Learn to play the doumbek drum

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Monday, March 5 at 6 p.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires invites the community to gather in celebration of Israel’s 70th birthday. Hafla Night brings tastes, sounds, and stories of the Jewish homeland to the Berkshires. The event, which will take place at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, inauguruates a year of “Israel at 70” programming, and is free and open to the community. “Hafla” is an Arabic word (often used in modern Hebrew, as well) for a party, one evoking an intimate gathering focused on food, music, dance, and socializing. This interactive evening will feature culinary tastings presented by a visiting delegation of Israeli musicians and cooks from the Afula-Gilboa region of Israel, as part of the Federation-supported Partners2gether program of the Jewish Agency for Israel. Israeli home cooks Rina Cohen and Shirli Abitbul-Zaikay will share culinary tastings and stories from their region of Israel, as part of the Federation-supported Partnership2gether program of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Rachel Kadish on The Weight of Ink
Author to discuss her best-selling novel at the March 23 Knosh & Knowledge

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Friday, March 23, Knosh & Knowledge hosts Rachel Kadish, whose 2017 novel The Weight of Ink last year won a National Jewish Book Award for best book club story and the Association of Jewish Libraries’ inaugural Jewish Fiction Award. She will be talking about the path she took in researching and writing this acclaimed historical novel that shifts back and forth from 1660s England to the present day. This 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.

The Weight of Ink tells the interwoven tale of two women of remarkable intellect: Estee Valsesia, an emigrant from Amsterdam who is permitted to scribe for a blind rabbi; and Helen Watt, an ailing historian with a love of Jewish history. As the novel opens, Helen has been summoned to view a trove of newly discovered 17th century Jewish

Music, Food, Stories for Israel at 70!
Interactive Hafla Night kicks off community festivities in the Berkshires

Some of our loyal readers, we know, are reading this issue of the BJV in Florida or other winter climes, leaving us in the still chilly Berkshires to dream about walking barefoot in the sand and picking juicy winter citrus fruits right off the tree. Did you know you can thank Jews for those delicious fresh oranges you’re eating, snowbirds? Please turn to page 24 for more on how the late Roman Empire etrog trade led to today’s citrus industry in Israel and beyond. (This 1927 poster was created by 26 yr-old Raban [1890-1970], a leading artist of the Bezalel school art style, an art movement in Eretz Israel in the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods that has been described as “a fusion of ‘oriental’ art and Jugendstil [similar to Art Nouveau].”)

“THE MAN WHO NEVER FORGOT,” on March 19
Novelist Kenneth Markel presents his new book, To Catch a Nazi

FITCHFIELD – On Monday, March 19 at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes Kenneth Markel, who will discuss his new book To Catch a Nazi at a program titled “The Man Who Never Forgot.” This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Federation’s Connect- ing With Community series.

To Catch a Nazi is a twisty psychological thriller centering on the efforts of David Menard – originally Willy Mannheim, son of a Jewish mother and a German father – to unravel a mystery set in motion the last time he saw his mother, six years before the start of World War II. Menard was sent to live in America by his grandparents while still a child, where he took his adoptive parents’ name and grew up to work in New York City as a bookbinder. In 2004, Menard sees a listing for an auction of artwork, and remembers that his mortally injured mother had whispered the artist’s name – Anton Reiss. Deepening the intrigue is the fact that Menard has, since the late 1960s, been corresponding with his “Uncle Kurt” – who is, in fact, his father, the former Nazi Ernst Mannheim, who wishes to hide his shameful identity from his son, but

Purim 5778
Late winter longing for sun, sand, and balmy weather

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President's Message
Thanks to All Who Helped Us Every Step of the Way
By Judy Usow / President, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

As we close the books on our 2017 Annual Campaign, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the generous donors and volunteers, listed in this edition, whose collective efforts helped us surpass our campaign goal by raising over $802,000.

Kudos to Jen Sacon and Scott Hochfelder, who started us off with a tremendous Super Sunday, and to Eli and Marilyn Katzman, who kept the momentum rolling at our Major Donors’ breakfast. They, together with their many volunteers, host committee members, and board members reached out to so many people in our community, sharing the critical role of our Federation and our full agenda.

Thank you, too, to the Federation’s terrific staff, which was there every step of the way. Without the dedication of our community members, volunteers, and professionals, we simply would not have this wonderful Jewish community in which we live.

In recent years, our Jewish Federation has made tremendous strides in advancing our mission of building and supporting a vibrant Jewish community. Engaging more Jewish individuals and fostering a powerful sense of Jewish identity is essential for the health and viability of our community. We must never forget, however, that we are also responsible for the welfare of those in need, whether that person is our neighbor down the street or an impoverished single mother living across the ocean. That is the thought on the minds of the members of the Federation’s Allocations Committee, who as I write are reviewing grant proposals in order to decide how to make a meaningful impact with these dollars in 2018. There will be thorough and thoughtful discussion on many important priorities, such as how to balance the need for a quality Jewish education for our young people at our local congregations against the importance of funding identity-building experiences for them at Jewish summer camps, on college campuses, and on Birthright trips to Israel.

As a small community, we are deeply committed to meeting our local needs while also recognizing the importance of being part of the wider Jewish community’s efforts of tzedakah and tikkun olam that are so desperately needed in our world today.

Our Allocations Committee will also determine how we will support the needs of our brothers and sisters in Israel and overseas through our partners—the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), the Jewish American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and World ORT. Our campaign dollars will support the care of fragile Jewish populations, engage new leaders, and help build Jewish community in places where Jewish life was once almost erased. In addition, the committee will decide on allocations that will be made to specific social service organizations in Israel that care for elderly Holocaust survivors, at risk and abused children, and the disabled. Shaping the lives of young adults, supporting those in crisis around the world, strengthening the Jewish identities of teens, and ensuring that older adults in the Berkshires continue to live independently and with dignity—this holy work of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and our partners transcends age, gender, geography, and levels of religious observance. At our core, we are committed to building community and raising the funds needed to support the critical programs and services relied upon by thousands across the Berkshires, in Israel, and in more than 70 countries around the world.

Please take a moment to review our annual report on page 12 of this paper. While there is much more to be done, we are deeply proud of all that we have accomplished. This important work is only possible through the commitment and generosity of our donors and volunteers like you. On behalf of our community, we are deeply grateful for all you have done.

Our campaign dollars will support the care of fragile Jewish populations, engage new leaders, and help build Jewish community in places where Jewish life was once almost erased.

Letters to the Editor

Studying in Israel

Thanks to a Federation Scholarship
Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires: I am truly grateful for the scholarship you have provided to attend Alexander Muss High School in Israel. Traveling to Israel is an amazing gift, and being able to study abroad there is simply incredible. I look forward to furthering my education in not just my core curriculum, but also in my Jewish studies and the history of Israel. Thank you for supporting me in my education.

Elena Brown
Lenox

Even at Camp, Science is Fun
Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires: I would like to thank you very much for your very generous contribution to my summer camp scholarship so that I could attend Camp Ramah in the Berkshires last summer. While I was there, I participated in tennis, archery, robotics, science, music, and swimming. My favorite activity was science, because it is my favorite subject in school. Also, science is fun!

Robert M. Ferrin
Lenox

He Found Out What’s Cooking at Camp, Thanks to Federation
Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires: Thank you for sending the money that allowed me to go to camp this year. I really enjoyed the new dining hall last year.

Joseph Weiner, Shoafim Camper
Pittsfield

Your PJ Donations Keeping Berkshires Kids Warm
Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires: The Department of Children and Families Pittsfield Area Office deeply appreciates your generous donation of 150 pajamas through your PJ Library pajama drive program.

With your donation, the Department was able to provide children with new warm pajamas. The Department is excited and looks forward to working with you again. Thank you!

Respectfully yours,
Marcie Gilbert, MSW, M.Ed.
Director of Area

He Liked Pulat Tzrif
Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires: Thank you for sending me to camp. I especially liked Shabbat, morning music, and pulat tzrif (bunk activities). Again, thank you.

Your friend,
Art Weiner
Pittsfield

Your Generosity Aids Vermont Congregation in Time of Need
To the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thanks to you for your support in a time of need. Of caring. On behalf of the members of our Jewish community, sharing the critical role of our Federation and our full agenda.

To the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thanks to Federation

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

A Purim Message: Knowing is Ultimately about Connection

By Rabbi Seth Wax

It seems that today, it is so hard to talk to each other, especially across political lines. When was the last time you actually tried to speak to someone who you knew held political beliefs that you find difficult, if not abhorrent? Perhaps you thought twice about speaking with the person, fearing what might be said?

We live in challenging times: we face so many challenges to our planet and to our physical and mental health. How can we possibly meet those challenges if we cannot work together and learn from each other, if we see each other as the enemy and not united in common goals?

The story of Purim is set in a time of deep and existential uncertainty. In Megillah Esther, the Purim story, we encounter Mordechai, who watches as the world around him falls apart. When the fragile ego of the evil Haman is slighted, this chief adviser to the king dooms the Jewish people to destruction. Then, upon hearing the decree, the city of Shushan is dumbfounded (Esther 3:15) as Mordechai and Jews throughout the Persian empire tear their garments, don sackcloth and ash, and wail bitterly (Esther 4:1-3). It seems as though all is lost.

