

# Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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

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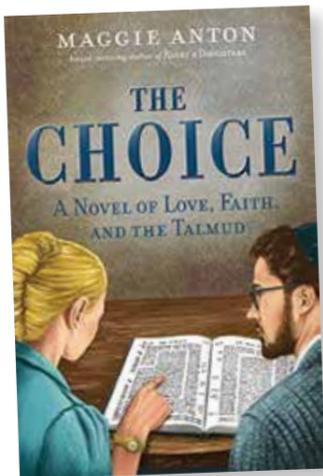
Vol. 31, No. 1

Shevat 5783

January 23 to February 20, 2023

[jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org)

## 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](http://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*

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.

## 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](http://jewishberkshires.org) for links to our programs.



Barbara Newman

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*

**DREAMCATCHER CODES,**  
*continued on page 18*

## We Let It Shine, Let It Shine, Let It Shine



“There are two ways of spreading light,” wrote Edith Wharton: “To be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.” How appropriate, then, that the great author's home, The Mount, served as the backdrop for Federation's Community Chanukah Celebration on December 18. More than 275 revelers came together to shine our light on a chilly Berkshire evening. For photos and more, please see page 11.



Jewish Federation  
OF THE BERKSHIRES

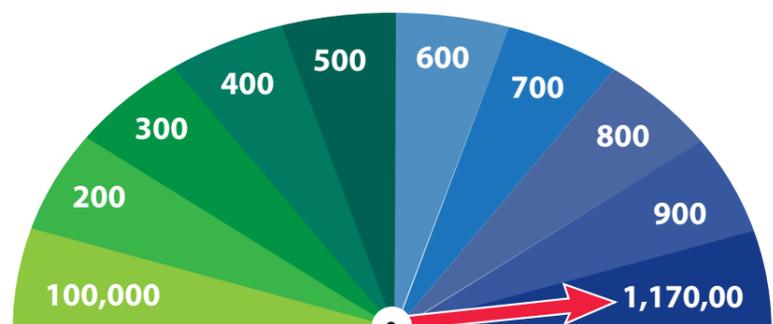
THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE  
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

## OUR CUP RUNNETH OVER!

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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2022**

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# 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 the leadership and direction to ensure our people's continuity for generations to come.

In 2022, we set the loftiest fundraising goal in our 82-year history – \$1.1 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, Elisa 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, Dara Kaufman, 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 aliya of Russian 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 synagogue religious schools, summer camp, and travel-to-Israel scholarships. These experiences provide rich memories and instill a love of Judaism, *tikkun olam*, 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.

Check out our website!

[www.jewishberkshires.org](http://www.jewishberkshires.org)

For calendar listings and events



### 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.

Download an application at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org)

or pick one up at the Federation's office  
196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA



THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE  
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

# 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](http://KnessetIsrael.org/livestream)



# 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 higia, chag ha-ilanot" ("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.

The metaphor of sap rising makes sense here in the Berkshires. We all recognize good sugaring days, right? (Nighttime temperatures in the 20s, daytime tempera-

*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.*

ture 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 sap, our medieval mystics spiritualized Rashi's teaching even more.

Tradition analogizes a human being to a tree in the field. Ergo, Tu BiShvat is when our spiritual sap begins to rise to nourish our new growth of the spring to come. Tu BiShvat is about hidden potentiality within us. It's about opening ourselves to who we haven't yet become.

I've buried both of my parents in the last few years. 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. Even when our hearts feel deadened or our spirits frozen, we can affirm that someday there will be sweetness that we can't yet feel or see. This is a way of embracing potentiality, too.

One of the *mitzvot* often cited at Tu BiShvat is the prohibition on *orlah* fruit. Torah teaches that when a tree is planted, we may not eat of its fruit for three years. So far, so good.



*Jewish National Fund certificate testifying that Samuel Glasberg planted a tree in Eretz Yisrael to commemorate the seventh anniversary of his mother's death (1933).*

CREDIT: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM; COURTESY OF VICTOR GLASBERG

But the word *orlah* is a strange one for Torah to use here. Usually it refers to circumcision, and often appears in the phrase *orlat ha-lev*, "the foreskin of the heart." In the words of Rabbi Charlie Buckholtz, *orlat 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."

That's where I see the connection between *orlat ha-lev* and Tu BiShvat. One central practice of the Tu BiShvat seder takes us from eating tree fruits with hard shells (e.g., walnuts) to tree fruits with a pit (e.g. plums) to tree fruits that are edible throughout (e.g., apples). These shifts symbolize each soul's journey from walled-off, to partially accessible, to (w)hol(l)y open – a journey we re-enact time and again.

