**A Community Commemoration of Yom HaShoah**

Reflections, remembrance, and the story of a long-neglected wartime diary

On Thursday, April 1, at 7:30 p.m., join us for a community commemoration of Yom HaShoah – Holocaust Remembrance Day. Featured speaker Timothy Boyce, Esq. will discuss From Day to Day, the World War II diary kept by concentration camp prisoner Odd Nansen. Boyce edited the diary, which Vanderbilt University Press republished in 2016 after its being out of print for more than 65 years. The New Yorker hailed this diary as “among the most compelling documents to come out of the war.”

Rabbi David Weiner of Kesnett Israel will offer a benediction and Massachusetts State Senator Adam Israel will facilitate a memorial candle lighting and prayers in Ahavath Sholom will facilitate a memorial candle lighting and prayers in

Rabbi Barbara Cohen of Congregation B’Nai Emunot will join us for a community commemoration of Yom HaShoah – Holocaust Remembrance Day. In the past, present, and future of Israel.

This Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program commemorating Yom HaShoah will be presented via Zoom. Visit our calendar of events at Jewishberkshires.org for a link to this presentation.

Yom HaShoah, continued on page 2

**In the Land of Israel**

Characters from Amos Oz’s classic portrait of Israel captured by actress/playwright TAMIR

On Sunday, April 25, at 7:30 p.m., the Israeli/American actress and playwright TAMIR presents her adaptation of Amos Oz’s In the Land of Israel, bringing to life six women portrayed by the author in his indelible portrait of Israel in the 1980s. In the 1980s and 1990s, TAMIR traveled and worked with Oz at book festivals and other venues, presenting a version of this performance before the author would speak about his book. In the Land of Israel recounts Oz’s travels around Israel and conversations he had with its inhabitants – Israelis and Palestinians, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, secular and religious Jews, the doves and the hawks, and nationalists and humanists. TAMIR distilled these conversations into a theater piece that captures six women’s personalities and conveys their views of the past, present, and future of Israel. Although published 35 years ago, In the Land of Israel is still relevant today.

This free online presentation is LAND OF ISRAEL, continued on page 11

**HAPPY PASSOVER 5781!**

If we could gather together this Pesach – Dayenu!

Meanwhile, Back at the Farm...

Over the years that Elisa Spungen Bildner and Robert Bildner researched, wrote, and photographed The Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook, they could scarcely have imagined that publication of their book would coincide with the coronavirus pandemic, which rocked the farm and food communities they intimately and lovingly portrayed. The June/July 2020 issue of the BJV featured the cookbook in a story that expressed the uncertainties of that moment in time: How would our community fare without the cultural programming that is the lifeblood of our local economy? How would our local food producers and purveyors – whose livelihoods can be precarious even in the best of times – make it through?

Over the summer and into the winter months, the Bildners kept tabs on what was going on with our local farmers, restaurateurs, and artisanal food producers – how they adapted to the changes wrought by the pandemic and how they are preparing for the upcoming summer season. In this report, Elisa tells some stories (and Bob shares images) that convey the resilience of this community in the face of an unprecedented challenge. Please turn to page 12 for the story.
Growing up, I was blessed to have my grandparents, Betty and Philip Turetsky, live close by. My grandparents were hard-working chicken farmers in Perinneville, NJ and my grandfather also worked as a dress cutter in New York’s Garment District. Upon retirement, they moved to the Berkshires to be close to us. For most of my older childhood, my grandfather would be at our house every day helping my parents in our greenhouse and flower business.

Working alongside my parents in their flower shops, taking us for ice cream, making us our favorite meals, and giving us rides to school was their way of showing us love. As children and even young adults, my sisters and I happily received the care and attention my grandparents bestowed upon us.

I was living in Israel when I learned that my beloved Grandpa Philip had passed away. There was no Skype, FaceTime, or Zoom to facilitate a virtual funeral or shiva. I had a hard time grieving alone. I remember sitting with a close friend and sharing stories about my grandfather, including telling her how he would always drive me to school when it was raining. As a child, I thought it was just a fortunate coincidence when he would show up in our kitchen on a rainy morning and offer to take me to school. It was only as an adult that I realized he came over early on purpose because he did not want me to walk in the rain.

Such is the nature of life. As children, it is natural that we are on the receiving end of care, and as we grow into adulthood, we gradually take on the role of the caregiver. The ritual of becoming a bat or bar mitzvah specifically lays out this transition from being a receiver of care to assuming the responsibility of caring for others – giving Tzedakah, caring for the sick, feeding the hungry, and protecting the orphans and widows.

This pandemic has turned our traditional notions of giving and receiving upside down. People who unexpectedly lost their jobs through no fault of their own have suddenly found themselves in line at the food pantry and applying for feeding the hungry, and protecting the orphans – giving Tzedakah, caring for the sick, to assuming the responsibility of caring for others.

A Federation board member recently reminded me that by allowing others to help you during a difficult time, you are actually enabling them to do a mitzvah themselves relying on adult children or community volunteers to bring them groceries and medicine. Many times over the last year, I heard a common sentiment: “I have always been the one who gives. I never thought I would be the one who needed help.”

This past month, despite being extremely careful, my husband Ofer and I contracted the COVID-19 virus. The illness was awful, and we were both very sick. To complicate matters, our 15-year-old daughter Maya did not contract the virus. The reversal of roles between parent and child, giver and receiver, changed overnight. We were quarantined in our room, and our daughter became our primary caregiver.

As difficult as this situation was for all of us, it was especially hard for her. She was scared for us; she was afraid that she would get it; and to make matters worse, she had to go into quarantine on the exact day that all her peers were finally returning to in-school learning for the first time since November.

Let me say that Maya was AMAZING. She rose to the challenge in ways we never expected. For two weeks, she managed everything on her own. She attended virtual school, prepared and cleaned up meals, put away groceries, emptied the dishwasher, did her laundry, and sanitized every surface every time she used any common area. She took care of all of us! And she was resourceful in keeping herself busy. One day I called her on FaceTime to see what she was up to, and she showed me all the rings she had made out of paperclips.

As much as I was grateful for all that Maya was doing, I felt a lot of ‘mom guilt.’ I was also surprised at how uncomfortable I first felt when friends and family began offering food and other forms of help. Like so many others, I was used to being the one doing the helping. I never thought I would find myself needing to accept the assistance of others. The reality was that we did need the help.

Four weeks after we first felt ill, I finally felt strong enough to make a simple Shabbat dinner and light the Shabbat candles. It was an emotional experience. Starting at those flickering lights, the enormity of what we had been through really hit home. I was overwhelmed by a sense of relief and gratitude. I also felt compelled at that moment to say the Shehecheyanu for my parents and best friends who had all recently received their vaccinations.

Later, I recited the Birkat HaGomel – a blessing that expresses gratitude for coming through illness (or any trauma) and the miracle of healing and full restoration to life. While I did not recite it in the traditional public format, it was still very meaningful. I love that Judaism has these wonderful blessings and rituals to help us express deep feelings, restore our spiritual energy, and bring us back to wholeness.

We are so thankful for the many meals, flowers, calls, emails, cards from our family, friends, and community members. We are also deeply grateful for the many mishchabachas, prayers for healing and recovery offered on our behalf. A Federation board member recently reminded me that by allowing others to help you during a difficult time, you are actually enabling them to do a mitzvah. It turns out that accepting help when you need it is really a win-win for everyone. May we all keep that in mind for the future!

Dara Kaufman is the executive director of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
Rabbi Reflection

Helping Each Other, Cultivating Trust for the Better Days that are Coming

By Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

Pesach is the season of our liberation, the story at the core of our peoplehood. We were caught in the crushing straits of The Narrow Place (Mitzrayim) and God freed us with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. We went forth from slavery into freedom with a mixed multitude, a perennial reminder that liberation is not for us alone but for everyone.

Pesach is my favorite story and my favorite holiday, and I’m not alone in that. Studies have shown that Pesach is the holiday most celebrated by American Jews. Across and beyond the denominations, across and beyond the spiritual spectrum, the Passover Seder is the practice we collectively hold most dear. We gather with our loved ones, retell our central story, sing and laugh, and feast. Well – that’s what we used to do. Last year wasn’t like that, thanks to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year won’t be like that, either. We’re not yet out of the narrow straits of global pandemic. Once again we’ll celebrate Pesach on Zoom, from home.

What does it mean to approach the season of our liberation when many of us are feeling that we are stuck in the narrow straits of a global pandemic causing unthinkable amounts of death and suffering – as well as political tensions, heightened awareness of racism for white folks like me; people of color were already quite aware, mistrust and misinformation?

I don’t have an easy answer. But I know we’re not the first generation to experience Pesach during a time of unrest, or suffering, or pandemic, or fear. So I turned to one of my textual teachers for insight.

The rabbi of the Warsaw Ghetto, R. Kalman Kalonymus Shapira (also known as the “Aish Kodesh” and as the “Placeczynzer”) lived in a time of tremendous suffering, including the death of his family and the destruction of his home. He buried his Torah teachings in a milk can. They were found by a construction worker after the war, and subsequently published. The Placeczynzer taught that God is like a human being who cries out to a friend, “help me carry this burden?” The burden that God wants help in carrying is our human suffering, which God feels-with-us. Even God takes comfort, when bearing a burden, in not having to carry it alone. (Aish Kodesh on Vayikra, 1940)

Even when we are apart physically, we can reach out to one another. When we connect – even via phone or text or Zoom – we lighten one another’s burdens. What does it mean to approach the season of our liberation when many of us are feeling that we are stuck in the narrow straits of the global pandemic? Once again we’ll celebrate Pesach on Zoom, from home.

In a time like that (a time like this!), we can cultivate trust that God can help us turn even the most difficult of circumstances into blessings. (Aish Kodesh on M’tzora, 1940)

We never know, when something difficult is happening, what blessing we might be able to find in it later when we look back on it. My reading of the Placeczynzer tells me that we have two tasks in this time: to reach out to each other and help each other carry the burdens of this time, and to cultivate trust that better days are coming. Spring is coming. Fresh air is coming. Sunlight is coming. Vaccinations are coming. The mixed multitude of the whole world will emerge from these narrow straits, and we will rejoice with song and dancing on the other side of this sea.

