

Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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The Game of Pawns

Professor Ralph Nurnberger to deliver 2018 Middle East Update

LENOX – On Sunday, November 4, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires presents “The Game of Pawns: Middle East Update 2018” with Dr. Ralph Nurnberger, Professor of International Relations, Georgetown University. This free program will take place at 7:30 p.m. at the Elaine P. Bernstein Theatre at Shakespeare & Company, 70 Kemble Street in Lenox. All are welcome to attend.

What forces are shaping today’s Middle East? Professor of international relations and government affairs specialist Dr. Nurnberger will take us beyond the headlines on a journey through this most dangerous of global neighborhoods to better understand the multidimensional, multi-faceted players of the Middle East today

Dr. Nurnberger, a Georgetown professor since 1975 who now teaches at Florida Atlantic University, is a widely acclaimed speaker who brings humor, current political insights, and historical background to his presentations. He has addressed a wide range of audiences on a variety of topics including overall American foreign



Dr. Ralph Nurnberger

policy, American policies in the Middle East, the history of the Middle East conflict, and current American political issues, including electoral analyses, political campaigns, and matters under congressional or presidential consideration.

His articles have appeared in the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Miami Herald*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Baltimore Sun*, and numerous scholarly journals and magazines. He has also advised numerous congressional, senatorial, and presidential campaigns on foreign policy issues, especially those related to the Middle East. Additionally, he served for over eight years as a legislative liaison for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which widely regarded as the finest foreign policy-oriented government relations organization in Washington DC.

ISRAEL UPDATE, continued on page 4

From the Old Maccabees to the New Maccabees

A new Jerusalem monument to Machal volunteers



(PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY KLINGER)

Machal is a Hebrew acronym for “Volunteers from Outside of Israel,” representing the men and women who came to defend the Jewish people and help birth the State during its War of Independence from 1947-1949. Jerry Klinger, president of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, tells the stories of these brave volunteers and the recently-erected monument in Jerusalem honoring their service. Please see page 24 for more.

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Repairing Divisions Within the Jewish World

Controversial activist and attorney Rabbi Uri Regev of Hiddush to speak at Hevreh and Temple Anshe Amunim

GREAT BARRINGTON & PITTSFIELD – In general, it is difficult to find too many voices condemning the good intentions underpinning David Ben Gurion and Israel’s early leaders’ decision in 1949 to exempt the ultra-Orthodox from compulsory military service in the Israel Defense Force (IDF).

The decision was made in the aftermath of the decimation of European Jewry in the Holocaust, and Ben Gurion worried that the scant remnants of that traditional culture would be lost to future generations of Jews. In any case, he believed that the ultra-Orthodox way of life would

moderate on its own, subsumed by modernity generally and Zionism particularly. And so, in 1949, a cohort of 400 yeshiva students received this exemption, and they and their yeshivas were granted state-funded stipends to support the study of Torah and religious texts.

Far from fading away, of course, ultra-Orthodox communities rebounded demographically in the post-World War II era, and learned how to use the political parties representing their interests to wield power in Israel’s coalition government. As revealed in his archived correspondence, Ben Gurion himself would later regret his decision. The exclusion from conscription in the IDF remains effectively in place – while



Rabbi Uri Regev

RABBI URI REGEV, continued on page 10

IF YOU GO

Rabbi Regev will be in the Berkshires this October to share his ideas at two Shabbat-study events.

Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, on Friday, October 26 at 6:15 p.m., part of Kabbalat Shabbat

Temple Anshe Amunim, on Friday, October 27 at 9:30 a.m., part of Torah Plus study

Life in Israel: An Inter-Religious Dialogue

Four panelists from the Afula-Gilboa region discuss their lives in Israel

PITTSFIELD – On Monday, November 12 at 10:45 a.m., join four Israeli residents from our partner community as they discuss religion and their personal perspectives on the intersection of secular Jewish, Muslim, and Modern Orthodox life in the Afula-Gilboa region of Israel. Dr. Ravid Pitaro, a former Southern New England Consortium (SNEC) Young Emissary and the head of the delegation, will moderate the panel.

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

We all know Israel is complex. Religious-secular, left-right, Israeli-Arab-Palestinian-Muslim-Christian-Jewish. Military service-national service-no service. All are significant issues Israelis debate on a daily basis, and some are also very important to Jewish communities worldwide.

Afula-Gilboa is unique, with 40 percent of the Gilboa population Israeli-Arab, as is 50 percent of the employment force in Afula. Local kibbutzim and *Moshavim* are largely secular communities, while in recent years many ultra and modern Orthodox families have been moving into the area. Residents of the region are thus specially-equipped to discuss how these issues impact their everyday lives.



Amir Cahaner



Amani Masalha Zoabi

LIFE IN ISRAEL, continued on page 7

Letters to the Editor

Letters from Our Campers

This year, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and Jewish Women's Foundation of Berkshire County provided camp scholarships for 47 local campers, allocating \$51,000 in total. Studies have shown that Jewish camp experiences are among the leading predictors of ongoing Jewish engagement, and here are what some of our campers have to report about Summer 2018.

Learning how to lead through Tzofim

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and Jewish Women's Foundation:

Thank you so much for the money towards me being able to go to Eisner Camp this year. This year at camp, we had so much fun. I loved seeing all my friends again. I have made such strong connections at Eisner and it is amazing being able to walk into camp on opening day and see all my close friends.

This year, I was in Bunk 23 with all of my closest friends. I was in Tzofim, which is the year before Olim. It was a lot of responsibility but we all learned how to be great leaders to lower camp. All of my counselors were fantastic and I had so much fun with them.

I had so much fun with all my activities this session. I was able to express my love for art in the drawing/painting classes and the amazing modern dance classes. In sport, I got to get all my energy out in archery and tennis. My favorite place at camp is in the Tzofim Beit Am, whether it was playing cards with friends or looking at the plaques with my best friend, Morgan.

Camp is such an amazing place for me and I am so thankful for the scholarship you gave to me so I can make all of these memories.

Sincerely,
Emma Adelson
Lee



Eliot Stern (left) with his camp crew

He keeps coming back for the relationships

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

My name is Eliot Stern and I went to JCC Camp Kingswood. This camp is located in Bridgton, Maine, about an hour north of Portland. It is my fourth year going to this camp, and this year I stayed for five-and-a-half weeks. The reason I keep coming back to this camp is because of the relationships I have made with my friends. I just wanted to say how grateful I am to the people who donate to the Jewish Federation to make it possible for me to go to camp.

On Shabbats, we would have Friday and Saturday services. I liked services because the songs that we would sing would make me feel at home. After Friday night services, we would have a big dinner with great food! After that we would have this activity called "Ruach." This is where we would sing and dance to camp songs. Overall, I had a great time at camp and wanted to thank you for making it possible for me to go.

Sincerely,
Eliot Stern
Pittsfield

Changed by camp, and she's glad

Dear Jewish Federation,

Thank you for giving me the money I needed to go to camp this year. It was great to be around other Jewish kids and adults, as where I live, there are not many Jews. I really enjoyed my *chugs* and some of the activities – my favorite *chugs* included video, outdoor cooking, boating, and woodworking. I feel that this experience has really changed me and I am glad that I went.

All the best,
Ellie Caine
Richmond

Havdallah had her undivided attention

Dear Jewish Federation,

Thank you for giving me money to help send me to Camp Ramah. I had an amazing two months there. I made so many close friends, and I learned a lot about Israel and my Judaism. The havdallah ceremony was one of my favorite parts of the camp.

Talia Caine
Richmond

Last-time camper cherished every moment

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thank you for helping me get to go to Camp Ramah. It was awesome of you to do that. I like camp because it is fun and a nice place to be. It is nice when you see your friends you haven't seen in a long time, and to have the new experiences. As it was my last year at camp, I cherished every moment. Once again thanks for everything that you did.

From
Cormac Duffy
Pittsfield

On the Bus with Etgar 36, Thanks to Federation

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thank you for your very generous financial gift, without which I would not have had the opportunity to go on Etgar 36. My time traveling across the United States provided me with so many memories that I will hold on to forever. The fact that I shared all of those memories with other Jewish kids greatly enriches them.

Of the many places we visited and the people we met, I found the most impactful places to be the new Equal Justice Initiative Lynching Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, and the Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, a non-profit that aids ex-felons in becoming productive members of society.

All along the way, we were introduced to many different types of people, often with viewpoints different from my own and most of the other kids on the trip. Throughout our journey across America, as the value of being able to speak to and listen to the many different types of Americans was instilled in us, I learned that compromises are not feasible unless people are willing to first respectfully engage with those who have opposing viewpoints. Having learned this lesson, the most interesting speaker we met was a prominent anti-gay marriage advocate and climate change denier. I never would have thought that to be the case before embarking on this trip.

In addition to exploring many of the issues dominating modern American political discourse, we also witnessed many different types of Judaism within the United States. Every Friday night, we observed Shabbat with a congregation that observed Judaism in its own way, such as a Conservative synagogue in New York City and a gay and lesbian synagogue in Dallas. Etgar 36 broadened my understanding of American Judaism significantly.

Most importantly, I enjoyed every moment I was on Etgar 36. Thank you once again for giving me the opportunity to have this Jewish summer experience. It was an immensely fun and educational journey that I would recommend to anybody.

Sincerely,
Adam Cohen
Lanesborough

Adam Cohen is a senior at Mount Greylock Regional School. Etgar 36 is an independent, pluralistic, nonpartisan and nonprofit Jewish educational venture, a summer cross country journey for teens that since 2003 has had more than 18,000 participants.

Thanks from Our College-Bound Scholarship Winners

Dear Scholarship Committee:

I am writing to thank you for your remarkable generosity in providing me with a scholarship for college. Although I have not decided what I will major in yet, I believe that my next four years at Wesleyan University will prepare me to make meaningful contributions to the communities I inhabit for the rest of my life.

Your scholarship helps to make this possible. Additionally, it is thanks to the example the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires has set in my life that I desire to enrich my communities.

Sincerely,
Miriam Pomerantz
Williamstown



Scholarship winners Miriam Pomerantz and Noah Hochfelder with Judith Cook, Federation's scholarship chair, at our annual meeting last June



Dear Members of the Simkin/Schiller Scholarship Committee:

I would like to thank you all so, so much for naming me a recipient of this year's award. The Federation has made too many impacts on my life to count – from enabling me to go to summer camp to being a collector of friendly, comforting, and supportive faces on South Street.

I am so grateful for the Federation's help in making the Berkshire Jewish community my second home. The Federation with *always* have a special place in my heart.

Sincerely,
Noah Hochfelder
Pittsfield

Rabbi Reflections

*The Holy Days are Over! What Now? And If Not Now – When?**

By Rabbi Neal Borovitz



With the month of holy days of Tishri behind us, I believe the real challenge of beginning a new year starts now.

The Book of Genesis is a collection of stories about both the imperfections of human beings, and our potential for being God's partner in the ongoing creation and perfection of the world. After all the promises and bargains we made with God and with each other, will you and I really change? Will our month of introspection have any long lasting impact?

The Genesis narrative takes us through generations of human beings and, in particular, our Biblical ancestors who are constantly wrestling with their imperfections. I find stories such as Abraham's fear-based offering up of Sarah as a concubine to

Pharaoh in Genesis 12, immediately after receiving God's promise to make of him a great nation, to be a great example of how real life circumstances often challenge our faith. Similarly, the lesson of the *Akeda* (binding of Isaac) ten chapters later raises for me the danger of blind faith fundamentalism, be it Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. When is the Biblical narrative a context within which we can find guidance toward better relationships with God and our fellow human beings, and when is it being used as pretext for self-centered grasps for power?

My teacher and friend, Rabbi Norman Cohen, is professor emeritus of *midrash* at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. He wrote a book 25 years ago titled *Self Struggle and Change: Family Conflict Stories in Genesis and Their Healing Insights for Our Lives*. A generation after its publication, Rabbi Cohen's book remains the best guide I know to understanding the challenges we each face in actualizing our High Holy Day promises, and realizing that we can live better, but still imperfect lives. As we begin again this month our journey through the Torah narrative, self-struggle and change can serve as wonderful tools for both personal and communal self-reflection. The title of Rabbi Cohen's book itself points us in the direction of the interrelationship between our task of improving our personal lives and our responsibility for repairing the world.

Can we learn from the mistakes made by the protagonists of Genesis ways that each of us can live better lives? Can we acknowledge that the "other" can be transformed into a brother?

Rabbi Cohen's focus, as his title implies, is upon family relationships. Sibling rivalry has been an eternal challenge. He not only traces the stories of conflict from the first human brothers, Cain and Abel, through the fraternal feuds of the Children of Israel, but points out for the reader the relevance of these tales for contemporary interpersonal relationships. Over the next

two months, as we read a portion of this Genesis narrative each week, I hope you will join me in seeking to use these stories of conflict as mirrors on our own lives. How often do each of us and all of us, choose "one-upmanship" over real relationship? Can we learn from the mistakes made by the protagonists of Genesis ways that each of us can live better lives? Can we acknowledge that the "other" can be transformed into a brother? Can we, as Rabbi Cohen asks in each chapter of this challenging book, learn to live in peace with our neighbors?

Our communal name Israel is defined in Genesis 32 when Jacob, preparing to confront his brother Esau after more than two decades of exile, dreams a dream in which he wrestles with an "*Ish*," a Hebrew term usually meaning "human being." As dawn is about to break, this *Ish* demands that Jacob let go. Jacob – the quintessential dealmaker – demands that the *Ish* – whom he perceives is a messenger of God – must first bless him. The blessing he receives is a name change from Jacob to Israel, with an explanation that Jacob and his progeny who will bear his name are destined to "wrestle with the Divine and the Human and persevere in the struggle."

In re-reading this book this summer, I came to realize that the Genesis narrative challenges both "We the People," and each of us as individuals, to understand that true change in individual lives, in the life of America, in the life of the Jewish People, and in the life of all humanity will require us to wrestle with each other and with God. The wrestling metaphor of Genesis speaks to me, as it does to Rabbi Cohen, in a profound manner. Wrestling is a "hands-on" close encounter. The difference between a "bear hug" and a "love hug" is in the intent. The sibling stories in Genesis are meant to be understood on both a personal familial level and as reflections of real life intergroup and international conflicts.

Years ago, in an anthology of Jewish stories compiled by Rabbi Jack Riemer for the UJA Rabbinic Cabinet, the following vignette was included:

A young observant Jew who had for the years since his bar mitzvah had religiously studied the weekly Torah portion, goes to his rabbi on the eve of Simchat Torah and asks: "Rabbi, for years I have gone through the cycle of Torah readings do I really have to go through them again this year?"

The rabbi answers: "This year, instead of just going through Torah, let the Torah, go through you."

If the self-evaluation and reflection and promises of the month of Tishri are to be brought a little closer to realization for each of us – for America, for Israel (both the state and the people), and for the world – I invite everyone to seek ways to both go through the Torah and let the Torah go through you this year.

Rabbi Neal Borovitz is Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Avodat Shalom in River Edge, NJ, and a member of the Berkshire Minyan and Hevreh of Southern Berkshire.

Letters to the Editor, continued

A Reader's Note About the August-October BJV

Dear Editor:

In addition to learning of achievements, life and loss, moving personal stories, some outstanding programs, and events in the community and the wider world, some items really resonate.

Reading of Barbara Cohen's rabbinical ordination, I wish to congratulate her publicly on what seems now an inevitable journey. I clearly recall the first time, many years ago, when I was struck by her beautiful and soulful singing voice. And what's not to enjoy about Carole Goodman Kaufman's recipes and the fascinating details of the origin and stories behind the dish – not discounting the motivation to try them!?

