A Powerful Love Story with a Purpose – To Challenge Jewish Customs Concerning Women, Marriage, and Equality

Bestselling author Maggie Anton talks about The Choice: A Novel of Love, Faith, and the Talmud

On Thursday, February 9 at 6:45 p.m., join novelist Maggie Anton as she talks and answers questions about her work and latest book, The Choice: A Novel of Love, Faith, and the Talmud. This program is a part of "Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council."

This free program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for links to our programs.

Join in a conversation with the award-winning author of Rashi’s Daughters, Maggie Anton, who has written a wholly transformative novel that takes characters inspired by Chaim Potok and ages them into young adults in Brooklyn in the 1950s. When Hannah Eisen, a successful journalist, interviews Rabbi Nathan Mandel, a controversial Talmud professor, she persuades him to teach her the mysteries of the text forbidden to women—even though it might cost him his job if discovered. Secret meetings and lively discussions bring the two to the edge of a line that neither dares to cross, as their relationships with each other and Judaism are tested.

BJV INTERVIEW: MAGGIE ANTON, continued on page 13

Tikkun Olam and Environmental Storytelling in The Dreamcatcher Codes

A Tu B’Shevat conversation with Barbara Newman and Sadie Honig-Briggs

On Thursday, February 16 at 6:45 p.m., join author and filmmaker Barbara Newman and young writer Sadie Honig-Briggs for a timely Tu B’Shevat conversation on the topics of climate change, building cultural bridges and girls finding their voices and vital place in the world.

They will be talking about Newman’s young adult novel The Dreamcatcher Codes, about which the author writes: “It builds cultural bridges, unity and hope while illuminating two critical issues of our times: climate change and girls finding their voices and vital place in the world.”

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for links to our programs.

Barbara Newman didn’t know when she began writing The Dreamcatcher Codes that two themes would rise so prominently – the Jewish value of tikkun olam and diversity in her characters. She writes: “In the story, repairing the world is the calling – the urgent task for four fierce girls as they come together to restore Mother Earth. One of the girls is Jewish. She teaches the others about the Tree of Life, and the Hebrew words and symbols that

Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ 2022 Annual Campaign exceeded goal!

Together we raised $1,170,000, Thank you to all who participated!

Check out the next edition of the Berkshire Jewish Voice for a full report and honor roll of our generous and caring donors.

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ANNUAL CAMPAIGN 2022

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Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ 2022 Annual Campaign exceeded goal!

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Thank you to all who participated!

Check out the next edition of the Berkshire Jewish Voice for a full report and honor roll of our generous and caring donors.
In My View

Confident about the Joy of Jewish Life in the Berkshires
By Elisa Schindler Frankel / President, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

It is an exciting time to be part of the changing Jewish landscape in the Berkshires. Enhanced by all those who have moved here since the start of the pandemic, Jewish life is flourishing. Federation has greeted this influx of new residents with energy, excitement, and enthusiasm. We continue to be at the forefront of our vibrant and diverse Jewish community, providing leadership and direction to ensure our people’s continuity for generations to come.

In 2022, we set the loftyest fundraising goal in our 82-year history – $81.1 million. And we achieved it thanks to so many members of our community! A huge thank you to the dedicated members of the board of directors for their hard work and leadership throughout the year. They serve as our moral compasses and always keep us on the right path. A special thank you to two dynamic duos – our remarkable Major Gifts Chairs, Elissa Spungen Bildner and Rob Bildner, and stellar Super Tzedakah Week Chairs, Tom and Suzanne Sawyer. Their events were smashing successes, each creating a strong sense of community and engaging so many others in our work. We thank them for their ongoing commitment, passion, and generosity.

A heartfelt thank you to our cadre of more than 200 amazing volunteers for their endless hours dedicated to our cause. They take great pride and find tremendous joy in coming together to help wherever help is needed most. We would be remiss in not acknowledging and thanking our extraordinary executive director, Dana Kaulman, without whom none of what we achieved would be possible. We thank her for guiding her fantastic team and thank each of them for their thoughtful planning and wide range of contributions, day in and day out.

Most importantly – we thank YOU – our remarkable donors who believed in us and believed that we could do it. We appreciate your support, attendance at our programs and events, and generous financial contributions. I am exceedingly proud of our collective accomplishments this past year. As the hub of Jewish life, Federation has worked to create a welcoming presence that improves lives and inspires Jewish engagement. Community is at the center of everything we do. Only by working together can we continue to nourish and sustain Jewish life, embrace challenges and opportunities, and plan for the future with optimism and hope.

With 2023 here, we have more work to do. This month, our Allocations Committee will meet to decide how to best allocate funds drawn from our annual campaign to support the work of organizations outside of the Federation’s direct program services. The Talmud teaches us that “Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh – All of Israel is Responsible for One Another.” Through Federation’s allocation process, we accept our communal responsibility and commit to the larger efforts to care for those in need and sustain the Jewish community wherever Jews in the world need us.

The Allocations Committee will wrestle with how to balance support for deserving organizations within our Berkshire Jewish community against the needs of fragile Jewish communities around the world. They will consider how best to help thousands of Ukrainian Jews living under life-threatening winter conditions and support the escalating aliyah of Palestinian Jews fleeing their country’s devastating political and economic conditions.

Our youth represent our future, and the Allocations Committee will also decide on funding levels for supporting synagogues, religious schools, summer camp, and travel-to-Israel scholarships. These experiences provide rich memories and instill a love of Judaism, tikvah, or olim, Jewish learning, and celebration – all the components of a meaningful and strong Jewish identity. This past year, our Education Taskforce developed an exciting new allocation process to fund youth education in a congregational setting. We hope this will provide more flexibility to the religious schools to create innovative and robust Jewish journeys for our young people moving forward.

And as we think about the future, we cannot stop our efforts to raise awareness about the dangerous widespread rise in antisemitism. Our “Shine A Light on Antisemitism” online campaign was very successful, engaging more than 7,500 viewers, with more than 700 individuals sharing and clicking through to the numerous resources, articles, and videos we presented.

It was so exciting to see hundreds of community members come together and share their light at our recent Chanukah celebration at The Mount, where State Representative Smitty Pignatelli noted the need to address antisemitism in our community and our state. “I’m so proud to see so many young people here,” Rep. Pignatelli said. “It’s up to them because I don’t believe anybody is born with hate in their heart. They’re taught to hate. We need to change that narrative. And if we can’t start at a young age, we’re all in trouble.”

The challenges of antisemitism are significant. But as Dr. Deborah Lipstadt, US Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism, recently noted at the Jewish Federation’s General Assembly, we must balance the OY of antisemitism with the JOY of being Jewish and celebrating our rich and meaningful heritage.

The support and trust our community expressed through our work together gives me hope and focuses me on the joy of Jewish life in the Berkshires.

As you think about your resolutions for the secular New Year, I invite you to consider how you can get involved in our Jewish community and celebrate the Joy. One easy way is to join Federation and our local congregations and Jewish organizations at our upcoming community-wide musical Hootenanny Havdalah on February 4 at Knesset Israel.

The support and trust our community expressed through our work together gives me hope and focuses me on the joy of Jewish life in the Berkshires. I am thankful for the opportunity to serve Federation, and I am confident our community will continue to shine in 2023.

For calendar listings and events

Download an application at jewishberkshires.org or pick one up at the Federation’s office.

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Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
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ISRAEL TRAVEL & STUDY GRANTS FOR YOUTH

The Michael Nathaniel Shute Endowment Fund provides grants to Berkshire area youth for educational travel or study in Israel. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Awards are made within 45 days of receiving the application. Additional funding is available through the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Check out our website! www.jewishberkshires.org

COMMUNITY WIDE
Hootenanny Havdalah SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4 | 7:00 P.M.
Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield

Join our Berkshire Rabbis, local musicians, and Hevreh’s artist-in-residence, Peri Smilow, for an inspirational evening of singing, jamming and schmoozing.

All ages welcome! ‘Bring your own tambourine, maracas, or musical shaker to join in the fun!”

Livestream at: KnessetIsrael.org/livestream

Join us for a joyous celebration of Jewish culture, community, and connection.
Rabbi Reflection

When Our Spiritual Sap Begins to Rise
By Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

Every year, as winter’s darkest days give way to winter’s coldest days, I look ahead to Tu BiShvat, the New Year of the Trees. Tu BiShvat is a beacon of spiritual spring on the calendar ahead even when the outside world remains frozen.

Many of us know the Stark house motto “Winter is Coming,” from George R.R. Martin’s A Song of Ice and Fire books (made famous by the HBO series Game of Thrones.) If I have a spiritual motto, it might be “Spring is Coming,” regardless of the time of year. I start humming “Tu BiShvat hapía, chag ha-darom” (“Tu BiShvat is coming, festival of trees”) sometime around Thanksgiving.

I am always, always ready for Tu BiShvat. This is in part because I love the literal, tangible spring. I look forward to soft breezes, to magnolia and lilac blooms, to the scent of newly-turned earth and the promise of growing things. But more than that, I’m always ready for what Tu BiShvat represents.

The spring that Tu BiShvat heralds is not necessarily about almond blossoms or fig trees – though of course those may be blooming in Israel when we reach the full moon of Shvat. Tu BiShvat is about potentiality. First our tradition gives this to us in a fairly literal sense, as Rashi teaches that Tu BiShvat is when the sap begins to rise to feed leaves and fruit for the year to come. That’s a spring for which I am always ready. Here’s to embracing and embodying the openness of that kind of spiritual spring, no matter the time of year.

Tu BiShvat invites us to relinquish our protective shells and become vulnerable in the 40s: a good time to go out for pancakes! I can already picture how the snow at that time of winter melts each day in a little vortex around each tree trunk and refreezes at sundown...) But moving beyond the science of temperature and snow at that time of winter melts each day in a little vortex around each tree trunk...

In times of mourning, I’ve experienced Tu BiShvat as a time to cultivate faith that the emotional winter of grief won’t last forever.

That’s where I see the connection between orlah, or “the foreskin of the heart.” In the words of Rabbi Charlie Buckholtz, orlah ha-lev is “a metaphor for disconnection and numbness, a barrier to giving and receiving the compassion that is the nature of God, the fabric of the universe, naturally available to every conscious human.”

But the word orlah is a strange one for Torah to use here. Usually it refers to circumcision, and often appears in the phrase orlah ha-lev, “the foreskin of the heart.”