May the Pesach season help us cultivate hope for the better days that are coming – and may we support each other from afar in all the ways we can, until the day comes when we can embrace in person again.

Rabbi Rachel Barenblat is the spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams, and founding builder of Bayit: Building Jewish (yourbayit.org).

The Jewish Transportation Network
Discount Taxi Vouchers

for Jewish residents aged 65 years and older

Purchase $50 worth of taxi vouchers for $5
($6 if requested via mail)

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

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

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

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

Welcome to the Berkshires!

To new members of our Berkshire Jewish community.
YOM HASHOAH, continued from page 1

This inspiring diary – with illustrations by the author, who was also a sketch artist – brilliantly illuminates Nansen’s daily struggle, not only to survive but to preserve his sanity and maintain his humanity. After having been out of print for over 60 years, the diary was rescued from oblivion by Timothy Boyce after he discovered it when reading the memoir of another Holocaust survivor, whose life, as a 10-year-old boy, was saved by Nansen while both were prisoners in Sachsenhausen.

According to historian Andrew Roberts, author of The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War: “This is one of the most searing contemporary accounts of the Holocaust, but also one of the best written of the great documents of World War II. It is a profound indictment of evil, a daily diary of the civilization for which the Allies fought.”

Throughout selected readings, Boyce will explain why Nansen was, why he was arrested, why he wrote the diary, how he preserved it, and why this diary is as important today as it was when first written. Timothy Boyce practiced law for many years, most recently serving as the managing partner of the Charlotte, NC office of Dechert LLP, a global law firm with offices in 13 countries. He holds an MBA from The Wharton School of Finance, and a JD from the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

On Monday, March 15, from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m., ethnomycologist Jon Greenberg will share some of the fascinating research that went into creating his new Hagadah, Hagadah: Fruits of Freedom: Ancient Seder Insights from Nature, Food, and Farming. Learn about the German rabbit who reversed the meaning of maror by replacing it with vermouth herbs, Rabbi Hillel’s Seder burrito, how ancient rabbits used botany, physics, and sophisticated culinary techniques to explain the Paschal lamb barbecue; and how the potential conflicts between Torah and science over leavening left at the Seder and baking matzah in the Southern Hemisphere have been resolved.

Dr. Jon Greenberg is one of the very few living biblical and Talmudic ethnobotanists. He is often consulted by rabbis and other scholars for his knowledge of the area. Dr. Greenberg received his bachelor’s degree with honors in biology from Brown University and his master’s and a doctorate in agronomy from Cornell University. He has also studied with Rabbi Chaim Brovender at Israel’s Yeshivat Hamivtar and researched corn, alfalfa, and soybeans at Cornell, the US Department of Agriculture, and the University of Pennsylvania’s Institute for Cancer Research. Since 1989, he has been a science teacher and educational consultant.

Dr. Greenberg was senior editor of science textbooks at Prentice Hall Publishing Co. Previously on the faculty of Yeshivas Ohr Yosef, the School of Education at Indiana University, and the University of Phoenix, he has taught at the Heschel School since 2008. He is a frequent speaker at synagogues, schools, and botanical gardens.

Dr. Greenberg is the author of TorahFlora.org and can be contacted at jon@torahflora.org.

Banananas on the Seder Plate?
With a unique new Hagadah, ethnomycologist Jon Greenberg shares forgotten Pesach lore

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What is My Civic Responsibility?” – with Dr. Dan Prinzing of the Wassmuth Center for Human Rights

On Monday, March 22, from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m. join Dr. Dan Prinzing, the executive director of the Wassmuth Center for Human Rights, builder and home of the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial. He’ll be talking about the Center’s efforts to cultivate ideas about civic responsibility.

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

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The World Before Your Feet
Cross-country sojourner Matt Green on his efforts to traverse every block in New York City

On Monday, April 19, from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m., Matt Green joins us for “The World Before Your Feet,” a look at his bipedal adventures as a long-distance walker who has crossed the United States and is now in the midst of an effort to walk every block in New York City.

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

To hear Matt Green walk along the West Side Highway in New York City, tune in and enjoy a reminder of all the small wonders that surround us at every moment, just waiting for us to take the time to notice them. Because, as comedians Steven Wright observed, “Everywhere is within walking distance if you have the time.”

Matt Green is a former civil engineer who quit his job in 2010 to walk across the United States, a kaleidoscopic journey of more than 9,000 miles, photographing and researching whatever catches his eye as he explores one neighborhood after another. Matt will share photos, videos, and stories from his adventures, along with some of the lessons he learned while walking. His tales of unexpected kindness and shared humanity offer an uplifting antidote to the political and cultural polarization that seems so prevalent in America today.

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

The World Before Your Feet
from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m., Matt Green will share insights about “The World Before Your Feet.”

On Monday, April 5 at 6:45 p.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes Julie Kohner, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor and a founder of the Holocaust educational program, “Voices of the Generations.” She’ll talk about her work to preserve the stories of survivors and share a video of her mother’s groundbreaking 1953 appearance on the television show This Is Your Life.

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

Voices of the Generations, Inc., is a non-profit organization with a mission to bear witness as a second generation. Wrote Kohner: “In as little as ten years, there may no longer be a Holocaust survivor to share our stories in person. As a way of remembering, it is important not to forget how the human race has allowed injustice and deprivation to target specific ethnic or religious peoples. If we look back into our own past, it is possible to find that such discrimination has come into our lives or the lives of our families.

Julie Kohner has been a Jewish educator for over 30 years, with a master’s degree in educational counseling. After Julie’s mother passed away in 1990, Julie began to create educational programs to honor the victims and survivors of the Holocaust. Her goal was to teach the Holocaust as seen through her mother’s eyes. She has presented Voices of the Generations for the past 26 years and has traveled extensively throughout Europe to many of the places her parents described in their book.

Kohner conducted interviews with survivors whose experiences paralleled her mother’s story of survival. As a result, Julie has become her parents’ voice and of the survivors who shared her parents’ story for future generations.

On Monday, April 19, from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes Julie Kohner who will share insights about “The Business & Politics of Sports.”

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

Views: “To have a successful big-time sports operation in the United States, you need three components or a ‘three-legged stool’: Government support (as in building stadiums and arenas and creating cable TV), a large cable TV contract, and big-time corporate support. Those three are essential, followed by marketing partners.

“Fans are not considered anymore. They can watch games on TV. A commissioner works for the owners, not the fans or players. A commissioner is a political lobbyist. It is a business. Nothing more, nothing less.”

A radio journalist from the age of 15, Evan Weiner won two Associated Press Awards in 1978 and 1979. In the 1980s, he started his long association with Westwood One Radio. Weiner was a contributing columnist for several newspapers throughout the US. He did a daily commentary called “The Business of Sports” for Westwood One Radio between 1999 and 2006. He has written six books about the business and politics of sports.

Weiner also lectures at colleges and universities about the business and politics of sports, including the globalization of North American sports and how technology is changing sports. His book, The Business and Politics of Sports, has been critically acclaimed by academic journals and is in sports business management courses at schools throughout the United States.
Your Federation Presents

Purim Bags Delivered Across the Berkshires

Thank you to all of the volunteers who baked, packed, decorated bags, and delivered Purim baskets to hundreds of local seniors who are homebound, in senior facilities, or in the hospital. This year, we added a bottle of hand sanitizer to each bag – courtesy of The Consulate General of Israel in New England – along with the hamantaschen and cute drawings from our local PJ Library children. Special thanks to volunteer packers Martin and Alice Jonas (shown bottom left). Sasha and Lev Dresner (left) delivered packages to Devonshire Estates in Lenox, and Shira Nichaman (top row, second from left) brought packages to folks in Great Barrington. Also shown are some happy recipients.
Your Federation Presents

Discovering a Shared Love of Caramel and Social Justice

A Williams College student works with Federation to create Caring Pals outreach to isolated Berkshire seniors

Last autumn and winter, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires helped create Caring Pals, a community outreach program conceived by Williams College junior Regina Fink to connect student volunteers with local seniors living in pandemic isolation. These connections were facilitated by Federation’s Coordinator of Volunteers Susan Frisch Lehrer and our social worker, Jill Goldstein. Here, in Regina’s own words, are some Caring Pals stories.

By Regina Fink / Special to the BJ

We’ve all heard variations of the phrase so many times that it has become like a mantra – “These unprecedented times have created unprecedented uncertainty and, especially among already vulnerable populations, unprecedented loneliness.”

This longing for communication is felt across the generational divide – students must adapt to digital college, and seniors are no longer able to participate in their community activities in person. In response, the Jewish value of tikkun olam prompted Williams College students to do something unprecedented.

The obligation to make the world a better place or to heal the world feels at times daunting or overwhelming, but grounding this responsibility in what we can do locally, here and now, allows us to take the first step. Small acts of compassion and connection can together be the healing we need in the world and in ourselves.

Feeling the pandemic-induced need for connection myself – and knowing how much it must be magnified for older adults without access to technology – I reached out to Federation’s Jenny Greenfeld, the mother of my friends (and recent Williams graduates) Emma and Jacob Lezberg. She quickly connected me with volunteer coordinator Susan Frisch Lehrer and social worker Jill Goldstein, who both harbor a wealth of knowledge and experience about connecting with older adults. I called Susan to discuss our hopes for a cross-generational connection between Williams College and the Federation, and soon the Caring Pals program was born!

After matching twelve Williams students with seniors, Susan and Jill led an orientation and we started contacting our Pals soon after. Our experiences have been filled with the sweetness of connection, even virtually.

The wonderful Bellamy R. described how she has enjoyed calling her pal, Ms. P., every week.

“Neither of us are doing anything particularly exciting right now, but it’s nice to just chat about what shows we’re watching on television or what music we’re listening to. She has shared a lot of great stories with me and she enjoys listening to what my life is like as a student at Williams. She used to live in NYC so she enjoys hearing about how things are in NYC right now from me.”

Arguably most importantly, they have been emailing photos of their pets to one another, extending their inter-generational connection across species.

Megan S., a Fulbright Scholar and Williams grad says she feels very fortunate to have been paired with her pal, Mrs. K.

