverly traveled. Often quoted as saying “Driver’s seat is the driver’s seat,” he never tired of road trips and late in life he became interested in driver’s safety with AARP, leading their driver safety course for seniors. He was awarded AARP Massachusetts Volunteer of the Month in June 2018.

Jay and Helen’s son Robert Zief (Loree); two daughters, Deborah Zief and Suzanne Van Schaick; and six grandchildren, Adam Van Schaick (Pieter); and Deborah Zeif (Loree); two daughters, and the wonderful, cherished children of Van (Nancy), Leah (Gary), Emily and David. He was adored by his six grandchildren.

Chairman of Palmer Asphalt Company, Tar Heel, and a big fan of dark chocolate, Lewis was loving, generous, caring, accomplished and well-repected. He had a heart of gold. “We will love and miss you forever.”

Carole Schwimmer, 84, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt

LENNOX — Carole Schwimmer, 84, very bright, NY, Long Island, and Lenox passed away peacefully on Saturday, May 9, in her home. She learned new languages, including accents, flawlessly in hours. She was a dedicated volunteer to the National Alliance of Mental Illness in care of the Roche Funeral Home, 120 Main Street, Lenox, MA 01240.

Marjorie Esther Marusarz, volunteer and artist

PITTSFIELD — Marjorie Esther Marusarz, 89, devoted her life to helping those with mental illness LENOX — Aaron M. Leavitt MD, 89, devoted his life to helping those with mental illness and particularly those who are not accepted.

Marjorie married in 1953 in Springfield. She was the loving widow of Elliott and mother of Jennifer and Josh. Helen owned her own advertising and direct marketing agency. She was an exceptionally talented artist specializing in watercolors and sold her artwork in art shows. She was on the Egremont Planning Board for 15 years, proudly serving two terms as chair.

An active member of the Council on Aging, Helen was responsible for the council’s public relations. She generously volunteered her time writing press releases for Knesset Israel. She was a lifelong member of Hadassah.

Funeral services will be held at the convenience of the family. There will be a Celebration of Life at a later date. Memorial contributions may be made to the Berkshires Humane Society in care of Derby Funeral Home, 54 Bradford Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

Berkshire Jewish Voice • jewisheberkshires.org June 15 to July 26, 2020

Berkshire Public Theater in founding member of the NY-based community theatre arts. From Westchester, participant in the performing supporter and sometime "check in with the office.”

Jay’s granddaughter Molly gave him the moniker ‘Bebop,’ which was adopted by all six of his grandchildren and even several newer family friends. In 2005 he wrote his memoir. From Buddy to Buddy, Reflections of A Life. His family and friends remember Jay as a tireless storyteller, his tones universally related to the many places to which he and Beverly traveled. Often quoted as saying “Driver’s seat is the driver’s seat,” he never tired of road trips and late in life he became interested in driver’s safety with AARP, leading their driver safety course for seniors. He was awarded AARP Massachusetts Volunteer of the Month in June 2018.

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Connecting With Community

In response to coronavirus guidelines...

As of press time, all-in-person Connecting With Community programming has been canceled through June. For the most up-to-date information and details on virtual programming, please visit our website www.jewishberkshires.org to sign up for our lists 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 through July. 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 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, Liberation Network, 139 North Street, Pittsfield (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.

JUNE

Monday, 15 ...............Lunch: Pomegranate glazed chicken**, baby carrots, salad, Challah, grapes, and tea.

Tuesday, 16 ...............Lunch: Corned Beef**, sauerkraut, salad, pickles and potato chips, egg bread, mandarin oranges, and tea.

Thursday, 18 ...............Lunch: Fresh fish**, noodle kugel, broccoli, salad, multi-grain bread, ice cream & cookies, coffee, and milk for coffee.

Monday, 22 ................Armenian “pizza”**, salad, mixed vegetables, and tea.

Tuesday, 23 ................Duck sauce glazed turkey tenders**, asparagus, rice pilaf, salad, rye bread, fruit cocktail, and tea.

Thursday, 25 ...............Greek salad platters**, tomato juice, stuffed grape leaves, hummus, pita bread, baklava, and tea.

Monday, 29 ................Hickory smoked chicken**#, passion fruit juice, hot and spicy barbecue potatoes, broccoli, Farmer’s loaf, watermelon, and tea.