And again. That’s the spring for which I am always ready. Here’s to embracing and embodying the openness of that kind of spiritual spring, no matter the time of year.

Rabbi Rachel Barenblat is the spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires in North Adams. You can read more of her writing at: rabbirevbabiblogs.com.

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From Henry Herzberg

First-time Camper Found the Routine Okay and Wants to Go Back Next Year!

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires,

Eisner was a great camp. Some of the most fun things there: Swimming, basketball, hiking, media, magic and so much more but some of the bad parts include: taking a shower every day, not being able to be in the bunk during brot (free time). But that’s pretty much the bad parts, and the chadar ohel we got donuts on Saturdays, good cereal and always having pasta in the kitchen when you did not like what the warmers were serving. And before bed we get to play mofia and listen to my counselor playing the guitar. And the routine was okay... well, we got dressed.

Adventures... Henry Herzberg

went to breakfast, went back to the bunk for kolaches, and getting free time and going to havdalah, and going to art then lunch. If you read the daily hubble, you got the news. And then going to another chugime then swimming then breira then shower then dinner then nighttime activity then bedtime. That was my first year at Eisner and I want to go back next year.

From Henry Herzberg

Pittsfield

Thank You, Federation, for Supporting Our Religious School

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

On behalf of Hevrer of Southern Berkshire, I wish to personally thank Federation for your financial commitment, including an additional 20 percent increase in providing funding for our Religious School. Your funding, with this generous increase, will enable us in creating a meaningful religious school experience. Our partnership with Federation not only ensures our ability to educate our youth, but it also strengthens the Jewish community of the Berkshires.

By working together, the future of our Jewish community becomes even more secure in these uncertain times. Again, please let me thank you for your partnership with us, your generous financial support, and being there for our Jewish community.

Best,

Larry Frankel
President, Hevrer of Southern Berkshire
Great Barrington

Congratulations and Thank You for an Amazing Chanukah Celebration at The Mount

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

The Federation’s Chanukah celebration at The Mount was amazing, worthy of a front-page story in The Berkshire Eagle.

With a great turnout from all generations and members of the Berkshire Jewish community, it was an expression of hope and joy.

Elisa Schindler Frankel - your messages of community in the face of rising threats of antisemitism and the expressions of pride and enthusiasm as you lit the candles and sang with the children gathered around you was just what we needed at this time. The glow of the candles, the beautiful smiling faces and the sounds of voices and the musical instruments - all evoked the feelings of carrying on beloved traditions and building new ones with future generations. Representative Smitty Pignatelli’s presence and remarks were also timely, echoing that we all should celebrate the diversity of our communities and all have a role in fighting the hate that threatens us.

I can only imagine the many efforts that go into providing this unique Chanukah experience for the Berkshire community. We only see the final product. So many thanks to the entire Federation team for your creativity, energy, time and resources for the enjoyment of all and for bringing us together to celebrate our Jewish lives.

Best,

Amy Richman

Pittsfield

Celebrate Chananah Did Not Feel Like an ‘Add-On’

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

I wanted to thank you for putting together the lovely first-night event of Chanukah at NightWood. My experience of walking down the paths lit by Stars of David (with the prism glasses) was very moving - I don’t think I’ve ever been at a true community event that was centered around Judaism and one of our holidays outside of a synagogue event. Given that NightWood isn’t a “Christmas” event, it made it clear that celebrating Chanukah wasn’t an “add-on” like it virtually always is (like when businesses have their holiday parties and play lots of Christmas music, but have a menorah set up). It literally brought tears to my eyes. Of course, the musicians, speakers, and candle lighting were also lovely.

So thank you so much – I wish all of you a wonderful and healthy 2023!

Warmly,

Daltrey Turner
Pittsfield

Letters to the Editor

Thank you to our supporters!

The Berkshire Jewish Voice extends a very special “thank you” for the generosity extended by those who have sent in their contributions for voluntary subscriptions to the paper.

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A publication of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serving the Berkshires and surrounding NY, CT and VT

Berkshire Jewish Voice • jewishberkshires.org
January 23 to February 20, 2023
Report on the General Assembly of Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA)

By Natalie Matus / Vice President of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and President of Congregation Beth Israel

I had the honor of joining Dara Kaufman, executive director of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, at the General Assembly of the Jewish Federations of North America in Chicago from October 31 to November 1, 2022. This was my first time attending the General Assembly, and it was an inspiring and amazing three days.

The GA brought together 1,800 professional and lay leaders in the Jewish community from across North America, from large and small communities. It also featured appearances from President Isaac Herzog of Israel, US ambassador to Israel Amy Gutmann, president and CEO of JFNA Eric Fingerhut, and many other luminaries. Topics of keynote speeches and panels included some of the major issues facing Jewish communities, including growing antisemitism, how we can strengthen Jewish life, the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the importance of strong leadership across Jewish organizations, the impact of increased diversity in the Jewish community, and the need to bring young Jews to the table.

There was a lot of discussion about the new Jewish family and how they will redefine the Jewish future. These issues impact us here in the Berkshires in the work of Federation and our local synagogues. Workshop participants talked about the increasing number of marriages between Jews and non-Jews over the past 10 years (according to the most recent Pew study) and the reluctance of many younger families to affiliate in the way the previous generations did. They concluded that if we don’t understand who these parents are and what they are looking for – when and how they want to bring Judaism to their lives – we will create a growing divide in the Jewish community. We need to understand them and develop programs to meet them where they are.

Families are seeking community and we need to figure out how to work with them to provide what they are looking for.

looking for – when and how they want to bring Judaism to their lives – we will create a growing divide in the Jewish community. We need to understand them and develop programs to meet them where they are. Families are seeking community and we need to figure out how to work with them to provide what they are looking for.

As president of Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams, I found that many of these issues resonated deeply with me. These are all questions I think about every day – how can we engage young families in a meaningful way to them? How can we connect in an authentic way so that families see themselves as truly belonging to our organizations? We also need to think about new ways to measure engagement and success – not necessarily by whether or not they choose to become members of synagogues.

Finally, I was deeply moved by a briefing by JDC – a leading Jewish humanitarian organization that many Federations, including ours, support. We were briefed on the lifesaving work JDC is doing in Ukraine. Of the 200,000 Jews in Ukraine when the Russian invasion started, roughly 50,000 have left. But 90 percent of the elderly remain, and their situation is dire. Winter relief will be critical for these Jews’ survival. JDC is providing generators, gas tanks, wood, food, medicine, blankets, and warm sleeping bags to keep people alive. Hesed Centers and JCCs are being turned into warming centers.

This briefing became the focus of a meaningful conversation at our Federation’s executive committee meeting later that month. Our community had already raised over $100,000 earlier in the year to support the Ukrainian Jewish community fleeing the war, but after discussing the severity of this situation and our responsibility as Jews to help one another, the executive committee decided to allocate an additional $20,000 to help our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, who have already lost so much, survive the bitter winter ahead.

I returned home from the General Assembly feeling inspired and grateful to be part of Federation and this amazing community. To see the strength of Jewish communities working together and putting our values into action to improve and save lives has filled me with renewed energy for the work ahead.
Your Federation Presents

Havdalah is a Hoot!
Community-wide musical celebration on February 4
PITTSFIELD – This Jewish community will come together on Saturday, February 4 at 7 p.m. for a musical havdalah service in the sanctuary of Knesset Israel. Join our Berkshire rabbis, Jewish musicians from our congregations (including Hevreh’s artist-in-residence, Peri Smilow) and your fellow community members for an inspirational evening of singing, jamming, and schmoozing.

All ages welcome! Bring your own tambourine, maracas, or musical shaker to join the fun!

This free community-wide celebration will be presented by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and its affiliates: Berkshire Hills Hadassah, Berkshire Minyan, Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Congregation Beth Israel, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Knesset Israel, and Temple Anshe Amunim.

Knesset Israel is at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield. You can livestream the event at knessetisrael.org/livestream.

For more information, please call the Federation at (413) 442-4360, ext. 10.

In the Midst of Civilized Europe: Jews and Ukraine in Times of War
On Thursday, February 23 at 6:45 p.m., join Jeffrey Veidlinger, Joseph Brodsky Collegiate Professor of History and Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, who will talk about his latest book, *In the Midst of Civilized Europe: The Pogroms of 1918-1921 and the Onset of the Holocaust*, a finalist for the Lionel Gelber Prize, a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award, a Times of London “Book of the Week,” and a Kirkus Top Nonfiction Book of 2021. This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewisberkshires.org for links to our programs. This program is a part of “Jewish Literary Voices: A Federation Series in collaboration with The Jewish Book Council.”

Between 1918 and 1921, over 100,000 Jews were murdered in Ukraine by peasants, townsmen, and soldiers who blamed the Jews for the turmoil of the Russian Revolution. In hundreds of separate incidents, ordinary people robbed their Jewish neighbors with impunity, burned down their houses, ripped apart their Torah scrolls, sexually assaulted them, and killed them. Largely forgotten today, these pogroms – ethnic riots – dominated headlines and international affairs in their time. Aid workers warned that six million Jews were in danger of complete extermination. Twenty years later, these dire predictions would come true.

Drawing upon long-neglected archival materials, including thousands of newly-discovered witness testimonies, trial records, and official orders, Veidlinger shows how this wave of genocidal violence created the conditions for the Holocaust and continues to haunt Ukraine to this day. This talk will look at the historical fate of Jews in Ukraine during times of war with a focus on the pogroms of the First World War, the Holocaust, and the Russian-Ukrainian War of 2022.

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The World of Jewish Mustard, with the National Mustard Museum's Barry Levenson

Is mustard the “Jewish condiment?” On Thursday, February 2 at 6:45 p.m., find out the answer from Barry Levenson, founder and curator of the National Mustard Museum (and a nice Jewish boy who almost became a rabbi), who will present a delightful program on mustard and its relation to Jewish culture and cuisine.

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for links to our programs.

Tradition tells us that when Abraham greeted strangers with food, he served mustard with tongue. Does “Jewish mustard” have to be kosher? Are there some typically Jewish foods that must be served with mustard? Is mustard okay for Passover? (It depends.)

The National Mustard Museum holds the world’s largest collection of mustards and mustard memorabilia and Barry Levenson is the world’s foremost mustard expert. He grew up in Worcester, where he had mustard on his corned beef sandwiches whenever he would visit his rabbinical school, but at the last minute decided to go home for Passover.