“She has led an incredibly inspiring life, working to uplift and support the Berkshire community — a mission that I also held near and dear to my heart during my time on the Community Service Board at Williams. From learning about her role in settling refugees, to her dedication to accessibility, and equality within the temple, to hearing fun stories about her genealogy project, I have thoroughly enjoyed and found hope in my [Caring Pal] company.”

In true Jewish-grandmother-maker-fashion, Kasey S.’s pal attempted to set her up with her grandson.

Personally, calling my pal, Ms. S., has been quite joyful. On our first call we realized we share both a love of caramel and social justice, and I am very excited to learn more about her.

I am so grateful to Susan and Jill at the Federation, the Williams students, and the participating seniors who have helped make this program a success. Please contact Susan Frisch Lehrer or Jill Goldstein if you would like to get involved!

Regina Fink is a Williams College junior majoring in Environmental Studies and Spanish.

For more information on Caring Pals, please contact Federation’s Coordinator of Volunteers Susan Frisch Lehrer at slehrer@jewishberkshires.org or by calling (413) 442-4360, ext. 14.
Interfaith Sabbath Study with Hevreh and Christ Trinity Church

On six consecutive Tuesdays, from March 2 to April 6 at 7 p.m., Hevreh of Southern Berkshire joins with Christ Trinity Church, an Episcopal/Lutheran church in Sheffield, for an interfaith study of concepts surrounding the Sabbath day.

Using Sabbath as Resistance as a primary study guide, and The Sabbath by Abraham Joshua Heschel as a supplement, participants will explore Sabbath beyond the ideas of simple legal prohibitions and discover together Sabbath’s potential to change our culture. How do we break our culture’s addiction with consumption and busyness? The Sabbath may just be the answer!

How will this work?
Purchase the book Sabbath as Resistance from your favorite independent bookseller and read the first chapter. Each week, Reverend Erik Karas, along with Rabbi Jodie Gordon and Rabbi Neil Hirsch, will facilitate the discussion with congregants from Hevreh and Christ Trinity, as well as from Grace Church in Great Barrington, and St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Stockbridge.

The study sessions will be presented via Zoom. To get the Zoom link each week, email info@hevreh.org and be added to Hevreh’s listerv. Classes are free and open to all.

Other Study Opportunities with Hevreh

Lunch & Learn Torah Study
On Wednesdays at 11:45 a.m., join Rabbi Hirsch for ongoing study, about which he says: “Our tradition teaches that when two (or more) sit together and discuss words of Torah God dwells with them. Study is one of the many ways we as a Jewish community experience the sacred and the spiritual. Join us each week as we continue our path of sacred learning. All are welcome, and make sure to bring a friend!” To get the Zoom link each week, email info@hevreh.org and be added to Hevreh’s listerv. Classes are free and open to all.

Creative Beit Midrash
On April 10 and 24, both Saturdays, at 8:30 a.m., release your spiritual and intellectual imagination in Hevreh’s Creative Beit Midrash. Together with Rabbi Hirsch, explore rich Jewish topics through your medium of choice—visual art, music, dance/movement, or written word. Sessions are for sharing and processing individuals’ creative product through nurturing, not critique.

After registering, contact info@hevreh.org to be directed to Heidi Katz or Larry Frankel.

Hevreh Celebrates Passover

Plus ongoing services

On Sunday, March 28 at 6 p.m., Hevreh of Southern Berkshire hosts a second night Passover Seder on Zoom that is free and open to the community.

Join Hevreh for a Seder from your home. Make your favorite dishes, pour some wine with Rabbi Jodie Gordon, and in between, learn how to make charoset two ways with the rabbits.

For more information about family programs at Hevreh, including a Tot Shabbat on April 10, email Jodie Friedman at jfriedman@hevreh.org.

Ongoing Services

Kabbalat Shabbat
Fridays at 6 p.m.
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Passover and Programs at Temple Anshe Amunim

Virtual Second Night Passover Seder Experience

All are invited to join Rabbi Liz Hirsch virtually on March 28, at 5 p.m., for this Passover Seder experience. Participants will sing, share Seder highlights, and words of blessing. To register, go to: tinyurl.com/TAAPassoverSeder

Other Programs at TAA

Jewish Meditation
Join Rabbi Liz virtually for a four-week series on Jewish Meditation. The Zoom class will take place at noon on Wednesdays, March 3, 10, 17, and 24. She will lead a guided meditation for all ages and abilities. No prior experience necessary! The program is free and all are welcome to join us. To register for the class, go to: tinyurl.com/MarchJewishMeditation

TAA Book Discussion and Joint Program
Join Rabbi Liz virtually for a book discussion about In the Land of Israel, by Amos Oz. on two Thursdays, March 18 and 25, at noon. To register: tinyurl.com/TAAMarchBook. See the related story on page 1 about the Sunday, April 25 theatrical presentation by actress/playwright Tamar Drori.

Jewish Parenting Book Club Discussion
Join Rabbi Liz virtually for a book discussion, March 18, at 8 p.m., sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. This month’s book will be Forest Dark, by Nicole Krauss. To register, go to: tinyurl.com/TAAmparentingBookClub. Books will be available for those that register.

Wolf Cantorial Concert: Celebrating with Israel through Music

Join Temple Anshe Amunim for a musical evening with Cantor Rachel Shasky and Cantor Jacob Harris, commemorating and celebrating 73 years of Israel. This virtual event will be held on Saturday, April 17, following Havdalah at 7 p.m. To register, go to: tinyurl.com/TAAcanticorialConcert

Temple Anshe Amunim is a Reform Jewish Congregation that promotes engaging and widespread participation in services, education, and cultural and social action programs. For more information, contact the Temple Anshe Amunim office at (413) 442-5910, email templeoffice@ansheamunim.org or visit www.ansheamunim.org
Seeking Peace Through the Trauma of Shared Loss

Williams College students relate their experience of a dialogue between an Israeli and Palestinian who both lost sisters to the ongoing conflict.

By Sydney Pope and Gaby Nisan/Iyar 5781

In January, our club, Students for Israeli Palestinian Dialogue at Williams College, hosted an online discussion with two members of the Parents Circle – Families Forum, a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization of families who have lost an immediate family member to the ongoing conflict. In the story below, two Williams students share their experiences of that conversation.

Arab and Yigal

Palestinian peacebuilding networking Palestinian families and individuals from both sides of the conflict who have lost a loved one, with the other side to pursue a just, sustainable peace. The Parents Circle is aware- ness and enables dialogue through the power of sharing and open communication. Noticeable from the onset of the meeting was Arab and Yigal's relationship and history together. They seemed not just colleagues but close friends, and when deciding who would start, Arab said to Yigal, "You first. You are the big brother." Yigal, 28, born in West Jerusalem, might have grown up in the same municipality as Arab, 27, from East Jerusalem, but he empha- sized that their lives couldn't have been more different. Yigal explained that until the age of five, "there was no reason for me as a Jew who grew up in Jerusalem to even think about Palestinians." For him, they were "a people without an identity and history." Two years before his fifth birthday, this narrative would change.

His father Smadar, 14, was walking from school with three other girls when three Palestinians from nearby houses, feeling that the camp detonated a suicide bomb. Smadar was instantly killed from the shrapnel.

Yigal asked everyone in the meeting "to imagine as best as you can" what that was like for him, all of a sudden, missing an essen- tial organ or limb, something that "can never be absent that will never grow back." His sister responded that unfilled void, and while he felt he had no direction, his parents eventually opted to engage with the Parents Circle and similar grassroots organizations. Initially, Yigal couldn't face the truth of what they were doing — sharing his family’s most intimate and personal experience with him, as he put it, "no offense, but complete strangers.

Even while in our Williams College club smiled at that, but as leaders of the club, it resonated more deeply with us because we had felt anxious in Yigal’s life, he soon faced a dilemma: something he had been eighteen — the age at which Israeli law mandates that citizens enlist in the Israeli Defense Force. By that time, Yigal had formed his viewpoint about what he had come to consider his occupation of Palestinian territory; he also recognized that many of his peers did not possess information about what, in his view, "segregative policies of urban planning, the separation language, and everything else." Although he didn’t want to participate in that perceived injustice, he also realized that to change anything, he had to be part of Israeli society. “And unfortunately in Israel, society is... serving in the military,” he said. “It’s a stamp of citizenship. This is how you gain your voice to speak publically against what you think is wrong because otherwise, what do you know?”

He went on to say that he could speak up and “look [his] peers...and friends in the eyes” as he explained both his view of the situation and the power of encountering the other side and speaking towards reconciliation. It came at a cost, however.

A close friend of a, Palestinian member of the Parents Circle and Yigal’s father, before he joined the military: “Yigal, once you’re going to wear the uniform, I will stop speaking to you until you take off.” Those words offended him deeply at the moment, and he carried them closely throughout his service. At the end of one workday in 1996, he was called to the checkpoints, not far from where he lives. He threw them at the army, he got on a bus and left.

I think anger is a positive emotion to lead to action. And if that action is standing directly in resistance towards injustice, use that anger: Cherish it. Own it.

— Yigal Elhanan

Yigal went on to share a story to which no one was a stranger, one in which an individual’s beliefs come under attack when confronted with a new perspective, resulting in a gradual but powerful transformation. In Yigal’s case, the catalyst was a statistic — a number. At 14, he began questioning what happened before his sister’s death, so he researched and discovered that between 1996 and 1999, 120 Palestinians and 100 Israelis lost their lives to the conflict. “That shook me to my core,” he remem- bered, “because it meant that Smadar’s death was not as singular and unique and specific as I thought.” Two hundred twenty families, on both sides, were torn apart by similar trauma.

Led by his shock and deep- ened curiosity, he decided to join a larger family that both he and Arab Aramin belonged to — the family of the Israeli-Palestinians who, this period of a process as a place where, despite not knowing his aim, he began to listen to others and open his heart and mind. He took part in the youth activities at the summer camp that the Parents Circle holds every year for bereaved children. Here, he eventually became a counselor. It was where Yigal met the “other side,” and he began to listen to the stories and about their loss. “Palestinians were no longer faceless,” he said. “They were no longer story-less.”

Though these experiences marked a pivotal turning point and made eye contact with a Palestinian boy. He looked at me the only way he possibly can, under the current power imbalance between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea," Yigal said. “I looked at me as his oppressor, as his occu- pier, as the representative of the checkpoint who held his mother for a few hours, or a soldier who joined his army, or just as the representative of the administration that destroyed this town.”