Tu BiShvat invites us to relinquish our protective shells and become vulnerable before each other and our Source. At Tu BiShvat we can choose to recognize our *orlat ha-lev*, our disconnection and numbness, the barriers that prevent us from being real with each other – and then choose to let those fall away.

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: [velveteenrabbi.blogs.com](http://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com).

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**Berkshire JEWISH VOICE**  
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The color photography in this issue of the *Berkshire Jewish Voice* is made possible through the generosity of **Livingston and Saranne Kosberg** and **Jeff Solomon** and **Audrey Weiner**, honorary publishers. The staff of the Federation and the BJV are deeply grateful.

Thank you volunteers **Ellen Rosenblatt** and the BJV delivery team, **Colin Ovitsky** and **Roman Rozenblyum**.

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**Berkshire JEWISH VOICE**  
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Published nine times a year by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

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Next issue publication date: **February 21, 2023 – March 19, 2023**

Press deadline: **January 9, 2023** • Advertising deadline: **February 1, 2023**

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## Letters to the Editor

### 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, biking, mofia, 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 *breira* (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,



Advantage...Henry Herzberg

went to breakfast, went back to the bunk for *nikayon*, and getting free time and going to *hugime*, and going to art then lunch. If you read the daily bubble, you got the mo! 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 Hevreh 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, Hevreh 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

### Celebrating Chanukah Did Not Feel Like an 'Add-On'

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

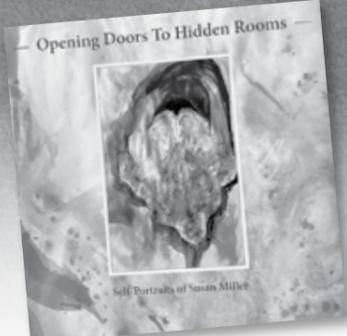
I wanted to thank you for putting together the lovely first-night event of Chanukah at NightWood. My experience of walking down the paths lit by Stars of David (with the prism glasses) was very moving – I don't think I've ever been at a true community event that was centered around Judaism and one of 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

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*Opening Doors To Hidden Rooms*  
Self Portraits and poetry of Susan Miller





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## Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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## Your Federation Presents

### 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

*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



Natalie Matus (right) with Dara Kaufman at the GA

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.



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*Mark S.*

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# 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 Kneset 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, Kneset Israel, and Temple Anshe Amunim.

Kneset Israel is at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield. You can livestream the event at [knesetisrael.org/livestream](http://knesetisrael.org/livestream).

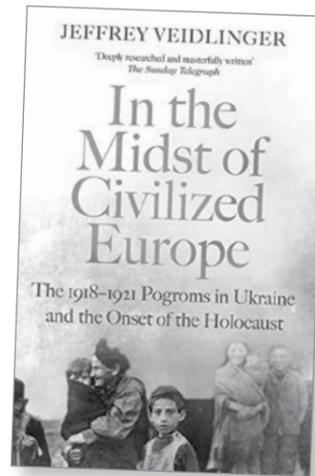
For more information, please call the Federation at (413) 442-4360, ext. 10.

## 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 [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.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.



### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!



#### Deliver & Pack Purim Care Packages

Bring some Purim cheer to older adults in assisted living facilities, nursing homes, hospitals, and the homebound.

**Packing Volunteers:** Mon, Feb 27 & Tues, Feb 28  
**Delivery Volunteers:** Tues, Feb 28 - Fri, March 3

#### SIGN UP TODAY!

Contact Molly Meador at (413) 442-4360, ext. 14 [mmeador@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:mmeador@jewishberkshires.org)



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

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# Your Federation Presents

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



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](http://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 authority on the golden condiment. He will answer these (and indeed any) questions you might have about mustard.

**Barry Levenson** grew up in Worcester, where he always had mustard on his corned beef sandwiches at Weintraub's Delicatessen. He was accepted to rabbinical school, but at the last minute decided to go to law school and became the head of the Criminal Appeals Unit at the Wisconsin Department of Justice. In 1986, he began collecting mustards, and, as they say, the rest is history. As the world's number one mustard maven, he has tasted more than 4,000 mustards. He left his law position and opened the Mustard Museum in 1992 but still has his finger in the law, teaching Food Law at the University of Wisconsin Law School. He is the author of *Habeas Codfish: Reflections on Food and the Law* and is working on a new book, *A Corpus Delectable*.