In 1986, he began collecting mustards, and, as they say, the rest is history. As the world’s number one mustard muse, he has tasted more than 4,000 mustards. He left his law position and opened the National Mustard Museum in 1992 but still has his finger in the Jewish mustard. He is the author of four books including Barry Levenson’s All About Mustard (2011), and is working on a fifth novel about mustard. He left his law position and opened the National Mustard Museum in 1992 but is still in business.

The National Mustard Museum holds the world’s largest collection of mustards and mustard memorabilia and Barry Levenson is the world’s foremost authority on the golden condiment. He will answer these (and indeed any) questions you might have about mustard.

True Colors: Stories from Jews of Color Exploring Identity and Community

On Monday, January 23 at 6:45 p.m., get to know the “Jewish mustard” in our midst. Joshua Silverstein and Ronda Spinak, who will present a delightful program exploring the impact of living as Jews of Color, will share true stories and insights about their yearning for belonging and the rich and complicated question that is identity. While all people face challenges and struggles, Jews of Color have many touching and unique stories to tell about resilience, self-respect, and celebrating the many colors and voices in our community.

True Colors, a salon theatre show in which Jews of Color share true stories about their yearning for belonging and the rich and complicated question that is identity. While all people face challenges and struggles, Jews of Color have many touching and unique stories to tell about resilience, self-respect, and celebrating the many colors and voices in our community. The enlightening show will explore the impact of living as Jews of Color when inclusion and equity are not always practiced in the Jewish community.

“We are proud to spotlight the experiences of Jews of Color,” said Ronda Spinak, The Braid’s artistic director. “These are poignant and moving stories of questioning, of feeling like the outsider, of committing to Judaism...quintessential and universal Jewish stories.

In True Colors, audiences will hear the story of a daughter of a Jewish mother and a Black/Chinese father and how she was taught to embrace her diversity, and have confidence that the world would embrace her, as well. You will hear about a woman torn between her Jewish heritage and her Latin one, struggling to find her place in either culture. And you will learn from an African American man whose Jewishness confuses himself and others.

True Colors was created and produced by The Braid (formerly Jewish Women’s Theatre) as part of its Salon Theatre season in May 2019 with material curated and adapted by Ronda Spinak, directed by Susan Morganstein and co-produced by Eric Greene. For more information, visit the-braid.org.

Contemporary Jew Hatred in Universities and Popular Culture in America

On Thursday, January 26 at 6:45 p.m., respected scholar, author, and speaker Dr. Charles Asher Small will explore issues of contemporary Jew hatred in the United States, including antisemitism in American universities, popular culture, and hip hop.

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for links to our programs.

Dr. Small is the founder and executive director of International Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP) and the director of the Fellowship Training Programme on Critical Antisemitism Studies at Woolf Institute, Cambridge. Through ISGAP, he has convened ground-breaking academic seminar series, conferences and programming in the emerging field of contemporary antisemitism studies at Harvard University, Yale University, Columbia University, Stanford University, Fordham University, McGill University, University of Miami, La Sapienza University in Rome, the Sorbonne in Paris, the National University of Kyiv, the CNRS (the French National Center for Scientific Research or Centre national de la recherche scientifique), and other top-tier universities around the world.

Dr. Small is committed to creating scholarly programming and research on contemporary antisemitism at top universities internationally, and establishing contemporary antisemitism studies as a recognized academic discipline. He is the author of books and articles including the six-volume Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity and The Vale Papers: Antisemitism in Comparative Perspective (vols. 1-3).

Is home really the best decision?

There comes a time when many seniors or their loved ones realize that there is a need for additional daily help. With so many questions and considerations it all can seem overwhelming.

We’re here to help!

We’ve compiled resources from a variety of experts in the field of senior living to help you navigate the best path forward—check out the comparison lists on our website.

geercares.org/resources

77 - 99 South Canaan Road | North Canaan CT 06018 | www.geercares.org | 860.824.2600
Connecting with Community
Nourish Your Body, Mind, and Soul!

Meals-on-Wheels & Meals to Go – Advance Reservation Required
Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Meals to go will be ready by noon for pickup at the Knesset Israel kitchen door, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield. All meals-on-wheels will be delivered by Federation volunteers in the early afternoon.

Please call (413) 442-2200 no later than 9 a.m. to reserve your meal for pickup and to arrange delivery if standing instructions are not in place. All are welcome to reserve meals for pick-up, although delivery may be limited in certain circumstances. The menus listed below are planned, but may be modified depending on availability of ingredients. When making a reservation, please inform us if a person in your party has a food allergy. Adults 60 and over: $3 suggested donation. Adults under 60: $7 per person.

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

What’s for Lunch?
Gluten Free Main Entrée ** and Dairy Free Main Entrée #
Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.

JANUARY
Monday, 23............Sloppy Joes**#*, baby carrots, roasted Brussels sprouts, salad, hamburger roll, and Mandarin oranges.
Tuesday, 24............Turkey stew**, noodles, salad, wheat bread, and parve cookies.
Thursday, 26............“Chicken” souvlakis (soy-based chicken), lemon rice, tzatziki, shredded lettuce, falafel on the side, pita bread, and baklava.
Monday, 30 .............Meatballs and cherries**, rice, green beans, pita bread, and triple chocolate cookies.
Tuesday, 31............Veal stew**, noodles, Italian bread, and grapes.

FEBRUARY
Thursday, 2............Oven roasted root vegetable pizza, vegetable soup, salad, and peaches.
Monday, 6 .............Meatloaf**, lentil soup, peas and carrots, mashed potatoes, pumpernickel bread, applesauce, nuts and dried fruit..
Tuesday, 7.............Roasted miso marinated chicken (all thighs)**#, white rice, Oriental vegetables, salad, multi-grain bread, and tropical fruit salad.
Thursday, 9............Italian Day: Chef’s choice of pasta, minestrone soup, salad, garlic bread, and Mandarin oranges.

Monday, 13............Corned beef hash frittata**, vegetable soup, salad, green beans, Farmer’s loaf, and apricots.
Tuesday, 14............Persian chicken**, salad, whole wheat bread, and parve chocolate chip cookies.
Thursday, 16............Fresh fish**, mushroom soup, wild rice pilaf, mixed vegetables, oat bread, and apple strudel.
Monday, 20............Closed for Presidents’ Day
Tuesday, 21............Breaded chicken cutlets#, egg drop soup, spicy dipping sauce, egg rolls, white rice, Oriental vegetables, rye bread, and pineapple.
Thursday, 23............Vegan lentil stew**, brown rice, salad, multi-grain bread, and cherry pie.
Monday, 27............Roasted chicken**, mixed bean soup, noodles and onions, roasted broccoli, whole wheat bread, and applesauce.
Tuesday, 28............Pepper steak with Korean barbecue sauce**, mango juice, white rice, Oriental vegetables, salad, white bread, and Mandarin oranges.
MARCH
Thursday, 2............“Pepperoni” pizza, beet, salad, and fruit cocktail.
Monday, 6 .............Meat loaf**, chicken soup, peas and carrots, mashed potatoes, rye bread, and pears.

PLEASE NOTE: The Elder Services Senior Nutrition Program, under which the Federation operates its kosher lunch program, raised the suggested donation to $3 a meal. The suggested donation is completely voluntary. Seniors who cannot pay a voluntary donation will continue to receive a meal, no questions asked. We appreciate your understanding.

Homebound or recovering from an illness or injury?
Let us help you arrange for a kosher lunch to be delivered through our Kosher Meals on Wheels Program. Call (413) 442-2200.
THE MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF THE BERKSHIRE

Learning what matters
Toddler through 8th grade
BerkshireMontessori.org

Interested in Volunteering Locally?
Literacy Network of South Berkshire needs volunteer tutors!

Our tutors love what they do!

- Work 1:1 with a local immigrant or US-born adults in learning or improving English language and literacy skills.
- Training and support provided.
- Work remotely or in person.
- Only 1 hour per week.

Join the community!
Contact Leigh Doherty ldoherty@litnetsb.org or 413-243-0471

EISNER DAY CAMP
LOCATED IN GREAT BARRINGTON, MA

Campers 4 years old to rising 2nd graders
All campers must be "up to date" with Covid-19 vaccinations.

Week-long sessions:
June 26 - August 11, 2023
Optional pickup & drop-off service
Financial assistance available upon request

Attentive, caring and energetic staff
Day Camp fun includes boating, swimming, farm, sports, crafts, drama and music!

613.528.1652 | eisnercamp.org | eisnerdaycamp@urj.org

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Join over 1,450 of the most creative, engaged, and active adults in the Berkshires for in-person and online courses, events, and community.

Learn more at berkshireolli.org

OPEN HOUSES
June 11 & 25
1-3pm

A REFORM JEWISH SUMMER CAMP
Local Students Experienced a Day of Holocaust Education and Remembrance at the Museum of Jewish Heritage

On December 8, Jewish teens in the 7th through 10th grades (plus parents) from across the Berkshire Jewish community shared a meaningful day of learning and remembrance at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York City.

The trip, sponsored by the Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County and Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, included a tour of the exhibit “The Holocaust: What Hate Can Do,” which focuses on what Jewish life was like in Europe from World War I to the rise of Nazism in Germany, then through the Holocaust and beyond. The exhibit featured personal stories, family heirlooms, and historical artifacts, which emphasized the very real connections of the past to the present.

After viewing the exhibit, the 32 participants were able to visit, via Zoom, with Gabriella Major, a Holocaust survivor who gave a stirring account of her experiences in a concentration camp as a young child, and how, miraculously, she was reunited with her parents after her liberation. Gabriella’s dynamic and inspiring testimony ended with a moving call to take a stand against antisemitism in our own community and around the world.
We Let It Shine, Let It Shine, Let It Shine

Federation’s Community Chanukah Celebration at The Mount

sent shivers down our spines and every other body part

Federation’s Community Chanukah Celebration at NightWood warmed our hearts even as Mother Nature chilled us to the bone on December 18. More than 275 spirited community members of all ages braved the frigid weather to mark the Festival of Lights, joining together in song and revere to shine a light to dispel the darkness. Special thank yous to our guest speaker, Rep. Smitty Pignatelli, for delivering a rousing speech calling for unity and action against antisemitism; to the Berkshire Jewish Musicians Collective for proving that a stirring set of Chanukah tunes can be played with frozen fingers; to iBerkshires.com and The Berkshire Eagle for prominently featuring this event and sharing its message with the wider Berkshires community; and to the folks at The Mount for once again being gracious hosts for our winter celebration.