Though a brief and incon- spicuous encounter, it inspired him to speak up. He began to join several groups aligned with his anti-occupation, pro-justice beliefs. As he chaired the group, he began speaking to different international communities with [his] brother,” Arab.

At that point in the retelling of his very story, Yigal’s relationship and history with the other side when working, so we only heard his voice...to see what is going on here, you will see the same color. And my pain, and his pain...it’s just the same.

Aramin

Aramin and Yigal Elhanan, a dilemma when he turned fourteen. He then remembered what his father had said all those years ago.

Many from the audience were curious how Palestinians and Israelis might change their minds and act if they have not experi- enced such loss. Yigal took a deep breath as he thought about it, and said: “We lost our sisters. In order to join this struggle against war – this is not what needs to happen to you. We open your eyes...to see...”

In a follow-up question about how Aaramin felt about the fact that the most in releasing their pain and anger and fear. Yigal explained that joining a struggle against injustice doesn’t guarantee that a person will ever make peace with those feelings. For, one has not released them. “I think anger is a positive emotion to lead to action,” he said. “And if that action is standing directly in resistance towards injustice, use that anger: Cherish it. Own it. In a dilemma when he turned fourteen. He then remembered what his father had said all those years ago. He was told to start his fear and anger towards Israelis as he went to school. He wanted to talk to them and understand their lives better. In doing so, he realized that it wasn’t only the Palestinians who were loving ones; they were the Israelis in this sense of loss.

Arab said he began to see “a human side,” one he knew to grow and accept Israelis’ stories, faces, and names. “My blood color and Yigal’s blood color – it’s the same color. My pain, and his pain...it’s just the same.”

Aramin

Aramin knew how to follow the ideas of his parents, calling his father, "No offense, but he put it, “no offense, but..." He then remembered what his father had said all those years ago.

Images
I'm asking you guys, please end the silence of our friends. And enemies but we will remember the words of our with Martin Luther King, who said, “I'm going to finish it the only way how you can help you're not going to help us,” said Arab.

The difficulty, Arab explained, is that there are two faces for every story, and each side genuinely believes they know one another when many only know their part of the story. He has since decided to choose the difficult path towards peace – to talk to people, hear them out, and try to see both sides to every story. The final question was directed at what we can do as a club, advocates, or as individuals wanting to learn more. Arab’s response was a powerful close to the dialogue.

“...If you’re going to support Israel or support Palestine, you’re not going to help us,” he said. “Please, support justice. For two nations. That’s the only way how you can help us, and I’m going to finish it with Martin Luther King, [who] said, ‘Tomorrow, we will not remember the words of our enemies but we will remember the silence of our friends.’ And I’m asking you guys, please don’t keep silent.”

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Berkshire Jewish Voice

MEDFORD – (JNS) The anti-Israel group Students for Justice in Palestine has withdrawn its impeachment complaint against a Jewish student government member at Tufts University.

Max Price, the Jewish Community Union Judiciary (TCUJ) member, was informed on March 1 that the complaint filed by the SJP that sought to have him removed from office for expressing Jewish identity, harassment and discrimination targeting Price on the basis of his Jewish identity, according to the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under the Law (LDB), the group representing Price.

The hearing represented a continuation of a months-long campaign of intimidation, harassment and discrimination, according to the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under the Law (LDB), the group representing Price.

After Price attempted to point out baseless lies in SJP’s proposed “Deadly Exchange” referendum condemning U.S. police delegations to Israel, he was harassed, targeted and marginalized: slandered in the student newspaper; interrogated as to whether he is fit to hold office; muted for an entire student government Zoom meeting that he was elected to participate in; and attacked with age-old anti-Semitic tropes about money and power.

Earlier this month, the Brandeis Center demanded that Tufts president Anthony Monaco halt the disciplinary hearing and end the harassment and discrimination that has infringed on Price’s freedom of speech, denied him due process and deprived him of equal opportunity and equal access to university programs in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Tufts University’s stated institutional policies.

Price said that while he welcomed the decision by SJP to end its months-long harassment campaign, he said it does not “absolve” the anti-Israel group of its behavior. Similarly, he expressed disappointment that the university did not intervene on his behalf.

“I am disappointed that university administrators failed to intervene and have not yet reached out to me to address my concerns. Unless Tufts introduces sweeping reforms to combat anti-Semitism, this will happen to somebody else,” Price said.

Patrick Collins, a spokes-person for Tufts University, confirmed to JNS that the complaint has been withdrawn.

“We respect the TCU Senate’s independence regarding the conduct of its business according to its policies and procedures. We take very seriously any concerns raised by students—regardless of their backgrounds and perspectives—of bias, safety, privacy and intimidation,” the Brandeis Center demanded.

The Tufts Daily student newspaper, “TCU Parliamentarian Taylor Lewis, who had been organizing the hearing, explained that the complainants’ decision came after their names were shared with the members of the Judiciary against whom they had filed their complaint, citing privacy and security concerns. The four students in SJP originally submitted their complaint anonymously, but Lewis and members of the Tufts administration determined it was necessary to share their identities with the respondents prior to the hearing... Lewis added that although SJP withdrew its complaint, it is exploring other means of pushing forward with its allegation.”

Alyza Lewin, president of the Brandeis Center, echoed Price’s sentiment and called on the university to take more aggressive action against the SJP.

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315 wish to remain anonymous
About TAMIR

When TAMIR first read In the Land of Israel in the 1980s, the Jerusalem native (who studied modern dance with Martha Graham both in Israel and in the UIU) was taking acting classes at the American Place Theater in New York City. She recalls that Wynn Handman, its artistic director, urged her students to put aside scene study and “see if you can find work that actually expresses who you are or how you would like to leave a mark in theater.” TAMIR says she was intrigued by a fellow student who used correspondence left by her great-grandmother that described her life as a pioneer to create a one-person performance that was both theatrical and educational.

While wondering how to move forward with a show like that of her own, TAMIR was urged by a friend to read In the Land of Israel. After reading just a few pages, TAMIR says she knew she had to “adapt this to a one-woman play because it spoke to me like nothing I’d ever read before. As an Israeli living in the United States, yet somehow never really honoring that part of myself, I felt that the book was a way of weaving the separate cells of my history, of myself, together.”

Even in its early stages, TAMIR could tell the work would have an impact – she recalls that her fellow acting students started taking notes as she performed. To direct, she enlisted fellow Israeli Avishay Greenfield-Caspi and, with input from Wynn Handman, the two developed the piece. But there was one hurdle TAMIR had to cross. “I wrote a letter to Amos Oz,” she recounts, “and said this is what I’ve done, and I would like to take it out to the public. And if you say no, that makes it an exercise – so that’s wonderful. And if you say yes, then I will proceed.”

And he [responded]: “Okay, I’m coming to New York, and I would like you to show it to me.” She proposed that he attend a live performance but told him, “You know for you to be sitting alone in the audience, I would have a heart attack. Can I bury you in an audience?” He said yes, so long as the audience didn’t know he was there.

“That was going to be a little hard because all of them were Israelis. So we warned everybody – ‘don’t know him’” TAMIR says that at the performance, the audience (unsuccessfully) took pains to pretend they didn’t recognize Oz and Oz, in turn, pretended they weren’t looking at him. “But since nobody was asking him questions, he was happy.” Oz was happy with the performance, as well – from onstage, she says she could hear him laughing. At the end of the evening, TAMIR had received Oz’s blessing to proceed with her adaptation.

TAMIR started to work with the same agent as Oz, who began booking them together at book festivals and other venues – TAMIR would perform, and then Oz would follow with a talk about his work. They developed a friendship and a rapport that TAMIR describes as “very, very, very remarkable. He was working on various books, and he would read them to me and ask me for my opinion. I said, ‘What? Me? You’re the writer.’ And then he said, ‘No, you’re a very good writer, and I absolutely trust you completely. And that as a matter of fact, I want you to take all of my books and write another play based on women in my books.’” TAMIR went on to develop a second show adapted from Oz’s work titled I Belong Elsewhere, in which she portrayed eleven of the author’s female characters.

The characters in In the Land of Israel include a woman from the ultra-Orthodox Meshal Shearin neighborhood of Jerusalem, an older pioneer on a moshav, a French Catholic nun, a Palestinian pharmacist, and a right-wing extremist. Her upbringing in Israel, she says, enabled her “to immerse in the characters, and they were able to immerse in me. It’s kind of an intuitive recognition of who they are and what they want.”

And, she says, she also has a deep understanding of Oz and his work – she grew up in the same Jerusalem milieu that he writes about and even attended the same schools. Though events and issues captured in In the Land of Israel occurred nearly 40 years ago, TAMIR says that both the book and her play offer “a wonderful opportunity to see all the different perspectives at the same time, to be able to go from one chapter to another or one character to another and see the disparity and the connectedness behind them, and the disharmony in their visions of Israel.

“But now it’s become a historical piece, though it’s contemporary in the sense that people are still killing each other. People are still vying for what piece of land belongs to me, what piece of land is my ancestry, my heritage. My agricultural connection to it, my archaeological connection to it, my religious/spiritual connection to it – there is still that constant fight that goes on. I feel that though it’s not a contemporary story in terms of what the characters are specifically talking about, the meta-story is totally of the now – sadly – because war is still with us. It remains a piece of literature that allows us to examine ourselves. And in that universal and esoteric aspect of it, it’s a book that will always be timely.

“And besides which, Amos Oz is a fantastic writer, and I love him.”

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How the Berkshires’ local farm and food communities are faring – and ways our community can help them thrive

By Elissa Spungen Bildner / Special to the BJV

Photographs by Robert Bildner

As Jews, we’re known as The People of the Book, but, let’s face it, we’re also The People Who Love to Eat. Indeed, as one of our Books says, in this case the Talmud, “there can be no joy without food or drink.”

And in the Berkshires, we Jews are blessed with a plethora of small family farms and farm to table restaurants that work mightily to supply us with good — local — food that brings us that joy. But it hasn’t been easy for farmers and restaurateurs this year, and just how hard it’s been is the subject of this article.