Tuesday, 30 ................Stuffed pepper casserole**, baby carrots, brown rice, oat bread, apricots, and tea.

Thursday, 2 ...............Fresh fish**, borsch & potato, salad, zucchini & yellow squash, rice pilaf, scones, pears, and tea.

JULY

Monday, 13 ..............What Would You Answer?” with Sharon Strassfeld, author of “Dear Molly” for Jewish Week.

Monday, 20 ..............Armenian “pizza”**, salad, mixed vegetables, and tea.

Monday, 21 ..............Stir fried chicken**#, rice, oriental vegetables, multi-grain bread, pineapple, and tea.

Tuesday, 22 ..............Macaroni & cheese, salad, steamed tomatoes, Italian bread, raspberry pillow cookies, and tea.

Monday, 27 ..............Fish sticks, sweet potato fries, mixed vegetables, salad, potato bread, peaches, and tea.

Tuesday, 28 ..............Tomato basil quiche**, green salad, fruit cocktail, and tea.

Thursday, 30 ..............No meal for Tisha B’Av.

Homebound or recovering from an illness or injury?

Let us help you arrange for a kosher lunch to be delivered through our Kosher Meals on Wheels Program. Call (413) 442-4360, ext 10.

Knesset Israel
16 Colt Road, Pittsfield

ONGOING MINYANS

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

CANDLE-LIGHTING

Friday, June 19 ........8:15 p.m.
Friday, June 26 ........8:16 p.m.
Friday, July 3 ............8:15 p.m.
Friday, July 10 .........8:12 p.m.
Friday, July 17 ..........8:08 p.m.
Friday, July 24 ..........8:02 p.m.

Connecting With Community

Nourish Your Body, Mind, and Soul!

Despite the coronavirus crisis, Federation’s Program Director Nancy Maurice Rogers continues to schedule presenters to deliver engaging online programming into the summer months. Through the month of June, all programs will be presented via Zoom or other platforms – please check your emails from Federation to find the necessary links. All programs begin at 10:45 a.m. at press time. Federation planned to resume its live programming into the summer months. However, that plans might change, in which case some of the programs listed below will be moved online or canceled. For up-to-date details, please check emails you receive from Federation or visit our calendar of events online at www.jewishberkshires.org.

JUNE

Monday, June 15 – Pedals, Pints, and Print Culture: The New Women and her Fight for Equality”

Cassandra Peltier, executive director of the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum in Adams, relates the narrative of a woman who emerged after the Civil War, when dress reform surged and the bicycle became more widely available. Women were becoming nurses, doctors, journalists, and publishers, and also breaking into the worlds of business and finance. Yet they could not vote. Society, however, would be unable to put a woman on the ballot. However, women were changing American culture forever.

Thursday, June 25 – “The Berkshire Museum Now, and What Comes Next”

The Berkshire Museum has a history, but that history has promised the museum for the future. In these troubling times, many museums face the prospect of closing their doors forever. Here in Pittsfield, the Berkshire Museum is fortunate to be making infrastructure improvements, keeping staff employed, working to adapt to the community’s current needs, and planning to be part of the fabric of the Berkshires in the future, whatever it may hold. Join Jeff Rodgers, since 2019 the executive director, for a look at the museum today and a glimpse at what the museum hopes to create for the Berkshires over the next few years.

Monday, June 29 – Summer Olympics Germany: 1936 and 1972” with Ewan Weiner

Ewan Weiner will talk about two infamous Summer Olympics in Germany: the “Nazi” Olympics of 1936 in Berlin that is remembered also for Owens’ Jennings’s matchless field and track accomplishments, and the 1972 Munich games, which were marred by the murderous attack by Palestinian terrorists on Israel’s Olympic team.

JULY

Monday, July 13 – “What Would You Answer?” with Sharon Strassfeld

Educator and author Sharon Strassfeld wrote an anonymous advice column called “Dear Molly” for The Jewish Week to New York, which was syndicated to other Jewish newspapers throughout North America. In this session, Sharon will read some of the letters she received over the many years she wrote the column, and participants will have an opportunity to discuss how they would have answered the questions.