Thanks to the fortitude and skills of Esther and Mordechai, a plan is hatched to save the Jews from certain death. The turnaround is striking, and the tale ends with celebration and song. But to more deeply understand the story, we should ask: What happens that ultimately turns the tide and saves the people?

Is it Esther’s confrontation of Haman before King Ahasuerus? Is it Mordechai’s encouragement of Esther to approach the king?

I think the most important moment of the story, in which everything turns around, occurs at the very moment before Mordechai begins to wail. In chapter four, which introduces us to Mordechai’s wailing, the opening words are “U’Mordechai p‘ako” — “And Mordechai knew.” We might think that these words describe how Mordechai learns about the decree against the Jews. But early Hasidic teacher Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezeritch, suggests that something very different took place. Knowing, the Hasidic master reminds us, is not simply a matter of grasping facts. Knowing is ultimately about connection. To know someone or something in the truest sense means that we seek to connect to bring out the light.

What Mordechai did at the moment he learned about the decree was to make connections, and to help others to do that relationship and to seek to deepen that connection (for HaEmet on Esther 2:5; translation and commentary in Arthur Green, et. al., Speaking Torah, vol. 2, pp. 203-4).

And so what Mordechai did at the moment he learned about the decree was to make connections, and to help others to do that. In the Megillah, the Jews are derisively described by Haman as “one nation, spread out and dispersed in the world.” But according to an alternative way of reading the verse in Hebrew, with Mordechai’s help the Jews are “a nation seeking oneness, who do it while spread out and dispersed in the world” (Sfas Emet on Purim, 1871). In other words, what Mordechai helps the Jews of his time to do is to seek connection. To break through the barriers to separate people and to find the underlying oneness that ties everyone together. That was the only way that they would be able to face the challenges of the day.

That certainly takes work and is by no means easy. But I think it is a powerful lesson for us: The message of Purim is that, especially in troubling times, our task is to seek connection with others and to elevate the unifying oneness that ties us all together. It is too easy to despair, to put on sackcloth and ash and wail about how terrible things are. But that is not the message of Purim. It is precisely at these times that we are called on, like Mordechai, to really know. Yes, we may ultimately begin to cry out. But first and throughout, we seek to know and to make connections to bring out the light.

Rabbi Seth Wax is Jewish chaplain at Williams College.
Dear Jewish Women’s Foundation and Federation:

I thought our trip to the Jewish Heritage Museum in NYC was a very educational experience and I learned a lot about my heritage and what the Holocaust was like in more detail than what I had learned in the past. I’m glad that we took this trip because without it I would not have been able to learn the things that I did that day. It was a sad experience for me and I’m sure it was for my peers as well, but I’m still glad that we got that information. Thank you for allowing us to visit the museum!

Thanks,
Georgia Raser
Dallon

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Dear Jewish Women’s Foundation and Federation:

The trip to The Jewish Heritage Museum was very memorable. I learned a lot about my heritage and the more I read and heard about what I saw during the Holocaust. Also, the Holocaust story that was told by the amazing and inspiring survivor really opened my eyes. Experiencing the museum opened my eyes and heart to the world, and really made me more aware of the people around me. Thank you for this amazing experience.

Rose Sutter
Windsor

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Dear Jewish Women’s Foundation and Federation:

I learned a lot about my heritage and the Holocaust. During our trip to the Jewish Heritage Museum, I thought to express this gratitude and appreciation for the Jewish Women’s Foundation’s sponsorship of “A Day of Holocaust Education, Meeting Hate with Humanity,” supported by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

During our trip, we listened to survivor Sally Finshberg, an 84-year-old woman who was barely 5 years old on September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland. Her family lived in a small town where life was simple, and people of different religions went about their lives respecting and caring about their neighbors. But when the German Army arrived, life changed dramatically and forever. The German Army eventually made it to her small town, taking control of the villagers’ lives, homes, and security. Sally’s house would become the residence for three soldiers. Over the next few years, one of the three soldiers befriended Sally’s father, sharing tales of the horrors that were coming. One day the sirens rang, and the Jews were ordered to the square the following morning. Sally’s father knew they had no choice – to escape into the fields and pray they could survive until the Germans left.

Sally spoke about the horrors of survival and her gratitude toward the poor Polish farmer who put his family’s life on the line to save her and her Jewish family. Many of the kids on the trip found the story to be the most important and meaningful part of the trip. When I asked my son Jay why, he said “because she was only a child, like me.”

This trip was indeed a gift for my son, providing a tangible resource for embracing his Jewish heritage while he is in the midst of his bar mitzvah experience. After his visit, Jay recognized the responsibility toward all humanity, and the importance of preserving the stories of survivors and the memories of the people who died, so as never to let the world forget.

Jay said he was grateful to live in the United States, but, and I quote, “living anywhere doesn’t mean we are truly safe.” We discussed how essential it is to talk about hatred, whether it is towards one’s beliefs, or one’s neighbor whether here, at home, or somewhere far away. An example of Jay’s own experience we talked about was when he was in elementary school and faced anti-Semitism on the bus to and from school. Jay followed the bully protocol, and yet his requests for support were denied. When many years, Roy, at the age of 55, had a bar mitzvah. Rachel had the wonderful experience at the Hadassah Year Course program in Israel. It was her deep connection to Israel that I believe propelled her to work at AFMC and now for the Conference of Presidents of major Jewish organizations. Jordana met her fiancé, Greg, on her birthright trip to Israel.

I really do not want to be one of those parents who brag on and on about their family, but what I will say is that we all have a strong understanding as to the importance of community. Not only being a part of it, but contributing to it and helping to sustain and nurture it.

Once our daughters graduated from college, we moved from Chappaqua to New York City for a few years; however, I soon realized that city living was not really for me. Roy and I then decided that we would pack up and head north, and spend the next chapter in our lives in the Berkshires.

Like so many who find the Berkshires later in life, we came to enjoy the world-class culture and the natural beauty. We embraced the Berkshires lifestyle, but we really had no idea about what it meant to be Jewish in the Berkshires.

While I have had the pleasure of attending various events sponsored by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, I had no idea of the depth of its programs and services, or how many lives Federation touches and enriches. For years, my parents spoke about the Berkshire Jewish community and their involvement with the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. I was happy that they had felt so connected to a community. Now I look forward to being connected, too, and helping to make sure that our vital programs continue to connect and serve the needs of this community.

I also look forward to meeting our many generous community members and hearing what is important to them, what programs they may be interested in, and why they support this community. I hope to share with them how, through Federation, they can help make our community and our world a better place for all.

Leslie Voremborg Kozupsky
Development officer of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. You can reach her at (413) 442-4360, ext. 19, or by emailing lk@jewishberkshires.org.

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In an open discussion with Jay and Michael, we realized that allowing small remarks, even laugh along, provides permission and sets a tone that it is okay. Because, one day, something will be said that crosses a line. Once Pandora’s Box is open it is hard to stop the inevitable – a joke is no longer just a joke, it is hatred and it is hurtful.

Thank you again for providing our family and our community with this opportunity to learn and grow.

Amy Glaser D’Alton
Lenox
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 Knesset 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.

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 16. Note that lunch menus are subject to change.

Current Affairs: Topics in Contemporary American and International Politics

On Monday, March 12 at 10:45 a.m., join Professor Steven J. Rubin for the second installment of “Current Affairs: Topics in Contemporary American and International Politics.” This course will meet once a month to discuss and explore current issues that influence our lives and society at large.

This free program at Knesset 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 Rubin in consultation with the class and in view of the issue’s relevance. Members will be invited to participate in discussions, expressing their views and opinions in a supportive and informal atmosphere.

Steven J. Rubin is professor 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.

The class meets on the second Monday of each month (subject to change).

Your Federation Presents

The Spirituality of Aging,” with Wren Bernstein

“The Spirituality of Aging: A Conversation About Life and Death,” led by licensed social worker and spiritual guide Wren Bernstein, continues with sessions on March 1 and March 15, both Thursdays. This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, in Pittsfield, part of the Federation’s Connecting With Community series.

What does it mean to embrace your elderhood and transform your expectations of aging? According to Wren Bernstein, this course offers an opportunity to explore the unique spiritual and psychological gifts of the third major stage of life in a relaxed group setting. Both one-hour sessions will include a brief mindfulness practice, inspirational readings with questions for introspection, and a facilitated group conversation. Topics include aging consciously; retelling the inner critic; forgiveness; life review; facing mortality; and the mystery of transformation.

Wren Bernstein, LICSW, has been a spiritual practitioner for 35 years and a clinical social worker for 25, working with clients both individually and in groups. As a lifelong seeker of truth and transcendence, she brings a spiritual and philosophical perspective to the psychological and social issues that confront us at various stages of life. Though she works with adults of all ages, she is most recently focusing on the unique challenges and opportunities that arise in the “third act” of life, when meaning-of-life questions seem to demand more attention and priorities and goals begin to shift. She believes in the power of contemplation, conversation, and community as essential to mental and spiritual health.

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires / Connecting With Community
Venue: Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Monday, March 12 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 16).