Your Federation Presents

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The Henry Simkin and Frances Simkin Schiller and Dr. Stanley and Fay Simkin Scholarship Fund

Annually awards one or two scholarships to graduating seniors who have demonstrated leadership and participation in the Berkshire Jewish community.

Deadline: April 22

Download an application at jewishberkshires.org or pick one up at the Federation’s office 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA
Ten months into the Ukraine crisis, the country is in the midst of a bitter winter. Temperatures frequently drop below freezing, and much of Ukraine’s electricity and heating infrastructure has been damaged to its core. Ukraine’s Jewish community is contending with a host of frightening and new winter-related challenges.

If the first months of the emergency were defined by evacuations and assistance at the borders, and the summer months focused on sustaining emergency operations and serving as a source of hope for those in despair, today the most pressing need is keeping Ukraine’s Jews from freezing. This update highlights how your generosity is bringing warmth to the freezing – in the face of enormous challenges.

Writes Batsheva Shanee Katz, donor relations officer at JDC: “Once again, I’d like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for your important part in supporting Ukraine’s most vulnerable Jews. It is thanks to your generosity that elderly Jews throughout the country are receiving vital clothing, equipment, and nourishment that will keep them warm and healthy in the coming months – thank you for standing by their side with your community’s donation of more than $120,000 raised in emergency funds.”

**Dropping Temperatures, Rising Needs**

With snow blanketing much of Ukraine and temperatures regularly dropping below zero, warmth and survival are on everyone’s minds. Nearly half of Ukraine’s energy infrastructure has been damaged in attacks, meaning that many Ukrainians are often without light or heat. In the capital of Kyiv, some residents only have electricity for four to six hours a day. Throughout the country, people are struggling to survive without heat, hot water, or gas to cook their food.

**Winter Survival: Turning Compassion into Action**

JDC launched its Winter Survival operation in October 2022 just before temperatures began to drop. With your support, we were able to transform winter relief into winter survival, offering additional forms of aid to a growing number of Jews in dire need. In addition to our annual winter assistance, highlighted in blue, this year’s assistance includes numerous items, highlighted in red, to help Ukraine’s Jews survive power outages in subzero temperatures.

**Impact in Numbers**

The numbers below reflect the projected number of individuals and households that are benefitting, or will benefit, from Winter Survival.

**Thank You!**

JDC’s life-saving Winter Survival operations are only possible thanks to the generosity and compassion of donors like you. On behalf of the tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews whom you are helping keep warm this winter and sustaining throughout the crisis, we thank you.

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**At Renaissance Investment Group, LLC our clients have direct access to senior leaders that are able to answer difficult questions about market movements and volatility. With decades of global financial experience we’re here for you every step of the way, helping you to customize and grow a portfolio that manages risk and maximizes returns. So you can stress less and relax more. Call today to speak with one of our experienced advisors.**
You have a long list of books dealing with women and Judaism, particularly women whose stories have never been told before. The Choice, as the subtitle indicates, is a novel of love, faith, and the Talmud. The title recalls Chaim Potok’s The Chosen and the story takes place during the same period and in the same location. If you’ll forgive the pun – was that by choice?

Oh, absolutely. I read The Choice and The Promise when I was in college. After Rabbi Reuven’s Daughters got out there, I was doing book tours. I stayed at someone’s house and The Choice was on the shelf there. I started reading it and I realized, where are the women? Of the two main characters, the hero [Modern Orthodox narrator Reuven Malter], is like Bambi. His mom died so long ago that he doesn’t even remember who she is. And I think she appears maybe four times in the book, and she’s in the kitchen.

So by that point, I’m a full-fledged feminist and already studying Talmud, and I was kind of outraged. Then, when I read in The Chosen [protagonist Ila Davita Chandal] is the same age as Reuven Malter and she’s his classmate and they’re both graduating from grade school, she doesn’t get the award for best student, even though she is clearly the best student, because the trustees say no one will ever send their son to that Orthodox day school if the best student is a girl. So she’s sure that Reuven is going to get the prize instead of her. But lo and behold, at graduation he does not. Some other kid gets it, and Reuven comes over to her and he tells her it was offered to him, and he turned it down. He didn’t want to take it because he despised it. [Potok writes that] each thinks the other is attractive, and Reuven is a mensch, but that’s the end of the book.

Why did Potok stick Reuven back into this story of a female character that he wrote 30 years later? Clearly, he didn’t do it to write a sequel, or to seem to me there should be a sequel that gets the two of them together. And then he died, and there was no sequel. So I decided, okay, I’m going to get this couple together. I was mostly writing it for my own fun, to see if and how I could do it. The characters were in my brain and refusing to leave. I had to get them out of there and onto some pages.

Is there any autobiographical aspect to the book? Because I understand you started studying Talmud.

Rachel Adler started this woman’s Talmud class, and it was back in the early 1990s. There was no place that a woman in Southern California could have studied Talmud, even though it’s the second-largest Jewish community in the world. By and large, even in the 1960s women, maybe [Talmud study] wasn’t so much forbidden as there were just no classes for women. Nobody was offering classes to women or girls. Not until this millennium has it become available. That’s a huge difference.

There’s that famous New Yorker cartoon with the dog sitting in front of the computer. The caption is, “When you’re online, nobody knows you’re a dog.” Well, when you’re studying Talmud online, nobody knows you’re a woman. This is breaking all the barriers and studying Talmud outside of official classrooms. Besides, it became so obvious, like from the argument I have in the book – once you have women judges on securities court, nobody is going to ignore the rabbinic and professors and getting PhDs, then all the excuses why women shouldn’t or can’t study Talmud fall apart.

You have two subplots running through the book, one regarding clergy child sexual abuse.

Potok had already made the Hasidic character a child psychologist. And I’m thinking, who would go to a Hasidic ultra-Orthodox child psychologist? At the same time, I watched Spotlight [a 2015 film that tells the true story of how the Boston Globe uncovered the massive scandal of child molestation and cover-up within the local Catholic Archdiocese] and, in the New York Times, I saw that kind of stuff coming out in the Jewish community. When I started doing internet searches, I saw that this is all over the place. Just like nobody had any idea what was going on in the Catholic Church for many, many years, they knew it, they said anything, this was going on in the ultra-Orthodox world. Because the clergy, the Hasidic rabbis, are such that nobody would dare challenge them. And also in that community, if there is any hint of mental problems in your family, nobody’s going to marry your children.

And so that’s what I’m giving my character as his job. I did a lot of research into it, and it was more horrible than I had imagined. I chose to put that in because I don’t want to sugarcoat the world my character lived in. Potok had already made his Davita a journalist – he wrote some short stories about Davita when she was older, married to an Orthodox Jewish man, living in Utah, and I thought, why not make her like Nathan to me. By making my Hannah a journalist, I got to have her to investigate all kinds of interesting historical events.

The other main subplot revolves around the halakhic concept of niddah (a woman having her regular menstrual period).

I happened to connect with Professor Steven Miller, who’s the head of the Jewish Studies Department at the University of Connecticut. He’s the world’s expert on the history of mikvehs in North America. Mikvehs became a problem for the New York Department of Health in the 1910s and 1920s because they were starting to investigate big public swimming pools, and spas and sweatsheds, for cleanliness. With indoor plumbing, [the authorities] now had a higher standard of sanitation than they used to in the 1800s. Anyway, the Department of Health caught on that there were these Jewish baths – and that they were disgusting. It’s like someone took a giant rusty tin can and stuck it in somebody’s basement and you were supposed to immerse in there. Nobody ever changed the water and nobody ever cleaned them.

By the 1910s, what also messed up the whole mikveh business was that the young people who came as immigrants at turn of the century and were without their parents. The young people, the single people, were the first immigrants who would come and work in the sweatshops, and they would send the money back to bring over other family members. And so what happened when these young people decided to get married? The mother who was back home would normally have taken the daughter and explained about the mikveh – but that cord was cut. So they would go to the mikveh, who wouldn’t be married unless Rashi knew about the negative, all the horrible stuff that will happen to you, to your body, to your children, to your husband – to the world – if you do not use the mikveh.

So the bride probably never knew what it was like at home and immediately taken a bath because she had indoor plumbing by that point. And you didn’t have to be a Nobel Prize winner to think, ‘Why should I go to that disgusting old mikveh? I have a perfect good bathtub at home. I’m going to use it anyway when I get out of there.’ I knew it was actually a problem in northern France for Rashi’s community because he had to write a responsa telling women – begging them – to go to the mikveh. The fact that he had to write such a responsa meant that women were not going to the mikveh. They were going instead to the Roman baths that are still around in cities that the Romans had established hundreds of years earlier.

Your book, The Choice, is inspired by Potok’s novels and characters, but you could not use his creations as he wrote them – you had to change names and certain details. Can you share some of the strategies you had to employ to create your story?

The Potok family did not authorize The Choice, and I was prepared for them not to. I worked with one of the finest literary copyright attorneys in this country, Jonathan Kirsch in Los Angeles, who has written some Jewish novels himself. Knowing this was a potential problem, I worked with Kirsch on how to stay on the correct side of the copyright infringement line so that I was protected by fair use.

In 2001, Alice Randall published a novel called The Wind Done Gone. The Gone With the Wind story retold through the point of view of one of Scarlett O’Hara’s slaves] and Margaret Mitchell’s estate sued her and lost. The copyright law was interpreted that it is fair use if, though based on copyrighted material, the new work is a critique, is social commentary. Of course, nobody would ever have read the new book, except that Margaret Mitchell sued the author and lost. It was tremendous publicity. Sometimes I thought I would sue me so that we could take advantage of that publicity, but they didn’t.

So I changed all the names, and I changed some other obvious stuff that really wasn’t necessary to my story. Once you have women judges on securities court, nobody is going to think it’s a mikveh. The characters were historical figures. I kept them at the same kind of job, where they lived, and that sort of thing. They have the same number of family members, but since [Potok wrote] nothing about the women, I had free range to make up whatever I wanted to – to give them names and backstories that he hadn’t. I also named my character Nathan’s mother Minnie Trachtenberg because that was his bubble’s name and I wanted to immortalize that her way.