The National Mustard Museum



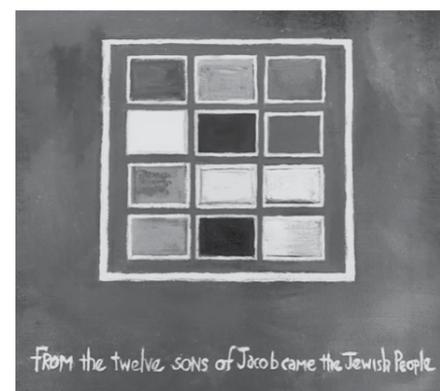
## True Colors: Stories from Jews of Color Exploring Identity and Community

On Monday, January 23 at 6:45 p.m., get to know The Braid, a theater company offering a diverse array of stories about Jewish identity. They will present "True Colors: Stories from Jews of Color Exploring Identity and Community," humorous, revealing, and inspiring stories about being a Jew in modern times. A moderated Q&A by DEI Consultant and actor/writer, Joshua Silverstein, will follow.

This free Jewish Federation of the Berkshires program will be presented via Zoom. Please visit our calendar of events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org) for links to our programs.

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 stories in True Colors, ostensibly about Jews who feel "different," actually remind us how very much alike we are. Audiences will meet unforgettable characters who tell personal stories about how they see themselves and how others see them. From The Braid: "Ironically, while many American Jews can reach consensus about a commitment to social justice for others, they do not always embrace diversity in their own 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 it, 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 of 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 Morgenstern and co-produced by Eric Greene. For more information, visit [the-braid.org](http://the-braid.org).

## Contemporary Jew Hatred in Universities and Popular Culture in America



Dr. Charles Asher Small

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](http://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 groundbreaking 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 tier 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 Yale 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.



Scan code to learn more



[geercare.org/resources](http://geercare.org/resources)





# 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.



Jewish Federation  
OF THE BERKSHIRES

## MAZEL TOV!

**Mister G (Ben Gundersheimer)** on his new children’s book, *How Many Squirrels Are in the World?*.

**Hayley Sumner** on the 10th anniversary of Berkshire HorseWorks.

### Knesset Israel 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield

#### ONGOING MINYANS

Saturday, ..... 9:30 a.m.  
Sunday, ..... 8:45 a.m.  
Tuesday, ..... 7 p.m. Zoom only  
Thursday, ..... 7 p.m., Zoom only  
Friday, ..... 5:45 p.m.



#### CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

Friday, January 27 ..... 4:42 p.m.  
Friday, February 3 ..... 4:51 p.m.  
Friday, February 10 ..... 5:00 p.m.  
Friday, February 17 ..... 5:09 p.m.

## 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, beets, 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.



## VOLUNTEERS ARE VITAL!



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You can now read and share *Berkshire Jewish Voice* feature stories online!

Visit [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org) and select **Community & Events>Berkshire**

**Jewish Voice** for links to highlights of current and past issues.



# Education/Summer Camp



## THE MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF THE BERKSHIRES



# Learning what matters

Toddler through 8th grade  
BerkshireMontessori.org



A REFORM JEWISH SUMMER CAMP

## 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 pick-up & 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!

413.528.1652 | eisnercamp.org | eisnerdaycamp@urj.org

## Interested in Volunteering Locally?

Literacy Network of South Berkshire needs volunteer tutors!

*Our tutors  
love what  
they do!*



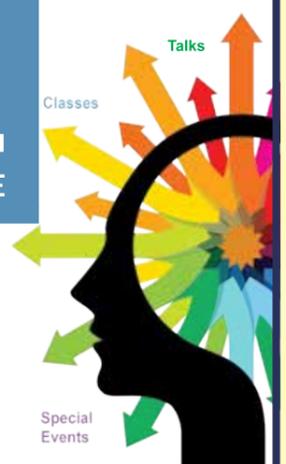
- Work 1:1 with a local immigrant or US-born adults in learning or improving English language and literacy skills.
- Training and support provided.
- Work remotely or in person.
- Only 1 hour per week.

Join the community!