Flexibility Training for Seniors, with Thea Basis

On Monday, February 26 at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes back Thea Basis, a certified senior fitness specialist who will present the next installment of “Silver Wellness and Nutrition for Seniors,” this time focusing on flexibility.

This is a drop-in series, with no prior registration necessary. This free program at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Federation’s Connecting With Community series.

“Tight, shortened muscles can affect our joints,” says Thea Basis, a certified senior fitness specialist and orthopedic exercise specialist. “In this class we will learn routines that we can safely practice at home to keep ourselves mobile and, reduce stiffness. I will guide the group through this process.” The class includes a warm-up, light cardio, strength training, and stretching.

Thea Basis earned an ACE Group Fitness Instructor Certification in 1988. She specializes in the conditions that make exercising more challenging, including arthritis, fragility, balance and gait issues, respiratory disease, diabetes, and lack of motivation.

Being selected means a lot to us.

Making this list is no small feat. First, firms must meet specific requirements, not the least being registered investment advisors. Once they are met, the editors of Financial Times ask those firms to be considered for further evaluation.

This is neither a “pay-to-play” advertising product, a peer review nor a popular vote campaign. In the simplest of terms it means that all of us work in your best interest. That in and of itself is invaluable to our clients, the industry and our integrity.

Have a conversation with Gary Schiff, Managing Director, at the number listed below. He’ll fill you in on details that helped us make this year’s Financial Times FT300.

October Mountain Financial Advisors

103 West Park Street
Lee MA 01238
413-243-4331
octobermountain.com

Top Financial Advisers 2017

But it means even more to you.

For further information on all Jewish Federation of the Berkshires programs, please call Nancy Maurice Rogers, Program Director, at (413) 442-4360, ext. 15.
Easy Yoga for Flexibility, Mobility, and Peace of Mind

On Thursday, February 22 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. Chair yoga is beneficial for people who 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 Kinhall Farms, and all over the Commonwealth with the Massachusetts Housing Authority. She explains that her approach to yoga encourages everyone to listen and love their body. Her yoga classes encourage gentle stretching, proper breathing, strength and balance. She attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and has a BIFA 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: Embodifying setting up and serving during the event should contact Ellen Hefflan at ellot@aol.com. (413) 269-6500.

Local hosts who can provide overnight hospitality for our Israeli visitors are also needed. Those interested should contact Josh Bloom at joshabloom1@gmail.com. (718) 683-2548.

This celebration is free and open to the community but space is limited. Please reserve your spot by calling the Federation at (413) 442-4360, ext. 10, or by emailing federation@jewishberkshires.org.

Hereveh of Southern Berkshire is located at 270 State Road in Great Barrington.

Larry Johnson, M.D.

Larry Johnson, M.D.

Larry Johnson, M.D.

Larry Johnson, M.D.

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“Breaking the Silence in Gyumri, Armenia”

On Thursday, March 8 at 10:45 a.m., join Suzi Banks Baum, a writer and artist who will talk about her experiences in Armenia leading an art and writing workshop called New Illuminations, which works to empower local women through the creation of handbound books. This free program at Knesset Israel. 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Connecting With Community series.

This program is in honor of International Women’s Day.

“In a culture that silences women,” writes Suzi Banks Baum, “that neither values their work nor sees their stories as essential, we are reconnecting Armenian women artists with indigenous practices of handbound books. Building books with them redirects our curiosity about the thresholds we cross in to creative practice, I write personal narrative with an ear for transformation through engagement with the ordinary,” she says. She has an ongoing artist residency in Gyumri, Armenia with New Illuminations, while also interviewing women artists there about their daily lives. She says she inspires women to live from the space of creative spirit and to value their contributions to the world and one another through workshops steeped in book arts, ritual, and writing. Find her work in Eazy Street, The Mid, Literary Mama, Mother Writer Mentor, Rebelle Society, Mothers Always Write and her blog, www.suzibanksbaum.com.

Purim Spiel: The Whole Megillah!

On Monday, March 5 at 10:45 a.m., celebrate Purim through song, drama, masks, and immersing with the story of Esther interpreted by Leslie Elias, artistic director of Grumbling Gryphons Traveling Children’s Theater. This free program at Knesset Israel. 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield is part of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Connecting With Community series.

Leslie Elias will lead us on a theatrical and fanciful journey re-enacting the powerful story of brave Esther, Mordechai, Haman, Vashti, and King Ahasuerus. We will welcome in the spirit of Purim and enjoy the art of improvisation and festivity!

The Jewish Transportation Network

Discount Taxi Vouchers

for Jewish residents aged 65 years and older

Purchase $50 worth of taxi coupons for $5

(If requested via mail)

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

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

IF YOU GO

Purim Spiel: The Whole Megillah!

Venue: Knesset Israel

Date & Time: Thursday, March 8 at 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch (see page 16).

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Your Federation Presents

Like us on Facebook:
• Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
• PJ Library Berkshire County

Rachel Kadish

documents and embarks on one last project: to determine the identity of the scribe ‘Aleph.’

Says Kadish about researching the novel: “I started out knowing nothing about 17th Century London or about the Portuguese Inquisition refugees in Amsterdam. I was fascinated by the topics. So I read, and read. I listened to music of the time period, researched 17th century architecture, and clothing, and sewage systems, and how people did laundry... I interviewed document conservationists, who gave me an education in the politics between historians and conservationists.

“I visited London; consulted with experts in 17th century history and Judeo-Portuguese and Ladino dialects; learned how to write with a quill pen and a bottle of ink (my kids, then very into the Harry Potter books, were in heaven. And since I don’t have any background in philosophy, I had to work very hard to learn enough about Spinoza and metaphysics to write the book.”

Here’s how Kristen Gibbons of the Jewish Book Council reviewed the novel.

In many ways a book about books, The Weight of Ink surprises with delights that are gradually revealed. At first it might seem almost necessary to take notes to follow the complex plot, but soon the reader will become absorbed in this rich opus of impressive breadth. The beauty of this story is in the variety of its milieus and sensibilities. As we follow our female protagonists of both the seventeenth and twenty-first centuries—Ester Velasquez and Helen Watt, respectively—we also witness the goings-on of a venerable and drafty house of a rabbi in 1660s London, and glimpse the modern life of a cheeky young American man with heartrending troubles of his own. Perhaps most pivotally, we see an English girl’s time volunteering abroad on a kibbutz in Israel in the years after the war of independence. In spite of a gulf of over 300 years, these characters depend on each other, each for their own reasons, any of which we in the present day can find parallel in.

The images of these different times and places, brought to life at once through painstaking detail and accessible prose, are startlingly clear, even cinematic. Supporting roles, too, are far from dull. Much more than mere foils, even minor characters are fascinating in their own right. Mary, at first unlikable in her childlike coquettish snobbery, eventually finds her way into one’s heart. Rivka, a servant and survivor of Polish pogroms, is not simply loyal, but also intrigues with a timeless intellect and will. The men in Ester Velasquez’s and Helen Watts’ lives wholly determine the courses of their universes. Indeed, perhaps too much for comfort, but believable nevertheless.

Weighty explorations of what it is to be Jewish and to enter interfaith relationships in multiple time periods are integral to each of these stories. Is there merit to keeping within the tribe? Are there, regardless of time, place, or commitment, bridges that those who would willingly enter the Jewish community from the outside can never truly cross? Crucially, what does it mean to choose survival over martyrdom? These questions play out in the characters’ personal lives concurrently with Ester’s philosophical forays into the nature of God. No stone is left unturned in either study.

After her talk, Rachel Kadish will be on hand to answer your questions and to sign copies of her book.

IF YOU GO
Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
Date & Time: Friday, March 23 at 10:45 a.m.
Venue: Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road, Great Barrington
Cost: $11 with fresh buffet lunch. Program only, $5. Advance lunch reservations required for this event.
Email federation@jewishberkshires.org, or call (413) 442-4360, ext. 10

Like us on Facebook:
• Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
• PJ Library Berkshire County
It was eight days since I last saw my mother. My teacher, Mrs. Pressinger, told me to report to the director’s office after the bell. When I came, the school was silent; I swung my book-bag over my shoulder, ran down the hall.

Two tall, bespectacled, hair-in-black uniforms and shiny black boots stood in the director’s room, caps in hand. Each had a pistol strapped to his belt.

“Do you know who we are?”

“Soldiers,” I answered.

Not the hint of a smile creased their blank faces. I’d seen men like them from a window as they marched on Unter den Linden, torches held high; they burned holes in the night sky.

“Look mama,” I said, “isn’t it wonderful?”

“You’re soldiers,” I answered.

“Is it wonderful?” I replied.

“I will also be brave when I’m twenty.”

“Would you give up your life for the Fatherland?”

“I’m only nine years old.”


The friendly one asked me if I’d like to visit the zoo. The Tiergarten was my favorite place in Berlin.

“We can see the big cats!”

“We’ll see,” the less friendly one answered. When we got to the zoo, the friendly one took a package of gumdrops from his pocket and asked, “Are you sure you don’t want some?” Why, I had a red gumdrop. “Take more. Go on.” I had another. Finally, the friendly one gave me the whole package. I put them in my pocket.