One last question. Your book 50 Shades of Talmud: What The First Rabbis Had To Say About You-Know-What is a definite riff on 50 Shades Of Gray, right? Both books were self-published, correct?

Yes. Nobody wanted to publish Rashi’s Daughters, to their loss. And I started my own small press, Banot Press, way back in the early 2000s because I was determined to get Rashi’s Daughters out in time for Rashi’s 900th yahrtzeit. It sold over 100,000 copies.

First of all, I knew who my audience was. I was in synagogues and Jewish women’s organizations so I knew that I could do a book at my monthly meetings. The Red Tent was the only other book at that time that spoke to that audience of Jewish women. I just started with Southern California synagogues, of which there are hundreds, so I had plenty to go to. I said, I will come and...
**Shabbats and Tu BiShvat with Temple Anshe Amunim**

**FITTSFIELD** – With the days still short and the temperatures low, Temple Anshe Amunim continues to offer different opportunities to celebrate Shabbat.

**TAA Young Families Shabbat**

On Friday, February 10 at 5 p.m., TAA invites young families to come together in celebration of Tu BiShvat. Pizza will be served.

**Kabbalat Shabbat**

Join Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch at 5:30 p.m. every Friday night for Shabbat services. All are welcome to join in person or via livestream. Please reach out to the Temple office for the link to the livestream.

**Torah Study**

At 9:30 a.m. every Saturday, Rabbi Hirsch leads a Torah study session. All are welcome to join in person or via zoom. Please reach out to the Temple office for the link to zoom.

**Winter Shabbat Celebrations at Hevreh**

**Music, community, and solidarity**

**GREAT BARRINGTON** – This winter, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire will hold Shabbat celebrations where participants will join together in song, in community, and in solidarity with Americans pursuing reproductive freedom.

For information on these events and more, visit hevreh.org.

Shabbat Shira: Singing Our Way Across the Sea

On Friday, February 3 at 6 p.m., join Peri Smilow, Hevreh’s artist-in-residence, the Hevreh Band, and Rabbi Jodie Gordon for a musical celebration of Shabbat Shira, our Sabbath of Song. The celebration of Shabbat will be elevated by the music of progressive Judaism in North America, Israel, and beyond.

Community Shabbat: Shabbat Beshalach

On Saturday, February 4 at 10 a.m., Rabbi Jodie Gordon and Hevreh’s Tsaddiq/9th and 7th grade class will be elevated by the music of progressive Judaism in North America, Israel, and beyond.

**Repro Shabbat**

On Friday, February 17 at 6 p.m., Hevreh joins hundreds of communities across the country in a special Shabbat convened by the National Council of Jewish Women. Join prayers together and imagine a future of safe access to necessary reproductive health care for all people. From Hevreh’s announcement: “This summer, the Supreme Court decision to reverse Roe v. Wade paved the way for states across the nation to pursue abortion bans and restrictions on birth control and fertility treatments. But reproductive freedom is not a way out for anyone. This summer, the Supreme Court decision to reverse Roe v. Wade paved the way for states across the nation to pursue abortion bans and restrictions on birth control and fertility treatments. But reproductive freedom is a constitutional right. It’s intended for those who already read Hebrew, but are looking for a greater understanding of the language and the prayer book. Tuesdays, usually 10-11.15 a.m., but please check the calendar before attending. In-person only.”

**Friday Night Lights: Start Shabbat with Music and Friends at Kneseet Israel**

**FITTSFIELD** – This winter, Knesset Israel invites all to its lively Kabbalat Shabbat get togethers.

**Shirei Shabbat with Community Dinner**

Friday, February 17, 5:45 p.m.

The extended musical family of Knesset Israel relishes the privilege of coming together each month to lead this upbeat Friday night service, including contemporary songs alongside traditional Kabbalat Shabbat melodies. The raucous and community feeling at Shirei Shabbat services is irresistible, encouraging all to raise their voices in song and prayer. Register in advance for the community dinner following the services on February 17: knessetisrael.org/rsvp. Dinner is $20 for adults, Free for under 18.

**Musical Minyan**

Friday, January 27, 5:45 p.m.

The Musical Minyan offers a unique Kabbalat Shabbat experience, with a small acoustic ensemble providing the back, drop in for the Friday night service. The music comes from Israel, Eastern Europe, the US, and South America, with new and traditional melodies to welcome our Sabbath Bride. At times meditative, at times spirited, this musical service is the perfect start to a sweet and spiritual Shabbat.

And if you want to get up and dance to the samba-inspired L’cha Dodi, no one’s going to stop you!

**Traditional Kabbalat Shabbat Services**

Join KI on the Fridays of February 3, 10, and 24, 5:45 p.m.

**The Great Hamantashen Sale – Let’s Nosh!**

**FITTSFIELD** – Like all good Jewish traditions, there’s a healthy debate about why hamantashen are shaped into triangles. Some say it’s a reference to the 3-pointed hat of a certain villain. Others point to the word’s derivation from the Yiddish word for paunch or pocket (tox), a reference to his attempt to pay the king for the right to destroy the Jews. Then there are those who believe that these cookies represent the strength Esther drew from her ancestors, specifically the three patriarchs. Still, others hold that a cookie is just a cookie, and save their breath to debate the merits of apricot vs. raspberry. No matter which side of the debate you fall on, most will agree that hamantashen are a delicious way to celebrate our survival. And they make a great gift.

Knesset Israel will be selling homemade hamantashen again this year during the annual winter fundraiser. A band of volunteers is baking these delicious apricot and raspberry treats at this very moment, which will be available for $14 a dozen. Our tradition is to gift a bag to our friends, but it’s also kosher to keep some for yourself. Order by January 31, online (preferred) or by mail.

• The online order form is at www.knessetisrael.org/hamanstahen.

• To order by mail, send a note including your name, telephone number, how many dozens of apricot or raspberry hamantashen you want, and a check payable to Knesset Israel with “Hamantashen!” on the memo line to: Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Rd, Pittsfield MA 01201, Attention Diana Macfarlane

Order by January 31, and pick them up at KI the week of February 27 - March 3.

**Knesset Israel Families Together Presents S’mores Under the Stars**

**A sweet Havdalah by the fire**

**FITTSFIELD** – If there’s been one silver lining from these last couple of years, it’s the renewed love of gathering together outdoors, no matter the season.

On Saturday, February 11, at 7 p.m., KI’s Families Together group will come together for a special mid-winter Havdalah.

Participants light the Havdalah candle, say the blessings, smell the spices, and start a new week on the right foot. There will be several tasty fires going, with s’mores galore and hot chocolate. And if the weather cooperates, perhaps all will make a snow sculpture.

All families with kids are welcome to join and warm their bones by the fire. S’mores and hot chocolate will be served. Please RSVP at knessetisrael.org/rsvp.

Bring your friends! The s’more the merrier!
Knesset Israel Students Join Thanksgiving Angels
A community puts the giving into Thanksgiving

PITTSFIELD – Each year the Thanksgiving Angels program brings together people from all corners of our community to provide holiday meals for thou-
sands of families around the Berkshires.

For the second year, the Knesset Israel Families Together crew had the privilege of joining in this incredible effort. First, KI’s young bakers got to work in the kitchen, baking dozens of banana breads that made their way to Thanksgiving tables of families in need. Then the kids rolled up their sleeves to pack 130 of the more than 1,800 boxes that went out for delivery. It was a special opportunity for KI Hebrew School students to learn about tzedakah by doing, and to take part in this fantastic program in part-
nership with the Thanksgiving Angels and the South Community Food Pantry.

PHOTOS: NOAH COOK-DUBIN

Counter Winter Darkness with the Warmth of CBI’s Family Programs
NORTH ADAMS – Beat the winter blues and get out of the house – and join Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires for fun family events.

On Sunday, February 5 at 4 p.m., celebrate Tu BShvat with Rabbi Rachel Barenblat and Jane Shiyah, the Berkshires for fun family events.

On Saturday, February 4 at 9:30 a.m. – Participate in a special service for National Refugee Shabbat. It is a moment for congregations, organizations, and indi-
viduals in the United States and around the world to dedicate their Shabbat experience to refugees and asylum seekers.

Masks are required when indoors.

Flynn & Dagnoli Funeral Homes
Flynn & Dagnoli Funeral Homes
Flynn & Dagnoli Funeral Home
Flynn & Dagnoli-Berwick
Flynn & Dagnoli-Montague
Central Chapel
West Chapel

43 South St.
8 South St.
North Adams

(413) 646-1193
(413) 646-1193

Shubba Dagnoli
Nicholas Flynn
Donnie Dagnoli

Serving Berkshire County for three generations.
Marilyn Frankel Simons, 92, raised her family with the values of faith, family, and community

Marilyn Frankel Simons, 92, died peacefully on Tuesday, December 13, 2022, embraced by the love of her family.

Born January 19, 1930, to Louis and Florence Rose Frankel, she grew up in Bronx, NY, and spent most of her summers with her family at a cottage on Pontoosuc Lake. She graduated from Hunter College with a degree in education and taught second grade in the New York City public school system.

In the summer of 1960, she and her husband, Bill, relocated to Pittsfield with their two young children. Together they raised their family in an environment imbued with the values of faith, family, and community.

For many years, Marilyn directed a nursery school at the former Jewish Community Center in Pittsfield. She would love when adults in the community would remind her that she was there at the start of their education. When she was not working, she devoted her time to childrearing, volunteer work at her beloved synagogue, and of course, her weekly mah-jongg game. Her mah-jongg group, fondly dubbed the “MJs,” was affectionately referred to by her family as the “longest-running crap game in Pittsfield.”

Marilyn was an avid reader, a wonderful baker, and a great cook. Jewish holidays and Shabbat were wonderful for Marilyn and Bill Simons Endowment Fund at Knesset Israel, 16 Coll Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201, or to a charity of your choice.

Alice Almeleh Gronski Lane, career, ability to light up a room with her smile

NEW YORK, NY – Alice Almeleh Gronski Lane, 79, beloved mother, grandmother, educator and friend to many passed away on Tuesday, November 29, 2022.

Alice’s parents emigrated from the Isaac and Pearl Gronski of Orange, NJ, and were friends and high school sweethearts. After graduating, she was accepted to Brooklyn College, where she received her Bachelor of Science degree in Education.