Restaurants have been the hardest hit, and so have farmers who relied heavily on supplying them. But for all farmers, whether they sold directly to consumers or wholesale, “everyone had to reassess their markets,” says Margaret Moulton, executive director of Berkshire Grown, which supports and promotes local agriculture.

Even in non-pandemic times, farmers must be adaptable folks. As one farmer, John Primmer, who with his wife, Joy, owns Wildstone Farm in Pownal, VT, says, pivoting — to use the Pandemic Word of the Week, “there can be no joy without food or drink.”

And that practice clearly paid off. Moulton says that as of January she had not heard of any farms that closed “in our membership area” and instead has watched the farming community “make it past those rocky shoals” by switching to selling online, home delivery, creating safe environments for customer pick-up, opening farm stores, and embracing farmers markets they might not have relied on previously (Berkshire Grown sponsors winter markets). Many farms have also increased the number of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares they offer.

“Farms may be surviving, but the challenges they face should not be underestimated.”

“I really feel for farmers,” says Moulton. “They do all their business planning, care for everything, then come in at the end of the day, and update their ecommerce. That wasn’t what they bargained for when they went into farming.”

One of the most common requests for help Berkshire Grown receives is for technical assistance. Those farmers, she says, who know how to use social media, build an engaging website, and have a strong email list have an easier time.

John Primmer jokes that “for a couple of older folks” who are not “techie people,” he and his wife managed to use the Internet for online ordering, adapted to curb-side pick-up at the farmers market, and when they could open for in-person business, adopted safety protocols.

They also launched a grant to purchase software for their online CSA ordering, which they plan to continue this spring. Both in their 60s, the Primmers decided to forego inside markets. “Why take the chance,” John asks.

“They’ve been gratified by the customer response. “People wanted to support their local farmer,” he says.

Sustaining Public Support

Certainly the pandemic alerted consumers that relying on food shipped from California and elsewhere could be precarious. But post-pandemic, and as the scarcity on grocery shelves becomes a thing of the past, will consumers remember? Will they keep supporting Berkshire farmers?

Farmers worry about this, even though the reasons to support local products go beyond using them as a back-up plan during a pandemic — area farms preserve open space, improve the environment through sustainable farming methods, promote biodiversity, contribute to the local economy, and offer fresher, better-tasting food that retains nutrients as a result of less travel. Small family farms also are more likely to treat animals humanely.

One farmer concerned about the public’s continued support of local farms is Dominic Palumbo of Moon In The Pond Farm in Sheffield, who massively ramped up and reconfigured his operation to meet the increased demand. He acknowledges that the pandemic’s sudden rush to support farmers like him may be “too steep a learning curve to stick.”

He has seen his curbside pickup numbers decline from 15 a day at its height to two a week. But, he warns, “the reality is if you want these things in the future you have to maintain them. You can’t think that the groovy local farm is going to be there the next time things get tough unless they can support themselves between now and then.”

Palumbo, by the way, urged consumers to support small Berkshire farms long before the pandemic as a way to keep people fed if climate change makes it difficult to obtain agricultural products from elsewhere.

Like farmers Palumbo and Primmer, Michael Gallagher, owner of Square Roots Farm in Lanesboro with his wife Ashley Amsden, has been inundated. “We’ve had a lot of produced and more,” he says, adding that they planned to open a farm store, but found that they didn’t have enough of their products left. When I caught Gallagher on his phone, he was driving between Pittsfield and Great Barrington making wholesale as well as home deliveries, which he started during the pandemic. Another pandemic hurdle Gallagher cites is the difficulty of finding child care and safely bringing on new employees during this time, which other farmers also mentioned. He, too, is hoping his customers don’t have “short memories. People aren’t going to remember that they can’t trust Big Ag.”

He’s also optimistic that customers he’s added will realize the benefits of buying local. He notes that one woman he was delivering to the day we spoke first showed up in April. “She’s stuck with it. She had no idea there were farms around you could buy from.”

Part of the increased demand may result from second home owners who have stayed in the Berkshires this year. As Ethan Thaler-Null, farm manager of Abode Farm in New Lebanon, NY, asks, are the farm’s increased sales a result of “fols with more means who have moved to the area or are spending more time here? Or are people changing their buying habits?” Abode’s response to the pandemic, especially when restaurant sales declined, was to expand its CSA program (it just opened its summer 2021 signups). Joining a CSA, he says, is a great way to support local agriculture — and people who need food. At Abode, members can subsidize shares for those in lower income brackets — the farm offered 30 last year. If the farm’s large acreage makes this an easy pivot for

FARM TABLE UPDATE, continued on page 13

Chef Brian Alberg at The Break Room in North Adams

Join Hevreh for Zoom Passover

Sunday, March 21 9:30 am - 11:30 am
Yachad Passover
A Passover Experience for Families

Sunday, March 28 at 6:00 pm
2nd Night Passover Zoom Seder

Thursday, March 25 at 4:30 pm: Matzo Ball Soup
Tuesday, March 30 at 10:30 am: Matzo Brei

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Sheetbook
Ah, no. That also specializes in fall crops and has great winter storage. (By the way, besides Ahode, many farms offer products nine months or more a year.) If you choose not to join a CSA or buy directly from farmers, you can still support small family farms by opting for local products in super-markets, says Moulton of Berkshire Green. Read the labels under products that denote origins. “Where is this cheese or milk from? Who grew this kale? The smallest places to even large super-markets like Big Y will name the farmer.”

Chomping to Go Out Chomping
If farmers have had to rev up to meet the increased demand for local (a demand they reassuringly acknowledge might not continue) for restaurant, the pandemic pivot (which has usually meant increasing takeout, limiting or reconfiguring indoor dining, and when possible, offering outdoor dining) has been tougher.
Kate Abbott is the creator of an online guide to the Berkshires (berkshires.com) who has followed the status of local restaurants. She says that many restaurateurs have become “nervous” and have taken a break, at least for the winter, from both takeout and indoor dining. Others that seem to have permanently closed, she says, perhaps will find different locations later. (Berkshire.com provides an online listing of the status of area restaurants on its COVID Resources page.) Yet there is optimism even during this first financial quarter of the year, a tough stretch for restaurateurs in non-pandemic times. Steven Clark, vice president for government affairs for the statewide Massachussetts Restaurant Association (MRA), says that by April, more people will be vaccinated and “consumers will just be chomping to go out.” He feels that business “will come back gangbusters.”

Kate says, “You’re working from home. You’re done at 5. Go out and eat. Tip your servers. Staffers. Maybe you’re getting takeout and not buying a dessert or drink.” Consider tipping on that amount as well.

Nancy Thomas, co-founder and proprietor of Meze Bistro + Bar in Williamstown, is one of two area representatives (with Mark Firth of Prairie Whale in Great Barrington) of a new organization, Massachusetts Restaurants United, that works with the MRA but is geared to ensuring the survival of independent restaurateurs. She also urges customers to regularly take out if they can afford it, and to consider gifting takeout meals to older people or folks who’ve been helpful during the pandemic. Meze offers Thursday through Sunday takeout and, as of January, socially-distanced indoor dining on Friday and Saturday.

Despite the challenges, Thomas still sees a silver lining, and quotes Winston Churchill: “An optimist sees an opportunity in every calamity, a pessimist sees a calamity in every opportunity.” While her earnings this year were well below 2019 totals (her catering operation was also sidelined by the virus), she found ways to about break even. Thomas learned to be more efficient serving guests inside and expanded the restaurant’s software program for takeout. And instead of reliance on takeout, she says, even tipped customer contact since people often phone for help with the form, which provides an opportunity to ask for feedback.

At the same time, Thomas hopes customers understand her and other restaurants’ situation. “The nuances of takeout have been hard. We’re asking for a deep breath and a little extra time to get things right. Meze is also trying not to have too many people in the building.” And, of course, she notes, the staff is wearing masks eight hours a day.

Joining Thomas, Chef Brian Alberg, who heads The Break Room at Greylock Works in North Adams (and who, full disclosure, collaborated with Rob Eldred and me on The Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook), and Michael Marcus, owner of Bizen Gourmet Japanese Restaurant and Sushi Bar in Great Barrington, bask in the community support they’ve received.

Alberg appreciates the many customers who order takeout once a week, as well as patrons who just come in for pastries and coffee. He appreciates the second home owners who have stayed around during a time they’re usually not here. Like Meze, he’s lucky to have a lot of space — the restaurant is in a former cotton-spinning mill with high ceilings, tons of natural light and hall-ways where guests can sit at tables easily 10 to 15 feet apart. Opening a restaurant mid-pandemic as Alberg did is an impressive feat, but he met the challenge by creating a menu both easy on the kitchen staff and appealing to the customer. For those ordering takeout, the menu is composed of dishes that travel well and are ready to heat — for example, Alberg chose risotto rather than pasta. quiche instead of Eggs Benedict, and came up with a curried chicken and chickpea dish with plaid that’s still aesthetically pleasing when it gets home. Plus, he continues to feature a menu that highlights regional products, like butternut squash from nearby Peace Valley Farm in Williamstown.

Marcus of Bizen says, that he, too, has an ‘attitude of gratitude.’ I tell people on the phone ‘thank you for your support.’ His customers are likewise appreciative they can still order Japanese hamachi, snapper, and jackfish and that he can still source organic, which is a cornerstone of his philosophy. While he normally sources as much local as possible. Marcus says it’s harder to get, not only because of winter but because he grows many of his own ingredients — kale, zucchini, kohoko squash — at other times of the year.

He says his persistence helped him stay open from the beginning of the pandemic, from last March 16, hyperfor-
cussing on his mission to feed the public, and at another level, “give them comfort and solace.” Yet Marcus was keenly aware that “we were one sick person away from closing,” noting that staying open has required “strict discipline” on his part and that of his staff. “The vulnerability of the staff,” Marcus says, “is a real and present danger.” Besides takeout, Bizen offers indoor dining, as of this writing, at 25% capacity, with patrons seated in private kaiseki rooms furnished with air purifiers.

In pre-pandemic days, Marcus was commonly seen kibitzing with customers at the sushi bar but “my new now is conversation on a phone.” As much as conversation, he misses the opportunity to present food as aesthetically as he would like. A potter who founded Bizen on the principle of using his ceramics to serve food, he’s had to morph from “ceramics to paper in a heartbeat.” He’s concerned that if people bring food home “will it still have any heat of the eyes?” Like his colleagues, he’s worked to present take out better as possible while minimizing plastic and using no-bleach paper.