The review by our editor of a 1960s book *A Letter From Israel* by William Papas, with its many colorful illustrations, was a delight.

And last but not least, for quite personal reasons, is the story by Lora Tobias about the emotional trip she made with her family to her childhood home in Germany, for the ceremony of the *Stolpersteine*, laid in memory of her predecessors. Relating to it, we have two volumes detailing the homes before which these "tripping stones" were laid in Wiesbaden, Germany. A close friend who lives there and sent them to us, is a committed participant in an organization called *The Active Museum*. Its members (mostly non-Jewish) mount well-researched exhibitions, documentation, and programs to honor former Jewish residents of the town, so that events and their lives – destroyed or dispersed by Nazi Germany – will not be disregarded or forgotten.

Ruth Heuberger
Great Barrington

Check out our website!

www.jewishberkshires.org

INCLUDES A CALENDAR OF PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

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Thank you volunteers Ellen Rosenblatt and the BJV delivery team, Michael Albert, Jeff Kramer, Roman Rozenblyum, and Ron Turbin

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Your Federation Presents

ISRAEL UPDATE, *continued from page 1*

Dr. Nurnberger was the first director of Builders for Peace, an organization established in 1993, with the encouragement of Vice President Al Gore, to encourage private sector investment in the West Bank and Gaza. In this capacity, he dealt with international leaders including Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, then-Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, as well as American and international business and political leaders.

He also spent two years as a senior fellow at the Center

for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), where he directed the Congressional relations program, ran a number of conferences, and co-authored and edited books dealing with Congressional leadership and the role of Congress in foreign policy.

He is a partner in a Washington, D.C. government relations firm, Nurnberger & Associates, which was founded in 1994.

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires thanks Shakespeare & Company for supporting this community program.

Music as Midrash, with Rabbi Liz

On Thursday, October 25 at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires hosts Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch of Temple Anshe Amunim for "Music as Midrash," a musical exploration of Jewish themes. This free program at Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Federation's Connecting With Community series.

How does music deepen our understanding of Jewish text and prayer? Music can serve as *midrash*, a creative interpretation that adds to the depth of our understanding and connection to these texts, explains Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch, herself a guitarist and musician. She will teach about Jewish text through song, including live and recorded musical selections.



Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community

Venue: Kneset Israel

Date & Time: Thursday, October 25 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 22).

Current Affairs: Contemporary American and International Politics

On Thursday, October 18 and Thursday, November 15 at 10:45 a.m., join Professor Steven J. Rubín for "Current Affairs: Contemporary American and International Politics." This course meets to discuss and explore current issues that influence our lives and society at large. This free program at Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' Connecting With Community series.

Topics will be chosen by Professor Rubín in consultation with the class and in view of the issue's relevance. Members will be encouraged to participate in discussions to express views and opinions in a supportive and informal atmosphere.

Steven J. Rubín is profes-

sor emeritus of international studies and former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Adelphi University, Garden City, NY. He is the author of numerous books and articles and frequently lectures both here and abroad on such topics as international anti-Semitism, Jewish history, popular culture, and literature. His radio play "Dem Bums: The Rise and Demise of the Brooklyn Dodgers" was broadcast live on National Public Radio in December 2017 and can be currently heard online.



Professor Steven J. Rubín

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community

Venue: Kneset Israel

Date & Time: Thursday, October 18 and Thursday November 15 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 22).

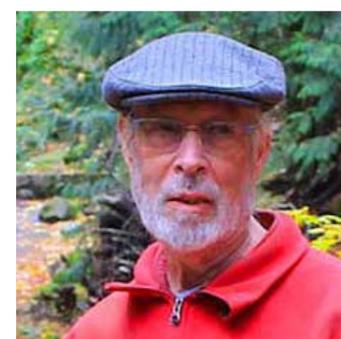
Jewish Germany – Its History and Legacy

On Monday, October 15 at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes Dr. David Levinson, a cultural anthropologist and son of a Holocaust survivor who will speak on the topic of "Jewish Germany – Its History and Legacy." This free program at Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Federation's Connecting With Community series.

Says Dr. Levinson: "The purpose of the talk is twofold. First, to provide a quick introduction to the long and complex history of Jewish

communities in Germany, with an emphasis on the enduring trends that shaped Jewish life for over 1,800 years. Second, to discuss Jewish Germany's contributions to Jewish life and the human experience in general, including commercial innovations, Yiddish, Reform Judaism, scientific discoveries, and cultural advances."

For the last fifteen or so years, Dr. Levinson has been studying and writing about the not-totally-dissimilar topics of the Jewish experience in Germany and African American heritage in the Berkshires. His two new books are: *Jewish Germany: An Enduring Presence from the Fourth to the Twenty-First Century* and *African American Community in Rural New England: W. E. B. Du Bois and His Boyhood Church*.



Dr. David Levinson

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community

Venue: Kneset Israel

Date & Time: Monday, October 15 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 22).

Now Accepting Applications for Camp Scholarships



YOU CAN AFFORD JEWISH SUMMER CAMP The Jewish Federation Can Help

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is dedicated to making a Jewish summer camp experience affordable and accessible for every child.

Tuition assistance is available through:

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires Camp Scholarship Fund
Dr. Arthur & Helen Maislen Camp Scholarship Fund
Jewish Women's Foundation of Berkshire County

APPLICATION DEADLINE: JANUARY 16

Download an application at jewishberkshires.org or pick one up at the Federation's office, 196 South St., Pittsfield, MA

Additional funding is available from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation (hg.org)



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Your Federation Presents

Connecting With Community Programs / Kosher Hot Lunch

Programs in the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' Connecting With Community series are free and start at 10:45 a.m. most Mondays and Thursdays at Kneset Israel (16 Colt Road, Pittsfield). Programs are followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a \$2 suggested donation for adults over 60 years of age or \$7 for all others. Advance reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. Lunch alone is also served Tuesday.

Knosh & Knowledge events take place each month on a Friday at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire (270 State Road, Great Barrington). Programs start at 10:45 a.m. and are now free – the buffet lunch that follows the presentation is \$11 and must be reserved in advance by calling (413) 442-4360, ext. 10.

For further information on all programs, please call Nancy Maurice Rogers, program director, at (413) 442-4360, ext. 15. For lunch menus and a chronological list of all scheduled programs, please see page 22. Note that lunch menus are subject to change.

Return Engagement – “The Bintel Brief”



On Thursday, October 11 at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires presents *A Bintel Brief*, a staged reading of a play developed by Carol Rusoff that was originally staged at Kneset Israel in June. This free program at Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road, in Pittsfield, is part of the Federation's Connecting With Community series.

In the early 1900s, Jews fled Eastern Europe oppression by the hundreds of thousands. Once on these shores, adapting to life in the *Goldeneh Medina* (“Golden Land”) posed great challenges!

The Yiddish newspaper, *Der Forvertz*, was the secular “bible” for these immigrants, and its editor, Abraham Cahan, became something of a “rebbe” to many who wrote in to the paper seeking advice on life in America. *The Bintel Brief, A Selection of Sixty Years of letters from the Lower East Side to the Jewish Daily Forward* is a book that records these letters to the editor, translated into English, and the advice he proffered.

A cast of local volunteers and vocalists will share the poignant, tragic, bittersweet, and humorous experiences that motivated that “Letters to the Editor” column. Cast members include Lara Denmark, Herman Rotenberg, Ann Krawet, Amy Miller, Louise Penney, Steve Rosenthal, and Alexandra Warshaw.

Don't miss this second chance to see *A Bintel Brief!*

The Process of Aging, with Maggie Bittman

On Monday, October 8 and Monday, November 19 at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires presents “The Process of Aging” with therapist Maggie Bittman. This free program at Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road, in Pittsfield, is part of the Federation's Connecting With Community series.

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

facing mortality; experiencing aloneness; and engaging free will.

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



Therapist Maggie Bittman

IF YOU GO

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The Sunday Strummers Ukulele Ensemble!

On Monday, October 22 at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes The Sunday Strummers Ukulele Ensemble, a group of avid ukulele players who have been strumming, singing and performing together for several years. They will come together to fill the air with tunes from the 1930s to present day.

This free program at Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Federation's Connecting With Community series.

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community

Venue: Kneset Israel

Date & Time: Monday, October 22 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 22).

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Your Federation Presents

Love Shouldn't Hurt: Responding to Relational Violence in our Community

On Monday, October 29 at 10:45 a.m., join Deborah Parkington and Susan Gordon of the Elizabeth Freeman Center for "Love Shouldn't Hurt," an exploration of relational violence and the effect it has on our community. This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Federation's Connecting With Community series.

In honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, members of Elizabeth Freeman Center will be speaking about relational violence – what it looks and feels like; how it affects us, our loved ones, and our community; what we can do to help prevent and respond to it; and what help and resources are available in Berkshire County.

Deborah Parkington, the director of programs at Elizabeth Freeman Center, has 20-plus years experience in the sexual assault/domestic violence field. Deborah is a lifelong resident of Berkshire County and resides in Dalton. Susan Gordon is a board member at Elizabeth Freeman Center. She is an active member in the community and former owner of Bagels Too, which she ran for 30 years.



IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community
Venue: Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Monday, October 29 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 22).

Taking Action for Animals

On Monday, November 5 at 10:45 a.m., join Susan Emerson Clapp of The Humane Society of the United States, who will talk about "Taking Action for Animals." This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Federation's Connecting With Community series.

Susan Emerson Clapp will talk about how each one of us can make this a more humane world for animals

Topics will include:

- The role of The Humane Society of the United States in the fight for animals
- What are the greatest

threats animals face today?

- How can each of us help? (Including discussion of effective advocacy)

Susan Emerson Clapp is a Berkshire resident who has been employed as a professional fundraiser since 1989. In 2011, she became the senior director of philanthropy for The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Susan works with leadership, major donors, and key advocates to advance the organization's work on behalf of animals at home and abroad.

HSUS and its affiliates provide hands-on care and services to more than 100,000 animals each year, and works to professionalize the field through education and training for local organizations. As the leading animal advocacy organization,

HSUS seeks a humane world for people and animals alike. Since 1964, the HSUS has been driving transformational change in the U.S. and around the world by combating large-scale cruelties such as puppy mills, animal fighting, factory farming, seal slaughter, horse cruelty, captive hunts and the wildlife trade.



Susan Emerson Clapp and friends

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community
Venue: Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Monday, November 5 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 22).

A Mystic's Guide to Prayer

On Thursday, November 1 at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires hosts Williams College's Jewish chaplain Rabbi Seth Wax for "A Mystic's Guide to Prayer." This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Federation's Connecting With Community series.

Says Rabbi Wax: "The Jewish prayer book is a resource that we use in services, but for the Jewish mystics, it is a handbook for unlocking the inner mysteries of the universe and for helping us to see the world and ourselves with a deeper consciousness. Yet most of us have never been exposed to this radical way of experiencing prayer.

"In this session, we'll explore one mystic's instructions for the traditional prayer for the body and learn the deep connections between ourselves and God."

Rabbi Seth Wax is the Jewish Chaplain at Williams College.



Rabbi Seth Wax

A graduate of the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College in Newton, MA and Harvard Divinity School, he enjoys studying and teaching Jewish mysticism, Buddhist thought, and comparative theology.

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community
Venue: Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Thursday, November 1 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 22).

Chair Yoga: Easy Yoga for Mobility and Peace of Mind

On Thursday, November 8 at 10:45 a.m., join Linda Novick for "Chair Yoga: Easy Yoga for Flexibility, Mobility, and Peace of Mind." This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' Connecting With Community series.

Linda Novick says: "Chair Yoga is appropriate for people of all levels of mobility. It is a series of breathing and stretching exercises done in a chair, which increases mobility of the joints, flexibility, strength and stamina. Some of the exercises are performed standing behind the chair, while holding on. Participants will learn breathing techniques to enhance lung capacity, as well as easy stretches and yoga postures. Yoga is good for *all bodies*. Beginners are welcome."

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

She explains that her approach to yoga encourages everyone to listen and love their body. Her yoga classes encourage gentle stretching, proper breathing, strength and



Linda Novick

balance. She attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and has a BFA in art education, and has taught art for 50 years.

She's been teaching yoga since 1997, and lately has been focusing on easy yoga for elders. She taught on staff at Kripalu Center for 7 years, and is now a regular presenter, offering programs that combine painting and yoga. She's the author of the book, *The Painting Path: Embodying Spiritual Discovery through Yoga, Brush and Color*.

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community
Venue: Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Thursday, November 8 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 22).

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

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Your Federation Presents

“Interreligious Illiteracy” the Topic of October 19 Knosh & Knowledge

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Friday, October 19 at 10:45 a.m., Knosh & Knowledge welcomes Dr. Terry Schmitt, executive director of the Connecticut Council for Interreligious Understanding, who will talk about interfaith outreach and understanding in a presentation titled “Interreligious Illiteracy.”

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will take place at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire at 10:45 a.m., and will be followed by lunch, available for \$11 (RSVP required).

Terry Schmitt is an ordained member of the United Church of Christ, and was the senior minister at Center Congregational Church in Manchester for eleven years. Prior to that, he was a project director at the Program for Non-Profit Organizations at Yale University, as well as interim minister at several Connecticut churches.

About his talk, Dr. Schmitt says: “I will talk about the problem of religious illiteracy, and about our seeming struggle to have open conversations around sensitive topics. The reality is that most people are religiously illiterate, starting with their own religion, but moving on to include lack of awareness and understanding about denominations and diversity within their own religion.”

“This ignorance gets worse as one goes on to awareness of other religions. The problem with this illiteracy is twofold: religion is about ‘ultimate things,’ which means that one’s religious beliefs are important and central, and secondly, ignorance can quickly lead to mistrust, fear, and then hatred. Thus, seeking to address religious illiteracy is one crucial way to break down walls of misunderstanding and fear.”

Dr. Schmitt will also talk about the Connecticut Council for Interreligious Understanding’s work.

Schmitt went to Yale University for his Ph.D. in Sociology, Eden Theological Seminary for his M.Div., and to Brown University for his A.B. His family and he have lived in West Hartford since 1996.



Dr. Terry Schmitt

LIFE IN ISRAEL, continued from page 1

Meet the Panelists

Amir Cahaner is a geographer specializing in the demographics of the ultra-Orthodox. Born and raised in Kibbutz Neve-Eitan near the Jordan River, he lives in Kfar-Yehezkel, at the foothills of the Gilboa mountains, where his family has a 10,000-acre cattle ranch. He served as a paratrooper and is now a major in the reserves. He holds a degree in Agricultural Engineering and worked for several years in Med-Tech. Today, this married father of three works at SDA, an Israeli company that manufactures and delivers natural dehydrated ingredients – all grown in the fields of Israel – to more than 20 countries around the world.

Amani Masalha Zoabi was born in Daburiah, a traditional Arab village next to Mount Tabor. This married mother of two is now a resident of the Israeli-Arab village of Tamra in the Gilboa Regional Council. For the last 15 years, she taught children in rehabilitation processes, and has studied animal assistance therapy and worked at Bet Uri, a special needs community in Afula. She participated in the “Olive Tree” art initiative for shared living, and volunteers at the “Marching Together for a Shared Future,” the co-existence NGO in the region.