As we walked, I ate gumdrops. It was very casual, the way two people that their uniforms were for... to make them look bigger, but the uniforms really were. “Tell us, where does your mother go on her day off?”

“We understand,” the friendly soldier said.

“Can we see the big cats?”

“Aren’t they a little big?”

“Once I visit the zoo.”

“You’re getting hungry,” I said.

“You were getting too close to the cage.”

I looked up. It was the man who gave me candy, the friendly one. We “Want to bring your home to you... Help us save her before it’s too late.”

“What do you want to know?”

“What was her name?”

“She was called Julia.”

“She didn’t feel well.”

“Where does her friend live?”

“I can go back to the tiger.”

“The tiger isn’t going any where. The keeper will give him his dinner very soon.”

“I put my hand into my pocket. The package was empty. For some reason, I thought I was observing. “We have eaten the tiger eat his dinner if you’d like,” the friendly one said, misleadingly. I looked up at the sky, they getting dark. Suddenly, I had more interest in my stomach than in the tiger.

“We want to bring your grandmother to the zoo.”

“I’m getting hungry.”

“We understand. The friendly soldier said, “Don’t you, Horst?”

“The other man nodded. “Soldiers are human beings too. We get hungry like everybody else.”

“Can I have anything I want?”

“Of course.”

“Mother…”

“I was growing up. “Your father was a great distance runner. He wanted to represent Germaine at the 1924 Olympics in Paris. He was tall, blond, with blue eyes... like you.”

Freda, my mother, didn’t go any further. I wasn’t sure why she stopped. Maybe, it was because it was getting late and I had school the next day. Later, I found out that she didn’t know the whole story herself... where my father was captured or how he died. I once overheard her say to my grandmother: “Maybe, Anton could use me. I still have a pistol strapped to my belt.”

“Can you take me to my grandmother’s house in the Grünewald. The friendly one opened the door and lifted me from my seat and set me down on the stone walk. He sniffed the air and shouted: “Better hurry, your German grandmother is cooking chicken soup.”

As he drove off, I turned away from the spray of diesel exhaust... and the sound of laughter.

I remembered the laughter, but more importantly I remembered the words: “Soldiers are human beings too.”

I didn’t know if they found my mother... whether they arrested her. Perhaps, they only wanted to ask her a few questions.

Ken Markel is the former editor at Magazine Management. His short stories have been published in True, Adventure Life, Sportsman, and Mystery Tales, among others. He studied at The New School with Anatole Broyard, and his play Mystery Tales is avail-

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Temple Anshe Amunim Celebrates Purim with Worship, Study, and Fun!

Join the Hevreh Hipsters

GREAT BARRINGTON – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire has launched a new program for Jewish tweens and thirties who want to interact with other like-minded Jewish millennials in and around Berkshire County. The Hevreh Hipsters’ first event, “Join the Hevreh Hipsters” on Friday, March 2 at 5:30 p.m., will be a smashing success. In the future, they are planning a number of exciting events including game night, trivia night, Shabbat potlucks, bowling, and more.

“Hamantaschen is the perfect treat to celebrate Purim,” says Rabbi Breindel. “This year, we’ll be hosting a special hamantaschen contest, where participants can win a variety of prizes. The contest will be held Saturday, March 3 at 9:30 a.m, and will be open to everyone, regardless of age or affiliation.

Purim Carnival

On Wednesday, February 28, Knesset Israel and Temple Anshe Amunim come together at KI for this ridiculous, fun group of musicians. This year is their most ambitious concert yet – a mixture of Jewish music, dance, and Purim schnapps.

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Everything is Coming Up Purim at Hevreh!

GREAT HARRINGTON – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire is excited to announce three programs to celebrate Purim. All programs are free and open to the community.

A Totally Rad 1980s Purimspiegel
On Wednesday, February 28 at 6 p.m., break out your scrunchies and your neon windbreaker – this year Hevreh’s Confirmation class is, like, totally taking it back to the 1980s with bodacious Queen Esther. Celebrate Purim in Shushan with a musical stroll down memory lane, and party with the totally rad Confirmation class.

Purim Carnival
Purim fun continues on Sunday, March 4 with “Green Eggs and Purim: A Dr. Seuss Themed Purim Carnival,” brought to you by Thing 1 and Thing 2. There will be games, face painting, raffles, balloon animals, and lunch and baked goods available for purchase. This is an afternoon not to be missed!

Prizes for Best Thematic Costumes will be awarded, so start working on your best Dr. Seuss themed costumes now!

A Chocolate Seder for All Ages
PITTSFIELD – All ages are warmly invited to participate in a fun-filled Passover Chocolate Seder at Temple Anshe Amunim on Saturday, March 24 at 4:00 p.m. In this family-friendly event, explore the story of the Exodus using chocolate in place of the traditional Passover foods. Participants will learn about the deeper symbolism of the Exodus and will be given educational materials to enhance their own Seders.

The cost for this event is $8/person with a maximum of $30 per family. All chocolate will be nut-free and dairy-free. Sugar-free and gluten-free options will be available upon request.

For more information and to RSVP for this event please contact Esther Benari-Altmann, Director of Education at eba@ansheamunim.org or at (413) 442-5910.

Temple Anshe Amunim is located at 26 Broad Street in Pittsfield. The temple office can be reached at (413) 442-5910.

Spirited to Host Pre-Passover Tastings of Kosher Wine, Matzoh Balls, and Gluten-free Desserts
LENOX – Thumbing through your Passover recipe file? Hoping to kick your humdrum Passover desserts up a notch or two? Have you ever tasted spinach matzoh balls, chicken matzoh balls, or carrot matzoh balls? Wondering if there’s more to Passover wine than that syrupy-sweet stuff that usually ends up on your Seder table? Wishing you knew what Passover was all about, anyway?

Come to “Passover for Foodies: Wine, Desserts, and Matzoh Ball Tasting,” to celebrate the Season of Liberation with Chabad of the Berkshires. The program will be hosted by Spirited at 444 Pittsfield Road, in Lenox on Friday, March 23 from 1 to 3 p.m. The event is sponsored in part by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and the Wassermann-Streit Y’DIYAH Memorial Fund, along with Chabad of the Berkshires. Sara Volovik will bring her culinary expertise to the table, discussing the many regional differences in Passover cuisine. Free samples and recipes will be offered. Spirited will showcase its extensive selection of outstanding kosher for Passover wines.

The tasting is open to the public, and everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend, regardless of religious affiliation or level of knowledge. Please contact Sara Volovik at (413) 499-8099 or saravolovik@gmail.com for more information.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

- Help at the Federation Lunch Program. Assist setting tables, welcoming attendees and light meal preparation as needed. Mon., Tues. or Thurs., 12:00 noon - noon.
- Bake Hamantaschen in the K.I. Kichen on Sundays, 9:30 – noon and Tuesdays, 5:30 – 8 p.m. Beginning on Sunday, Jan. 7 and continuing into February. Contact Cindy Helitzer at chelitzer2012@gmail.com to volunteer.
- Decorate Purim Gift Bags. All children are invited to pick up and decorate gift bags at home and return to the Federation offices by Friday, Feb. 16.
- Pack Purim Care Packages on Tuesday, Feb. 20, 10:00 a.m. at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires office.
- Deliver Purim Care Packages to Seniors in assisted living facilities, hospitals, and homebound at your leisure between Feb. 21 - 27.
- Welcome Shabbat by Lighting candles and Reciting Blessings on a Friday afternoon (once a month) with residents at area nursing homes or assisted living facilities. Provide a simple service based on your own experience.
- Visit homebound Seniors and Residents of senior living facilities before Shabbat and Jewish holidays.

SIGN UP TODAY! Contact Susan Frisch Lehrer at (413) 642-3360 or via email at sleebrer@jewishberkshires.org

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Tikvah Olam Volunteer (TOV) Network connects community members of all ages with Mitzvah opportunities to make a difference in our community.

LOCAN NEWS
Spirited to Host Pre-Passover Tastings of Kosher Wine, Matzoh Balls, and Gluten-free Desserts
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A Chocolate Seder for All Ages
PITTSFIELD – All ages are warmly invited to participate in a fun-filled Passover Chocolate Seder at Temple Anshe Amunim on Saturday, March 24 at 4:00 p.m. At Passover, the Seder commemorates the biblical experience of the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt. In this family-friendly event, explore the story of the Exodus using chocolate in place of the traditional Passover foods. Participants will learn about the deeper symbolism of the Exodus and will be given educational materials to enhance their own Seders.

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Dr. Ruth: The Doctor is In
Dr. Ruth Westheimer at Annetice Isidoroff
Wednesday, April 25, 2 pm
A hilarious, inspiring, and profound look at life that will change the way you think at any age.

Berkshire Jewish Voice • jewishberkshires.org   Page 11
Building Community | Strengthening Identity | Caring for those in Need

Across the Berkshires

Kosher Hot Meals & Care Visits
Provided over 4,000 nutritious meals, companionship, and care visits for over 350 seniors and homebound.

Social Services
Provided case management and counseling, through a Jewish lens, by a licensed social worker to more than 35 members of our community.

Emergency & Specific Assistance
Provided small grants and interest-free loans to provide a safety net for community members.