This program highlights acts of courage by several rescuers including Sir Nicholas Winton, who saved children from Czechoslovakia, and Chusni Sologista, who gave Japanese visas to Lithuanian Jews. Presenting will be Judith Schummer, who was born in Shanghai, China in October 1945 to parents who survived the Holocaust by getting a special visa which enabled them to get out of Eastern Europe and travel first to Japan and then to China. Her father, a Yiddish journalist, eventually became the editor of the Yiddish newspaper, The Jewish Daily Forward. Schummer has authored two books about the Holocaust.

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Berkshire Jewish Voice
jewishberkshires.org
Berkshire Jewish Film Festival Is Virtual This Summer

The Berkshire Jewish Film Festival is going virtual this summer for its 34th consecutive season presenting outstanding films of Jewish interest from around the world.

Another diverse selection of engaging films that examine Jewish history, heritage, and culture will be shown online on Mondays from July 6 through August 10 at 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.

If you have internet access, you will be able to view the films from the comfort and safety of your own homes. There will also be live talkbacks in an online format.

Please visit the new festival website, berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org, for more on the 2020 film program, the schedule of films with trailers, a new online box office for purchasing your tickets, and the sign-up form for their e-newsletter.

Ticket prices have been lowered to $5 per film for this year. All proceeds are directed to the Knesset Israel Hebrew School.

Information is also available at (413) 445-4872, ext. 25.

Berkshire Jewish Film Festival 2020 Lineup

July 6
4 p.m. Mrs. G (Documentary)
The incredible story of how one woman created the world’s most famous swimsuit company. Mrs. Lea Gottlieb, known as ‘Mrs. G’ started Gottex in her tiny Tel Aviv apartment.

July 7
8 p.m. Golda (Documentary)
An engrossing portrait backboned by a surprisingly candid, unaired TV interview of Israel’s only female Prime Minister. The film charts Golda’s trailblazing rise to power and her tragic demise.

July 13
4 p.m. Give It Back! (Short narrative)
New to Israel, Olivia is bullied by her classmates and ends the day on a surprising note.

July 14
8 p.m. Mo’ab Fort (Documentary)
Arriving during a time of poverty and austerity, Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, seek shelter in the Promised Land and are forced into ma’abarot, remote shantytowns of tents and sheds.

July 20
4 p.m. Hunting Elephants
Sir Patrick Stewart stars in this funny, heartwarming caper about a precocious 12-year-old boy who conspires with three senior citizens to rob a bank in order to save himself and his mother from losing their house.

July 24
8 p.m. Broken Mirrors (Narrative)
Ariella, a 17-year-old girl, commits a grave error for which her military father, uncharacteristically, isn’t willing to punish her. She sets off on a quest and discovers a secret to her father’s past that leads them to confront one another.

July 27
4 p.m. Latter Day Jew (Documentary)
How does a gay, former Mormon and cancer survivor who converted to Judaism at the age of 34 prepare for his bar mitzvah? Latter Day Jew follows comedian H. Alan Scott as he deals with the big questions.

What are your financial goals?
Are you saving for a long and secure retirement? Hoping to build a legacy for you and your family?

Our Greylock Investment Group can help you with your goals by developing an investment plan or fine tuning an existing plan aligned with your needs, goals and level of investment experience.

Brian P. Astorino, CRPC®
LPL Financial Advisor
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Pittsfield, MA 01201

Michael B. DuPont
LPL Financial Advisor
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250 Stockbridge Road
Great Barrington, MA 01201

Michael A. Fazio, CFP®
LPL Financial Advisor
(413) 236-4835
150 West Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

Senior Vice President

Hunting Elephants

Golda

Broken Mirrors

Hunting Elephants

Life Through A Lens
(Short documentary)
The story of Hollywood photographer, Robert Zuckerman, whose life through a lens gets turned upside down after he is diagnosed with a rare, debilitating genetic disease, generally referred to by its initials, APBD.

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Senior Vice President
Mrs. G

The Rabbi from Hezbollah

(Cultural and Arts)

8 p.m.

The Rabbi from Hezbollah

(Documentary)

Ibrahim, born in a small village in Lebanon was destined to follow in his father’s footsteps as a farmer and shepherd, but fate had something else in store. Through coincidence and choice, he became one of Israel’s leading spies.

August 3

4 p.m.

Rewind

(Documentary)

Sasha Joseph Neulinger takes a brave and wrenching look at his childhood and the journey to reconcile his past. By probing the gap between image and reality, the film depicts how little and how much a camera can capture. (Courtesy Independent Lens)

August 4

4 p.m.