Ayala Carmi is a therapist and Healthy & Balanced Life consultant, as well as a yoga instructor for women and children. Born in Ramat Tzvi, a Moshav in the regional council of Gilboa, at age 25 she moved to Tel Aviv, became *bat teshuva* (practicing Orthodox). This married mother of two came back to the re-

gion 2 years ago as half of a “religious” couple in very “secular” surroundings. “There so many challenges living this way, on the one hand,” she says. “but many wonderful opportunities on the other hand. We still don’t have an *eruv*, but suddenly the synagogue is more active.”



Ravid Pitaro

Ravid Pitaro, the head of this delegation, is Afula born and raised. Growing up, he joined the Scouts and for three out of eight years was a

counselor and head of the counselors in the group’s training program. All the while, he volunteered with Magen David Adom as a first responder medic. A former SNEC Young Emissary at the Jewish Federation of Central Massachusetts, Ravid is very familiar with local communities and is a leader among the group’s alumni.

After completing one year of service in New England, he returned to Israel, joined the IDF, and served as a medical team trainer for two years. After the army and before college, he returned to New England (this time with his wife) for a few more months of work in the community.

Ravid entered medical school in 2009 and currently works as a family physician resident in the partnership area and Ha’emek Medical Center in Afula. Additionally, he is a lecturer at Ariel University, a worldwide flying doctor, and continues to volunteer with the medical emergency units in the partnership area.



Ayala Carmi

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Date & Time: Friday, October 19 at 10:45 a.m.

Venue: Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road, Great Barrington

Cost: *Knosh & Knowledge programs are now free.* Fresh buffet lunch is \$11. *Advance lunch reservations required for this event.*

Email federation@jewishberkshires.org, or call (413) 442-4360, ext. 10

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community

Venue: Knesset Israel

Date & Time: Monday, November 12 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 22).

Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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Your Federation Presents

From Sanctuary to Synagogue

Tracing the origins and development of our houses of worship at November 9 Knosh & Knowledge

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Friday, November 9 at 10:45 a.m., Knosh & Knowledge hosts Robert R. Stieglitz, professor emeritus at Rutgers University, for an illustrated presentation about the origin and development of that most Jewish institution—the synagogue—with special emphasis on its lesser known element of its decorative arts.

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will take place at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire at 10:45 a.m., and will be followed by lunch, available for \$11 (RSVP required).

Writes Professor Stieglitz:

“Synagogue roots are traceable to the Biblical traditions of the Hebrew portable ‘sanctuary’ (*miškan*), also known as the Tabernacle, and the subsequent permanent stone ‘house’ (*bayit*), or Temple (*miqdaš* or *beit hamiqdaš*) constructed for the God of Israel. The synagogue (*beit Knesset*), on the other hand, is first attested in Hellenistic times (3rd-1st centuries BCE) in Alexandria, Egypt, whilst the Second Temple was standing in Jerusalem. Special attention will be given to the remarkable artistic motifs, both Jewish and pagan, unearthed in assorted ancient synagogues of Israel

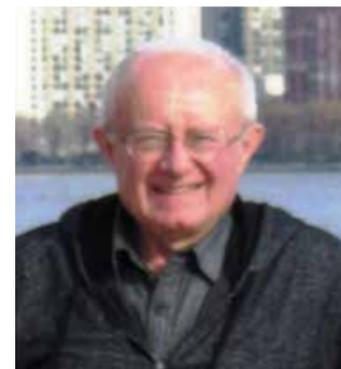
datable to Byzantine times (4th-7th centuries CE).

“I designed this talk,” he continues, “to try and answer three questions:

1. Where and when did the synagogue originate?
2. What decorative arts were used in ancient synagogues?
3. Why did the decorative arts cease?”

Robert R. Stieglitz, is Emeritus Professor of Hebraic Studies and Ancient Mediterranean Civilizations at Rutgers University. Stieglitz has taught at universities and institutes in Greece and Israel, and has excavated for many

years at several harbor sites in both countries. He conducted numerous surveys throughout the Mediterranean world, and was formerly curator of the National Maritime Museum, Haifa. He received his B.A. in Classics/Linguistics from the City College of New York, and his M.A. and Ph.D. in Mediterranean Studies from Brandeis University. Stieglitz is the recipient of numerous academic honors and awards and author of over 120 articles on the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean.



Professor Robert R. Stieglitz

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Date & Time: Friday, November 9 at 10:45 a.m.

Venue: Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road, Great Barrington

Cost: Knosh & Knowledge programs are now free. Fresh buffet lunch is \$11. Advance lunch reservations required for this event.

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Your Federation Dollars at Work

Unlike many other federations, we keep the majority of the funds donated to our annual campaign right here in the Berkshires to address the needs of our own small Jewish community. But when unforeseen crises affect the Jewish world beyond the Berkshires, the funds we raise can be used by the disaster relief network maintained by partners such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the world's leading Jewish humanitarian assistance organization. Here's how JDC and India's Jewish community stepped up in the wake of massive flooding that ravaged southwest India in late summer.

JDC, Indian Jewish Community Provide Food, Clothing to Kerala Flood Survivors

Joint Response to Flooding Ongoing As Needs Emerge

The Jewish community of India, together with JDC, has responded to destructive floods in Kerala, providing food and clothing to hundreds of families hard-hit by the disaster. With a presence in India since 1950, JDC and its partners in the Jewish community provided the aid through the All-India Disaster Mitigation Institute, its longstanding partner, and will continue to raise funds and monitor needs for future support given the extent of the flooding, which has killed hundreds of people and displaced hundreds of thousands. A JDC team was dispatched to Kerala for the distribution of aid and to assess needs of survivors, including members of the Jewish community, impacted by the floods.

As news of the rains, flooding and landslides grew, JDC's India team coordinated with the local Jewish community, which is made up of 4,500 people, and other NGO partners to devise a response to the devastation. JDC's India team — which works today with the Indian Jewish community to care for its neediest, provide Jewish cultural and educational opportunities, and support vulnerable populations in distress, like the poor in urban slums — took a lead role in JDC's responses to the Nepal earthquake and Indian Ocean tsunami.

"As we join with our neighbors in mourning the loss of life in Kerala, we are also acutely aware of the critical importance of the support we are providing to survivors facing an uncertain future," said Elijah Jacob, executive director of JDC's India office, and Dr. Nathan Aston, chair of the Indian Jewish community's Indian Joint Trust in a joint statement. "Drawing from our previous experience responding to these kinds of disasters in India, and throughout the region, we are focused on meeting immediate needs, rebuilding more sustainably for future disasters, and upholding the Jewish value for life, especially in the face of such terrible loss."



Elijah Jacob, executive director of JDC's India office (left), distributing food and bedding to a local woman impacted by the floods in Chalakuddy village in Thrissur district of Kerala

JDC's disaster relief programs are funded by special appeals of the Jewish Federations of North America and tens of thousands of individual donors to JDC. In the last year, JDC and its partners have responded to disasters and crises in Guatemala, Indonesia, Mexico, the Caribbean, Sri Lanka, and East Africa. JDC has continued its post-disaster development work in Nepal, Philippines, and Haiti. JDC also provides ongoing humanitarian aid to refugees in Europe and the Middle East.

JDC relief activities are coordinated with the U.S. Department of State, USAID, the Israeli government, Interaction, and the United Nations, as well as local and international partners.

About JDC

JDC works in more than 70 countries and in Israel to alleviate hunger and hardship, rescue Jews in danger, create lasting connections to Jewish life, and provide immediate relief and long-term development support for victims of natural and man-made disasters. For more information, visit www.jdc.org. To support JDC's disaster relief efforts, visit: <http://www.jdc.org/disasters/>.

Pajama Donations Will Keep Kids in Need Warm This Winter

As chilly weather returns to the Berkshires, the PJ Library Pajama Drive conducted by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires also returns to help the many children in our community who may lack the comfort of warm sleepwear. Last year's effort collected more than 150 pairs of pajamas from individuals, groups, and local businesses and the push this year will be to build on that success. The pajama drive will be conducted from November 1 through December 7.

Donors can drop off brand new pajamas (sizes newborn to teen) at the following locations:

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, 196 South Street, Pittsfield

Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road, Great Barrington

Congregation Beth Israel, 53 Lois Street, North Adams

Donations will be received by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families in Pittsfield, and will be distributed to local families during the holiday season.



PJ Library is a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and is funded locally by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires thanks to generous funding from local donors the Spitz Tuchman Family Fund and the Jewish Women's

Foundation of Berkshire County. The program provides free monthly books and music with Jewish content to children ages 6 months through 8 years of age.

For more information about PJ Library and the PJ Pajama Drive, contact Susan Frisch Lehrer at (413) 442-4360, ext. 14.



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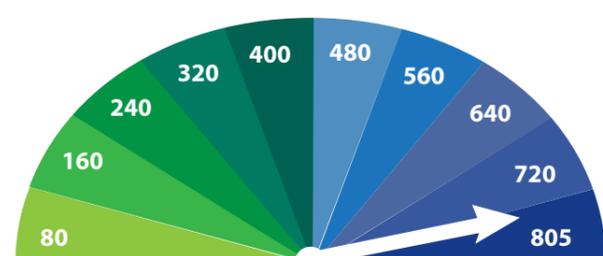
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LOCAL NEWS

RABBI URI REGEV, *continued from page 1*

Israel's population grew by 1,200 percent from 1948 to 2010, the number of ultra-Orthodox excused from military service grew by 15,000 percent. Currently, approximately 8,500 males eligible to serve receive exemptions under the terms of Ben Gurion's agreement, whereas for most members of Israeli society, service in the IDF – Israel's "melting pot" – remains central to their identities as citizens.

It's a hot-button issue on both sides. The disconnect is often bitterly resented by secular Israelis, who wonder why they and their children are being put in harm's way to defend the Jewish state, while also having to support (with tax revenues) the lifestyles of an ultra-Orthodox population that is indifferent or even hostile to them. Tensions over the draft issue have risen in the last 10 years as Israel's Supreme Court and Knesset have made legal and legislative efforts to end the military exemption of the ultra-Orthodox, while the government has struggled, often in the face of heated street demonstrations and fierce pushback by ultra-Orthodox political parties, to implement meaningful change.

Yet military service is but one dimension of this internecine conflict. In 1947, Ben Gurion and the religious parties of the time reached agreements that would create the institution of Israel's Chief Rabbinate, which established courts overseeing marriage, divorces, and conversions, all of which operate under a strict Orthodox *halakhic* interpretation of Jewish law. While the controversies surrounding the military draft might seem particular to Israel, those arising from the Chief Rabbinate's lock on religious matters affect the officially-recognized status in Israel of all who identify as Jewish worldwide.

Upsetting the outsized role exerted by those rabbinic courts in Jewish life has been the mission of Rabbi Uri Regev, an activist and attorney who is CEO of Hiddush – For Freedom of Religion and Equality in Israel, a non-governmental organization he founded in 2009. From its mission statement: "Hiddush believes that fully re-

alizing the promise of religious freedom will strengthen Israel both as a democracy and as a Jewish state, and will bolster Jewish Peoplehood and Israel/Diaspora relationships." Also from its mission statement: "The lack of religious freedom and equality...impacts virtually all of the domestic issues – security, economic growth, education, gender equality, access to quality health care and social services, and poverty." It cites a study that holds: "Over 80% of Israeli Jews believe that the consequences of this religious/secular divide constitute the most serious domestic threat to Israel today."

Rabbi Regev is quick to point out that the focus of Hiddush's activism is in no way religious. "It's about the clash of religion and state," he says, rather than any desire to reform aspects of Jewish practice in any of its diverse expressions. "We encourage an open-minded discussion of what Israel is about. Can Israel be both Jewish and democratic?" Rabbi Regev identifies the founding ideas of Israel, as expressed in its declaration of independence, as follows: being open as a place of refuge for Jews from around the world, personal liberty, and social and political equality for all without distinction on the basis of religion. "That is nothing like a Torah state," he asserts, adding that owing to the *halakhic* controls exerted by the Chief Rabbinate, Jews are the only group in Israel that does not enjoy unfettered religious freedom.

Rabbi Regev is a Tel Aviv native who grew up in a secular Jewish environment. The idea of Jewish pluralism was introduced to him on a 1967 trip to the United States organized under the auspices of the Reform Movement. "It was my first exposure to the full Jewish rainbow," he remembers. "I was impressed by the notion of Jewishness as a rainbow, not a monochromatic position." What he realized about the Judaism he learned in Israel was that "it ain't necessarily so."

He received his rabbinic ordination through the Reform movement in the late 1970s, after studying law at Tel Aviv University. He served executive

director of the Israel Religious Action Center (the political arm of the Reform movement in Israel) and president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, a global umbrella organization of the Progressive, Reform, Liberal, and Reconstructionist movements. He was also a founding member of B'Tselem, the Jerusalem-based non-profit organization whose stated goals are to document human rights violations in the Israeli-occupied territories.

As an attorney, Rabbi Regev has taken on the case of Rabbi Dov Haiyun, a Conservative rabbi in Haifa who was detained by authorities last July for performing a non-Orthodox wedding in Israel. His arrest created an international flap as Jewish institutions voiced their concerns over the government's intercession on behalf of religious authorities. Rabbi Haiyun's arrest added another touchstone among other recent controversies that have highlighted the divisions in the Jewish community both in Israel and abroad, among them the push for an egalitarian prayer space in the main plaza of the Western Wall exemplified by the "Women of the Wall" movement and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's remarks at the 2015 Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) General Assembly that suggested an openness to creating alternatives to the Chief Rabbinate for conversion and life cycle events. Pledges for reform by Netanyahu and his government raised hopes within Diaspora Jewish organizations that were subsequently dashed – by 2016, Netanyahu was back at the GA counseling patience with the realities of Israeli politics preventing him from moving forward.

Rabbi Regev sees Rabbi Haiyun's case as "an anecdote, not a game changer" that will likely not move forward through the legal system. Yet, he says, its ultimate utility may be to more widely publicize how "Israel is the only Westernized country that does not allow its citizens to marry" in the manner of their choosing. (The marriages of Israelis who choose to wed outside of Israel are recognized as civil

Israelis want American Jewish help in Promoting Religious Pluralism, Study Finds

By Ben Sales / JTA

For years, American Jewish groups have agitated for more religious pluralism in Israel. And year after year, the Israeli government has acted as if the country's demographic and political realities make any kind of substantial reform impossible.

The latest version of an annual survey disputes that claim: It shows that Jewish Israelis disapprove of how their government handles religious issues. It shows that they want more liberal religious policies. And it says they want American Jews to intervene in the debate.

The one wrinkle is that when Jewish Israelis talk about "religious

SURVEY, continued on next page

unions by the state.)

Ultimately, Rabbi Regev believes (and cites surveys that bear out his opinion – see article on this page) that Jews both in Israel and the Diaspora are, in the main, inclined toward religious and social pluralism, and that the divisions created and/or augmented by rabbinic control of religious life in Israel (along with the political accommodations to the status quo made by politicians) have the "potential of splitting the Jewish people at a time when a common front is as necessary as ever before."

Regev is critical of the roadmap for reconciliation laid out by Israel's minister of education Naftali Bennett at the AJC Global Forum in June, and the Israeli government's promotion of initiatives to bolster Jewish life in the Diaspora under the aegis of Mosaic United, a group that (at a cost of \$60 million) has created outreach centers on 16 US college campuses. Mosaic United receives one-third of its funding from the Israeli government, one-third from private donors, and one-third from Hillel International and Orthodox groups Chabad and Olami (Aish Hatorah).

Owing to the Orthodox nature of Chabad and Olami, Regev perceives the Mosaic United program as "an affront and a misunderstanding," as its goals seem to be to bring Jews into the Orthodox fold. "[Orthodoxy] is not the future of US Jewry. Jews in the United States are not going back to pre-modernity."