Jewish Education
Provided a high-quality Jewish education for 158 children and young adults through Jewish education grants to five area religious schools.

Family Programming
Engaged over 200 parents, grandparents, and children in Jewish programming and tikkun olam, strengthening their connections to the Jewish community and helping them build supportive relationships with Jewish peers.

The PJ Library
Distributed more than 1,500 books and CDs to 125 children, nurturing their Jewish identity and helping their families embrace Jewish values and traditions.

Camp, Israel and Campus Life
Funded transformative Jewish camp and Israel experiences for 47 local teens and enhanced Jewish life for over 2,500 college students through UMASS Hillel in Amherst.

Community Programming
Engaged more than 4,000 participants in celebrating Jewish life and connecting as a community through more than 125 cultural, educational, and holiday programs.

Berkshire Jewish Voice
Primary resource for over 5,000 readers, engaging our community in Jewish life and broadening our spiritual, political, and cultural understanding.

Community Relations & Advocacy
Provided a proactive voice addressing anti-Semitism, Israel and the Middle East, religion in the schools, justice legislation, and media relations.

Tikkun Olam Volunteer (TOV) Network
Engaged over 300 volunteers in more than 3,500 hours of service to the Berkshire Jewish Community.

Jewish Women’s Foundation
Contributed $56,000 to tikkun olam through programs such as subsidized taxi vouchers, camp scholarships, food security initiatives and medical transportation.

In Times of Crisis
In partnership with Jewish Federations across North America: the Berkshires provided over $21,000 to support recovery efforts for the communities of Houston and Puerto Rico, devastated by the recent hurricanes.

In Israel & Overseas
Through our partner, The American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), our Federation helped support:

- Food cards, meals-on-wheels, homecare, winter relief and medicine to more than 120,000 of the world’s neediest Jews in the former Soviet Union, many of them Holocaust survivors.
- Food cards, medical treatment and activities for more than 21,000 at risk children in desperate poverty, living with severe physical and intellectual disabilities.

Through our partner, the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), our Federation helped support:

- Job training and resettlement services for more than 25,000 Jews fleeing anti-Semitism in Europe, helping them create new lives in Israel.
- Jewish education, camp experiences, and Israel experiences for more than 7,500 youths and young adults from the former Soviet Union.

In addition, we provided direct support in Israel to after school programs for at risk students, shelter for abused women, a supportive home for disabled youth, counseling for sexually abused women, and assistance for the frail and elderly.

This is just a sampling of how, together, we are making a difference in the lives of others.
The 2017 Community Campaign Raised $802,369

On behalf of those whose lives will be touched by your generosity,

Together We Do Extraordinary Things!
Thank You!
Staying Healthy with Hevreh

GREAT BARRINGTON – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire has expanded its lineup of mind/body classes. All classes are free and open to the public. Donations from non-members are accepted. Please call the office if you are new to the classes to check on any last minute changes at (413) 528-6378.

Meditation

Tuesdays from noon to 1 p.m. (unless otherwise noted). "Sleep and said, ‘Surely, God is present in this place and I did not know!’" Genesis 28:16. Join Hevreh member Larry Bronstein for a meditation class. No previous experience is required – "the only requirement is the willingness to be present and open with your heart and soul," says Larry. "May our time together bring us closer together. Jacob had after his dream of angels ascending and descending a ladder connecting heaven and earth."

Pilates Mat Class

Thursdays from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Join Janet Lee, certified Pilates Instructor, for a Pilates Mat class in the sanctuary. Pilates is an exercise program designed by Joseph Pilates to build core strength, elongate muscles and create stability.

PFTY Shabbat and Dinner

PITTSFIELD – On Friday, March 16 at 5:30 p.m., Temple Anshe Emeth’s youth group, PFTY, welcomes Shabbat with Anshe Amunim’s youth group, PITTS. For its annual lasagna dinners, PFTY stands for Pittsfield Federation of Temple Youth. Through PFTY, youth are engaged in activities that support the Temple and also the community at large, such as the High Holiday food drive, the Memorial Day cemetery cleanup and flag placement, and a variety of cultural and spiritual events throughout the year. PFTY is open to all Jewish teens in Berkshire County, grades 6-12, regardless of affiliation.

PITTSFIELD Federation of Temple Youth

26 Broad St., Pittsfield, MA

(413) 442-5910, ansheamunim.org

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires encourages you to affiliate.
Connecting with Community

Nourish Your Body, Mind, and Soul!

Enjoy an educational program followed by a delicious kosher hot lunch!
Programs take place Mondays and Thursdays at 10:45 a.m. Lunch is served Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays at noon.
Venue: Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA.

Advanced reservations are required to attend lunch.
Please call (413) 442-2200 no later than 9 a.m. on the day you would like to attend.
Open to the public. All are welcome!

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

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

What’s for Lunch?

# Dairy Free. ** Gluten Free Main Entrée

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

FEBRUARY

Monday, 19............. Closed for Presidents’ Day
Tuesday, 20.......... Fish sticks, corn chowder, French fries, mixed vegetables, rolls, brownies, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.
Thursday, 22........... 10:45 a.m., Chair Yoga with Linda Novick. Lunch: Mushroom ravioli casserole, minestrone soup, salad, asparagus cuts n tips, rolls, mint brownies, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.
Monday, 26........... 10:45 a.m., “Flexibility Training” with Thea Basis. Lunch: Roasted chicken**, oven roasted Brussels sprouts, noodles and onions, salad, Challah, dessert TBA, and tea.
Tuesday, 27.......... Brisket leftovers**, chef’s soup, potato latkes, applesauce, mixed rye breads, chef’s choice of fruit, and tea.

MARCH

Monday, 5............ 10:45 a.m., “Purim Spiel: The Whole Megillah!” with Leslie Elias, artistic director of Grumbling Gryphons. Lunch: Meat loaf**, noodle soup, hash browns, salad, peas & carrots, farmer’s loaf or multigrain bread, apricots, and tea.
Tuesday, 6............ Chicken with artichokes and sundried tomatoes**, risotto, salad, chef’s choice of bread, oatmeal cranberry cookies, and tea.
Thursday, 8........... 10:45 a.m., “Breaking the Silence in Gyumri, Armenia” recognizing International Women’s Day with Suzi Banks Baum. Lunch: Tuna noodle casserole, salad, potato bread, cookies, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.
Monday, 12.......... 10:45 a.m., “Current Affairs” with Professor Emeritus, Steven J. Rubin. Lunch: Spaghetti and meat sauce*, salad, green beans, bread TBA, mandarin oranges, and tea.
Tuesday, 13.......... Turkey piccatta**, broccoli soup, rice pilaf, mixed vegetables, soup crackers and bread TBA, applesauce, and tea.
Tuesday, 20.......... Leftovers as we prepare for Passover.
Thursday, 22.......... 10:45 a.m., Program to be Announced. Lunch: Leftovers as we prepare for Passover.
Monday, 26.......... 10:45 a.m., Program to be Announced. No meal due to Passover preparation.
Tuesday, 27.......... Kitchen closed for Passover preparation.
Thursday, 29.......... 10:45 a.m., Program to be Announced. No meal due to Passover preparation.
OBITUARIES

Saul Victor, 87, lifelong advocate for liberal and progressive causes

LENEXO – Saul Victor, 87, passed away on Sunday, January 14 after complications of surgery, surrounded by his loving family.

Saul was the fourth of five children, born in the South Bronx during the Depression and raised by his beloved parents Sylvia and Benjamin to be self-reliant and to take care of his family. He began working before age 10, holding jobs ranging from carousel flyer to aerial installer.

He graduated from Brooklyn Technical High School, night school at City College of New York, and Brooklyn Law School, which he attended on a full scholarship. After military service in counterintelligence, he built a successful commercial and real estate law practice, rapidly becoming a prominent figure in the New York hotel and restaurant industries. Saul could strike up a conversation with anyone he met.

He was a lifelong advocate for liberal and progressive causes, from his days as a sound-truck campaigner for Adlai Stevenson, through the civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1960s and 70s, to the present.

Saul is survived by his chidren Jonathan and Karen and their spouses Rosemarie and Bob, grandchildren Stefanie, Alexander, Adam, Rachel, and Aaron; and great-grandson Lucian, along with stepchildren Donald, Alison, and Pamela; grandchildren Hillary Joshua, Max, and David; and great-grandchildren Beth, Nomi, and Murray. He was predeceased by his first wife Joan Libson Victor and his second wife Sandra Bernstein Victor (nee Sarrow). His family and countless friends will forever remember Saul – his wit, generosity, ideals, and lust for life.

Donations may be made to Brooklyn Law School for scholarships or to the American Civil Liberties Union.

Dr. Ellen Perlman Simon, 73, mentor to many

NEW YORK, NY – Dr. Ellen Perlman Simon, 73, died on Monday, January 15 at home surrounded by her family. Born February 15, 1948 in Pittsfield, she was predeceased by her parents, Herman and Jeanne (Horoby) Perlman.