Alice had a rewarding 35-year teaching career at Lawrence Public Schools in Long Island, NY. She was an educators’ educator, always believing there was a gift within every child. Her teaching style focused on using her passion, creativity and the arts to awaken and inspire students of all ages and abilities.

Alice was surrounded by her friends who helped them achieve success as artists, educators, and industry leaders. She always referred to her students as her children and was grateful to have traveled with them throughout her lifetime. She applied this love of education to herself and received her Master’s in Education from Queens College and worked towards her doctorate from Columbia University Teachers College.

She brought all these important aspects of her life to her three children, Alice, Andrew, and Ally, who she adored and brought into the world. Alice constantly said all she needed in her life was her “babies.” She raised Adam, Karyn, and Jen on her own, instilling in them the importance of independence, family, following one’s passion, and most importantly, learning through life’s journey.

Alice had the ability to light up a room with her smile and looked at the bright side, even in the darkest times. This was never more apparent than when she was able to turn sickness and misfortune into joy and love when she met and married Dr. Stanley Lane, her past surgeon who cared for her during her illness. Alice always referred to her students as her children and was grateful to have traveled with them throughout her lifetime. She applied this love of education to herself and received her Master’s in Education from Queens College and worked towards her doctorate from Columbia University Teachers College.

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Alice had the ability to light up a room with her smile and looked at the bright side, even in the darkest times. This was never more apparent than when she was able to turn sickness and misfortune into joy and love when she met and married Dr. Stanley Lane, her past surgeon who not only saved her life, but opened her eyes and heart to new experiences that she cherished.

She leaves behind her greatest accomplishments, her three children, Adam (Marni) Gronski, Karyn (Scott) Goffin, and Jennifer (Craig) Sabal. She was predeceased by her son-in-law, Zachary Weilburg, and her daughter-in-law, Amy (Marcie) Simons of Pittsfield; and four great-grandchildren; Eliav Marks, Adam (Marni) Gronski, Karyn (Scott) Goffin, and Jennifer (Craig) Sabal. She was predeceased by her parents and siblings Martin Almeleh and Rachel (Irving) Postman.

The family would like to acknowledge the wonderful love and support provided by the physicians and nurses who cared for her during her illness these past two years, especially the wonderful staff at South Berkshire County Dialysis Center.

A private graveside funeral service was held at Ahavath Sholom Cemetery on Thursday, December 1. The family asks for any donations to go to The American Sephardi Federation at https://donbox.org/american-sephardi-federation.

Walter Black, 87, generous, kind person, and all-around mensch

BOCA RATON, FL – Walter Black, 87, who lived a full and inspiring life, died peacefully at home on Saturday, December 3, 2022.

Walter was born December 8, 1935 in Queens, NY, to Esther and Paul Black. He graduated from Jamaica High School, attended New York University and received a JD at Cornell Law School.

Walter was a generous, kind person, and all-around mensch. He was an avid supporter of the arts, from the New York State Opera in Lincoln Center to Tanglewood in the Berkshires. Walter served in the Army Reserves in the 1950s and 60s, and ran a successful law practice in Great Neck, NY.

He is survived by his wife Hildi of 60 wonderful years; children Alyssa, Andrea, and Wendi; grandchildren Adam, Eliav, Zachary, Meaghan, Emily, and David; great-grandchildren; Adam Almeleh, Walter was a generous, kind person, and all-around mensch. He was an avid supporter of the arts, from the New York State Opera in Lincoln Center to Tanglewood in the Berkshires. Walter served in the Army Reserves in the 1950s and 60s, and ran a successful law practice in Great Neck, NY.

He is survived by his wife Hildi of 60 wonderful years; children Alyssa, Andrea, and Wendi; grandchildren Adam, Eliav, Zachary, Meaghan, Emily, and David; great-grandchildren; Adam Almeleh, Walter was a generous, kind person, and all-around mensch. He was an avid supporter of the arts, from the New York State Opera in Lincoln Center to Tanglewood in the Berkshires. Walter served in the Army Reserves in the 1950s and 60s, and ran a successful law practice in Great Neck, NY.

He is survived by his wife Hildi of 60 wonderful years; children Alyssa, Andrea, and Wendi; grandchildren Adam, Eliav, Zachary, Meaghan, Emily, and David; great-grandchildren; Adam Almeleh, Zachary Weilburg, and their sister-in-law Jerry and Joyce Black.

Funeral services were held on Monday, December 5 at The Gardens, Boca Raton. Please make donations in Walter’s name to any charity close to your heart. We will miss his laugh, wisdom, and generosity of spirit.
Dr. Alexander N. Drescher and Aline Drescher, 92, pillars of the community, loved the Berkshires The family requests memorial gifts be made to support the Richmond Library.

Peter C. Cohen, 85, loved the Berkshires The family requests memorial gifts be made to support the Richmond Library.

Bunny and Sandy met at Little Red Schoolhouse, fell in love as teenagers and were wed in 1951. They leave three sons, Peter Clowes of Westport, CT, Andrew C. Brown of Los Angeles, CA. Peter D. Drescher of El Cerrito, CA, and Matthew M. Drescher of Albuquerque, NM.

Alexander was the son of Harold J. Drescher, chief counsel of the Greyhound Bus Company, and Berta Rosen Drescher, a pianist. A graduate of Allegheny College and the College of Medicine of New York University, he later interned at NYU Bellevue Medical Center and completed his residency at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx. A dedicated baseball fan, he was chief of pediatrics at the US Army Hospital in Fort Carson, CO, and subsequently a consultant at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD. He was a keen photographer, and his navigation skills enabled him to find his way anywhere in the world when he was in need. He was an amateur woodworker, building birdhouses and sending them to children in the town’s new Richmond Library.

Peter leaves his brother, Laurence D. Drescher of Richmond; another brother, Elissa Cohen of Norwalk, CT; son, Adam Cohen, MD and daughter-in-law, Lindsay Cohen of Feasiville, PA; two granddaughters, Lily, Maya and Ava, and grandson Lincoln.

Aline was the daughter of Harvey A. Mayer, publisher of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Daily Review and Aline Shakkam Mayer, a painter. She was also the stepdaughter of Harold Geigerman, a textiles businessman. A talented soprano, Aline continued to perform in various recitals and choral music performances, her roles in local musicals, and her work as head of the Mt. Greylock Regional High School Board of Education. In his later years, he was a generous donor and scholar in English literature, specializing in the work of James Joyce, Herman Melville, and Stephen Crane.

Aline was an avid skier and was an excellent tennis player. She was also a very good golfer, often golfing at various courses in the region.

The family requests memorial gifts be made to support the Richmond Library.

Robert S. Cohen, 89, devotion to friends, outgoing personality, sense of humor, love of family

SLANGERLANDS, NY - Robert S. Cohen, 89, died in his son and daughter-in-law, Alan and Dede Cohen, of the town of Slingerlands, on Monday, December 12, 2022, after a long, brave struggle with Alzheimer’s Disease. Robert was the first child of Saul Cohen and Sarah Cohen (deceased), of Brooklyn, NY. His parents, Pauline and Harry Goode, and his brother-in-law, Robert Cohen (Lauree) of San Francisco, CA, and Cohen (Robert Thistle) of Lee, seven grandchildren, Hannah and Sarah Cohen, Devan (Ashleigh), Quinn, Carolyn Cohen, and Noa and Patricia Thistle. Bob is lovingly remembered by his siblings, Janet (Mark) Cohen, Shoshana (Bob) Cohen, Liesa (Cohen), Mano (Cohen), and Berta (Cohen) Kuller, DDS, MAGD, passed away on December 22, 2022. Born August 23, 1937, he was eclectically talented, hardworking, and devoted to friends and family. Stuart lived, labored, and thrived in New York, NY, and West Stockbridge. Before the onset of dementia and Alzheimer’s, Stuart was skilled in many areas, including engineering, woodworking, home building, and maintenance. He was also a dedicated caregiver to family and friends, and a patron of the arts in New York City and the Berkshires. While irascible at times, he was also gregarious, hilarious, and loyal, to the end.

Robert will be remembered for his service to the community in his will.

Northumberland, on the 50th Memorial Day of his passing.

Nikki Katz (Goode), 83, gregarious, hilarious, and loyal to the end

Nikki Katz (Goode), 83, died peacefully on Wednesday, December 21, 2022, surrounded by local family. Born in Brooklyn, NY, on January 4, 1939, to the late Harry and Pauline (Edman) Goode, Nikki’s story is inspira- tional in that she never sat still. A teacher before marriage and之后, she took the opportunity in her 30s to be on the Mahopac school board, get a master’s degree in social work, and work for, then manage, a service for women in abusive relationships. For her work creating a fundraiser to save the school’s extracurricular budget one year, she was honored as Mahopac’s person of the year.

Stuart was married to his twin sister Ruth Davis (Goode) and brother-in-law Jerry Davis; three children Alissa Whiteman (Chuck), Jeff Katz (Heleen), and Mike Katz (Linda); and 12 grand-children: Jordan, Danny, Justin, Noah, Trevor, and Danielle.

A graveside service was held on Monday, December 26, at Ahavat Shalom Cemetery, Great Barrington. Please consider donating to the New Body Dementia Association at www. ltd.berkshires.org.

Dr. Stuart Sarson Mueller, 85, was a lifelong congregant of Congregation Knesset Israel, Pittsfield.

The service was held on Sunday, December 18, at Congregation Knesset Israel, Pittsfield. Please consider donating to the Alzheimer’s Association (www.alz.org) or Congregation Knesset Israel (www. knessetisrael.org).
Your Federation Presents

DREAMCATCHER CODES, continued from page 1

come through ancient “codes.” She opens
her heart and builds a bridge between herself
and Maia, her Lakota “sister.” Their threads
of connection are strengthened when they talk
about the genocides of Jewish and indigenous
tribes, the intergenerational wounds, their
ancestors, and the Holocaust. These girls are
different, and yet...

In advance of their talk, Sadie Honig-Briggs,
afreshman at Monument Mountain Regional High
School in Great Barrington, responded to her experi-
cence of the novel for the BJV.

The Dreamcatcher Codes: A tribute to the
Earth and all the strong girls who inhabit it

By Sadie Honig-Briggs / Special to the BJV

In the depths of the waters / streaks of
sunlight lit the fish of a million colors, / a
kaleidoscope dancing in the waves, / moving to
the currents of change.