Hiddush offers its own ways to address the secular/

religious dichotomy, and Regev says it aims to win the hearts and minds of those Israelis who can be swayed – namely centrists, and individuals who lean either moderately right or left of the political center.

To resolve the issue of ultra-Orthodox military exemption, Regev suggests that 1,400 exclusions be granted to top students of traditional Judaic study, as determined by standardized testing. The remainder of the ultra-Orthodox eligible to serve would have to perform military or civil service, or have their taxpayer-funded remuneration suspended.

As for marriage, the Hiddush plan would give couples the option of following one of two parallel paths, one secular and the other *halakhic*. Once a couple chooses a path, they would be obliged to follow its rules for marriage and divorce.

Recently, Regev joined Rabbi Marc Angel, Orthodox founder and director of the inclusive Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, to create "Vision Statement: Israel as Jewish Democratic State," an 8-point treatise outlining a path toward achieving some of the religious freedom goals espoused by Hiddush. At this writing, 845 signatories from across the religious spectrum have signed it. The petition is at: <http://rrfei.org/petitions/vision-israel-jewish-democratic-state/>.

The issues that Hiddush addresses "are issues that have the potential of splitting the Jewish people," Regev asserts. "We are dealing with very high stakes."



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LOCAL NEWS

SURVEY, *continued from previous page*

freedom," they are mostly talking about a different set of issues than their American counterparts. American Jewish institutions have poured their energy into changes at the Western Wall and blocking restrictions on Jewish conversion. But Jewish Israelis mostly care about quotidian issues like public transit on Saturdays and government funding of yeshivas.

Those are some of the takeaways from an annual survey of attitudes among Jewish Israelis on religion and state conducted by Hiddush, an Israeli organization that supports religious pluralism. The survey questioned 800 Jewish Israelis in July and has a margin of error of 3.5 percent.

"The overwhelming majority views negatively the government's policy on religion and state, opposes practically every aspect of any decision or any issue, whether it's the [military] draft or marriage or public transit on Shabbat," said Rabbi Uri Regev, the founder and CEO of Hiddush. "The public does want freedom, does oppose government decisions and policies. The public wants Diaspora Jewish involvement in promoting religious freedom."

As it does every year, the survey found that Jewish Israelis are far more liberal on religious issues than their government. The government's religious policies are largely administered by the haredi Orthodox Chief Rabbinate, which only recognizes Orthodox rabbis, Orthodox weddings, Orthodox conversion and Orthodox kosher certification. Israel bans nearly all public transit on Shabbat. It does not recognize same-sex marriages performed in the country.

But two-thirds of Jewish Israelis support separation of religion and state, representing an increase of 10 percentage points since 2012. Seventy percent back government recognition of all forms of marriage, including civil marriage — an increase from 53 percent in 2009. Sixty-six percent support the three major denominations of Judaism — Orthodox, Conservative and Reform — enjoying equal status in Israel.

Nearly half support recognition of all forms of Jewish conversion, while an additional 28 percent support a liberalization of current conversion regulations. More than 70 percent want increased public transit on Shabbat.

The survey does have some good news for fans of Israel's religious status quo. On issue after issue — from conversion to marriage to kosher certification — younger respondents favored more traditionalist policies than their elders. While more than 80 percent of respondents over age 50 support separation of religion and state in Israel, for example, only 42 percent of those under 29 do.

Regev said part of this divide is due to high haredi birth rates. But he said it's also due to "an element of contrarianism you find in young people."

And while only 22 percent of Israelis identify as religious or haredi — and 13 percent self-identify as Conservative or Reform — a greater part of the population has traditional religious tendencies. Nearly half of Jewish Israelis observe Shabbat partially or fully. And given the choice between different types of weddings, most

would still opt to be married in an Orthodox ceremony — either under the Chief Rabbinate's auspices or outside of it.

But while 76 percent of Jewish Israelis express dissatisfaction with the current government's religious policies, it may not make a difference. Israelis have not historically voted on religious issues, prioritizing security and economic concerns. Even so, the survey found that most Jewish Israelis are more likely to vote for a political party if it supports increasing religious freedom.

Whether or not they vote on religious issues, Jewish Israelis say they want Diaspora Jewry's help in advancing religious pluralism. Two-thirds expressed support for Diaspora groups "working to strengthen religious freedom and pluralism in Israel." That includes 65 percent of those who voted for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the 2015 election. Netanyahu froze a compromise last year — backed by American Jewish groups — that would have expanded a non-Orthodox prayer plaza at the Western Wall.

The Western Wall has been the top religious policy priority for American Jewish groups over the past several years, but it doesn't register with non-haredi Jewish Israelis. They told Hiddush that their most important religious issues were, in order: reducing government funding of Orthodox yeshivas, instituting civil marriage and allowing public transit on Shabbat. American Jewish groups have also pushed for civil marriage, but have not spoken out significantly on the other two issues.

Dwelling in the Past

A talk about historic land research and genealogy

GREAT BARRINGTON – Ever wonder what your house has been up to? On Sunday, November 11 at 4 p.m., Congregation Ahavath Sholom welcomes Lynn and Elisabeth Wood, specialists in historic land research and genealogy, a mother and daughter team who are founders of Dwelling in the Past, a South Egremont firm specializing in the research of historical homes. The duo will offer a presentation of some of their intriguing local findings.



A historic home in Egremont

Lynn H. Wood, title abstractor, and Elisabeth L. Wood, genealogical researcher, share a love for historic research. Through investigating old Berkshire records and employing their 58 years of combined research experience, Lynn and Beth are now bringing forward newly-found, fact-based Berkshire stories of people, places, and happenings.

Each story has been in some way unique and surprising. As they will explain, history is often painted in grand strokes, on canvasses of monumental size. The aim at Dwelling in the Past is to bring history, in all its vivid colors, to a more human scale. By investigating the historic homes of Berkshire County, Lynn and Beth offer an opportunity to glimpse the shape, form, and varied hues of residents' lives.

Born in Pittsfield, Lynn grew up in the town of Otis when it had a population of 450 people. Her father owned a general store, a great place to get to know neighbors.

Lynn is the editor of the book *A Gift from the Past*,

Nellie E. Haskell's history of Otis. She served the town of Egremont at different times as town clerk, selectmen's secretary and planning board chair. In 2015, she worked with Beth and many others to produce Egremont's July "1865 Civil War Basket Picnic."

Lynn and her husband, Bill, live in Egremont, in Bill's great-grandparents' home. They are parents of two children and grandparents of five. Currently, Lynn chairs the St. James Community Housing Corporation in Great Barrington and serves on the Egremont Meeting House Committee.

Beth lives and works in Alexandria, Virginia. She and her husband, David Berman, have raised five children and various cats. In addition to her work, Beth is an assistant historian for the Mayflower Society of Virginia.

Congregation Ahavath Sholom is at 15 North Street in Great Barrington. For more information: www.ahavathsholom.com or (413) 528-4197.

The Concert – Reading of a New Play by Linda Josephs

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Sunday, October 28 at 4 p.m., Congregation Ahavath Sholom will present a free staged reading of *The Concert*, a play by Linda Josephs. Featured actors will be Deann Halper and Gail Ryan.

As Ann and Beth go through their recently deceased parents' belongings, a 25-year-old secret is revealed, one that could change their lives forever. *The Concert* is a short play based on two true stories.

Following the reading of the play, there will be a talkback with the actors and director/playwright.



Gail Ryan and Deann Halper

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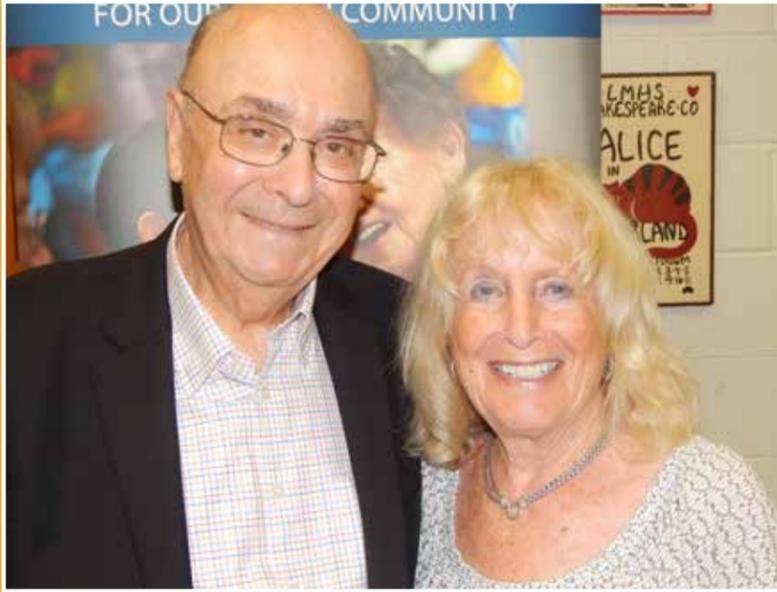
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Summer Concert a Fundraising Success

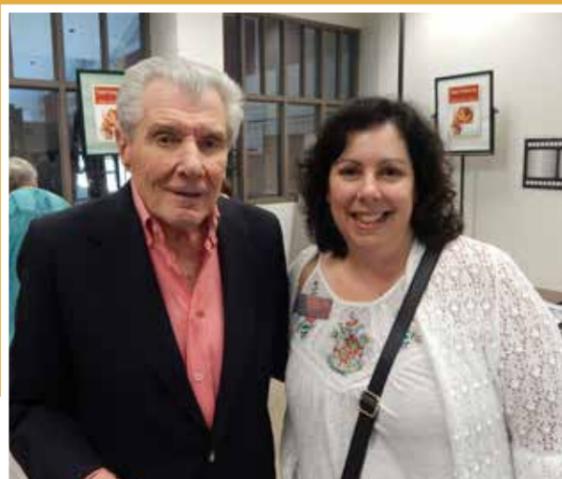
More than 350 community members came together to hear Sam Glaser at the Federation's annual benefit concert on August 5. Together we raised more than \$10,000 to benefit the Jewish Agency's Victims of Terror Fund. A special thank you to concert co-chairs, Norman Michaels and Judith Cook, as well as to the many underwriters and attendees for their support of this very special community event.



Concert co-chairs Norman Michaels and Judith Cook



Sam Glaser had audience members dancing in the aisles



Fun in the Summertime with Berkshire PJ Families

PJ Library families from across the Berkshires came together this summer to celebrate the season and the Jewish holidays that fell early in the calendar this year.

Everyone had a grand time at our Family Shabbat at the Lake (Lake Mansfield in Great Barrington) on August 10, with youngsters and their parents gathering to sing songs, share blessings, and read our PJ Library book *Koala Challah*, led by Sarah Aroeste Blaumgard. All enjoyed a craft activity, supper, swimming, and playing on the swings.

More photos on page 14.



Sarah with PJ kids at Lake Mansfield



RENEW

We bought our house in 1966. The place is full of memories. Our kids grew up here and now we have grandchildren and even a great-grandchild that are adding to the memories.

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Rusty MacDonald



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More Fun in the Summertime with Berkshire PJ Families

The fun resumed just before the High Holy Days, with apple picking for Rosh Hashanah at Lakeview Orchards in Lanesborough and Windy Hill Farm in Great Barrington on September 16. A meaningful time was had by all!



PJ Library, a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, is funded locally by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires thanks to generous funding from local donors the Spitz Tuchman Family Fund and the Jewish Women's Foundation of Berkshire County. The program provides free monthly books and music with Jewish content to children ages 6 months through 8 years of age.

Maimonides Society of the Berkshires

The Maimonides Society of the Berkshires hosted health care professionals and interested guests at its fifth annual meeting on August 12. Attendees heard Rabbi Leonard A. Sharzer, MD, speak on the theme of "Decision Making at the End of Life," and networked over bagels and lox at this well-attended event at the Marriott Courtyard in Lenox.

"Rabbi Sharzer blended medical aspects with religious and social perspective," reports Maimonides Society of the Berkshires chairperson Dr. Stuart Masters. "It was an excellent talk that we all found both stimulating and thought provoking."

"Dr. Sharzer's different perspectives were important to consider," says Federation Development Officer Leslie Kozupsky. "I felt fortunate to have had the opportunity to participate in this meeting with other members of the Berkshire Jewish community."

Stuart and Leslie invite all Jewish medical professionals in the Berkshires to participate in future events. For more information on the Maimonides Society of the Berkshires, please contact Leslie at lkozupsky@jewishberkshires.org.



Rabbi Leonard Sharzer, MD, addresses the Maimonides Society of Berkshire County



MAZEL TOV

Mazel Tov to...

Federation's own stalwart kitchen boss **Cindy Bell-Deane** and husband **David** on the birth of their first grandchild, **Miriam**.

*

Lawrence Klein, who was named Assistant Head of School for Institutional Advancement and General Counsel at Darrow School.

*

Alba and Bob Tutnauer on their 60th wedding anniversary.

*

Mister G (Ben Gundersheimer) on the release of his ninth album for families, *Fireflies*. And best wishes to Ben's parents, **Karen and Werner**, on their move from the Berkshires to Sarasota.

*

Judy Seaman on her first grandchild, **Noa Laget**, daughter of **Michal and Nico Laget** of Virginia.

*

Bea Selig on her 95th birthday.

*

Ella Novik on celebrating her bat mitzvah at Hevreh.

*

Ethan Pratt on celebrating his bar mitzvah at Hevreh.

*

Roz and Ed Kolodny on their 60th wedding anniversary.

*

Richard and Claudia Kirsch on the marriage of their daughter, **Lindsay**, to **Geoffrey Katz**.

*

Shelley and Marty Rolf on the birth of their first granddaughter, **Lulu**.

*

Bob Nason on his retirement as Lee's town manager.

*

Simon Warren and Blair Gross on their marriage.

*

Sid and Lisa Freund on the birth of their grandchild.

*

Rachel and David Eidex on the bat mitzvah of their daughter, **Dora**.

*

Harold and Gretchen Hastings on the birth of their granddaughter, **Ellery Morse Buckley Hastings**.

*

Joyce and Steve Pyenson on their 50th wedding anniversary.

*

Michael Geller on his 80th birthday.

*

Steve and Helice Picheny on the birth of their grandson, **Miles William Dufour**, born Tuesday, September 11. Parents are **Arielle Picheny Dufour and Jeffrey Dufour**.

*

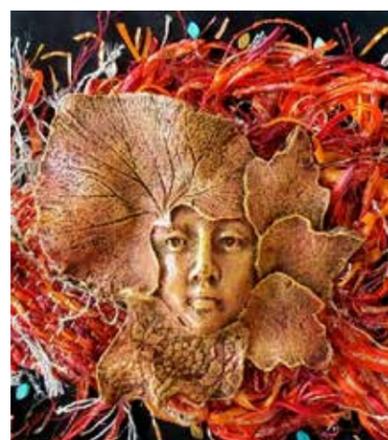
Noah Hochfelder on receiving the 2018 Daniel Pearl Berkshire Scholarship Award.

*

Amy Lindner-Lesser on the recent marriage of her daughter **Maya** to **Scott Connell**.

*

Wendy Rabinowitz on her successful summer exhibition at the Artful Mind Gallery in Lenox, which will be on view through October.



"VESSEL OF LIGHT: Sarah, Queen of Light," a mixed media assemblage by Wendy Rabinowitz

PJ Library PAJAMA DRIVE

November 1 - December 7

During the cold winter months, many children in the Berkshires go to sleep cold, without the comfort of warm pajamas.