Dr. Simon was the former executive director of Union Settlement Association. Prior to Union, she was the director of Patient and Family Services at New York Presbyterian Hospital, Columbia Presbyterian Campus. Dr. Simon holds degrees from Simmons College, The University of Chicago, and Hunter College School of Social Work. She was a mentor to many, both formally and informally, throughout her career.

Survivors include Donald Simon, her husband of almost 48 years; daughters, Rebecca Simon of Portland, OR, and Hannah Simon (Israel) Lauer of Columbus, OH; grandchildren, Nathan and Jeanne Lauerman; and cousins, Rick and Renee Tillie Robbins in 1929.

Dr. Simon was the former donor and as a member of cultural institutions as a supporter and patron of the arts, including the Berkshire Athenaeum, Kimball Farms, Berkshire Center for Family-Sand Children, Pittsfield City Personnel Committee, Colonial Theater, and the Tanglewood volunteer association.

He loved and was proud of his hometowns of Pittsfield and the Berkshires. He enjoyed attending events such as the annual Fourth of July Parade, concerts at Tanglewood, and theater events. He was a passionate fan of the Boston Red Sox and New York Giants. He took great pride in his military service and participated annually with the placing of a flag at veterans’ graves every Memorial Day. He had a terrific wit and sense of humor throughout his life that never faded and loved spending time with family and friends.

Joe is survived by his beloved wife of 58 years, Mary Jane; children David and Terri Handler of Newton, MA and Susan and Cliff Monaf of Medfield, MA; grandchildren Ali, Bekah, Sam, Ben, and Emily; sister Karen Lent; and many nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

Funeral services were held Thursday, January 11 at Temple Anshe Amunim in Pittsfield. burial followed in the Pittsfield Cemetery.

Memorial donations may be made to the Union Settlement Association, the Berkshire Music School, or Temple Anshe Amunim, all in Pittsfield, in care of the Devany-Condon Funeral Home.

Calling All High School Seniors

College Scholarship Opportunity for Jewish Teens

Awarded annually to a graduating senior who has demonstrated leadership in the Berkshire Jewish community, this scholarship is made possible through the generous support of the Henry Simkin and Frances Simkin Schiller and Dr. Stanley and Fay Simkin Scholarship Fund

Deadline: April 13

Berkshire Jewish Voice • jewishberkshires.org Page 17

Adar/Nisan 5778

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Deadline: April 13

Download an application on Jewishberkshires.org or pick one up at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA

Sustainable Wine Practices

Jewish Women in Linking Young Jewish Women in Their Fight Against Breast Cancer

(866) 474-2774 www.sharsheret.org

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Adar/Nisan 5778
The holiday of Purim is all about turning the world topsy-turvy, its roots found in the Scroll of Esther, where we read in Chapter 9, Verse 1: “when the king’s commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have rule over them; whereas it was turned to the contrary that the Jews had rule over them that hated them.” The intended genocide victims were saved and victorious while the killers were condemned. In other words, things in ancient Shushan were overturned.

Part of our celebration of going “from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning into a holiday” (Esther 9:22) entails wearing disguises as we turn from our normal lives into something totally different. Children in particular love to dress up in costume. One year, my son Seth decided to dress as Haman in the nursery school parade. Why? Because just once he wanted to be the bad guy. Lucky for us, he re-vertied back to his regular self after the holiday.

But it’s not just children who like to conceal their real identities; on Purim we witness normally sober and serious Jews wearing costumes. And drinking. An adult Jew is, according to the Talmudic sage Rava, “obligated to drink on Purim until he does not know the difference between ‘cursed be Haman’ and ‘blessed be Mordechai’.”

Again, the normal world is turned upside down – and probably spinning as well if the imbibing is taken to extremes. Which brings me to the food portion of this Purim column. I present the salmon.

The salmon, rather than taking the easy way to procreation with a river’s downstream flow, the salmon must think it’s Purim as it heads upstream when it’s time to spawn. So, in honor of this holiday and the theme of ve’nahafoch hu (“and it was turned to the contrary”), we’re going to make this salmon do an about-face and make your holiday brunch preparation super easy and stress free – at least for us if not for the fish. We’re going to make homemade lox. Three ingredients and you’ve got the basis of a wonderful holiday brunch. And bragging rights for having made your own lox.

### Make Your Own Lox

**Ingredients:**

- 1 lb. salmon filet (King Salmon if possible)
- ½ cup kosher salt
- ½ cup white sugar

**Directions:**

1. Rinse the salmon with water; pat dry with paper towels.
2. Check carefully for pin bones, removing any you find with tweezers.
3. Mix salt and sugar in a bowl.
4. Lay out a large sheet of plastic wrap.
5. Pour half the salt mixture onto the wrap and lay the fish on top.
6. Cover the salmon with the remaining salt mixture.
7. Fold the plastic wrap around the salmon, then wrap again with another sheet.
8. Place a wire rack inside a large pan, and place the wrapped fish on top.
9. Cut off both ends of the plastic in order to allow drainage.
10. Cover the fish with another, smaller pan and add a heavy object to weigh it down.
11. Put the pans into the refrigerator for 24 hours.
12. Drain the juice and unwrap the fish. If the salt mixture is gone, add more and rewarp.
13. After 48 hours, unwrap the lox and rinse well. Peel off the skin. It should come off easily with a sharp knife.
14. Cut into thin slices, against the grain of the fish.

You’re done! Serve your lox with bagels and your favorite add-ons: red onion, tomato, cream cheese, capers. Or, stir into your scrambled eggs or top a salad, or … Your imagination is the only limit.

Leftover lox can be repurposed for Purim costumes.

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

By Sarah Aroseo

I always found it strange, growing up in suburban New Jersey, that pictures hung on the walls of my childhood home featured ancestors in fez hats and full Balkan regalia. I heard stories of my grandfa-
thor’s life in the Ottoman Empire that bordered my new home. I knew I liked eating familial specialties like spanikopita and tabbouleh (biscuits), and singing Sephardic music. My family settled in a town called Monastir, at the time part of the Ottoman Empire in upper Greece/lower Yugo-
slavia. Today it is known as Bitola, Macedonia. Rathi-
her to convert to Christianity, my family settled there as a result of the -war, but also heaviness

my upbringing. My family lived in my consciousness throughout my childhood, and yet, also heaviness

of the best in classical mu-

I did not know, however, that a chance pairing with the great opera arias and duets

Besides being a beloved singer and diction coach at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Nico Castel was also one of the world’s leading experts on Ladino, otherwise known as Judeo-Spanish. The moment I learned I shared a common heritage with Nico Castel, I knew I wanted to learn every-
thing I could about the Ladino music of my family. I quickly fell in love with Ladino and its music. It was the way I could truly connect deepest with my Sephardic heritage. Not long after working with Castel (now over twenty years ago), and I made the switch from studying opera, to exploring Ladino full time.

Since then, I have per-

formed and spoken all over the world. But had never been to Monastir, my family’s home-
town, until September 2017. It was a dream come true. I had fans in Macedonia, as evidenced by interview requests and a smattering of articles that had been written about me by enthusiasts there. When I was invited to perform in nearby Bulgaria last year, I knew, after looking at a map, that I would have to have a way to make it to neighboring Mac-
edon. I casually mentioned my idea to a friend who had also lived in Bitola, and within a month, my entire itinerary—including sightseeing and a performance venue—had been planned for me. The people of the Republic of Macedonia were responsible for this.

To say that I received a homecoming welcome would be an understatement. The moment I arrived in Mace-
don, I was greeted by a candlelit crowd, fated with flowers, cakes, and gifts for both my children and me. In all my years of performing around the globe, I have never felt as appreciated as I did when I was in Macedonia.

The people there are in love with their Jewish history. Not only did they hold a collect-
gift for past wrongs, but because they miss Jewish life so much, they were unlike no other. They were open to every story I told and expressed interest in my family’s story. The people there are in love with their Jewish history. Not only did they hold a collect-
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My family’s story of immi-

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and white footage of my family in the Balkans from before World War II. That point in a concert has always been a poi-

nting convergence of music, identity and Jewishness for me: Singing this song, howev-

er, with the same video behind me, for a non-Jewish audience in my family’s ancestral town, took on a whole new meaning for me. It was a dream fulfilled on many levels.

Over a Shabbat dinner upon my return home to the Berkshires, I started swapping Macedonian travel adventure stories with Josh Bloom, hus-
band of Rabbi Jodie Gordon from Hevreh. He did peace building and human rights work in Macedonia from 2001-
2004, and was headed back a month after my trip as an international elections moni-

tor for the People’s Movement for Macedonia and its Jewish heritage. To-

gether we decided we wanted to introduce more people to this special place—a coun-

dy with natural beauty, ethnic diversity, and dynamic history: The land of Alexander the Great, birthplace of Mother Theresa, and home to a once-great Jewish community.

The August 19-26, 2017 Shabbat and I will co-lead an exclu-

dy Jewish Heritage Tour to Macedonia (http://bit.ly/jew-

ishmacedonia) and we invite members of the Berkshires Jewish community to join us. Together, we’ll visit remains of a 2nd century synagogue in Stobi, volunteer in the clean-

up of Bitola’s Jewish cemetery, learn at Skopje’s Holocaust Memorial Center, spend Shabbat with the Skopje Jewish community and so much more.