Yue, The Dreamcatcher Codes

The currents of climate action, feminism, and
youth activism run deep through the pages of this
book. The Dreamcatcher Codes by Barbara Newman,
衡光] up the fire of change that rests in all of us.

The Codes, stored in a magical crystal Horsehoe,
hold all of the Laws of Nature. The only hope of
saving the dying planet Earth rests within these
Codes, and in the hands of Sophia Rose, the
Guardian of the Crystal Horsehoe. For years, Sophia
has protected the Codes and used their powers to
help nature; but one fateful day, in an encounter
with an evil, greedy force, the horsehoe breaks and
a piece is stolen. Sophia, knowing that she cannot
put the Codes back together on her own, reaches
out to Maia, a young girl with a deep love for the
Earth. Together, they assemble a task force of strong
girls from all over the country. Yue, Yue, from the West,
with the passion of protecting the oceans. Ava, from
the South, who loves horses and anything to do with
music. And Falcon, from the East, who loves the
natural world despite the concrete city she lives
in. With the help of four magical horses and all the
mystical spirits they meet along the way, Maia, Ava,
Yue, Yue, and Falcon travel the world, fight evil, and use
their combined strength to find the stolen piece of the
horsehoe, and restore the Codes.

Through beautiful, lyrical language and a true
understanding of what it means to want to help the
Earth, Newman weaves a story that will resonate with
today’s young people. Maia, Yue, Falcon, and Ava
are just regular girls, but when they put their passion
and power towards one common goal, they are able
to achieve wonder. When we hear “climate justice,”
our minds go to climate activists like Greta
Thunberg and Jerome Foster II, or to laws that
cut down on fossil fuels. Really though, climate action
doesn’t just come from one person or one law; it
comes from people joining forces and using their love
and talent to make change, which is exactly what the
four girls in The Dreamcatcher Codes do.

As a teenager growing up in the 21st century,
I connect with Maia, Yue, Ava, and Falcon, and
their journey together. Their passion for the Earth,
music, the oceans, and animals is conveyed perfectly
through their dreams, their journaling, and their
conversations with one another. Falcon, in particular,
resonates with me, because she is a young person of
the Jewish faith. Her belief in tikkun olam (repairing
the world) is shown through her actions. She is a
perfect example of what it means to take the
courage that the Jewish religion focuses on: making
the world better, and turning to real action. I know
that a lot of Jewish teenagers, myself included, are keen
to uphold these values, but don’t quite know how
they can make an impact. Falcon provides us with an
example, even though it is an extreme one, showing
that we really can be mitzvot ourselves.

These girls reflect all kinds of values from different
cultures and communities. They are wise beyond
their years, and yet, Newman has still made them
relatable. The language they use with each other is
profound, the things they see in the Earth and the
ways they interpret messages through their stories are
sensitivized, but still, they are just young girls. Maia
is anxious to get her first period; Falcon is grappling
with her sexuality; and all four of them are figuring
out how they want to be in the world. They also have
fun together despite all the peril they face throughout
the book, and they stay connected to their friendship
even when the task at hand feels overpowering.

For those of us growing up today, we live in a dichotomy:
fixing the climate crisis that others before us have
failed to fix rests on our shoulders while still just
being kids who experience heartbreak and joy,
friendships, confusion, and everything in between. This
is a difficult thing to balance, but just acknowled-
ging that we are all going through it makes it
easier to handle, which is exactly what Newman does
in this novel.

The Dreamcatcher Codes is a beautifully written
tribute to the Earth and all the strong girls who
inhabit it. This book should be read by every person,
young and old, who cares for the beautiful planet we
live on. It should be picked up by anyone who has a
depth passion for something, anyone who appreciates
language, and everyone who wants to get lost in a
story of sisterhood.

About Our Presenters

Barbara Newman always wanted to be a cowgirl.
Growing up in New York didn’t stop her. She took
that can-do spirit and became an award-winning global
cultural organizer. Her work in the advertising
world and found herself in Montana, Wyoming, and Texas
filming a documentary about their lives. An advocate for
empowering girls, Barbara facilitates girls’ leadership programs and was part of
the think tank that inspired the Fred Rogers Center
for Early Learning & Children’s Media. Barbara has
a fierce love for the natural world. She lives in
the Berkshires of Western Massachusetts, with her family
and their English bulldog. This book is her love letter
to Mother Earth and all of her daughters.

Sadie Honig-Briggs lives in Tarryingham with her
family and many pets. Sadie has always loved
to do anything with the arts, so her free time,
she loves to act in school productions, write short stories and poetry, or sing very loudly in the car with her
siblings. As of this year, she also runs cross-
country...a surprising turn of events that she actu-
ally enjoys very much. Sadie is also very interested in
activism and wants to use her passion for the arts to
help fuel social justice.

BJV INTERVIEW: MAGGIE ANTON, continued from page 13

speaking to you about Rashi’s Daughters and my research, and I’ll speak for,
and I’ll sell my books in the back of the room. I sold 75 percent of the room that
first time. Then I started getting invitations to other places. People would pay my
expenses to come out and speak, and I ended up just back of-the-room selling.
There was a Yahoo group for Jewish books, booksellers, and book publi-
cishers, and somebody from Library Journal went on there and said, “We’re getting
complaints that we’re reviewing too much Christian fiction. We need some Jewish
fiction. Has anybody out there done any?” Well, as it happened, I did.
Rashi’s Daughters was just coming out in the spring of 2005, so I answered back
and said, “Yes, I have this.” And Library Journal chose it as one of their top five fiction
books for the fall of 2005.

Then, in the spring of 2006, US News & World Report had this whole issue:
Books gone wild. Hoaxes, lies, and truthiness. Small books, big money. How to
publish your own book.” And lo and behold, on the first page of that article, there
we are. It’s the Rashi’s Daughters ad at every dentist’s office in the country. And
they stay there for years, right? I didn’t even know what had happened. I was
on Amazon looking at my rank, and all of a sudden, it’s like 200-something. I asked
the company that printed Rashi’s Daughters to check what was going on. They told
me that there were 100 copies left. So I said, “Quick, quick, order another printing.”
And they sold really fast. We had to do two more printings. It was a good book,
and people loved it, and there wasn’t much competition. But still, what a piece of
luck that was!

Maggie Anton was born Margaret Antonofsky in Los Angeles, California.
Raised in a secular, socialist household, she reached adulthood with little knowl-
dedge of her Jewish religion. All that changed when David Parkhurst, who was
to become her husband, entered her life, and they both discovered Judaism as
adults. In the early 1990s, Anton began studying Talmud in a class for women
ught by Rachel Adler, now a professor at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles.
Intrigued that the great Jewish scholar Rashi had no sons, only daughters, she
started researching the family and their community. Thus the award-winning
writing, Rashi’s Daughters, was born. She is the author of Rav Hida’s: Rav Hida’s
Award finalist, Rav Hida’s: Daughter: Apprentice, and its sequel, Enchantress.
Then she switched to nonfiction, winning the Gold Ben Franklin Award in the reli-
gious category for Fifty Shades of Talmud. What the First Rabbi Had to Say about
You-Know-What.
Hidden Demons: Evil Visits a Small New England Town

Margery B. Metzger’s true crime book portrays how the Berkshires community responded to dark events 30 years ago

To satisfy fans of true crime, but true crime books seem to require a similar admixture of elements—a view of the modern day life of the people touched by the crimes; details of their relationships with the monster living in their midst; an overview of the monster’s pathology and logic; unflinching descriptions of the misdeeds; a police procedural; particulars of how the justice system operated; and a where-are-they-now wrap-up. While the set-up and execution of these narratives can be tough to perfect, that distinguishes the better true crime books, and it’s the author’s ability to evoke a place, allowing a reader to experience the unfolding drama through the point of view of the people who lived in that setting in a particular moment in time.

Berkshire readers will be able to use more than their imaginations if they choose to travel the journey Pittsfield author Margery Metzger takes us on in her new book, Hidden Demons: Evil Visits a Small New England Town. The story recounts the abysmal life and ghoulish misdeeds of Lewis Lent, a serial killer who used the Berkshires as a base of operations during a years-long crime spree in the 1980s and early 1990s. Lent kidnapped and killed a Pittsfield teenager named Jimmy Bernardo in 1990; his crime spree ended when he was apprehended after an unsuccessful attempt to snatch a local schoolgirl in 1994. While he was convicted of just one murder and confessed to a number of others (including the case of Sara Ann Wood in New York State), Lent is suspected to have committed several other so-far unsolved crimes, details of which he seems likely to keep secret until he dies in prison. Many local readers will no doubt remember these events, and perhaps even know some of the people whom Metzger portrays. Certainly, most of us will be familiar with the locales where these unspeakable crimes unfolded.

This will make Hidden Demons a particularly difficult read for Berkshire residents, but true crime worth taking on for those with a strong heart and stomach who want to learn more about local history, good and bad. Like all accomplished true crime authors, Metzger explores how easily public safety, which so much depends on goodwill, can be breached by an enabler playing by a different set of rules. She also portrays what good people in law enforcement, the courts, and the penal system have to do to restore order and achieve justice. Finally, Metzger sensitively portrays the brokenness that remains after a community is visited by a fathomless evil.

In December, the BJV caught up with Metzger, who shared her motivations and perspectives with us as a surprise confession she is not a reader of true crime books herself and that her narrative developed organically. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

BJV Interview: Margery B. Metzger

You lived in the Berkshires at the time the events you recount in Hidden Demons occurred. How did you, and the community, experience the story as it unfolded?

It affected us terribly. Jimmy Bernardo was just a couple of years older than my older daughter. He lived right around the Cinema Center, which was a couple of miles from our home on West Housatonic Street, where a U-Haul lot now operates. It was shocking and really scary, because for three years afterward, there were no answers to how this happened and what happened. And then Rebecca Savage was killed in the summer of 1991, and this guy justades to kidnap her—we’re talking right smack dab in the middle of downtown Pittsfield, right under the window of the DA’s office. Rebecca is a year older than my daughter, and she was in school at the time. So Massachusetts state senator Ben Downing, whose father was the DA at the time. Everybody has some connection. After that, I never let my kids walk for the school bus by themselves. I never let them ride their bikes anywhere alone. I was terrified because you never knew what was going to happen. I don’t think there were any parents that didn’t talk about it.

Was most of your research interviews, or was it archival?