To meet this critical need PJ Library is running a community-wide pajama drive.

Pajamas will be distributed to families across the Berkshires by the MA Department of Children and Families.



Drop off your brand new pajamas (sizes newborn to teen) at any of these convenient locations:

- Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
- Hevreh of Southern Berkshire
- Congregation Beth Israel

Questions? Contact Susan Frisch Lehrer (413) 442-4360, ext. 14 slehrer@jewishberkshires.org

Thank you for your Support!



PJ Library, in collaboration with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, is made possible in the Berkshires through the generous support of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, the Spitz Tuchman Family Fund, and the Jewish Women's Foundation

LOCAL NEWS

Anti-Semitism in America: Past vs. Present

Lecture and discussion with Kenneth S. Stern

NORTH ADAMS – How does anti-Semitism in America in the past compare to its presence in our country today? How does an historical perspective help us assess the seriousness of the current situation?

Do we need new strategies to combat anti-Semitism's recent manifestations in America?

On Monday, October 15, at 7:30 p.m., Congregation Beth Israel, in partnership with Williams College, hosts Kenneth S. Stern, a speaker qualified to consider questions such as these, having dedicated his life's work to combating hate.

Stern recently served as director of the Division on Anti-Semitism and Extremism at the American Jewish Committee, where he worked for 25 years. A lawyer and award-winning author, he has written extensively on just about every aspect of anti-Semitism. He was the lead drafter of the definition of anti-Semitism adopted by the U.S. State Department. He has argued before the U.S. Supreme Court, testified



before Congress, presented at the White House Conference on Hate Crimes, and served as a member of the U.S. Delegation to the Stockholm Forum on Combating Intolerance.

He has trained over 200 college and university presidents on how to respond to instances of bigotry on campus and helped establish courses and programs on the study of hate. He has taught Jewish Studies and Human Rights courses at Bard College. Currently, he serves as executive director of the Justus & Karin

Rosenberg Foundation, whose mission is to combat the growing problems of anti-Semitism, hatred, and the demonization of Israel, particularly as they impact U.S. colleges and universities.

This event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served. Congregation Beth Israel is at 53 Lois Street, North Adams.

For further information contact Jack Hockridge, office: cbinadams@gmail.com; phone: (413) 663-5830.

Mysticism, MoCA, and Mincha

NORTH ADAMS – On Saturday, November 3 at 3 p.m., join Congregation Beth Israel for a Shabbat afternoon journey through texts, artwork, and prayer at MASS MoCA.

Meet at Tunnel City Coffee MASS MoCA for text study (jointly led by Rabbi Seth Wax and Rabbi Rachel Barenblat) that will explore texts relating to Jewish mysticism, creation, Jacob's ladder, and angels in Jewish tradition.

Then walk together to the Anselm Kiefer exhibit and spend some time with artworks that draw on those themes. Close with a short-and-sweet *mincha* afternoon service, after which all are welcome to explore the galleries.

No experience in art history, art critique, or Jewish mystical texts necessary. Bring your curiosity (and playfulness) and a desire to explore art and life.

Those who don't spend



money on Shabbat will have an opportunity to pre-pay as needed.

Please RSVP to rabbibarenblat@gmail.com by October 31.

Co-presented by Congregation Beth Israel and Williams College Jewish Association, with gratitude to MASS MoCA.

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"Making Shabbat Work," with Hevreh's Rabbi Hirsch

GREAT BARRINGTON – Rabbi Neil P.G. Hirsch of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire will lead a five-session course on "Making Shabbat Work," exploring the meaning of the Sabbath in the Jewish tradition and in our contemporary lifestyles.

Sessions will be held at 6:15 p.m. on Sundays, October 21 and 28, November 4 and 18, and December 2. Cost for the course is \$50.

Writes Rabbi Hirsch: "One of the greatest gifts our tradition gives is Shabbat. An incredible, 52-weeks-a-year holiday that is built to help us live our best lives. But, like many rituals, it can be hard to figure out how to make Shabbat fit into our busy schedules. How are we to schedule time to rest?"

This course will explore the intentionality behind Shabbat and the rituals that make the holiday special for you and family. Participants will study and reflect on different voices



Rabbi Neil P.G. Hirsch

from our tradition that all speak to how we can make Shabbat work for us, studying classic biblical and rabbinic texts, Abraham Joshua Heschel's *The Sabbath*, and books from off the secular self, such as *Bored & Brilliant* by Manoush Zomorodi and *Off the Clock* by Laura Vanderkam.

Sign up by contacting the Hevreh office during regular office hours at (413) 528-6378.

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LOCAL NEWS

Becoming a Soulful Parent

New parenting group facilitated by Hevreh's Rabbi Gordon

GREAT BARRINGTON – Starting in October, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire's Rabbi Jodie Gordon will facilitate a parenting group on "Becoming a Soulful Parent." The group will meet on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. through November.

"'Becoming a Soulful Parent' is a course that invites small groups of parents embracing their daily parenting struggles and rewards through the context of Jewish wisdom and community," says Rabbi Gordon. "The course allows parents to take the time out of their hectic lives to reflect honestly about the challenges and joys of parenting."

The course provides participants with:

- New insights into their role as parents
- Deepened awareness of their parenting and of their children
- Appreciation for their spouse's different parenting style
- A community of friends and co-travelers in the journey of parenting

For more information, please contact Rabbi Gordon at rgordon@hevreh.org

More Family Activities at Hevreh

Tot Shabbat

Monthly at 9 a.m., next session October 13. Start Saturdays with joyful Shabbat singing, movement, storytelling, and more! Rabbi Gordon, Rabbi Neil Hirsch and student cantor Shani Cohen (and their



Rabbi Jodie Gordon

special pals, Shluffy the Sloth and Barak-y Raccoon) look forward sharing Shabbat together with you and your family. As always, Hevreh welcome interfaith families, GLBTQ families, nursing moms, babies and siblings of all ages, grandparents and special people, new members, first timers, neighbors, and friends.

Tiny Talmidim

Monthly, Sundays at 9:15 a.m., next sessions October 14, November 11, and December 9. Teacher Terri Sash engages children and families in hands-on learning that is joyful, meaningful, and fun! This parent-child program is an interactive time of Jewish learning, activities, and snacks that is most appropriate for preschool-aged children or younger who are able to sit through a story and participate in activities.

Congregation Beth Israel to Celebrate Landmark Anniversary

NORTH ADAMS – All are invited to join in as Congregation Beth Israel (CBI) celebrates its 125th anniversary with a gala event on Saturday, October 20 beginning at 5:30 p.m.

CBI, originally House of Israel, began with the purchase of land in North Adams on May 26, 1893. Today's membership includes some one-hundred family, single and seasonal memberships and an active Hebrew School of twenty. The congregation is today led by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat with services also conducted by others, including Rabbi Pam Wax, former head rabbi of CBI.

On the gala evening, cocktails will be available from a cash bar, along with many exciting items in a silent auction to benefit the education of CBI's Hebrew School students and learners of all ages. Donors include MASS MoCA, the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Images Cinema, and local restaurants, artists, artisans and more from the talented and generous CBI community and beyond.

A brief havdallah ceremony will be followed by a celebratory dinner, with complimentary wine and live jazz entertainment by renowned guest artist Paul Green and his "Two Worlds" band. Green



is a celebrated classical, Jewish, and jazz-fusion musician whose music is deeply rooted in Jewish traditions, including Klezmer.

The presentation of the Jewish Star Award will cap the evening's event, as recognition for extraordinary service and commitment to CBI is given to Rabbi Rachel Barenblat and CBI Board Treasurer, Susan Hogan.

Tickets can be purchased by check (made out to Congre-

gation Beth Israel) or by credit card. Ticket prices are \$85 (Supporter) or \$125 (Benefactor), with a limited number of partially underwritten tickets available through the generosity of the Melcher Family Fund. Call the synagogue to find out about ticket availability.

Please contact Jack Hockridge at cbinadams@gmail.com or (413) 663-5830 for further information. Congregation Beth Israel is at 53 Lois Street, North Adams.

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

Special Kabbalat Shabbat Celebrations at Hevreh

GREAT BARRINGTON – This autumn, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire hosts several special Kabbalat Shabbat celebrations.

On Friday, October 19 at 6:15 p.m., join Rabbi Neil Hirsch and Rabbi Jodie Gordon for a special celebratory Shabbat to welcome the newest Hevreh members. Once a year, the congregation gathers for special songs, prayers and greetings to embrace those who have recently joined the community.

On Friday, October 26 at 6:15 p.m., Hevreh welcomes Rabbi Uri Regev of Hiddush (see cover story). The rabbis write: "[Rabbi Regev] is a passionate advocate for pluralism, and a profound teacher of Torah. Hevreh had the benefit of learning with him during our last

congregational trip to Israel, and we look forward to welcoming him to our community."

On Friday, November 2 at 6:15 p.m., all are welcome to a Community Shabbat sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, featuring a catered dinner and special abbreviated Shabbat service. Community Shabbat is free and open to the entire Hevreh community with advance RSVP. As always, Hevreh welcomes interfaith families, GLBTQ families, nursing moms, babies and siblings of all ages, grandparents and special people, new members, first timers, neighbors, and friends.

Please contact Hevreh at (413) 528-6378 for full details.

Circle Round for Storytelling at Hevreh

GREAT BARRINGTON – This November, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire presents a special live edition of WBUR's popular children's storytelling podcast, Circle Round.

The date and time of this event were not available at press time. Please contact Hevreh at (413) 528-6378 for full details.

Created and produced by West Stockbridge husband-and-wife team Eric Shimeloni and Rebecca Sheir, Circle Round takes folktales from around the world and adapts them into action-packed radio plays replete with original music, spectacular sound effects, and notable voices from the stage and screen.

Whether you're 3... or 103... this celebration of traditional storytelling is an event the entire family will enjoy. And – bonus – this performance will feature the talents of Hevreh congregants! They invite those interested to audition and help bring two Circle Round stories to life on stage:

- "Onions and Garlic," a Yiddish folktale that serves up a pungent lesson about ingenuity, humility, and greed.
- "The Prince in the Mirror," a classic Israeli story about the magical gifts that help a world-traveling princess make a very important decision.

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LOCAL NEWS

Working to Keep Holocaust Memories and Truths Alive

KI lunch and learn with Susan Kadar on October 27

PITTSFIELD – Susan Kadar, mother of Judith K. Weiner, the director of the Knesset Israel Education and Family Together programs, is also a full-time grandmother, an enthusiastic and committed volunteer for Jewish causes, and a semi-retired management consultant.

As a child of a Holocaust survivor, she feels passionate about the need to keep the memories and truths of that historical period alive. She has been working with the Sydney (Australia) Jewish Museum interpreting and translating documents from Hungarian to English. Through these old letters, postcards, diaries, and official documents, the victims and the survivors speak to us and to generations to come.

At the Lunch and Learn program on Saturday, October 27, following the Shabbat Service, Susan Kadar will share the stories of some of the people she has had the privilege



Susan Kadar

to know personally from their memorabilia. In particular, she will talk about the diary of Ida Benko, a survivor of Bergen Belsen and her journey back to her homeland, Hungary, and then to Sydney where she lived a successful and happy life.

Please reserve for lunch by calling (413) 445-4872, ext. 10.

Shabbat Mindfulness

Connecting Torah, guided meditations, and light yoga at TAA

PITTSFIELD – Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch of Temple Anshe Amunim will be offering a meditation and light yoga group at Temple Anshe Amunim beginning Saturday, October 20 at 9 a.m.

The five-week Shabbat meditation group will be inspired by each week's Torah portion and participants are welcome to stay and join the ever-popular Torah Plus study group that will immediately follow. Rabbi Liz will lead the guided meditation and light yoga for all ages and abilities – no prior experience necessary.

Rabbi Liz brings significant experience with mindfulness and meditation, particularly in a Jewish context. She participated in a three-year training cohort of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, the premier Jewish mindfulness organization. In the Boston area, she was a co-founder of Shira Yoga, a monthly Shabbat morning yoga minyan. She has led yoga and meditation under trees, in synagogues, at office

buildings, and through online platforms.

Rabbi Liz particularly enjoys weaving Jewish texts and concepts into her meditation practice. She says, "I had a yoga practice for many years when I realized that shavasana, the final five minutes of most yoga practices, which is spent in complete stillness and silence, was the hardest part for me! While I was moving and focused on holding different yoga positions, my mind had something to hold on to. Developing a meditation practice and learning to guide meditation myself has helped me become more calm, focused, and connected to Judaism on a spiritual level. Bringing meditation and yoga into the synagogue opens the door for those with a mindfulness practice to connect to Judaism, and those involved in the Jewish community to connect with mindfulness."

The group will meet for 30 minutes starting at 9 a.m. every Saturday from October 20



Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch

through November 17. No prior experience or athletic clothing is necessary to participate. Members, guests, and not-yet-members of Temple Anshe Amunim are all invited to join.

Temple Anshe Amunim is at 26 Broad Street in Pittsfield. For further information contact Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch by phone at (413) 442-5910, or email rabbiliz@ansheamunim.org.

You may request that the *Berkshire Jewish Voice* be mailed to your home. Just email us at federation@jewishberkshires.org for information.

Jewish Values and Trans Inclusivity

Co-founders of Bayit: Your Jewish Home to speak at three local congregations

Jewish perspectives on human rights, gender identity, and sexual orientation are more visible in the media today than ever before. How do Jewish texts deal with individuals whose sexuality is not as clear cut as that of Adam and Eve?

Specifically, what do Jewish texts say about trans inclusivity? Can the values we hold, as Americans and Jews, regarding human rights and individual dignity be reconciled with the wide spectrum of gender identity and sexual orientation in our society? The answer is "Yes," according to Rabbi Mike Moskowitz.

Rabbi Moskowitz is scholar-in-residence for Queer and Trans Jewish Studies at Congregation Beit Simchat Torah in New York City. He also co-founded, with Rabbi Rachel Barenblat of Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams, an organization called Bayit: Your Jewish Home.

In three different Berkshire venues in mid-October over two days of discussion, study, and insight, both rabbis will be addressing these questions and encourage attendance of the wider Berkshire community. The upcoming statewide ballot issue on transgender equality will also be examined.

The study sessions are:

- October 17, 7:30 p.m. at Congregation Beth Israel, 53 Lois Street, North Adams, (413) 663-5830.
- October 18, noon at Williams College Jewish Religious Center, 24 Stetson Court, Williamstown.
- October 18, 7:30 p.m. Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, (413) 445-4872.

Torah discussion and study will take place in each of these above sessions. Co-sponsored by Congregation Beth Israel, Knesset Israel, the Williams College Jewish Association, Keshet, and Congregation Beit Simchat Torah.



Rabbi Mike Moskowitz



Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

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BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

Traveling with Jewish Taste

Summer in the 49th state – Mincha/Maariv 'round midnight, Shacharit at 3 a.m., and compote opportunities in abundance

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



In Michael Chabon's award-winning novel, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, the author imagines a Yiddish-speaking safe haven for Jews following the collapse of the reborn State of Israel in 1948. That this refuge is in Sitka, Alaska makes for a fascinating look at the themes of exile and redemption.

And, since Joel and I recently returned from an eye-opening trip to Alaska, I've been thinking about the parallels between Alaska's indigenous peoples and the Jews. Both Jews and Native Alaskans have histories that reach back into antiquity, and family lore and traditional rites are handed down from generation

to generation. But both groups have had their lands taken from them, both have experienced discrimination by majority populations, and both have been persecuted, brutalized, and banished to reservations, ghettos, or concentration camps. The Jews, of course, were the victims of a strategically-planned genocide.