By returning this summer, I will continue this journey of my family’s unique, Sephardic memories of Macedonia, and I will be ready to create more of my own.

Sarah Aroseo in Macedonia
BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

Yentl, Yenta, and Match.com
By Marty Stransky

I know what you’re thinking – “How can there be any connection among those three words in the headline?” But there is, and you’ll see as we go on.

While my wife Isabelle and I were in Florida, our local library had a 3-week film festival of Barbra Streisand films. We went to see the wonderful movie Yentl, the story of a young Jewish girl in a small village in Poland in the 1900s who wanted to study in a yeshiva. After having been told that the name of the movie was Yentl not “Yenta,” I began to think about it. I knew that a “yenta” referred to a female busybody or gossipmonger, and began to wonder if there was a similar word for a man. So, I went on line to research it, but couldn’t find a word for a male equivalent. So I guess that a male busybody would also be referred to as a yenta.

But “yenta” in Yiddish really means a woman who is a gentle or noble woman, and not a gossiper. “Yenta” is sometimes incorrectly applied to someone who is a matchmaker, which probably stems from the show Fiddler on the Roof, where the character Yente is the matchmaker in the village of Anatevka.

In Yiddish, a matchmaker is a “shadchan” – someone who introduces two single Jews to one another with the hope that they will form a couple. Centuries of experience and tradition have shown that a good match is most likely to be formed between two people with similar outlooks, attitudes, beliefs, and backgrounds. Therefore, a matchmaker is most likely to be someone who is familiar with both people and in the position to introduce them to each other.

It is said that God is the greatest matchmaker in the world and his first successful shidduch (match) – Adam and Eve – were the best match in human history.

In heaven, Adam and Eve asked God why this was so.

“Wells,” God replied, “Adam, you didn’t have to hear about all the men that Eve could have married instead of you, and Eve, you didn’t have to hear what a good cook Adam’s mother was.

Today, in addition to a shadchan, we now have the dating websites Match.com, JDate, charm, and many more.

Isabelle and I met on Match.com when we were in our seventies. After you have registered with the dating service, you are given a listing where you can tell all about yourself. You don’t use your real name, only a pseudonym. Isabelle was “Puccini Lover,” and I was “Easy Going.”

It was Isabelle’s description of her interests that really made her attractive to me. She wrote: “That when I see a stone wall, a meadow behind, with trees and a blue sky, my inner being quivers like an aria from a Puccini opera.” She also wrote: “I see the two of us sitting in a room quietly reading, an occasional chime of a clock, and somehow feeling connected.”

How could you resist that? So we started to date and in a few months were married, with our grandchildren walking us down the aisle.

Years later, while sitting in the kitchen, Isabelle said to me: “You know, I really lied a little in my description of myself. I was really two years older than I said.” But you really lied when you said you were ‘Easy Going.”

Marty Stransky is treasurer at Congregation Ahavath Sholom in Great Barrington. You can find more stories by Marty on Congregation Ahavath Sholom’s website (www.ahavathsholom.com) under “Milchidka with Marty.”
Calendar – Ongoing Events
Around the Community

Continuous – Chabad of the Berkshires
“Smile on Sundays,” or “S.O.S.” volunteer program to serve senior citizens in the Berkshires. Information for families who can benefit and volunteers: Rabbi Levi Volovik at (413) 499-9899 or visit www.jewishberkshires.com.

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


Tuesdays, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. – Torah Portion of the Week study group at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield. Facilitator Myrna Hammerling guides the group through the triennial cycle, year-round in the KI Library. Newcomers always welcome to this gathering of students of diverse ages, backgrounds, and perspectives who search together to deepen understanding of our foundational text. Free. Information: (413) 445-4872, ext. 16.

Tuesdays at 10:45 a.m. – “The Book of Deuteronomy” at Knesset Israel. Please check with KI for dates in September and October. Classes taught by rabbi David Weiner who is guiding an in-depth exploration of a revolutionary book of the Torah that continues to shape Jewish thought and practice to this day. Texts are in English.

Tuesdays at 6:15 p.m. at Temple Anshe Amunim – “Reading Hebrew Through the Siddur,” with Esther Benari-Altmann. This course will improve fluency in reading Hebrew. Special emphasis will be given to words and prayers from the Siddur. Knowledge of and comfort with Hebrew letters (and vowels) is required. Open to members and non-members. $50 fee for non-members. Information: (413) 528-6378.

Tuesdays at 10:45 a.m. at Knesset Israel – “Enhanced Prayer Class for Adults” 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. at 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, KI Library. What are we saying when we read prayers at a service? How does the siddur language connect with my life today? How can I build my Hebrew reading fluency and practice my reading skills? How can I be more comfortable with the language and process of prayer? Facilitated by Myrna Hammerling. Newcomers always welcome. Information: (413) 445-4872, ext. 16.

Tuesdays at 7 p.m. – learn Hebrew for free with Temple Anshe Amunim through Read Hebrew America. Tens of thousands of Jewish adults gather in hundreds of locations across North America for Hebrew lessons for beginners and beyond. You will learn how to follow services, to be more involved in your children’s Jewish education, or simply enhance your own ties to Judaism. For more information, contact Esther Benari-Altmann at (413) 442-5910, ext. 12 or email eba@ansheamunim.org.

Tuesdays (fourth of each month) – Hadasah Book Club. For times, locations of meetings, and further information about the books: Roz Kolodny at (413) 243-2077 or rozlk@yahoo.com.

Fridays, last month of the year, varies with candle-lighting – Chabad of the Berkshires “Friday Night Live,” traditional Kabbalat Shabbat service. Information: (413) 449-9899 or visit www.jewishberkshires.com.

Fridays, at 9:00 a.m. – Meditation with Rabbi Rachel Barenblat in the Congregation Beth Israel sanctuary, 53 Lois Street, North Adams, overlooking the Berkshires. Information (413) 442-5910 or templeoffice@ansheamunim.org.

Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. – “Torah Plus: Exploring Jewish Text and Culture.” Join Rabbi Josh Brenidel for a conversation based on the texts of the Torah, Tanakh, and prayer book. Explore the text and meaning and reflect on what it means to be Jewish. All texts are offered in English. Temple Anshe Amunim, 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield. Free. Open to the public. Information: (413) 442-5910 or templeoffice@ansheamunim.org.

Saturdays at 9 a.m. – “Walking with Moses,” with Judith Weiner. Classes follow the schedule of the Knesset Israel Hebrew School. Judith Weiner leads an exploration of the purpose, development and form of midrash. This curriculum, developed by the American Jewish University of Los Angeles, introduces participants to some of the most compelling thinkers of the contemporary Conservative movement and guides them towards greater understanding of the role of midrash in their lives.

Saturday afternoons – “Exodus Inspirations,” with Rabbi David Weiner. Please check with the KI website for times (which coincide with evening services) and dates. Our people’s central story – our journey from slavery to freedom, from Mt. Sinai to the Promised Land – sparks innumerable conversations in every generation. Join in study of passages of Tanhuma Shemos, a creative 5th century commentary on the Book of Exodus, and enjoy the ensuing discussions.

Knesset Israel
16 Colt Road, Pittsfield
ONGOING MINYANS

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

CANDLE-LIGHTING
Friday, February 23 .......................... 5.18 p.m.
Friday, March 2 .............................. 5:26 p.m.
Friday, March 9 ............................. 5:35 p.m.
Friday, March 16 ............................ 6:43 p.m.

MAZEL TOV

Mazel Tov to...

Hazzan Randall Miller of Congregation Beth Israel upon becoming an ordained cantor.

* Richard Michelson, who was awarded the Jewish Book Council’s 2017 National Jewish Book Award for children’s literature for The Language of Angels: A Story About the Invention of Hebrew (which was enthusiastically reviewed in the February 2017 Berkshire Jewish Voice).

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

Thank you to these individuals who through their gift to the Legacy Circle will ensure that the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires thrives long into the future. May your name be a Blessing, and may the example you set inspire others to create their own Jewish Legacy.