When I had my children, I didn’t have any family to help me. I worked part-time, and I needed a babysitter. So I found this older woman, Harriet Boyington, who babysat. She lived in Pittsfield, near the School Street Apartments. Allison Boyington also used her as a babysitter. Amy and Allison’s father, Owen, was an officer in the Pittsfield Police Department and when they used to babysit, he used to do a drive around every night just to make sure the local school was safe. When I retired, I looked at notes I had taken at the time and I said, you know what? This is a really interesting story. Maybe I can write a book about it. So I called Owen, and he brought in Philip Shallies, the man who was in charge of the DA’s police force, whether he would be interested in seeing what I had written. I did a number of years at Rutgers Medical School before I moved up to the Berkshires. I have a social work background, but I also worked as a psychotherapist for a number of years at Rutgers Medical School before I moved up to the Berkshires. So I had a pretty good understanding of what a psychopathic personality was like. There’s a part of me that feels so sorry for a child that is so stunted along the way because something traumatic happened, whether they’re born with some kind of brain defect or something happened to their brain, or they were just so neglected or mistreated at an early age that this is the way they have developed. For them, it’s survival—they do what they have to do to survive.

Lewis Lent did horrible things and he has no regrets. He can’t tell the truth. But this defense mechanisms, as weak as they are, have let him survive.

Did immersing yourself so deeply into this person and his crimes give you any insights into what one might call “the social fabric” and how it operates and how someone like Lewis Lent can disrupt it?

Well, I got more of a picture of how someone could function under the radar, which Lent did. I quote a line from that song from Chicago, “Mister Cellophane / shoulda been my name / Mister Cellophane / Can’t look right through me / walk right by me / and never know I’m there.” That’s what he managed to do for a very long time. With true crime, I think readers really focus so much on the victim and the criminal. My focus was that I saw a lot of heroes in this. First of all, Officer Downing. He knew it. And to me, that was brilliant. The criminal was always more fascinating than the victims. I think that’s why it was so appealing to me. I think people write about these nights because they give you another piece of information. You call somebody else. They tell you something else. You read something, you pick it up, and that’s how it started.

I created [access court documents], and this was not easy for a couple of reasons. First of all, this is still an open, active case almost 29 years later. There are people who were working on the case who are very protective, and they would not talk to me and told a number of people not to talk to me. Another thing that was that several people who worked on the case have died.

Finally, about a year ago, one of the people from the DA’s office went and dug out 15 boxes of files for me to look through. Judge Daniel Ford, as soon as he retired from the bench, came over with all his decisions and gave them to me to read, which was extremely helpful.

In confronting this story and reporting on it, you had to look very deeply into a very dark human being, somebody who was broken in horrific ways by his own abusive family. How did you reconcile the story of his childhood with the monster that he became?

I think he’s broken. He was very, very intelligent. He had a social work background, but I also worked as a psychotherapist for a number of years at Rutgers Medical School before I moved up to the Berkshires. So I had a pretty good understanding of what a psychopathic personality was like. There’s a part of me that feels so sorry for a child that is so stunted along the way because something traumatic happened, whether they’re born with some kind of brain defect or something happened to their brain, or they were just so neglected or mistreated at an early age that this is the way they have developed. For them, it’s survival—they do what they have to do to survive.

Lewis Lent did horrible things and he has no regrets. He can’t tell the truth. But this defense mechanisms, as weak as they are, have let him survive.

Do you think that there is any chance of him giving any insight to any other crimes he may have committed?

There are things that he’ll never tell anybody. It’s his power. He is still holding the power. He lets out little bits when he’s in a jam, when he’s talking about something. He’s not telling you where these bodies are because it’s his bargaining chip. He wouldn’t talk to me because there was nothing in it for him. I wrote to him three times, and the third time he answered me in a snippy little way. Then, the day after he answered my letter, I got a phone call from a friend of his who has his power of attorney. And this guy says, ‘Oh, well Lew dies, he’s going to be buried on my property in Vermont. And I see Lew all the time, and Lew wants to know about your book.” Well, he’s not going to know about me because it’s not important.”

This guy kind of frightened me at that point. He said he’d have to talk to me, and if he could talk to me. Later, he got back to me and asked me if I wanted to know where Lew buried the bodies. I said to this guy, no, I’m a policeman. I don’t want to know about that. I just wanted to talk to Lew to see if I could get a more balanced picture of what was going on. I knew all along I’d never get the truth out of him. And he didn’t want to talk to me. After [Lent’s] friend called me, it scared me enough that I just did not want to go there.

Did immersing yourself so deeply into this person and his crimes give you any insights into what one might call “the social fabric” and how it operates and how someone like Lewis Lent can disrupt it?
TRAVELING WITH JEWISH TASTE

Love at First Sip

By Carol Goodman Kaufman / Special to the BJV

We just returned from a fabulous trip to Israel, where we attended the 100th national convention of Hadassah. I could go on and on about the heartwarming stories of the people whose lives we’ve saved at our two hospitals. Or I could tell you about the children whom we’ve rescued from around the world through Youth Aliyah. Or I could rhapwsodize over the heavy-duty educational modules that helped us understand the recent elections, security issues, and developing communities in the country.

But this is a column about food and its travels, so I am going to talk about something we discovered anew while there: the coffee.

Let me back up a bit. The first cup of coffee I drank in Israel was at the age of nineteen. My first night on kibbutz, I headed to the moshav, the lounge, where a kibbutznik working at the bar handed me a cup of coffee. I took a big sip and immediately thought that I had swallowed mud. Was this some sort of hazing for the new volunteer? A terrorist plot? Neither. I learned that “mud” (botz) is exactly what they call the stuff that settles to the bottom of a cup of Turkish coffee.

Suffice it to say, I did learn to love Turkish coffee. The only other choice at the time was instant coffee, what Israelis called “nes-café.” The term is a play on words since the word for “miracle” is “nes” (in the “nes” on the Hanukkah dreidel.)

Fast forward to 2022, when the varieties of coffee drinks available in Israel rival those at any Italian cafe. But what impressed us is that the coffee - even the decaf variety - was so delicious. Upon returning home, we were shocked at how awful our home-brewed cup of Joe was.

So, what makes Israeli coffee so good? Both geographically and culturally, Israel, with its immigrant populations from countries as diverse as Iraq, Germany, the FSU, and the United States, is an amalgam of east and west. So, it should be no surprise that its cuisine - and its coffee - would manifest these diverse cultures’ influence. Therefore, Israeli cafes offer Italian espresso and cappuccino as well as the Middle Eastern Turkish coffee.

Now for a little history. The coffee bean has its origins in the ancient coffee forests of the Ethiopian plateau, where legend has it that a goatherd noticed that his charges became quite lively after chewing on the coffee berries. As early as the 1100s, historical documents indicate that Arab slave traders brought the beans across the Gulf of Aden to Yemen, where it was first brewed. The beverage became popular there and by the 16th century it was known in Persia, Egypt, Syria, and Turkey. But it was in the holy city of Mecca where the first public cafes were established. And they became social centers, where people could not only converse with friends, but listen to music, play games, and watch performances.

Word of this wonderful beverage traveled back to Europe, and by the 1600s coffee became popular all across the continent, although not without some controversy. It took approval by no less a figure than Pope Clement VIII (after he enjoyed a cup of the stuff) to get things going in all the major European cities.

According to a recent exhibit at Jerusalem’s Museum of Islamic Art, coffee first came to Israel even earlier, by way of Egypt. As long ago as 1580, Rabbi Moshe Mitrani, a close colleague of Rabbi Joseph Caro, wrote of a cafe in Safed, although not in particularly complimentary terms. He felt that no good could come of frequenting such places as it might lead to assimilation. If he saw the cafes in Israel today, he might be more concerned with the many hours that people spend enjoying their coffee with friends rather than working or studying Torah.

Fast forward to 1959. Polish-born agronomist Israel Gindel wrote a book that described his experiments in coffee cultivation at the Neve Ilan forestry research station. Gindel dreamt of vast coffee plantations in Israel and worked with several strains of the plant in an attempt to adapt it to the geography and climate of the country. Unfortunately, as Gindel’s colleague Shimon Lavner reported, “An avant-garde hobby like the acclimatization of coffee plants was not the top agenda for people of that era.”

But more recently, industrialist Ram Evgi, CEO of Coffee-Tech Engineering, became interested in the effects of storage and roasting on coffee freshness and flavor, and he took up the challenge to grow coffee. On Israel’s Coastal Plain he planted 30 coffee trees representing different strains of coffee. Among the successes was the Gilda variety, related to the Arabica bean, one of the very ones with which Gindel had worked.

Israel now exports close to $10 million worth of coffee annually and the hope is that it will grow. The main buyers are the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, Hong Kong, and Cyprus.

So now we’re back to the question: What makes Israeli coffee taste so good? According to Yael Shefer, the curator at the Museum of Islamic Art, it’s the cardamom that was originally brought from India via the spice trail and was added from the beginning.

Delicious Turkish Coffee

You don’t need a traditional finjan pot to make Turkish coffee, but if you have one it will add to the atmosphere of the coffee-making ritual. Remember to let the coffee grounds settle to the bottom of your cup before sipping. Don’t worry; the coffee will still be hot.

If you don’t like Turkish coffee, simply add the spices to the grounds in your drip pot!

Ingredients:

- 6 oz. water
- 2 tablespoons ultra-finely ground coffee
- 1/4 teaspoon cardamom
- 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 dash ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons sugar

Directions:

Add coffee, cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, sugar, and water to your pot. Give a good stir to incorporate. Do not stir after this point.

Heat the pot on a medium flame. As the liquid becomes hot, it will begin to foam up. Keep an eye on the pot. Don’t let it boil or the coffee will be bitter.

Remove the pot from the heat and skim the foam off the top, spooning it into demitasse cups.

Put the pot back onto the flame until foam rises again. Remove the pot from the stove and slowly pour the coffee into the cups, allowing the foam to rise.

Enjoy!

Carol Goodman Kaufman has just published the second picture book in what is planned as a series about nature for young children. Written under the name Carolinda Goodman, Pirate Ships and Shooting Stars is written in rhyme, and its lively stories encourage young children to use their imaginations when looking up at the sky. From rainbows to constellations to pictures in the clouds, Kaufman believes there is much to see if only they lift their eyes.

In addition to her work for children, Kaufman also writes under her “real” name about food history (including for the Berkshire Jewish Voice), and her first novel, a murder mystery, will drop in 2023.