In Alaska, we saw exhibits, presentations, and ceremonies aimed at acknowledging the wrongs done to the natives by a succession of hunters and miners.

In Hoonah, a tiny village of 734 permanent residents tucked into an idyllic bay, we saw one of these ceremonies in preparation. I happened upon a woman sewing dozens of white buttons onto a large piece of black woolen fabric. She called it a healing blanket and, when I asked its purpose, she directed me to two

men outdoors. They were both carving totem poles for an upcoming ritual service to commemorate the peace made between their tribe and the National Park Service. The totem poles tell the history of the tribe, its achievements, its struggles with the Park Service, and the ultimate reconciliation.

And, of course, Jews and Native Alaskans have their traditional foods. Before grocery stores came to the state, Alaska Natives knew that during the very short summer they had to gather

all the food necessary to sustain themselves during the long, dark winter months. Some they stored in the permafrost (becoming less and less an option with climate change); some they preserved by smoking. Some they canned. (Grocery stores, by the way, are very expensive – as in 89¢ for an ear of corn – so hunting, fishing, and gathering, are still important methods of obtaining food.)

In every gallery and museum we visited, I saw photos, paintings, sculpture, and video documenting the vitally-important task of catching and preserving food. One particular photograph at the Morris Thompson Cultural Center in Fairbanks (a must-see) depicted an elderly woman teaching her grandchildren how to smoke salmon, passing down the tradition much as we pass down recipes for rugelach and brisket.

While Alaska is covered in ice and snow for much of the year, the state does have a summer – short, to be sure, but with very long sunlit days, making for prolific gardens and farms. (For example, on July 1, the sun rose in Fairbanks at 3:22 a.m. and set at 12:25 a.m.) Cabbages reach the size of basketballs on steroids. Sunflowers stretch to the eaves.

And, like every growing thing, the state itself is enormous. Denali National Park is the size of New Hampshire. Hubbard Glacier is almost one-and-a-half times the size of Berkshire County. And Alaskans love to tell you that if you were to cut the state in half, Texas would be only the third largest state.

Among other things Alaska does large is berries. Bushes of many varieties of wild berries blanket the country: blueberries, cranberries, raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, currants, crowberries, and even salmon roe look-a-like salmonberries. Jars of preserves line the shelves of every gift shop; cobblers, pies, and

tarts are on every menu; and every breakfast buffet features fruit salads chock full of the colorful gems. In fact, berry bushes are so prevalent that we were rewarded even on casual walks with raspberries and salmonberries, ours for the picking – giant, like everything else in the state, and absolutely delicious.

Mixed Berry Crisp

Because it calls for coconut oil instead of butter, this dessert is the perfect ending to a meat meal. It will serve 6 to 8, depending on your family's *fress*-ability. It can also be easily doubled.



Ingredients:

1/3 cup granulated sugar
3 tablespoons cornstarch
6 cups mixed berries of your choice

For topping:

1/3 cup sliced almonds
3/4 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
6 T. coconut oil

Preheat oven to 375°F. and coat a 2-quart shallow baking dish with vegetable spray.

In a bowl stir together sugar and flour.

Add blueberries to sugar mixture, tossing well, and spread mixture in baking dish.

Make topping:

In a bowl whisk together cornstarch and sugars.

With your fingers or a pastry blender blend coconut oil into flour mixture until mixture resembles coarse meal.

Add almonds and toss well.

Squeeze handfuls of topping together and coarsely crumble in chunks over filling.

Bake until crisp and bubbling, about 40 minutes.

Serve warm.

Carol Goodman Kaufman is a psychologist and author with a passion for travel and food. She is currently at work on a food history/cookbook, tracing the paths that some of our favorite foods have taken from their origins to appear on dinner plates and in cultural rites and artifacts around the world. She invites readers to read her blog at carolgoodmankaufman.com and to follow her on Twitter @goodmankaufman.

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OBITUARIES

Shirley Vorspan, 93, accomplished artist

NEW PALTZ, NY – Shirley Vorspan, 93, born April 25, 1925, passed away on Monday, August 27, after courageously battling Alzheimer's disease over the past few years.

Her memory will be cherished by her husband, Al, after 72 years of a uniquely loving and tender marriage. She will be dearly missed by her children and their partners, Chuck and Emily, Robby and Brian, Kenny and Reva, and Debby. Her eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren will carry her in their hearts forever — Emily, Ben, Zach, Sam, Jonah, Noah, Emmett, and Becca; and Jack and Audrey. Shirley will be forever loved, as well, by her large and loving extended family, many of whom have relocated to New Paltz in the past 10 years.

In addition to her roles as loving wife, mother, and grandmother, Shirley was an accomplished artist. In the mid 70s, the family bought a beautiful, yet neglected old house in Hillsdale, NY, which Shirley and Al transformed into a hub for the extended family that gathered there regularly as the grandchildren grew up. Shirley's deep and delightful aesthetic sense is evident in virtually every corner of the house and property.

She began her artistic career as a painter and sculptor and worked in the Reproductions Department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the first of its kind at a major museum in the US. Later, she transitioned to pottery, working for many years at the renowned Greenwich House Studio in New York City's Greenwich Village. In the 1970s, Shirley developed a small business based on research, design, and production of her original adaptations of ancient board games from around the world.

For the past five years, Shirley and Al have lived at Woodland Pond, where they have made many strong and lasting friendships that have enriched their lives and the lives of those around them. A retrospective of Shirley's artwork, spanning close to 50 years, was presented at Woodland Pond this past February.

Shirley's great love, and her appreciation and attention to beauty and family, will be with us forever.

Funeral Services were held on Thursday, August 30 at Copeland Funeral Home, New Paltz, NY, followed by burial at New Paltz Rural Cemetery.

Donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America, 322 Eighth Avenue, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10001 or <https://alzfdn.org/support-us/donate/>

Herbert Bennett Cohan, 92, devoted philanthropist

PALM BEACH GARDENS, FL – Herbert Bennett Cohan, 92, died on Tuesday, August 28.

Born on June 16, 1926 in Worcester, MA to Sophie and Joseph B. Cohan, he was a US Navy World War II veteran and a graduate of Syracuse University, Class of 1949.

Herbert was a CPA and for-

mer president and chairman of the board of Joseph B. Cohan and Associates, Certified Public Accountants. Under his leadership the company grew to become one of the premiere accounting firms in New England. He retired in 1998 at age 72.

Herbert was a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants, a Paul Harris Fellow in the Worcester Rotary Club, and a Mason. He was also a public adjuster.

A devoted philanthropist, he was chairman of the Worcester Memorial Auditorium for 23 years; chairman of the Worcester Housing Policy Committee; and chairman of the Israeli Bond Drive. Herbert was also treasurer of the United Way of Central Massachusetts; of the Worcester Economic Club; and of the Worcester Jewish Federation. He was on the board of directors of the Worcester Memorial Auditorium, Temple Emmanuel, Hahnemann Hospital, March of Dimes, Massachusetts Housing Partnership, Worcester Housing Partnership, United Way of Central Massachusetts, Worcester Jewish Federation, Red Cross, and YMCA Health Club. Herbert was also one of the founders of Temple Sinai in Worcester.

After he retired, he divided his time between his residence in Palm Beach Gardens, FL, and a vacation home in the Berkshires. During retirement, he was a Guardian Ad Litem and a Pro Bono Mediator in the Florida Courts. He played golf and tennis daily.

Herbert is survived by his wife of over 50 years, Jayne Cohan, and his son and four daughters: Robert D. Cohan and his wife Phuli Cohan of Newton, MA; Linda Cohan and her husband Christian (Kim) Herter of Gloucester, MA; Debbi Overbeck and her husband Charles Overbeck of Wilmington, NC; Beth Cohan of Palm Beach Gardens, FL; and Alyson Nathan and her husband Gregory Nathan of Palm Beach Gardens, FL. He has 12 grandchildren and two great grandchildren. He is also survived by his sister Judy Feldman and his brother Paul Cohan, both of Long Boat Key, FL. He was predeceased by his daughter Stacy Cohan, who passed away in 1977.

Services were held at the Star of David Funeral Home, West Palm Beach, FL. Memorial contributions may be made to the Cancer Center of South Florida, 11382 Prosperity Farms Road, Suite 228, Palm Beach Gardens, FL33410.

James Joseph Orlow, 82, longtime immigration attorney

ARDMORE, PA – James Joseph Orlow, 82, an immigration lawyer in Philadelphia for a half-century, died Thursday, August 23, of cardiac arrest at Lankenau Medical Center. He was a partner in various law firms for 57 years, but the high point of his career was in 1983, when he became a partner in Orlow, Fuller, Rubin & Steele, a firm with offices in

five cities, including Philadelphia.

In numerous cases, especially during the 1980s, Orlow Fuller challenged the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service on behalf of a client. The federal agency is now U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Starting in 1965, Mr. Orlow limited his practice to immigration and citizenship issues, and frequently accepted very complex referral cases from other lawyers, according to an online biography.

Both of his parents, Abram Orlow and Lena Orlow Ginsburg, had been immigration lawyers in Philadelphia. Their law firm, Orlow & Orlow PC, was founded in 1928. Both served as president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, as their son would do in 1974.

Even at age 82, Mr. Orlow maintained an active practice, representing clients in immigration court, and continuing to mentor new leaders.

Born in Philadelphia, Mr. Orlow graduated from Central High School in 1952. He received a bachelor's degree in economics from the Wharton School in 1956 and a degree from the Harvard Law School in 1959.

That same year, he enlisted in the Navy. He served in the Judge Advocate General's Corps, the law arm of the Navy, and attained the rank of captain. He was based at Port Deposit, MD, and later at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard.

He was a longtime board member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

Mr. Orlow enjoyed woodworking, model trains, and sailing in the Chesapeake Bay.

He was a longtime member of the Temple Beth Hillel-Beth El Chavurah Minyan in Wynnewood, a lay-run group within the synagogue.

Mr. Orlow was the husband of Eve (nee Katz), of Ardmore; father of Arielle (Doron) Hende, Daniel Katz (Susan Switzer) Orlow, Dr. Michael Katz (Rabbi Sara) Paasche-Orlow, and Rabbi Avi Katz (Cantor Adina Frydman) Orlow; brother of the late David Orlow; brother-in-law of Rachel Katz Cogan; and is also survived by 14 grandchildren.

Graveside services with full military honors were held Sunday, August 26. Memorial donations may be made to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society of Southeastern Pennsylvania, 2100 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 or www.hiaspa.org.

Irving Kronenberg, academic and health care career

STOCKBRIDGE – Irving Kronenberg died on Saturday, August 18, with his wife Norma by his side.

A 32-year resident of Stockbridge, Irving was born in Bronx, NY, and attended New York University, where he received both his bachelors of science and masters in Public Administration. Early in his career, he was a physical therapist who worked with the last 100 iron lung polio patients in NYC.

After an academic career

as the associate dean of Allied Health Professions at SUNY Downstate School of Medicine, he transitioned to health care administration and was CEO of not-for-profit long term care facilities that provided SNF, Rehab, nursing home, hospice and respite care (Jewish Home for the Aged, Providence, RI, and Hebrew Home and Hospital, West Hartford, CT). He was a pioneer in elder and hospice services; he created adult day care programs and co-founded the Hospice of Rhode Island in the 1970s. He had a distinguished career in health facility planning, and education and advocacy for the physically handicapped, disenfranchised and the elderly.

He held faculty appointments at the College of Medicine at SUNY Downstate, Brown University School of Medicine, and the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, and lectured at many other colleges and universities.

Irving lived a beautiful life. He met his Norma when he was 19, and together they had a loving 62-year marriage filled with laughter, travel, tennis, music, food, the New York Yankees, and enjoyment of the Berkshires. He was consumed with pride in his children and grandchildren: Dr. Frannie Kronenberg (Dr. Edward Peters, Carlie and Sarah Peters), Robert Kronenberg (Robbie Bogard and Adam Kronenberg), and David Kronenberg, Esq. (Jaci Flug, Esq., Abby and Rachel Kronenberg).

He was a voracious reader, a self-taught musician who could pick up any instrument and play a tune, and in his later years, a prolific writer. He was an amazing teller of jokes, particularly Jewish jokes and those with a long set-up. His influence, presence and love will be missed.

Graveside services were held Tuesday, August 21 at the Stockbridge Cemetery, Stockbridge, MA. Kindly consider donating to Hope Hospice of RI (<https://www.hopehealthco.org/ways-to-give/donatenow/donate-in-rhode-island/>), to the Southern Poverty Law Center (<https://donate.splcenter.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=1367>), or to other similar organizations that promote civil rights, social justice, and freedom of choice – values and ideals he upheld.

Gisela Lawton, 92, volunteering brought great joy

NEW YORK, NY – Gisela Lawton, 92, former volunteer at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, passed away Tuesday, May 8, 2018.

Born February 3, 1926, in the free state of Danzig, now known as Gdansk, Poland, as Gisela Troman, she attributed her loyalty, generosity, and work ethic to her father, Charles. Gisela's love of the arts came from her mother, Renata, who was a devotee of theater, dance, and music. Gisela took dance classes as a child, and performed professionally with a children's dance group. She reminisced that her favorite part of dancing was the applause. Her family suffered from anti-Semitism in the 1930s, and

despite narrowly escaping the Holocaust, the family was permanently separated. She lived in Palestine for many years, married, and had a daughter, Alisa. Palestine became Israel the same year Alisa was born.

Gisela and Alisa moved to the United States in 1953. Gisela reunited with her father, who had remarried and had a second daughter, Rita. After her divorce, Gisela worked many different jobs to support herself and her daughter, finally becoming a paraprofessional for special education students. This turned out to be her calling. She was beloved by her colleagues, administrators, and especially her students. Gisela saved money whenever she could, and purchased a cabin in Peru, MA. That cottage became the family hub and vacation home, providing a home base for exploring the Berkshires.

Gisela remarried in 1974, to Harry Lawton. The two lived and worked in New York City. Gisela was a loving stepmother to Harry's children, Connie, Patrick, and Spencer. One year later, Gisela was delighted to gain a son-in-law, Jeffrey. In addition to her full-time job and active involvement in the lives of her granddaughters, Francie and Julie, Gisela always had a side gig. She made jewelry, designed clothing, made custom chocolates, and threw children's birthday parties.

Volunteering brought her great joy. She volunteered at Tanglewood, taught yoga to senior citizens, taught English to Haitian immigrants, and delivered meals on wheels. Most of her time, however, was spent caring for her husband in his last years. After Harry passed, Gisela continued to volunteer as long as she was healthy enough to do so.

Gisela conducted every stage of her life with great dignity and compassion. She reached out to people who had less and everyone she knew was a repeat recipient of her homemade jam, key lime pies, cheesecakes, and challah. She was always proud of being Jewish, but she felt more comfortable in nature than in a temple. She took her daughter and granddaughters hiking all over the Berkshires and shared her love of nature and the arts with her family. She maintained lifelong friendships, including childhood friends still living in Israel. Gisela felt fortunate to enjoy spending time with her great-granddaughters: Devora, Basya, Miriam, and Shifra. She loved being around young people, especially children, and considered herself young even in her eighties and nineties.

Gisela will be greatly missed by her family and friends, who are forever changed for having known her. When asked for one piece of advice, Gisela was consistent: "Do what you want to do today, because tomorrow is promised to no one."

Funeral services were held on Wednesday, May 9 at Sinai Chapels, Fresh Meadows, NY. Burial was at Beth Moses

OBITUARIES

OBITUARIES, continued from page 20

Cemetery, West Babylon, NY.