Contact Leigh Doherty  
ldoherty@litnetsb.org or 413-243-0471



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



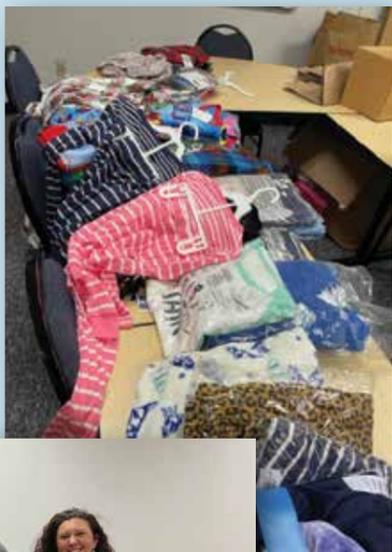
Learn more at [berkshireolli.org](http://berkshireolli.org)

# Your Federation Presents

## Your PJ Donations Will Help Keep Berkshire Youth Warm This Winter

By Molly Meador, Coordinator of Volunteers and PJ Library

Thank you to everyone who donated to the PJ Library Pajama Drive! We were able to donate over 250 pairs of Pajamas to the Department of Children & Families for the Berkshire Area. Giving Tzedakah and taking care of our community is a mitzvah always.



Molly (left) and staff from the Berkshire Office of the Massachusetts Department of Children & Families



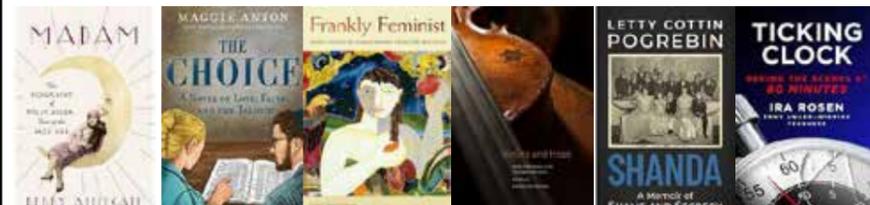
## Local Students Experienced a Day of Holocaust Education and Remembrance at the Museum of Jewish Heritage

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.

## JEWISH LITERARY VOICES



A Federation series in collaboration with the Jewish Book Council

Thursday, Dec. 8 at 6:45 p.m. (virtual)

Author and Producer Ira Rosen

*Ticking Clock: Behind the Scenes at 60 Minutes*

Thursday, Jan. 12, 2023 at 6:45 p.m. (virtual)

Author Debby Applegate

*Madam: The Biography of Polly Adler, Icon of the Jazz Age*

Thursday, Feb. 9, 2023 at 6:45 p.m. (virtual)

Author Maggie Anton

*The Choice: A Novel of Love, Faith and the Talmud*

Thursday, Mar. 16, 2023 at 6:45 p.m. (virtual)

Authors Susan Weidman Schneider and Yona Zeldis McDonough

*Frankly Feminist: Short Stories by Jewish Women from Lilit Magazine*

Thursday, April 20, 2023 at 6:45 p.m. (virtual)

Author and Photographer Daniel Levin

*Violins and Hope: From the Holocaust to Symphony Hall*

Friday, July 14, 2023 at 10:45 a.m. (in-person at Hevreh)

Author Letty Cottin Pogrebin

*Shanda: A Memoir of Shame and Secrecy*

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# Your Federation Presents

## 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 reverie 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.



PHOTOS BY JULIA KAPLAN AND LARRY FRANKEL



### 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](http://jewishberkshires.org) or pick one up at the Federation's office  
196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA



Jewish Federation OF THE BERKSHIRES

THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

# Your Federation Presents

## Ukraine Crisis Update from JDC: Winter 2022/23 Surviving Ukraine's Bitter Winter

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.

Your gift is also helping us prepare emergency warming shelters across Ukraine. These warming hubs, to be housed in JDC's Hased Assistance Centers and other community buildings, will be stocked with generators and food. Should power fail, the shelters will offer temporary refuge to vulnerable community members.

In Dnipro, in addition to winter aid, elderly Jews took part in training that equipped them with techniques for surviving power outages.



JDC client in the Dnipro region stands next to his recent delivery of firewood

### Impact in Numbers

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



**WINTER SURVIVAL 2022**

<b>STANDARD ASSISTANCE</b>	<b>EMERGENCY ADDITIONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Warm Blankets</li> <li>Firewood and Coal</li> <li>Utility Bill Subsidies</li> <li>Jackets and Warm Clothing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sleeping Bags that can sustain subzero temperatures</li> <li>Rechargeable Flashlights</li> <li>Portable Heaters and Stoves</li> <li>Non-Perishable Food Items</li> </ul>

### 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.



**Peace of Mind**  
DURING TURBULENT TIMES

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## Your Federation Presents

### BJV INTERVIEW: MAGGIE ANTON,

continued from page 1

The BJV's **Carol Goodman Kaufman** spoke with Maggie Anton for the paper in December. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.