As with farming, the restaurant business is likely to be permanently changed as a result of the pandemic. And it’s not a bad thing, says the MRA’s Clark. For example, he says, there will likely be more opportunities for outdoor dining. “A lot of cities and towns saw that it worked.”
My Coming to America

By Leo Goldberger / Special to the BJV

In late 1947, my mother, two younger brothers, and I sailed to New York aboard the Swedish ocean liner SS Drottningholm from Gothenburg. This was an unforgettable experience. We travelled first class as everything else was booked, and thus we ate at the captain’s table, wearing the required formal attire and hobnobbing with, among others, the sister of New York’s Mayor William O’Dwyer and the celebrated Swedish film star Edvard Persson, who was working on a film sequence on the boat. Even Greta Garbo was aboard – though rarely seen as she wanted famously “to be left alone,” with her meals brought to her cabin.

At my dear mother’s suggestion, we began a routine to provide the young woman with daily food (hidden in a napkin from our luxurious dinners) on the floor near my bed, which was safer than roaming around at night, hiding here and there. Surely not my ideal bedfellow!

And then … days later came the much anticipated, wonderful sight – the Statue of Liberty – as we rounded a corner along the Hudson River.

After a few days aboard, enjoying the pool and nightly dancing, a rather awkward situation occurred when my mother observed a young woman who seemed visibly anxious and ill at ease. The woman continually wore the same clothes and ill-fitting kerchief, and kept moving from one place to another. My mother approached her after several days and learned that she was an 18-year-old, Hungarian-born mother did as well. At my dear mother’s suggestion, we began a routine to provide the young woman with daily food (hidden in a napkin from our luxurious dinners). My mother also suggested that she sleep in a napkin from our luxurious dinners)

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Traveling with Jewish Taste

We Kid You Not – Kitniyot are Permissable on Pesach

By Carol Goodman Kaufman

From January until just this week, we’ve been reading the Torah’s story of the Hebrews’ exodus from Egypt, and now we’re coming up to our annual commemoration of that event – Passover. 

This festival brings with it so many memories. Among mine is the model Seder we students put on every year in the Pittsfield Community Hebrew School. In the Jewish Community Center gym on East Street, we dipped celery into saltwater, made Hillel sandwiches, and recited the Four Questions. We sang “Had Gadya” and “Eshet Mi Yodea,” among other songs, and looked forward to performing them at our family Seders.

But the Seder at my Bubbie’s house wasn’t like one of today’s more entertaining, er, educational ones with puppet shows, quiz games, and toy frogs atop the children’s plates. No, ours consisted of the men — my dad, Uncle Ralph, and Zayde Meyer — whispering through the Haggadah and droning the narrative, stopping only for our well-rehearsed recitations. Regardless, cousin Myla and I had a grand old time mumbling along, guzzling the Mogen David, and gigiling.

Of course, many of our memories of Passover have to do with the menu (this is a food column, after all). The flavors and aromas of chicken soup with kneidlach, potent horseradish, cinnamon-tinged haroset, and tzimmes can all conjure up thoughts of loved ones long gone and the beautiful tables they set.

So, given that the holiday spread tends to be vast, isn’t there room for a twist on the Passover menu? A small addition? Sure, tradition is important, but how about expanding our repertoire a little to encompass the culinary customs of our extended global Jewish family?

Now, a little detour. One of the guests at the wedding of my son Avi and his Sephardi family.

I must have looked like a rock band groupie when I sat myself down next to him to say “thank-you” for the reasoned argument he gave on the subject of kitniyot. With a wry smile he replied, “Of all the responsa I’ve written in my career, that’s the one I’ll be remembered for.”

Rabbi Golinkin may have been droll in his self-assessment, but I for one thought of loved ones long gone and the beautiful tables they set.

Rabbi Golinkin has been droll in his self-assessment, but I for one shout “hurrah” that we Ashkenazi Conservative Jews are finally at one with our Sephardi family. Am Yisrael Chai.
Happy Passover

Stock your pantry today with Passover essentials. Check out the Passover section in our weekly flyer for deals available in-store and at stopandshop.com.
Mazel Tov to...

Elia Spungen Bildner and Astrid Schanz-Garbassi, son and daughter-in-law of Elia Spungen Bildner and Rob Bildner, on the birth of Ayla Spungen Bildner, born on November 30.

* Elia Spungen Bildner and Dr. Benjamin Goldman Israelow, daughter and son-in-law of Elia Spungen Bildner and Rob Bildner, on the birth of Archie Lev Israelow, born on February 15.

Connecting with Community

Nourish Your Body, Mind, and Soul!

In response to coronavirus guidelines...

As of press time, all-in-person Connecting With Community programming has been canceled. For the most up-to-date information and details on virtual programming, please visit our website www.jewishberkshires.org to sign up for our e-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. Meals to go will be ready by noon for pickup at the Knesset Israel kitchen door, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.

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

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

The menus listed below are planned, but may be modified depending on availability of ingredients.

When making a reservation, please inform us if a person in your party has a food allergy. Adults 60 and over: $2 suggested donation. Adults under 60: $7 per person.

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

What’s for Lunch?

# Dairy Free, ** Gluten Free Main Entrée

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

MARCH

Monday, 15 ............Beef stew, noodles, potato bread, and applesauce.
Tuesday, 16 ............Turkey piccata, chef’s choice of soup, rice pilaf, mixed vegetables, salad, multi-grain bread, and peaches.
Thursday, 18 ............Chefs pleasure of dairy meals.
Monday, 22 ............Meal to be announced.
Tuesday, 23 ............Turkey stew**, rice, salad, potato bread, and apple dumplings.
Thursday, 25 ............Roasted chicken**, gefilte fish, matza ball soup, asparagus cuts n tips, oven-roasted potatoes, matza, and kosher for Passover dessert.
Monday, 29 ............Closed for Passover
Tuesday, 30 ............Closed for Passover

APRIL

Thursday, 1 ............Closed for Passover
Monday, 5 ............Meat loaf**, krepelch soup, peas, mashed potatoes, salad, pumpernickel bread, and apricots.
Tuesday, 6 ............Turkey salad platter**, coleslaw, farmer’s loaf, and fruit cocktail.
Thursday, 8 ............Fresh fish**, tomato soup, broccoli, rice pilaf, whole wheat bread, and pudding.
Monday, 12 ............Spaghetti and meat sauce, salad, Italian beans, garlic bread, and applesauce.

Tuesday, 13 ............Chicken Marsala**, rice pilaf, mixed vegetables, farmer’s loaf, and parve cookies.
Thursday, 15 ............Macaroni and cheese, stewed tomatoes, salad, potato bread, and grapes.
Monday, 19 ............Hot dogs and beans**, salad, hot dog roll, and applesauce.
Tuesday, 20 ............Stir fried turkey**, rice, ryebread, and tropical fruit salad.
Thursday, 22 ............Tuna salad and cottage cheese platters**, three bean salad, pita bread, and pudding.
Monday, 26 ............Salisbury steak**, hash browns, green beans, pumpernickel bread, and mandarin oranges.
Tuesday, 27 ............Roasted chicken**, salad, brown rice, mixed vegetables, Challah, and brownies.
Thursday, 29 ............Salmon**, noodle kugel, asparagus cuts n tips, farmer’s loaf, and lemon pudding.

MAY

Monday, 3 ............Make your own turkey sandwich, vegetable soup, coleslaw, whole wheat bread, and pears.
Tuesday, 4 ............Rice, bean, and cheese burrito caserole, yellow rice, and dessert TBA.

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

TUFTS, continued from page 10

proactive steps to combat anti-Semitism.

“SJP got caught, their harassment of Jewish students was exposed, and they backed pedaled. But this goes beyond Max. Now is when the real work begins. It is time for the Tufts administration to take concrete steps to end the ongoing marginalization, harassment and discrimination of Jewish students on campus.”

Levin added “The university should officially adopts and utilize the IHRA Working Definition of Anti-Semitism and its contemporary examples when investigating and responding to incidents of harassment and discrimination to determine whether such conduct is motivated by anti-Semitic animus or bias.”

This JNS article uses supplemented with information from other news sources.
OBITUARIES

STANLEY Z. SHAPIRO, 88, greatest joy was his family
STOCKBRIDGE – Stanley Z. Shapiro, 88, passed away on Tuesday, January 15. Born May 25, 1933, in New York, NY, he was the husband of Roberta, 88, and father of Jonathan, 60, of Bloomfield, WA, and two brothers, Joel Russell, of New York, NY, and Larry Shapiro, of Los Angeles, CA. He was predeceased by his mother, Sarah Shapiro, 88, of New York, NY; daughter Jennifer Milbauer of Manhattan, NY; and his aunts, and cousins. He is survived by his family in attendance, just as they were when he took his last breath on January 4, 2023, at Baystate Health in Sarasota, FL. He was a devoted husband to his wife Roberta for over 59 years, and a revered teacher to his students.

STANLEY Z. SHAPIRO

Stony Brook, NY – Stanley Z. Shapiro, 88, a world-renowned neurologist, passed away on Tuesday, January 15, 2023. He was born in New York, NY, on May 25, 1933, to Shalom and Rebecca Shapiro. He was predeceased by his parents, and survived by his wife, Roberta Shapiro, who he had been married to for 59 years. Dr. Shapiro was the father of two sons, Jonathan, who lives in Bloomfield, WA, and Joel, who lives in New York, NY. He is also survived by his two brothers, Joel and Larry Shapiro, and his sister, Bethany Murphy, who lives in Seattle, WA. Dr. Shapiro was the quintessential family man, dedicated to his family, and deeply loved by all who knew him.

Obituary for Stanley Z. Shapiro

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OBITUARIES, continued on next page
Dr. Andrew Puttick, Audiologist at Greylock Audiology, is a state licensed doctor of audiology, Au.D, FAAA.

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greylockaudiology.com

Dr. Andrew Puttick, Audiologist at Greylock Audiology, is a state licensed doctor of audiology, with more than 17 years of experience serving the Berkshire community.

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Dr. Trevor Marcelle is a Doctor of Physical Therapy and brings highly specialized training in vestibular (balance) rehabilitation and orthopedic physical therapy.