Holy Silence

(Documentary)

The Catholic Church’s response to the Holocaust, examined with historic film, rare documents, and interviews, reveals a failure of moral authority.

August 10

4 p.m.

Oliver Sacks: His Own Life

(Documentary)

This fascinating film explores the life and work of the legendary neurologist and storyteller, a fearless explorer of unknown mental worlds who helped redefine our understanding of the brain and mind, the diversity of human experience, and our shared humanity.

8 p.m.

Igor and the Crane’s Journey

(Narrative)

Igor and the Crane’s Journey touches the core of the migration experience. A charming film about a young boy facing new challenges and finding his own voice and strength by connecting to the world of nature.

Berkshire Jewish Film Festival

34 YEARS

BJFF GOES VIRTUAL FOR 2020

Mondays ~ July 6 through August 10

4:00pm and 8:00pm  $5.00 each film

VISIT: www.berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org

for complete schedule, film trailers, live talkbacks and online box office

Generous support from Wolfson Family Foundation, John Bergman Charitable Trust, Spitz-Tuchman Charitable Trust, Harold Grinspoon Foundation, Berkshire Bank Foundation, Greylock Federal Credit Union

Life Can Present Challenges

Sometimes, a little help along the way can make things easier

Our community social worker, Jill Goldstein, LICSW, offers case management, information/referral and consultation to help Jewish community members find support and access to services to help with such needs as:

- Coping with life’s transitions
- Aging and caregiving issues
- Relationship difficulties
- Adjustment to new living situation
- Living with Illness
- Grief and loss
- Depression or anxiety

If you are struggling with one of these or other issues, Jill can help you find community resources to assist you. Jill has a Master’s degree in social work (MSW) and is licensed as an independent clinical social worker (LICSW).

If you or someone you know needs a little help, give us a call:

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

All services are free and completely confidential
The Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook

A love letter to the Berkshires arrives at an auspicious time

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

The Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook is a billed-doux to the Berkshires that has arrived at a traumatic and unprecedented moment in the life of our community. Over the course of the week that it first crossed my desk and I interviewed authors Elisa Spungen Bildner and Robert Bildner, Tanglewood finally canceled its 2020 season and Kripalu announced it was shuttering until 2021, laying off 450 workers.

That bad news—which capped off weeks of similarly disquieting announcements from literally all the major cultural institutions that are the Berkshires’ lifeblood—landed like a devastating one-two combination of body blows and has left this region reeling. As I write, it’s the first of June, and how things are going to turn out for us this summer (and beyond) remain beyond anyone’s ken.

Amidst this cacavade of communal land, I’ll admit it, personal anxiety. I was surprised about how much solace the Bildner’s cookbook provided. For sure, it’s a handsome book that evokes the verdant, perfect Berkshire summers we anticipate all year and then revel in during their always-too-brief duration—Rob Bildner is a capable photographer and contributed the lion’s share of images of the places and people profiled. (The prepared dishes were captured by specialists in that kind of photography, and look delicious.)

But The Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook is much more than pretty pictures. It’s the culmination, the Bildners, of more than five years of focused exploration of local farms, restaurants, and artisanal food production, a portrait of how constituent parts of the Berkshires’ alternative food culture work together toward achieving the farm-to-table ideal. The book’s recipes, developed with former Red Lion Inn chef Brian Alberg, were intended to be accessible to any competent home cook, says Elisa, and will work even when supermarket staple ingredients available year-round are substituted.

By highlighting the fresh ingredients produced by local farms in these recipes, the book also invites the intrepid Berkshires home cook to connect directly with local farmers and artisans through fresh markets, farm stands, and CSAs—those inspired to venture out for the freshest seasonal ingredients will not only eat better and healthier, but also get to know their neighbors and explore these hills more comprehensively, a joy in and of itself.

The Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook is about the character of a place—what it is about the Berkshires that attracts a certain kind of food-focused person, what they believe they can achieve here (personally, practically, creatively, socially, and sometimes even spiritually), and how work they to fulfill those ambitions. In spirit, it resembles Jerusalem, Yotam Ottolenghi and Sami Tamimi’s landmark celebration of Israel’s multicultural capital and its denizens through the lens of the city’s rich food culture.