Maggie Anton

**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 *Rashi's Daughters* got out there, I was doing book tours. I stayed at someone's house and *The Chosen* 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 unlike most Jewish families in this kind of situation, there are no photos of her. He never says *kaddish* for her. We don't even know her name. They never go to the cemetery. She's not even a ghost. She just doesn't exist. And the Hasidic guy [Daniel Saunders], his mom is there, but she doesn't have a name either. 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 *Davita's Harp*, I saw at the ending that [protagonist Ilana 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 she deserved 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 was planning a sequel, or it seemed 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 be able 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 1990s women, maybe [Talmud study] wasn't so much forbidden as there were just no options for it. Nobody was offering Talmud to women or girls. Not until this millennium has it become available. That's a lot due to the Internet because you can study Talmud online.

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. Women are 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 secular courts, once they're doctors and lawyers 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 (or maybe they knew, but nobody 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 a nameless Jewish professor at JTS that sounds 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 Stewart 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 as it was starting to investigate big public swimming pools, and spas and schvitzes, 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 came 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 the couple would go to the rabbi, who wouldn't do a marriage unless he knew everybody was Jewish and *halakhically* permitted to marry. Believe me, rabbis don't want to talk about menstruation any more than any other man does. So they created mikveh manuals, of which I have a collection. And they're all 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 would have gone to an old mikveh and would have come 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 perfectly good bathtub at home that I'm going to use 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 were 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 hoped that the Potoks 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. But by and large, I treated Potok's works as if his 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 my bubbie's name and I wanted to immortalize her that 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, and I knew they all needed speakers at their 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

BJV INTERVIEW: MAGGIE ANTON,  
continued on page 18

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## LOCAL NEWS

## 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](http://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 Tzofim/6th and 7th grade class will make their way into the heart of the sea with a special, creative service including Torah reading. A festive kiddush will follow.

### 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 a Jewish value, and we're not going to back down. Rabbi Gordon will offer remarks, along with other members of the Hevreh community who have been engaged in the hard work of winning reproductive freedom."

## Shabbats and Tu BiShvat with Temple Anshe Amunim

PITTSFIELD – 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 join together in celebrating 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.

Temple Anshe Amunim is a Reform Jewish Congregation that promotes engaging and widespread participation in services, education, and cultural and social action programs. The Temple, located at 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield is an accessible building. For more information, contact the Temple Anshe Amunim office at (413) 442-5910, email [templeoffice@ansheamunim.org](mailto:templeoffice@ansheamunim.org) or visit [www.ansheamunim.org](http://www.ansheamunim.org).

## Adult Education All Winter at Kneset Israel

PITTSFIELD – This winter, Kneset Israel continues to offer adult education opportunities around a variety of themes, with two insightful facilitators. From exploring Jewish perspectives on healing and forgiveness, to deepening our knowledge of the Hebrew language, there are plenty of chances to join friends and learn together.

### Rabbinic Stories of Healing and Forgiveness, with Rabbi Pam Wax

The Talmud contains some fascinating stories of rabbinic self-reflection and, even at times, of self-criticism. They will take a look at some of these Talmudic stories, as well as some Hasidic ones, on themes of healing and forgiveness.

Three Mondays, 3 - 4:30 p.m., January 23 and 30, and February 6. This hybrid class may be attended in person or online. Please RSVP at [www.knesetisrael.org/rsvp](http://www.knesetisrael.org/rsvp)

### Hebrew Classes with Rabbi David Weiner

This ongoing Tuesday class blends Hebrew reading practice, vocabulary, grammar, and deeper discussions of content with the aim of helping participants grow in their understanding of the siddur. 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 Kneset Israel

PITTSFIELD – This winter, Kneset 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 Kneset 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 *ruach* 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: [knesetisrael.org/rsvp](http://knesetisrael.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 backdrop for the Friday night service. The music comes from Israel, Eastern Europe, the US, and South America, with new and traditional melodies to welcome the 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!

PITTSFIELD – 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 pouch or pocket (*tash*), 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.

Kneset Israel

will be selling homemade hamantashen again this year during the annual winter fundraiser. An army 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.knesetisrael.org/hamantashen](http://www.knesetisrael.org/hamantashen).
- 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 Kneset Israel with "Hamantashen!" on the memo line to: Kneset 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.