Fyzical.com/Pittsfield

OBITUARIES

Obituary

Otis Cultural Society, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, of Education.

Malchatsky, Ilisa was a graduate of Tilden High School in 1971. She went on to receive a B.A. from St. John’s University. She attained a class of 1971. She went on to receive a B.A. from St. John’s University. She attained an Ed.D. from NYC Dept of Education.

Ilisa Dawn Sulner, 65, of Otis, the Otis Cultural Society, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, of Education.

Ilisa is survived by her loving husband, Andrew B. Sulner; daughter, Farrah S. Wax and husband, Benjamin; two granddaughters, Makayla and Ellie, who were the loves of her life; and dog, Yoda. She was a surrogate mom, g.m.a., and sister to many.

Expressions of sympathy may be made to St. Jude’s in care of the Birches-Rey Funeral Home, 33 South Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230.

Lawrence C. Levin, 83, husband, father, grand-father, entrepreneur FOWNAL, VT – Lawrence C. Levin, 83, passed away on Saturday, February 13 at home, surrounded by his loving family and faithful dog. A lover of nature, he spent many hours hiking and kayaking at his family cabin on Lake George, NY.

Born in New Rochelle, NY, Lawrence graduated with a degree in chemistry from Ohio State University in 1959 and served in the U.S. Army Reserves. He was an entrepreneur, the founder and president of Poly-Guard, Inc. He was also a publisher of plastic core plugs that he designed for the paper and plastics industry. He also founded Pumona Plastics, buying and reselling recycled plastic raw materials.

Lawrence survived his brother, Howard, his second wife, Ruth; his children, Mark and Andrew; and his grandchildren, Malakai and Roa of Conifer, CO; sister, Frances Sisson, of St. Louis, MO. In memory of Larry, please consider a generous donation to the Dana Farber Cancer Institute at www.jimmyfund.org.

Ronald David Meyers, 63, happiest times when he was around the water PITTSFIELD — Ronald David Meyers, 63, passed away at home on Monday, February 8. Ron grew up in Mt. Vernon, NY and spent his childhood with friends and family. He started his career path as a chef both in New York restaurants, and on cruise ships to Alaska. He transitioned into a second career in the timeshare industry, acquiring awards as a top seller.

Despite his many health challenges, Ron maintained an optimistic outlook, always interested in the lives of his friends and family, offering advice and telling a joke. His happiest times were when he was around the water, becoming a proficient sailor in his youth on the family boat on Long Island Sound. He moved to Athens, NY, and with his wife, he built a home on Sleepy Hollow Lake. After moving to Pittsfield, Ron enjoyed spending time with friends at Burbank Park on Otuska Lake, playing chess, picnicking, listening to music and relaxing.

Ron is survived by his son, Jake Meyers; his good friend and former wife, Pattie Meyers; his mother, Toby Meyers; sister Lynn Meyers; niece Shawna Haust; and nephew Nate Haust. Ron was predeceased by his father, Fred Meyers, who was his mentor and role model. He is also survived by his dear friend and caretaker of the past two years, Paula.

Donations may be made in Ron’s name to Burbank Park, City of Pittsfield Parks Department, in care of Dery Funeral Home, 54 Bradford Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

Rest in Paradise.

David Jeremy Tanzman, 55, good friend, sensitive and skilled caregiver PITTSFIELD — David Jeremy Tanzman, 55, died at home early in the morning of Saturday, February 27, having bravely battled cancer for the past five months.

David was born in North Adams on November 8, 1965 and attended Pine Cobble School, Mt. Anthony Union High School, and Franklin Pierce College. He celebrated his mitzvah at Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams. David was a sales representative at Oak & Sigrue and had a busy landscaping business.

He was an accomplished youth swimmer and he loved downhill skiing. David had a keen interest and knack for history, especially the Civil War and the Pacific theatre of World War II, and was an avid reader.

David was a good friend and he had many close and long-standing friendships. He loved to share the bounty of his garden with neighbors, friends, and family. David was a sensitive and skilled caregiver, providing comfort and support to family members and friends in need. He was a devoted dog lover and any dog he raised was well-behaved and affectionate.

He is survived by his mother, Melinda Tanzman; step-father Burton Shapiro; daughter Raailin Collins; granddaughter Alexa Taylor; siblings Beth, George, and Jayson Tanzman; and step-brothers Andrew and Loren Shapiro, and Colin Barney. David was predeceased by his father, Irving Tanzman, and step-mother Gail Tanzman.

A small graveside gathering took place on Monday, March 1 at Beth Israel cemetery in Clarksburg. Memorial contributions may be made to the Berkshire Humane Society in care of the Flynn & Dagnoli Funeral Home, 521 West Main Street, North Adams, MA 01247.

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Book Review: Colum McCann’s Apeirogon — Showing a Path Forward

By Roberta Silman / via The Arts Fuse (artsfuse.org)

How a novel comes into existence is often mysterious and writers run the risk of sounding a bit fey when trying to describe how they make the decision to devote themselves — sometimes for years — to characters that they have made up. Some, like Donald Barthelme, insist that the source is dreams; others talk about characters knocking desperately on the doors of their brains (as if our brains are safe little houses in our heads), and still others talk about getting fictional material from an obscure incident in real life or something they have read in the newspapers — Tolstoy famously said he began Anna Karenina after reading about a woman in a train accident. Dreiser also claimed a newspaper source for his masterpiece, An American Tragedy. Dickens knew of an endless law case which propelled him to write his amazing Bleak House. And when John Steinbeck witnessed the devastation of the country he loved, he was propelled to write The Grapes of Wrath. The variations are endless.

What is rare is a writer meeting his characters first, falling in love with their stories, and then shaping those stories into a first-class novel. Yet that is what has happened here. Through Narrative 4, a global storytelling organization, Colum McCann founded, he was introduced to Bassam Aramin, a Palestinian, and Rami Elhanan, an Israeli. These three men found such a special place in my heart that I will call them all by their first names in this review. Five years later we have Apeirogon, a superb work of art which, actually, now that I am connecting the dots, can be traced back to Colum’s short story “Sh’khol,” which appeared in his 2015 collection, Thirteen Ways of Looking. “Sh’khol” is a Hebrew word that is difficult to translate. The closest Colum could come in English is “bereaved” when he describes that story’s protagonist translating a story written by an Arab Israeli about a couple who had lost their two children. And it is that shocking loss which has drawn him to the two men in Apeirogon.

How do you describe lives blown apart, never to be the same, yet still not robbed of meaning? How do you bring to life two fathers who have lost their daughters to violence yet continue to live in places filled with danger and steadfastly refuse to succumb to anger and hate? That is the task Colum McCann has set for himself, a daunting task but one he knows well because he has written about The Troubles in his native country, Ireland. (For the record, he is now an American citizen who lives in Manhattan with his wife and children and teaches at Hunter College, although he is under a cloud because of an accusation of sexual assault off-campus in 2014. He is on leave from Hunter until 2022.) Its form is based on its title; an apeirogon is from the Greek and defined as a polygon with infinite sides. In this Apeirogon there are 1001 sections and throughout there is an awareness of this book’s roots in The Arabian Nights, which I have always loved, especially in the translation by Husein Hadawy, whom I knew when he was a graduate student at Cornell and I was an undergraduate. Just as in that great classic, you have the feeling while reading Apeirogon that these stories are a matter of life and death.

The first 1-500 sections build to Rami’s story, then there is 1001, literally the lynchpin of the book, which I will give in its entirety below, and then the next 500 beginning with Bassam’s story and going back to 1. In these tales, sometimes no more than snippets, are all sorts of what first seem unrelated facts and stories and memories and vignettes about bird migrations. Sir Francis Burton, the science of falconry, politics in the Middle East, polo, Francois Mitterrand, the importance of water in all our lives and countries, the history of the families of these two men, and details about the short lives of the two children who were killed — Rami’s daughter Smadar and Bassam’s daughter Abir. There is also material about Einstein, and Freud, weaponry (who knew that there was actually a man named Henry Shrapnel?), some notes of the Torah and Qur’an, and, perhaps most interesting, a full account of how Bassam educated himself while he was in prison. (Editor’s Note: Bassam Aramin served a 7-year sentence for planning an attack on IDF soldiers when he was 17 years old.) There are also a number of other subjects, as well as occasional photographs and illustrations. Some sections are only a line or two long, others as much as a few pages, but all somehow connected to the tragic tales of these two men, one of whom — Rami — has a sticker on his motorcycle that reads “It will not be over until we talk.” And that is what Bassam and Rami, who are as close as brothers, do. As members of a club no one would ever want to belong to, they go around the world under the auspices of the Parents Circle – Families Forum, “a grassroots organization of Palestinian and Israeli families who have lost immediate family members due to the conflict. The PCF operates under the principle that a process of reconciliation is a prerequisite for achieving a sustained peace.” That is a direct quotation from the website about theirAPEIROGON, continued on page 21
APEIROGON, continued from page 20

mission. Bassam and Rami are sometimes welcomed, sometimes not. But they are determined to channel their grief and anger into something that encourages hope and a future; that is what makes them and their families so remarkable and why Colum was so attracted to them, not only for their stories, but for themselves. And why, as he got to know them better and better, he realized that the Hebrew notion of tikkun olam, that it is our obligation to repair the world, is real and being enacted before our very eyes.

I am an American Jewish woman who can remember when Israel came into existence and whose three aunts and an uncle emigrated from Lithuania to Palestine in the 1930s and who has very mixed feelings about the present Israeli government. I am also an admirer of David Grossman and other Israeli writers who are deeply involved in the present conflict, and I was riveted by this book. And, although I have supported organizations that try to form a bridge between the Palestinians and the Israelis, I feel that Apeirogon is unique. It has the potential to make the various sides see and listen in a way they never have before. Because you feel what these characters feel, understand their doubts and exhaustion and everlasting grief, and you also know their profound desire for a future that is open and free, not stuck forever, as the cynics about the Middle East keep insisting. Thus, as Colum writes, the reader becomes a participant in the story. Each detail asserts its own meaning depending on who you are and what your interests are, but in the end you have somehow done more than just read this book. You have gathered it into the fabric of your life. So, although some of Apeirogon is painful, this novel can inspire you to think differently and even to act, which is surely welcome after this horrible year in which we have all felt so helpless.