Lee & Sydelle Blatt
Betty Braun*
Capeen Brown
Barbara Cohen
Mark Cohen*
Mimi Cohen
C. Jeffrey & Judith Cook
Gerry & Lynn Denmark
Jonathan & Lara Denmark
Shelita K. Donald
Melva Edelbaum
Monroe England, in memory of Monroe B. & Isabel England
Dr. Armand V. Feganshaus*
Dr. Donald S. Fegansbaum*
Steven Feiner
Diana & Stanley Feld
Stuart M. Fischman
Lynn & William Foggle
Elaine Friedman
Eiran Gazit
Jeffrey Goldwasser & Joaquil Wolfsson
Jordan & Laura Green
Harold Grin Sloan
Ellen Heffran
Ed Jaffe*
Elhia Katzman
Marlene Katzman
Dara Kaufman
Howard & Nancy* Kaufman
Lawrence Klein
Sarah Klein
Arthur Krieger*
Fred & Brenda Landes
Beth Laster-Nathan
Andrew S. Levine*
Toby H. Levine
Erna Lindner-Gilbert
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Helen Maisen*
Ellen Mastir
Stuart Masters
Estelle Miller
Robert Newman*
Ken & Fran Rabenstein
Stella Schecter
Adene D. Schiff
Gary Schiﬀ
Stephan & Deborah Schiﬀ
Martin Silver
Sylvia Silverberg, in memory of Jerome Silverberg
Richard A. Simons & Marcie Simons
Mark & Elisa Snowdorff
Harold Sopor*
Lisa Fletcher-Udell
Michael & Joan Ury
Mark & Judy Uowo
Henry* & Beate* Voremburg
Alexandra Warshaw
Rommie Winberg*
Rabbi Deborah Zecher & Rabbi Dennis Ross

* Of blessed memory

Anonymous (10)
Ed Abraham
Norman Avnet*
Barbara Baehrke
Robert Babekin
Linda J. Becker
Robert Berend
Shelley Berend
Helena Berke
Lawrence Berke

[Image of community members]
In an unknown empty desert in a rickety bus with strange assorted people talking in a language she didn’t understand going in to who knows where

By Linda Morgenlander

My first trip to Israel was in 1944. Israel seemed largely uninhabited, mostly farmland. Jerusalem was a divided city. I remember ropes in Jerusalem preventing us to entering forbidden Palestine streets. And the rusted cars on the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem Road reminded everyone of the still unresolved conflict. In spite of this, one could feel excitement in the air! Pull of ambition and hope and new adventures! I had been invited to stay with a friend in Kibbutz Merhavia in the Negev Desert. To get to the kibbutz I had to take a long public bus ride to Beer-sheba. Beersheba struck me, back then, as an old style Hollywood western town. Stores and saloons lined Main Street. However, instead of tying up horses to the rail outside the local saloons, camels were tied up.

In Beersheba, I switched to a local bus to get to the kibbutz. The bus ride in itself was interesting – all kinds of diverse people! Soldiers carrying knives and guns; local farmers going to and from markets; mustached Arabs carrying crates of live chickens. (Noisy creatures, those chickens!) Great adventures – riding through an unknown empty desert in a rickety bus with strange assorted people talking in a language I didn’t understand going to who knows where.

Kibbutz Merhavim in the middle of nowhere. It was famous for being the home of Golda Meir, and her son still lived there. As kibbutzim go, this was a big one, but in the middle of the desert. It had to be protected, especially at night from roaming Arab bandits and local wildlife. However, I was never scared. I felt protected.

The couple I visited consisted of Miriam, who was once, a nice Jewish girl from Brooklyn, and her husband Schlomo, a Sabra. They had three kids, but the kids didn’t live with them. Each child was sent to live with his peer group. The babies had a nursery and a day care. Each older child had his age-appropriate school. And at night each child slept in a dorm room. However, the parents could visit anytime. Read a bedtime story, play with them, talk with them, or do whatever they wanted.

I was curious what effect this had on the children. They were undoubtedly peer oriented. Was it better to live with your family? With parents and siblings? Or better with your age group?

Miriam and Schlomo each had jobs to perform. Everyone in the kibbutz had duties and had to act responsibly. Miriam was a cook and worked in the laundry. Schlomo was a farmer and a security guard, day and/or night. It was not an easy life.

A few days later we left the hotel and traveled to Kibbutz Ein Hashofet (literally, “Judge’s Spring”), the first American kibbutz, which was founded in honor United States Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis. That was my first, and best, trip to Israel. When I returned from that first trip and was asked what did you think of Israel? I said, (mimicking a 1964 advertisement “You don’t have to be Jewish to love Levy’s Rye Bread!”) “You don’t have to be Jewish to love Israel!”

Linda Morgenlander, a long-time second homeowner in Hinsdale, now splits her time between the Berkshires and Sarasota, FL.

A Dry and Barren Land, So Unlike the Berkshires

By Malka Evan

I was born in Pittsfield toward the end of 1937 and moved to Israel the summer of 1950. My parents, Leon and Sonia Mohill, were ardent and active Zionists from the early 1940s. My father was a member of the delegation that was sent to the Displaced Persons’ camps in Europe after World War II to evaluate the needs of the displaced persons and the Holocaust. He returned from that awesome and emotional trip with the resolve that the moment had come to establish a Jewish State on the map of the world.

From that moment on until we lifted off on our flight to Israel in August 1950, all my parents’ energies were devoted to working toward the future of the Jewish people in Israel. When we landed in Israel and walked off the plane, we saw dry and barren land with little vegetation, so unlike the Berkshires. We were taken to our hotel and soon after my two younger sisters and I went out to explore the surroundings. Walking distance from the hotel was a cluster of small huts that had been an Arab village before Israel’s War of Independence. Lo and behold, every structure was packed with immigrant families, survivors of the Holocaust. Upon our return to the hotel all we could talk about was what we could give them and how we could help.

A few days later we left the hotel and traveled to Kibbutz Ein Hashofet (literally, “Judge’s Spring”), the first American kibbutz, which was named in honor United States Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis. That was to be my home for the next ten years, through high school, military service, and marriage.

Pittsfield native Malka Evan lived in Israel for many years. Upon her return to the US with her family, she became involved in community affairs and held many leadership roles, and now resides in New York’s Capital District and Florida.
Before There Was Birthright Israel...

By Elsie Feld

Elsie Feld, whose parents married and lived in Jerusalem before World War II, tells about her first trip to Israel in the summer of 1949. Her program was conducted by the Jewish National Zionist Federation of America, and was the first of its kind to bring American students under the aegis of the JNF to the fledgling State of Israel, which welcomed them with the ‘royal treatment’.

Pilgrimage

By Susan Kopelowitz

It was June 1959, and I was 16. I was Jewish and spoke Hebrew. It was June 1959, and I was 16. I was Jewish and spoke Hebrew.

Send stories about your early Israel experiences to Albert Stern, BJV editor, at astern@jewishberkshires.org

Image of Herzl’s reburial on August 17, 1949

Her “Tie Rack” was a hit – so Reuma has it

By Barbara Barron

My only trip to Israel was in 1994, when I joined other members of the American Guild of Judaic Artists to participate at an art show at the Jerusalem Convention Center as a Judaic artist. I had received many commissions, including a Torah cover for a major synagogue.

Pilgrimage

By Susan Kopelowitz

It was June 1959, and I was 16. I was Jewish and spoke Hebrew. It was June 1959, and I was 16. I was Jewish and spoke Hebrew.
You Can Thank Jews for That Orange You’re Eating

By Emily Paster / The Nosher

Winter is citrus season. The sweeter and juicier oranges, lemons and grapefruits appear in stores just when we seem to need them the most. What could be more welcome on a gray January day than a sunny burst of vitamin C from your favorite citrus fruit?

Not only are citrus fruits delicious and healthy, but they also have a long association with the Jewish people. Humans have cultivated citrus fruits, which originally came from south and east Asia, for thousands of years. Indeed, we Jews are aware, if perhaps unconsciously, of the ancient connection between humans and citrus fruits because of how we celebrate the festival of Sukkot. An etrog — which in botanical terms is an ancient citrus variety known as a citron — is an essential part of this holiday observance. While the Bible does not mention the etrog by name, the citron was identified as the required “fruit of the goodly tree” as early as the second century B.C.E. The practice of using citrus fruit in this holiday observance is so important religious observance. While the Bible does not mention the etrog by name, the citron was identified as the required “fruit of the goodly tree” as early as the late Roman Empire, and the ensuing chaos, to Jewish horticulturists whose need for the fruit was undiminished.

The cultivation of other citrus species was a byproduct of these early Jewish settlers’ need for citron. Almost all citrus varieties are sexually compatible with one another, and they are highly prone to mutation. Such traits allowed their genes to mix naturally for thousands of years and made it feasible for Europeans to cross-breed the different varieties. Indeed, just about every citrus fruit you have ever seen comes from just three ancestors: the citron, the pomelo, and the mandarin.

The etrog was the first citrus fruit to be cultivated in Europe following the collapse of the Roman empire, and the ensuing chaos, to Jewish horticulturists whose need for the fruit was undiminished. Thus began the long association between Jews and the citrus trade in the eyes of Europeans. Starting in the Middle Ages, Jewish merchants traveled from the Mediterranean to northern and eastern Europe with citrus to sell to their brothers and sisters living in colder climates. This led to a thriving trade in all kinds of citrus, not merely etrogs, and not only to Jewish customers. Italian Jewish traders who settled in Germany used their contacts to import citrus from the Mediterranean to sell to any customers who could afford the high price. In the 18th-century England, Jewish peddlers were known to specialize in citrus fruits. Beginning in the 19th century, Zionist rabbis and other Jewish leaders began encouraging their followers to seek out citrus grown in Palestine instead of those grown around the Mediterranean. This was due in part to anti-Jewish riots on the Greek island of Corfu where many of the citrus destined for northern Europe were grown. Today, of course, Israeli farmers continue to grow and export citrus — more to Europe than to the United States, which has its own robust citrus industry — especially the famous Jaffa orange, which in the 1950s and ’60s was a symbol of pride for the young nation.

So, when you peel a perfect round orange or squeeze some lemon into your tea this winter, know that it is due in large part due to the efforts of Jewish farmers and merchants from centuries ago that today we enjoy such a wide variety of citrus fruits.

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