## Kneset Israel Families Together Presents S'mores Under the Stars

### A sweet Havdalah by the fire

PITTSFIELD – If there's been one silver lining from these last couple of years, it's the renewed love of getting 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 toasty 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 [knesetisrael.org/rsvp](http://knesetisrael.org/rsvp).

Bring your friends! The s'more the merrier!





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**LOCAL NEWS**

# 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 thousands 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 partnership 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 BiShvat with Rabbi Rachel Barenblat and Jane Shiyah, teacher and storyteller. Act out stories about trees and caring for our environment and make a special craft related to the holiday. Participate in a mini-Tu BiShvat seder, tasting a variety of fruits and nuts. Meet at CBI.

Families Celebrate Shabbat on Saturday, February 11 at 9:30 a.m. – Join CBI for a joyful, engaging, and participatory family service led by Rabbi Jarah Greenfield. All are welcome, and there will be roles for children of all ages.

CBI's family programs are free and open to all, thanks to the generosity of CBI members and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. See all

scheduled family programs at [cbiberkshires.com/upcoming-family-events](http://cbiberkshires.com/upcoming-family-events).

### Shabbat Services

Saturday morning services are scheduled on January 28 and February 4 at 9:30 a.m.

On Friday evening, February 17 at 7 p.m., join CBI for a beautiful, musical Kabbalat Shabbat service led by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat. You are welcome to join in person or on Zoom.

# A Ritual of Tikkun – CBI's Special Tu BiShvat Seder and Havdalah

NORTH ADAMS – On Saturday, February 4 at 3:30 p.m., join Rabbi Rachel Barenblat for Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires' Tu BiShvat seder, a ritual of *tikkun* (repair).

Participants will draw on poetry, mysticism, and meditation on a journey through the four worlds and the four seasons, blessing and eating symbolic tree fruits and nuts along the way. The unique spiritual energies of Shabbat afternoon will sweeten the journey.

The afternoon concludes with havdalah, marking the end of Shabbat with song, candle-light, and spices. This program will be multi-access (both onsite and online – those participating via Zoom will receive a list of foods to have on hand). Check CBI's website ([cbiberkshires.com](http://cbiberkshires.com)) for details and updates. There will be a fee of \$10 per adult for onsite participation; children are free. If this fee is onerous for you, let CBI know.

Please RSVP for all programs and events at [cbiberkshires.com/calendar-of-events](http://cbiberkshires.com/calendar-of-events).

### Also on February 4 – National Refugee Shabbat

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 individuals in the United States and around the world to dedicate their Shabbat experience to refugees and asylum seekers.

*Masks are required when indoors.*

# Adult Education Programs at CBI

NORTH ADAMS – Wintertime is the ideal time for study and personal growth. Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires offers several classes that fit the bill.

### Spiritual Writing: Midrash and Making Meaning

Midrash consists of interpretive stories that explore the blank spaces in Torah, often offering answers to questions of meaning, character, and inner life. Participants read some classical midrash and explore what driving questions fueled the sages. Then with guided writing exercises, creative prompts, and gentle feedback, students will also write and share midrashic responses to the Torah stories at hand.

This adult education class taught by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat will meet on Zoom from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on the Wednesdays of January 25, February 1, February 8, February 15, March 1, and March 8.

Tuition is \$72 for members of CBI and Temple Beth El of City Island, and \$108 for non-members. Registration is available via Google Forms at [bit.ly/Spiritual-Writing-5783](http://bit.ly/Spiritual-Writing-5783).

### Journey Into Judaism

"Journey Into Judaism" is an adult education class for anyone exploring Judaism and Jewishness. The program is open to those on a conversion journey and to those who are already Jewish and want to learn more about our traditions and teachings. Taught by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat over Zoom, the class is offered in association with the Miller Introduction to Judaism program. Tuition is \$180 for members of CBI and Temple Beth El of City Island, and \$360 for non-members; there is also a \$30 fee for the textbook. If this tuition is a hardship, let Rabbi Rachel know.

Classes will be held at 2 p.m. on Sundays: January 29, February 12 and February 26, March 12 and March 26, April 9 and April 23, May 7 and 21, and June 4 and June 8. Registration is available via Google Forms at [bit.ly/Journey-Into-Judaism-5783](http://bit.ly/Journey-Into-Judaism-5783).

### CBI Book Club

The CBI Book Club meets monthly on Zoom, facilitated by Suzanne Levy Graver, Williams College Professor of English, Emerita and CBI member. Please contact [president@cbiberkshires.com](mailto:president@cbiberkshires.com) for information on dates and book selection.