Donations may be made to UJA Federation of New York, 130 East 59th Street, New York, NY 10022 or Alzheimer's Foundation of America, 322 Eighth Avenue, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10001.

Shirley Kravitz, 94, passion for service to the Jewish community

AVENTURA, FL – Shirley Kravitz, 94, passed away Thursday, September 6.

Born in Brooklyn, NY on May 4, 1924, her parents of blessed memory were Solomon Malsky and Mollie Malsky. She had two brothers, Murray Malsky (deceased) and Herbert Malsky of Belmont, MA.

In 1943, she met the love of her life, Herbert Kravitz. Herbert joined the Navy, went to serve in the North Atlantic, returned with little notice and as Shirley often said she "married a sailor on a three-day leave" on March 21, 1944. It was the beginning of a great romance.

They lived in Brooklyn for 14 years where they had their three children, Steven, Ellen, and Marlene. The family moved to South Florida in 1958 where Herbert and Shirley raised their children, saw them each graduate college, marry and have their own children. They were married for 37 years until Herbert's untimely passing in 1981.

Herbert and Shirley shared a passion for service to the Jewish community and the survival of Israel. They were founding members of Beth Torah Congregation where Shirley has been a congregant for 60 years. They visited Israel for the first time during the

Yom Kippur War. That visit transformed them into lifetime activists in support of Israel.

After Herbert's death, Shirley continued this work on behalf of Israel, participated in missions to Israel and found her place in important leadership positions in the Jewish community in the years to come, where she received the honor of a Life Membership in the Women's Board at the South Broward Jewish Federation.

She was a great lady, always young at heart, with a great sense of humor and the kindest of dispositions. She always cared for others with great compassion.

In 2003, she was honored with the Eshet Chayil Award from the South Broward Federation. She was a true Woman of Valor. But most of all, Shirley loved and cherished her family. Family was everything to her. She was so proud of her children and their spouses. She adored her grandchildren, each of whom she saw graduated from college and happily married. Most amazing and treasured by her were her eight great-grandchildren, two of whom she lived to see enrolled in college. She was so fortunate to have these blessings, appreciate them, and share them every day in spirit with her beloved Herbert.

Shirley is survived by her three children, Ellen (Larry) Elbrand, Steven (Wendy) Kravitz, Marlene (Michael) Olin; six grandchildren, Mark (Jonathan) Kravitz, Joseph (Stephanie) Kravitz, Jennifer (David) Chase, Michele (Jarad) Scher, Jonathan (Lisa) Olin, and Rachel (Ken) Levy; and eight

great-grandchildren.

Chapel service took place on, Friday, September 7 at Levitt Weinstein, North Miami Beach, with interment at Lakeside Memorial Park.

Donations may be made to The Herbert and Shirley Kravitz Family Philanthropic Fund at the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, 4200 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, FL 33137.

Sima Berezkina, dedicated life to helping others

PITTSFIELD – Sima Berezkina was born in Rogachev, Belarus in 1929 and was married to her loving husband Boris (deceased 1999) for over 40 years. She is predeceased by her brothers, Yakov and Samuel, who perished in battle during World War II.

Sima immigrated to United States in 1989 with her family and settled in Pittsfield, where she was an active member of the community. She spent most of her professional life as an operator of a food distribution center in Belarus.

After settling in America, Sima dedicated her life to helping others. She was a babysitter, a teacher, a leader and a friend to everyone who knew her. Sima loved life and lived to create joy for others. Most of the time, she was cooking and hosting gatherings at her home. Sima was devoted to her family, friends and community.

Sima is survived by her best friend and brother, Alexey Berezkin. She was a loving mother to her children, Alla Zernitskaya and Yakov Zernitsky; proud grandmother to Nadia Zernitskaya, Igor Zernitsky, Maksim Zernitsky, Yevgeny Kutik; and a devoted great-grandmother to Daniel,

Gabriel, Maya, Sasha, and Ori.

Funeral services took place Sunday, September 16 at Knesset Israel with Rabbi David Weiner, Spiritual Leader, officiating. Burial followed at Knesset Israel Cemetery.

Contributions can be made to Pittsfield High School Chamber Orchestra in care of the Flynn & Dagnoli-Bencivenga Funeral Home, 5 Elm Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

Marion R. Imber, 97, donated time and skills

LEE – Marion R. Imber, 97, passed away peacefully on Friday, April 6 at Berkshire Medical Center.

Born in Berlin on August 1, 1920, she attended schools in Germany and later across Europe.

Marion was owner and operator of her own business, mostly dealing in the import and export of household items. One of her passions was donating her time and skills to Habitat for Humanity, decorating homes. She enjoyed designing different types of genres, one of which were the gardens that will be enjoyed for many years to come at some of her previous residences, where she always planted her signature Red Maple.

Marion is survived by her three children, Karen Thiel of Washington, NC; Arnold Imber of Stamford, CT; and Linda Melson of Waynesboro, VA.

Gertrude "Trudy" Moskowitz, 88, active with many organizations

LENOX – Gertrude "Trudy" Moskowitz, 88, a loving mother and grandmother, dedicated teacher, and active member of the Jewish community passed away on Friday, September 7, at her home at Kimball Farms.

The daughter of Louis and Rose Honigbaum, she was predeceased by her brother, Nathan.

A resident of Pittsfield for 60 years, she was an avid reader and never reticent to share her opinion about current events or the many performances and cultural activities she enjoyed in the Berkshires. Proud of her roots in Brooklyn, NY, she was a graduate of James Madison High School and earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Brooklyn College.

A teacher of French in the Pittsfield Public Schools, she was also an active and longtime member of Pittsfield College Club, the League of Women Voters and B'nai B'rith Women.

Trudy is survived by her husband, Norman Moskowitz, with whom she would have celebrated their 67th anniversary on September 9. She also leaves her daughter Linda Noonan and her husband Robert of Boston and South Egremont; her son Ira Moskowitz and his wife Osnat of Modi'in, Israel; and grandchildren Madeline (Benjamin) Noonan Olson; Shira (Roie) Moskowitz Zaifer; Tomer (Adi) Moskowitz; Matthew Noonan and his fiancée Elizabeth Harmuth; and Ori Moskowitz. She cherished her four great-grandchildren, Hila and Shai Zaifer, Tal Moskowitz, and Max Olson, who brought her great joy.

A funeral service was held on Wednesday, September 12 at Knesset Israel in Pittsfield, where Trudy was a congregant for sixty-two years.

Donations to honor Trudy's memory may be made to Tanager Hillel at Brooklyn College, 2901 Campus Road, Brooklyn, NY 11210.

BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

Robert Crumb's Genesis and the Binding of Isaac

A strange comic book *midrash* on a foundational Jewish story

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a version of a d'var Torah delivered on Rosh Hashanah at Knesset Israel six years ago, published now because after four overstuffed editions of campaign/Berkshire summer/High Holy Day papers, our larder of stories is rather bare. It is a reflection on the binding of Isaac story that appears in Parshat Vayera, to be read this year on October 27.

Every year, I reread this fantastic comic book titled *The Book of Genesis*, illustrated by Robert Crumb, the dean of American comic book artists who started his career in the 1960s creating far-out counterculture characters like Mr. Natural and Fritz the Cat. Published in 2009, the comic book *Genesis* employs as its text the brilliant rendering of *Sefer Berashit* in English by the dean of biblical translators, Robert Alter. It is a fantastic fit of sensibilities.

"All 50 chapters!" trumpets the book's cover – "Nothing left out!" The dust jacket also adds a warning appropriate for any edition of the Torah: "Adult supervision recommended for

minors."

No matter how you come to the Torah, Crumb's drawings are a lot of fun, and serve as kind of a strange *midrash* to the text. Most entertainingly for me, Crumb draws at least one portrait of every personage named in *Genesis*, no matter how minor, and so if you ever craved an image of Esau's wife Oholibamah, or Benjamin's sons Muppim and Huppim, here is your chance.

Crumb draws the Almighty using the familiar Western image of a stern elder with a long grey beard and flowing robes and, this being *Genesis*, Crumb depicts the Almighty's many encounters with human beings. Art from many cultures shows humans encountering the Supreme Being – we may see people praying reverently or jubilantly rejoicing or moved to deep transcendent ecstasy. The biblical characters drawn by Robert Crumb, however, share one expression on their faces when they encounter the Almighty, an expression that can be summed up in two words: "*Oy, gevalt!*" Verisimilitude, that.

Parshat Vayera gives us the Torah's *oy gevalt* moment

without parallel – the story of the *Akedah*, the binding of Isaac. Given the intimacy of the father-son bond and the clinical human agency demanded in the horror that might unfold, there is nothing in the Torah that feels so outrageous as God telling Abraham to offer his son as a blood sacrifice.

Re-told and analyzed over millennia, the scene has lost none of its visceral power to disturb. I'll give you a for-instance – when I have trouble sleeping, I will use my awake time to think out my writing assignments. After pondering the *Akedah* in great depth one wakeful night, I finally fell back asleep only to dream about being separated from my six-year-old son on a train. I searched desperately, but was unable to find him. Finally, I awoke with a start, and found myself sweat-drenched and trembling.

Truly, the *Akedah* is the stuff of our deepest nightmares, forever utterly mysterious.

Unpacking the story does not enable us to penetrate its inscrutability – in fact, quite the opposite. Abraham has

been told by God that through Isaac, his offspring will become a great nation. The Almighty, however, interrupts Abraham's peaceful old age to put him to the test. The questions that arose for me are: What kind of character is Abraham, and why is this specifically Abraham's test? As entrances and exits in the Torah are always very important in defining a character, I decided to look at the beginning and end of Abraham's story for clues.

Abram's first words in the Torah are not addressed to God, but rather spoken to his wife, Sarai, in Egypt, where the still childless couple has fled to escape the famine that is ravaging the divinely-promised land of abundance that their divinely-promised multitude of offspring will inherit. Does Abram assure Sarai to trust in God to bring them through this trial? No – he tells his beautiful wife to pretend she is his sister so that Pharaoh will not kill him, indeed so that things may "go well" for him because of her desirability. In a marital context, his request is devastating – in the comic book *Genesis*,

Robert Crumb draws a tear trickling down Sarai's cheek as she listens to her husband.

When we last encounter Abraham, near the end of his life, he instructs a trusted servant to journey to his birthplace of Nahor to bring Isaac back a bride. In doing so, Abraham reviews the overall terms of the covenant with God, but feels it necessary to adamantly insist *twice* that the servant "must not bring [his] son back there," as if worried that he might have missed something in the small print. This is Abraham's last recorded utterance and, like his first, it reflects anxiousness.

Abraham's attitude toward God at both the start and end of his story reminds of a remark by Groucho Marx, who once told a friend: "Richard, I have nothing but confidence in you – and precious little of that." This, I think, is why the sacrifice of Isaac is Abraham's particular test.

The *Akedah* story is often spun as a demonstration of supreme faith, but even early commentary is sharply divided about whether Abraham would

R. CRUMB'S GENESIS,
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OCTOBER

Monday, 8 10:45 a.m., "The Process of Aging," with therapist, Maggie Bittman. **Lunch: Stir fried chicken**, egg drop soup, salad, brown rice, rolls, tropical fruit salad, and tea.**

Tuesday, 9 **Brisket leftovers**, chef's choice of potatoes, asparagus cuts n tips, salad, Challah, grapes, and tea.**

Thursday, 11 10:45 a.m., "A Bintel Brief: A Staged Reading." **Lunch: Tuna noodle casserole, tomato juice, rolls, ice cream and cookies, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.**

Monday, 15 10:45 a.m., "Jewish Germany – Its History and Legacy." **Lunch: Shepherd's pie**, mashed potatoes, corn, salad, rye bread, fruit cocktail and tea.**

Tuesday, 16 **Veal stew**, chef's choice of juice, noodles, Italian bread, pears and tea.**

Thursday, 18 10:45 a.m., "Current Affairs," with Professor Emeritus Steven J. Rubin. **Lunch: Roasted vegetable pizza, cream of mushroom soup, broccoli, peaches, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.**

Monday, 22 10:45 a.m., The Sunday Strummers Ukulele Ensemble. **Lunch: Beef stew**, noodles, salad, potato bread, tropical fruit salad, and tea.**

Tuesday, 23 **Roasted chicken**, noodle soup, broccoli, multi-grain bread, applesauce, and tea.**

Thursday, 25 10:45 a.m., "Music as Mid-rash." **Lunch: Macaroni and cheese, stewed tomatoes, salad, whole wheat bread, raspberry pillow cookies, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.**

Monday, 29 10:45 a.m., "Love Shouldn't Hurt: Responding to Relational Violence in our Community." **Lunch: Stuffed cabbage casserole**, brown rice, baby carrots, marble rye bread, apricots, and tea.**

Tuesday, 30 **Turkey piccata**, lentil soup, asparagus cuts n tips, rice pilaf, Challah, parve cookies, and tea.**

NOVEMBER

Thursday, 1 10:45 a.m., "A Mystic's Guide to Prayer," with Rabbi Seth Wax, Jewish Chaplain at Williams College. **Lunch: Fresh fish**, mushroom soup, noodle kugel, mixed vegetables, oat bread, pudding, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.**

Monday, 5 10:45 a.m., "Taking Action for Animals," with Susan Emerson Clapp, Senior Director of Philanthropy for the Humane Society of the US (HSUS). **Lunch: Meat loaf**, noodle soup, mashed potatoes, peas & carrots, rye bread, mandarin oranges, and tea.**

Tuesday, 6 **Chicken fajitas**, yellow rice, flour tortilla, parve cookies, and tea.**

Thursday, 8 10:45 a.m., Chair Yoga, with Linda Novick. **Lunch: Roasted turkey**, pumpkin soup, peas & pearl onions, mashed potatoes, salad, cranberry sauce, apple dumplings, and tea.**

Monday, 12 10:45 a.m., "This is Life in Israel: An Inter-religious Dialogue." **Lunch: Northern Indian lamb meatballs**, rice, mixed vegetables, naan, tropical fruit salad, and tea.**

Tuesday, 13 **Spaghetti and "sausage" sauce#, salad, mixed vegetables, Italian bread, parve cookies, and tea.**

Thursday, 15 10:45 a.m., "Current Affairs," with Professor Emeritus Steven J. Rubin. **Lunch: Vegetable lasagna, salad, beets, garlic bread, grapes, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.**

Monday, 19 10:45 a.m., "The Process of Aging," with therapist Maggie Bittman. **Lunch: Chicken pot pie#, peas & carrots, spinach, multi-grain bread, applesauce, and tea.**

Tuesday, 20 **Grilled cheese and tuna, minestrone soup, mixed vegetables, whole wheat bread, pudding, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.**

Monday, 26 Program to be Announced. **Lunch: Beef chili**, salad, brown rice, oat bread, pears, and tea.**



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NEWS

MACHAL, *continued from page 24*

butcher directed me to the newly-opened Israeli embassy. A secretary at the embassy wrote an address on a slip of paper and handed it to me silently. Two young Israelis in a bare room near the Arc de Triomphe questioned me, then sent me to three different Jewish physicians for a physical examination. A few days later, I was on a train to Marseilles with two other American volunteers, Frank Perlman, 28, of Pittsburgh and Jack Shulman, 20, of the Bronx. (Jack Shulman was killed in the fight for Beer-sheba.) Both Frank and Jack were veterans of World War II studying at the Sorbonne on G.I. Bill scholarships. All three of us now had fake Displaced Persons (DP) papers instead of our American passports. My new name was "Zeretch Itscovitch."