I might also add that Apeirogon’s overriding theme is the difficult one of forgiveness, which is what I was exploring in my own last novel, Secrets and Shadows, and which, in the end, may be the only way to sustain us as we continue to live in a world filled with so much conflict. But forgiveness requires trust, which is not easy to attain, especially among people who have been hurt beyond repair. That is why Apeirogon is so important.

In thinking about the impact of this singular work, I am reminded of Faulkner’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 1950 in which he said, “I feel that this award was not made to me as a man, but to my work — a life’s work in the agony and sweat of the human spirit, not for glory and least of all for profit, but to create out of the materials of the human spirit something which did not exist before.” Although in his personal life Faulkner was slow to recognize the evils of slavery and segregation, he left us with amazing works that confront race in America and are still relevant today. Colum has also looked at a seemingly unsolvable situation and written a work that both in substance and form has never “existed before” and that shows a path forward, filled with the “agon and sweat of the human spirit.” So it seems fitting to end this review with his own words — that wonderful sentence that comprises Section 1001 — which will, I hope, entice you to read this novel and give it the audience it deserves.

Once upon a time, and not so long ago, and not so far away, Rami Elhanan, an Israeli, a Jew, a father too of the late Smadar, father of Elik and Guy and Yigal, and Rami, and to find within their stories another story, a song for a father of Araab and Areen and Jala, near Bethlehem, in the Jewish suburbs of Jerusalem to the suburbs of Jerusalem to the Creman monastery in the main Christian town of Beit Jala, near Bethlehem, in the Judean hills, to meet with Bassam Aramin, a Palestinian, a Muslim, a father of Araab and Areen and Muhammed and Ahmed and Hiba, father too of the late Abir, ten years old, shot dead by an unnamed Israeli border guard in East Jerusalem, almost a decade after Rami’s daughter, Smadar, two weeks away from fourteen, was killed in the western part of the city by three Palestinian suicide bomb- ers, Bashar Sawahla, Youssef Shouli, and Tarifq Yassine, from the village of Assira al-Shamaliya near Nablus in the West Bank, a place of intrigue and free, not stuck forever, as the cynics about the Middle East keep insisting. Thus, as Colum writes, the reader becomes a participant in the story. Each detail asserts its own meaning depending on who you are and what your interests are, but in the end you have somehow done more than just read this book. You have gathered it into the fabric of your life. So, although some of Apeirogon is painful, this novel can inspire you to think differently and even to act, which is surely welcome after this horrible year in which we have all felt so helpless.

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CULTURE & ARTS

Robert Silman of Great Barrington is the author of four novels, a short story collection and two children’s books. Her most recent novel, Secrets and Shadows (Arts Fuse review), is in its second printing and is available on Amazon and at Campden Hill Books. It was chosen as one of the best Indie Books of 2018 by Kirkus. A recipient of Fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, she has reviewed for The New York Times and Boston Globe, and writes regularly for the The Arts Fuse. More about her can be found at robertasilman.com and she can also be reached at railswriter@verizon.net.

This review was originally published by The Arts Fuse (artsfuse.org), a curated, independent online magazine dedicated to publishing in-depth criticism, along with high quality previews, interviews, and commentaries.

For a related story about the Israeli and Palestinian families whose story McCann portrays in Apeirogon, please see page 9.
How Yiddish Changed America and How America Changed Yiddish
And how Yiddish and America changed our correspondent

By Alex Rosenblum / Special to the BJV

To read the contents of a new anthology is a new anthology titled How Yiddish Changed America and How America Changed Yiddish, edited by Ilian Stanovski and Joshua Lambert in affiliation with the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst. It’s a monumental effort, 63 diverse entries in five separate but intertwining sections. The editors present articles, essays, articles, excerpts of Yiddish plays and stories, poems, and cartoons, all in English with occasional transliteration from Yiddish. The book explores how Yiddish, which is true to its history as the language of the Jewish culture of Eastern Europe, transported to the United States and remolded by the immigrants, their children, and the radically new American environment. In unbiased tones over a mere 400 pages, the anthology attempts to tell the stories of these Yiddish roddey (speakers) and their offspring. The result introduces the Yiddish-speaking culture the editors call “radically new” and “socially and religiously affective,” saying that the culture not only was a “transformative experience” but that it gave rise “to a sweeter time, pogroms notwithstanding.”

Assimilation in the United States has indeed presented Yiddish with challenges, and it has responded impressively, dynamically, demonstrating its flexibility, complexity, and strength.

—from How Yiddish Changed America and How America Changed Yiddish

While Yiddish is a living language used daily that, like all languages in current use, is its refusal to answer the question suggested by the title—how did Yiddish actually change America—and vice versa. In general terms, the editors introduce several short stories, all dealing with the underbelly of the immigrants’ ghettos and life, including stories of suicide, incest, homosexuality, and prostitution, all facts of life in America that in the past have been of human interest but not of historical significance. Background, observations, memories, and samples of Yiddish Yidish (language). My own novel to return more seriously to Yiddish was strengthened by a week spent at the annual “Yiddishland” retreat in rural Dutchess County with a community of Yiddishists, and several of the principals were arrested. The Jew tries to shield his daughter from the activities below their abode, but the daughter meets and falls in love with one of the prostitutes and may be induced to run off with other prostitutes and ply their trade. The play, which features the first known kiss on stage between people of the same sex, was raided by the police after opening night and several of the principals were arrested.

Both the strength and the weakness of Yiddish Changed America and How America Changed Yiddish is its refusal to answer the question suggested by the title—how did Yiddish actually change America, and vice versa. In general terms, the editors introduce several short stories, all dealing with the underbelly of the immigrants’ ghettos and life, including stories of suicide, incest, homosexuality, and prostitution, all facts of life in America that in the past have been of human interest but not of historical significance. Background, observations, memories, and samples of Yiddish Yidish (language). My own novel to return more seriously to Yiddish was strengthened by a week spent at the annual “Yiddishland” retreat in rural Dutchess County with a community of Yiddishists, and several of the principals were arrested. The Jew tries to shield his daughter from the activities below their abode, but the daughter meets and falls in love with one of the prostitutes and may be induced to run off with other prostitutes and ply their trade. The play, which features the first known kiss on stage between people of the same sex, was raided by the police after opening night and several of the principals were arrested.

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7 things you didn’t know about Passover
By My Jewish Learning / 70 Faces Media

Passover celebrates the ancient Exodus of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. Here are seven things you might not have known about the major Jewish festival.

1. In Gibraltar, there’s dust in the charoset.

The traditional charoset is a sweet Passover paste whose texture is meant as a reminder of the mortar the enslaved Jews used to build in ancient Egypt. The name itself is related to the Hebrew word for clay. In Ashkenazi tradition, it is made from crushed nuts, apples and sweet red wine, while Sephardi Jews use figs or dates. But the tiny Jewish community of this small British territory takes the brick symbolism to another level, using the dust of actual bricks in their recipe.

2. Abraham Lincoln died during Passover.

The 16th American president was shot at Ford’s Theatre on Friday, April 14, 1865, which coincided with the fourth night of Passover. The next morning, Jews who wouldn’t normally have attended services on the holiday were so moved by Lincoln’s passing they made their way to synagogues, where the normally celebratory Passover services were instead marked by acts of mourning and the singing of Yom Kippur hymns. American Jews were so affected by the president’s death that Congregation Shearith Israel in New York recited the prayer for the dead – usually said only for Jews – on Lincoln’s behalf.

3. Arizona is a hub for matzah wheat.

Hasidic Jews from Brooklyn have been increasingly sourcing wheat for their Passover matzah from farmers in Arizona. Excessive moisture in wheat kernels can result in fermentation, rendering the harvest unsuitable for Passover use. But rain is scarce in Arizona, which allows for a stricter standard of matzah production. Rabbis from New York travel to Arizona in the days leading up to the harvest, where they inspect the grains meticulously to ensure they are cut at the precise moisture levels.

4. At the Seder, Persian Jews whip each other with scallions.

Many of the Passover Seder rituals are intended to re-create the sensory experience of Egyptian slavery, from the eating of bitter herbs and matzah to the dipping of greenery in saltwater, which symbolizes the tears shed by the oppressed Israelites. Some Jews from Iran and Afghanistan have the tradition of whipping each other with green onions before the singing of “Dayenu.”

5. Karaite Jews skip the wine.

Karaite Jews reject rabbinic Judaism, observing only laws detailed in the Torah. That’s why they don’t drink the traditional four cups of wine at the Seder. Wine is fermented, and fermented foods are prohibited on Passover, so they drink fruit juice instead. (Mainstream Jews hold that only fermented grains are prohibited.) The Karaites also eschew other staples of the traditional Seder, including the Seder plate, the afikomen and charoset. Their maror (bitter herbs) are a mixture of lemon peel, bitter lettuce and an assortment of other herbs.

6. You’re wrong about the orange on the Seder plate.

Some progressive Jews have adopted the practice of including an orange on the Seder plate as a symbol of inclusion of gays, lesbians and other groups marginalized in the Jewish community. The story goes that the practice was instituted by the feminist scholar Susannah Heschel after she was told that a woman belongs on the synagogue bimah, or prayer podium, like an orange belongs on a Seder plate. But according to Heschel, that story is false. In that apocryphal version, she said, “a woman’s words are attributed to a man, and the affirmation of lesbians and gay men is erased. Isn’t that precisely what’s happened over the centuries to women’s ideas?”


For many Seder attendees, the highlight of the meal is the afikomen — a broken piece of matzah that the Seder leader hides and the children seek; the person who finds the afikomen usually gets a small reward. Most scholars believe the word “afikomen” derives from the Greek word for dessert. Others say it refers to a kind of post-meal revelry common among the Greeks. Either theory would explain why the afikomen is traditionally the last thing eaten at the Seder.

Your Federation Dollars at Work
From the Berkshires to Afula, Israel with Joy this Purim

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, together with our Southern New England Coalition (SNEC) partners, funded shaloch manot Purim packages for healthcare workers in the coronavirus and respiratory intensive care units at Ha’Emek Hospital in Afula, Israel. Teens from the Federation-supported Sandwich Club at the Afula Crowns Community Center were engaged to help put together and deliver 130 packages.