### JEWISH DAY CAMP 2023 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



**Federation and Eisner Day Camp have teamed up to make day camp affordable for every family!**

Eisner offers a \$100 per week, per child discount to families whose children are enrolled in a Berkshire school district year-round. Families may also apply to Federation for an additional \$100 per week in financial assistance.

**DEADLINE: APRIL 30**

Download an application at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org) or email [federation@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:federation@jewishberkshires.org) to receive the link.





### JEWISH DISABILITY ADVOCACY DAY

**Making Change: Kick-off Event**  
Wednesday, February 15  
12 – 1 p.m. (virtual)  
More info and register at [jewishtgether.org/jdad-2023](http://jewishtgether.org/jdad-2023)

Join together with diverse communities across North America to harness our collective power and break down barriers to opportunity and inclusion. Help advance policies that will empower millions of individuals with disabilities to lead more independent and fulfilling lives.

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## OBITUARIES

### **Marilyn Frankel Simons, 92, raised her family with the values of faith, family, and community**

PITTSFIELD – 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 celebrated with love, warmth, and lots and lots of food. She challenged herself to learn new things. Late in life, she took up calligraphy (both Hebrew and English) and lovingly created B'nai Mitzvah certificates for the youth of Kneset Israel. She regularly attended adult education classes and participated in countless volunteer activities at the synagogue and in the general community. Never one seeking the limelight, she was a behind-the-scenes worker.

Known for her beautiful smile, infectious giggle, and unconditional love, she leaves her family feeling grateful for her life.

Marilyn was predeceased by her husband, Bill Simons, to whom she

was married for 63 years before his death in 2016. She is survived by her children Amy Simons Abramovich and Richard (Marcie) Simons of Pittsfield; four grandchildren who were the lights of her life, Daniel Abramovich (Meaghan), Emily Weilburg (David), Judith Marks (Ariel), and Hannah Rose Simons. She was also blessed with four great-grandchildren; Eliav Marks, Yadin Marks, Amitai Marks, and Zachary Weilburg.

Funeral services were held at Kneset Israel on Wednesday, December 14, followed by burial at the Kneset Israel Cemetery.

Donations in Marilyn's memory may be made to the Marilyn and Bill Simons Endowment Fund at Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201, or to a charity of your choice.

### **Alice Almeleh Gronski Lane, 79, rewarding teaching 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 Isle of Rhodes, Greece to East New York, Brooklyn, following the path of many Sephardic Jews in the United States. Her parents, Amelie and Bessalel, were loving, simple people who wanted to create a better life for the Almeleh family. Although she grew up in NY, she always cherished her culture. It gave her joy to make bourekas, black-eyed peas, and marzipan, especially during Jewish holidays when she opened her door to family and friends. One of her happiest moments, and one she spoke about quite often, was her family reunion trip to Rhodes where she felt connected to her roots.

Born August 26, 1943, the youngest of four, Alice was a driven child who discovered her natural abilities through the arts and academics. She attended the "famed" High School of Performing Arts in Manhattan where she studied the violin. Her love of music and dance was pervasive throughout her life. One could often hear her playing the piano and accordion or watch her

dance the polka in the comfort of her home. It was at the High School of Performing Arts where she met her first husband Ron. They became best 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 types and ages. Alice touched so many who recognized the seeds she planted helped them achieve success as artists, educators, and industry leaders. She always referred to her students as her children and was grateful to hear from 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, who she adored and brought her so much joy. She truly would have done anything for her children. 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 into 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 Dr. Stanley Lane and is survived by his children Stanley (Ina) Lane and Sandra (Jonathan)

Ballan. She is already missed by grandchildren Alec and Zachary Goffin, Jonah, Allegra, and Emilia Sabal, Bennett Gronski, Barrett (Aaron Kozuki) and Darren Lane, Sarah, Jamie, Scott, and Joseph Ballan. Also mourned by her sister Ann Glick and Alice's nephews and their spouses. 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://donorbox.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.

Born on August 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, Andra and Wendi; grandchildren Jacob, Owen and Jade; brother and sister-in-law Jerry and Joyce Black.

Funeral services were held on Wednesday, December 7 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.



## BERKSHIRE JEWISH CONGREGATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

### **Welcome to the Jewish Berkshires**

Everyone is welcome to attend services and events at any of the organizations listed here.

Please call the organizations directly to confirm service times or to inquire about membership.