Lowenstein added: "I cast my lot with 600,000 people with a will to survive. My mother came close to having a nervous breakdown. But all was forgiven when I returned to the U.S." Ralph was later drafted by the U.S.

Army during the Korean War. **(Tom) Derek Bowden** was 17 when he was sent to Mandate Palestine in 1938 by the English. He was regular British Army and served under the famed Pro-Zionist Christian British officer, Orde Wingate. Wingate taught the Jews to overcome their timidity, not to wait with *savlanut* – restraint – for the nightly attacks by Arab marauders and bandits. He

taught the Jews to defend themselves – fight at night, and find the enemy before they find you.

Having seen what the Jews were accomplishing in Palestine, Bowden became a Zionist. As World War II broke out, Bowden was an officer. During a key battle in Syria against the Vichy French, his leg was badly wounded. In the same battle, his sergeant, Moshe Dayan, lost an eye.

Bowden was invalided back to England. He recovered and became a hard-as-nails paratrooper officer. September 1944, Bowden parachuted into Arnhem – Operation Market



Smoky Simon (SA - Chief of Air Operations) and Derek Bowden (UK Paratrooper)

Garden – a bold idea to short circuit the war in Europe. It was a British disaster. Bowden, wounded again, was captured by the Germans.

Bowden was interrogated by German officers. Cordial at first, until they found letters on him from former Jewish girlfriends in Palestine, the Germans morphed into Nazis.

"When he saw the papers, he told me he would show me

how the Germans treated the Jews," remembered Bowden. "I was sent for a month to Bergen-Belsen." His job was carrying corpses from the Jewish barracks, piling them onto carts and tipping them into pits for burning.

Bowden resigned his commission in the British Army in 1947. With surprising ease, he made his way to Palestine to fight for the Jews. Derek went to Cyprus then on an air charter to Haifa. With only a slip of paper, he made his way to an IDF recruiter in Haifa. Three days later, he was sworn into the army.

Derek commanded a 30 man anti-tank unit of South Africans and later larger units. He took the name Captain David Appel after a Jewish family he knew well, and because he could write apple in Hebrew. After the war, Derek – now known as Captain Appel – founded the IDF Parachute School. He wrote the manual of operations and was the leadership in the development of the *Tzanchanim* – the Israeli Paratroop brigade. The paratroopers were the key to the 1956 Sinai War victory and the 1967 taking of Ammunition Hill.

I met Derek Bowden at his home in Diss, England recently. He could not come to the Machal dedication because of health, though he wanted to. On December 17, 2017, Derek turned 96.

I asked why he helped the Jews. A blue and gold bible, with a large Cross on the cover, lay on a table not far from where he sat. He said he needed to be part of what God had started, the rebirth of the Jewish state, the first in 2,000 years.

Leon (Jimmy) Kante was a South African volunteer. He was part of "The South African 800" who came to fight for Israel. South African Jewry had 1/50th the Jewish population of the United States, but the South African Jewish community actively sent Jews to fight. The United States and Canadian Jewry, combined, sent fewer than 1,200. In WWII, Kante escaped a POW camp and

fought with the partisans in Italy. Kante served in Israel's elite commando unit. During one vicious fight, he was severely wounded and was evacuated for care.

Naomi Levin was an American-trained nurse and a Zionist. She had family who lived on a kibbutz. Refusing to stay safely at home in the States, the rational response, she volunteered to the IDF.

Bashert...perhaps. Levin was a nurse in Kante's hospital. After the war, they married and moved back to the US to raise their family. Indeed, most Machal volunteers returned to their homes. They had come to do a job and they did it. Ben Gurion thought they had betrayed Zionism when they left.

The names of volunteers, some of which have been made famous in movies and books, are mostly known only on spreadsheets and to their families.

Last December 17, beginning near the Western Wall, under the shadow of the Al Aqsa Mosque, on the fifth night of Chanukah, 700



Leon (Jimmy) Kante and Naomi Levin Kante

soldiers began a Torch Run to Ammunition Hill. Amidst fireworks, hundreds and hundreds of onlookers, members of Machal, volunteers – many former lone soldiers who came to help in every year and every decade of Israel's existence, assembled. A giant menorah was lit by Mayor Barkat on the steps of Ammunition Hill, a site of deep meaning where the Israeli Paratroopers, in bitter hand to hand fighting, captured the doorway to the Old City in 1967. Amidst fireworks, music and passions no longer forgotten, the Old Maccabees were celebrated by the New Maccabees as the Machal Memorial was dedicated. Now, 200,000 visitors a year will see "The Machal."

Jerry Klinger is president of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation. A version of this story appeared on his Times of Israel blog in January 2018. For more on the society's work and ongoing projects, please visit www.Jashp.org. For more on Machal, please visit www.machal.org.il

(PHOTO COURTESY OF DONNA KANTE PARKER)

R. CRUMB'S GENESIS, *continued from page 21*

have sacrificed Isaac had the Almighty not intervened. There are several hints in the text that he would not have done so – consider just one, the subtle literary touch of Abraham giving Isaac the wood to carry to the altar, while he ports the dangerous items, the knife and the fire. Even the dehumanizing gesture of binding Isaac can be read as theater of cruelty performed so that God might recognize the repulsiveness of what has been asked. I think there is enough in the text to at least float the possibility that Abraham was instead engaged in brinkmanship with God in order to make a point, and had no intention of killing his son.

The *Akedah*, one of the central events in Jewish history, is maddeningly ambiguous. While the drama around human sacrifice draws our emotional attention, this is also the point in the story where God seals his covenant with Abraham, the most consequential event in the relationship between God and his chosen people until Mt. Sinai. At this moment, when everything should be clear, nothing is – Abraham's intentions are ambiguous, Isaac (in his

first recorded words) expresses bewilderment, and from the panicked urgency of His messenger's call – "Abraham! Abraham!" – perhaps God's expectations have also been confounded. There is too much uncertainty for uncertainty not to be central to this story, and by extension, at the heart of the relationship between God and man.

I think the *Akedah* story obliquely imparts two messages about the human condition that address this uncertainty, one delivered by God to Abraham, the other by Abraham to God. These messages, once delivered, allow the covenant to be made.

Human sacrifice – to us, B-movie stuff, but anthropological studies demonstrate that every early literate culture has performed these bloody rituals, and so too will depraved Israelites later in the Bible. And there was a reason for such rites, explicated by Joseph Campbell, whom I here paraphrase – to fit our human lives into the cycle of life and rebirth we observe in nature through a ritual dealing of death that will enhance the life of the community. Is Abraham being tested to show his willingness to perform such a sacrifice, or his willingness to reject it? Just as

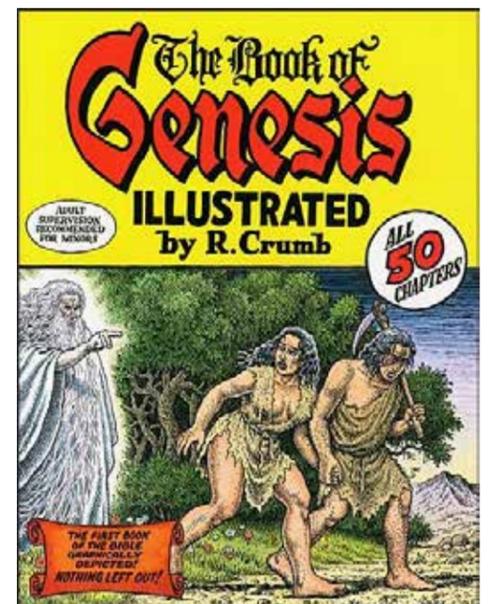
Abraham never states what he would have done, neither can we be certain how God expected him to pass the test – all we get is a hint of how unsettled God was by "Abraham! Abraham!"

Some *midrash* holds that since, after this episode, God no longer speaks to Abraham, we may infer that Abraham somehow disappointed the Almighty. Be that as it may, by staying Abraham's hand, God affirms that human sacrifice is not how He will be worshiped. The Almighty affirms something that our patriarch, as a believer in a supreme being beyond nature, probably already internalized – while human beings are of nature, because of this godly spark of consciousness we possess, we are also outside it. And that divine part of us, that quality human beings alone possess, is what this God wants from us, not blood.

For his part, Abraham does not speak much in the *Akedah* story, but says a lot. When called by God, Abraham declares simply "*Hinneni*" – here I am. When Isaac calls to his father, Abraham's first word to him is also "*Hinneni*." I detect a hint of irony in Abraham's answering his son with the

same word he used to respond to God, as if he is making a bitter inside joke about his predicament. In a psychologically astute touch, Robert Crumb draws Abraham at this moment as grim, and yet slightly bemused.

When Isaac asks about the whereabouts of the creature to be sacrificed, Abraham continues, "God will see to the sheep for the offering, my son." As we saw from Abraham's first and last words, resigned trust in God is not what Abraham is about, and so there is something deeply discordant about these words, particularly given their narrative importance – this comment stands as the only dialogue between Abraham and his son in the *Book of Genesis*. I believe it has to have a message – is it about the importance of faith in God, or something else about the role of faith in our relationship with God?



Finally, when the Lord's messenger calls Abraham's name to stop the proceedings, the patriarch again spits out that pivotal word, "*Hinneni*" – the last word in the Torah that Abraham speaks to God. With that word, I propose that Abraham is attempting to impart something about the human condition to a supernatural being that he worries may

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NEWS

From the Old Maccabees to the New Maccabees – “A Wrong Made Right”

A Jerusalem monument to Machal volunteers commemorates their service

By Jerry Klinger / Special to the BJV

Every year there are fewer and fewer of them. The “they” are *Machal*, a Hebrew acronym for “Volunteers from Outside of Israel.” They came to defend the Jewish people and help birth the State during its War of Independence, 1947-1949.

They came from 59 countries. There were fewer than 5,000 of them out of 2,000,000 Jews who had served in World War II Allied armies. Years later, Yitzhak Rabin poignantly said about them: “You came when we needed you most, during those dark and uncertain days in our War of Independence. You gave us not only your experience, but your lives as well. The People of Israel and the State of Israel will never forget.”

For the most part, Israel did forget them.

The thinning ranks of those who had made the crucial difference between life and death for Israel became resigned to their future, a fading into the darkening mist, part of a forgotten past. Their unique sacrifice officially ignored, not even a special citation exists in IDF archives recognizing what they had done. Their passing is even more complete than the cold relocation of the fallen, iconic armored convoy trucks that had once rested

where they fell along the defile lifeline road to Jerusalem.

A few years ago, I went to the Israel Air Force Museum in Beersheba. A young docent, really a young female soldier doing her national service at the museum because her English was good, showed me around. Aircraft equipment was everywhere, interpretation almost nowhere. I asked her about Machal. She never heard of them. I told her that 95 percent of the Air Force during the War of Independence were Machal,

21 percent of that number were Christians. Her doe eyes stared at my headlights and she turned off her translator.

The motto of my historic society, the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, is “Shaping the future by Remembering the Past.” Allied with the American Veterans of Israel Legacy Corporation and World Machal, and with strong support from the City of Jerusalem, on December 17, 2017, we forever visibly changed memory.

On a tiny wedge of undevelopable trash and weed collecting city-owned land directly across the street from the entrance to Israel’s Ammunition Hill National Memorial, an impressively large, permanent

Machal Memorial, 70 years late, 70 years present, was finally dedicated. For the Machal veterans who came in 1947-1949 believing that the impossible was possible, once again, the impossible became real.

The memorial, designed by noted sculptor Sam Philippe, a 5th-generation Jerusalemite, is 10-foot long and 8-foot high, shaped as a large Jerusalem foundation rock. The acronym ‘Machal’ is boldly displayed on the face under an Avia War of Independence aircraft reaching for the sky to defend Israel. On the right side is a British Cromwell tank, one of only three tanks in the entire IDF arsenal at the time. On the left side is an Aliyah Bet ship, which were manned largely by American volunteers who risked their citizenships, their futures in British prisons, and their lives, to bring desperate, stateless Holocaust survivors to Israel.

Who were the men and women of Machal?

The vast majority came with military and specialty skills. Many had been actively recruited by pre-Israel representatives who sought veterans with vital military experience, organizational skills, and contacts. Of extreme importance was the recruitment of people with aviation skills, pilots being the most important even if the State did not have any significant aircraft. A mini miracle smuggled in a few Avia

199 fighter aircraft. They were flown by Machal. Without question, during the early days of the War, Machal pilots saved the Jewish State from annihilation.

Some volunteers were idealistic Zionists. Many who came were repulsed by the Holocaust. They were intent on preventing a second Holocaust promised by the Arabs. Some volunteers came for mercenary reasons, promised pay that may or may not have been paid. Some came for religious reasons, especially Christian volunteers. Most brought active World War II combat skills and one brought a skill no one today would think was vital – the ability to drive.

Ralph Lowenstein was 18-years-old, an idealist from Virginia. He told his parents he was leaving Columbia University for a summer in England. Ralph found his way to a recruiter screener. Ten days after arriving in Israel he was thrown into battle driving a homemade half-track as part of the famed, largely English-speaking, 79th Armored Brigade. Ralph could drive a stick shift. “The 79th spearheaded the major battle at the end of October 1948



Ralph Lowenstein and his half-track, at Camp St. Jean, a former British army base near the port city of Acre

that cleared the entire north central Galilee of Syrian, Lebanese and Iraqi troops,” Lowenstein said.

“Neither my parents, two brothers, nor anyone else had any idea that I was contemplating such a mission.” Ralph crossed to France in August and began searching for a way to enlist.

“The only French I knew was ‘Juif,’ the word for Jew. There were two listings in the phone book beginning with that word. The first was a kosher butcher shop. The

MACHAL, continued on page 23



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R. CRUMB’S GENESIS, continued from page 23

not fully understand it: In the end, all a human being is able to apprehend with certainty is just that – “here I am” – and its corollary, “someday I won’t be.” By being so laconic, by acting so inscrutably, by retaining a secret – was he really going to use that knife? – Abraham is perhaps conveying to God the effect God’s own silences have on the human psyche, the insecurity evoked by a universe that mortal men cannot control nor fully understand. Abraham is giving God an “*oy gevalt*” moment of His own. And thus the covenant can be executed, even if God and Abraham will no longer be on speaking terms in the aftermath.

Comic books work in an interesting way. In one illustrated panel, we see Batman ordering the Joker to halt. In the next panel, we see Batman at the end of a throwing motion, and a batarang ricocheting off the Joker’s forehead. We understand that Batman reached into his utility belt and took out a weapon, and then threw it across the room to brain the Joker.

But where does the “action” take place? It takes place not within the two static illustrated panels, but rather in the blank space between them – which is to say, in our imaginations. Which is also to say, the action unfolds a little differently for each one of us.

I find that’s also how the Torah works. We approach Torah on its terms, and find it speaks to us as flawed, anxious, and yet persistently hopeful human beings – but not necessarily through the words that have been painstakingly pre-

served over thousands of years. The Torah speaks to us with words, but also with silences, and so it needs the flaws, anxieties, hopes, and imagination that we bring to those silences from generation to generation. It is necessarily incomplete – it not only needs us, but it needs us on our terms.

Torah is the ancient words of the *Akedah* story that we will soon read together. Torah is also a middle-aged man in the Berkshires, who, after pondering the *Akedah*, wakes with a start from a nightmare in which his beloved son disappears on a train. And Torah is the quiet moment that follows in which that man takes stock of all he fears and all he cherishes and, with more than a touch of wariness, feels incredibly blessed.