One characteristic of the Berkshires I have noticed, after nearly a decade of living here, is that while the region is checkered with amaz- ingly accomplished people who are doing fascinating things, they are likely to be operating within their own spheres. Part of that is geography, part of that is demographics, but mostly it’s personal preference—people are happy to do their own thing. What communities people do elect to join align with their interests and needs, and if you are not a participant in those particular communities, it’s easy to miss a lot of what is going on.

The Bildners are plugged into the Berkshires’ food culture and are gracious and inclusive guides to its richness and quirks. Lawyers by training, they both worked in Rob Bildner’s family business supplying specialty foods to supermarkets in the Northeast. Elisa also worked as a journalist, studied nutrition, and trained as a chef at culinary school. They are strong supporters of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires (Elisa is joining the board of directors this month and both are serving on our Major Donors Host Committee) and other philanthropic causes, notably the Foundation for Jewish Camping, which the couple founded in 1998.

They’ve been in the Berkshires for 35 years, their interest in local farming kindled when their son started farming on their Beetup property and they frequenting farmer’s markets to sell his produce. Elisa says that her interest in sustainable farming aligns with her Jewish journey. “I recognize that the values of these non-Jewish farmers were also Jewish values,” she says. “Reverence for the land. Treat animals with compassion. Don’t waste.” Rob says he admires how the community impulse displayed by many local farmers. “They care about quality and health and keeping money within the community.”

In The Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook, readers meet different types of people working the land, among them legacy farmers operating family farms, although often in ways their forebears would not have envisioned. Also working here are what Rob Bildner calls ‘natural farmers.’” folks who reject the practices of large-scale agribusinesses and cultivate their crops sustainably and employ humane practices in raising livestock. Some of the farmers the Bildners profile are people of means searching for a more meaningful way to work and live. Together, the profiles form a panorama of farming life in the Berkshires, its satisfactions and its sometimes challenging vicissitudes.

Here’s an example of a bit of information from the Bildners’ profile of Peter Platt and Meredith Kennard, owners of The Old Inn on the Green in New Marlborough, that imparted the complexities facing many of the principled, sometimes neophyte farmers in the Berkshires:

“Platt is aware of the pressures facing farmers he deals with as he works to bring farm-to-table dining to your entity. In the past, “when you used to have generations of farmers,” he says, “there was a knowledge passed on from father to son—or mother to daughter.” For new farmers, the learning must be done in such a short period and every growing season is different. And, farming is not just about growing and raising food, says Kennard. “It’s about making a living.

The people profiled in the book all work—none of them, not the earnest consciousness farmers, not the savvy businessespeople, not the slick restaurateurs, have chosen an easy way to make a living. The Bildners have provided an invaluable window into their lives and livelihoods.

People don’t understand what’s going on here behind the Tanglewood veil,” says Elisa. Bottom line—it’s nice to care a lot about how the turnips you’re eating came about, but it’s much more meaningful to know about your Berkshire neighbors who grew it.

And as someone with 40 years of home cooking experience, I can tell you that the recipes are dishes that you will actually want to cook and that preparing them is within the standard skill set. (The Carrot Soup with Sage and Mint, inspired by Woven Roots Farm in Tyringham is gooooood.) I envision The Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook occupying a prized place on kitchen shelves in the Berkshires, revisited year after year by full-time and seasonal residents mapping out meals to prepare during the precious summer months of abundance.

A crucial bit of information about the Berkshires was shared by a long-time resident soon after I first relocated here. “Every year that you are in the Berkshires,” he said, “summer is going to be shorter and shorter.”

It took me a few seasons to get what he meant, but what he repeated over and over was the truest thing I know about my adopted home. By the time that celery green spring changes to floral, sneezy-tecchnicolor spring, you best have figured out your game plans, marked your calendars, and saved up some money, because the summer train is rolling—true if you’re a gardener, a sporting type, name your local business owner, a culture vulture, a fundraiser for an extremely wealthy local Jewish organization, whatever. Don’t put off savoring what might be in front of you now, because it won’t be there for long.

In normal times, with so much to do and so many people to see, it’s easy to feel harried by the pressure to hurry up and relax. But in this strange season, maybe rambling through unex- plored byways while trying to figure out a memorable meal to prepare when we get home is the best of what the Berkshires has in store for us. With The Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook, the Bildners have provided an excellent roadmap of different ways we might get lost.