Learn more about our Jewish community and find great events on the community calendar at:

**JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG**

#### **Berkshire Minyan**

*Lay-led, Traditional, Egalitarian Minyan*  
South County  
[berkshireminyan.org](http://berkshireminyan.org)

#### **Berkshire Hills Hadassah**

P.O. Box 187, Pittsfield, MA  
(413) 443-4386,  
[Berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com](mailto:Berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com)

#### **B'nai B'rith Lodge, No. 326**

**Chabad of the Berkshires**  
450 South St., Pittsfield, MA  
(413) 499-9899,  
[jewishberkshires.com](http://jewishberkshires.com)

#### **Congregation Ahavath Sholom**

*Reconstructionist*  
North St., Great Barrington, MA  
(413) 528-4197, [ahavathsholom.com](http://ahavathsholom.com)

#### **Congregation Beth Israel**

*Reform*  
53 Lois St., North Adams, MA  
(413) 663-5830, [cbiberkshires.com](http://cbiberkshires.com)

#### **Hevreh of Southern Berkshire**

*Reform*  
270 State Rd., Great Barrington, MA  
(413) 528-6378, [hevreh.org](http://hevreh.org)

#### **Israel Philatelist Society**

c/o Dr. Ed Helitzer,  
(413) 447-7622

#### **Jewish Federation of the Berkshires**

196 South St., Pittsfield, MA  
(413) 442-4360, [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org)

#### **Jewish War Veterans**

Commander Robert Waldheim  
(413) 822-4546, [sellit4@aol.com](mailto:sellit4@aol.com)

#### **Kneset Israel**

*Conservative*  
16 Colt Rd., Pittsfield, MA  
(413) 445-4872, [knesetisrael.org](http://knesetisrael.org)

#### **Temple Anshe Amunim**

*Reform*  
26 Broad St., Pittsfield, MA  
(413) 442-5910, [ansheamunim.org](http://ansheamunim.org)

## OBITUARIES

### **Dr. Alexander N. Drescher and Aline Drescher, 92, pillars of the community, loved the Berkshires**

LANESBOROUGH – Husband and wife, Dr. Alexander N. Drescher and Aline Drescher, both 92, died together at home on Saturday, November 26, 2022 after more than 71 years of marriage.

Born and raised in New York City, Bunny and Sandy met at Little Red Schoolhouse, fell in love as teenagers and were wed in 1951. They leave three sons; Thomas S. Drescher and wife Andrea C. Brown of Los Angeles, CA; Peter D. Drescher of El Cerrito, CA; and William 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. In 1957-59, he was chief of pediatrics at the US Army Hospital in Fort Carson, CO, and subsequently returned to Albert Einstein as an instructor and researcher in kidney disease, infant nutrition, and endocrinology.

Dr. Drescher moved to Pittsfield with his family in 1962 and practiced pediatrics for many years. In the late 1970s he went back to school and trained as a psychologist at the Institute for Living in Hartford, CT. During his time in the Berkshires, he also taught regular classes at Albany Medical College and served as chair of the Mt. Greylock Regional High School Board of Education. In his later years, he became an independent scholar in English literature, specializing in the work of James Joyce, Herman Melville, and Vladimir Nabokov.

Aline was the daughter of Harvey A. Mayer, publisher of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Daily Review and Aline Shakman Mayer, a painter. She was also the stepdaughter of Harold Geigerman, a textiles businessman. A talented soprano, Aline initially attended Skidmore College before returning to Manhattan to study voice full time. Many people in the Berkshires will remember her classical music performances, her roles in local musicals, and her work as head of music at Berkshire Country Day School in the late 60s, where she specialized in the Orff Schulwerk method.

In 1980, she returned to school and completed a BA in Music (Summa Cum Laude) at the University of Hartford, before earning an MSW at SUNY Albany and embarking on a second career as a social worker. She worked in the dialysis unit at Berkshire Medical Center and then in a joint private practice with her psychologist husband. A lifelong lover of fine art, Aline volunteered as a docent at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown after her retirement.

Bunny and Sandy loved the Berkshires and especially their 1820s farmhouse, built along a country road in Lanesborough and not modernized until they took possession in 1967. They spent many summers with their sons renovating and updating the building, riding their horses through the surrounding fields, and later on, driving a Haflinger-drawn cart across the county's back roads and in the Tubs Parade in Lenox. They loved walking their dogs, chatting with their neighbors, and watching the sun set over the mountains from their front porch.

The family requests memorial gifts to be given to Doctors Without Borders or The Alzheimer's Association.

### **Peter C. Cohen, 85, loved the Berkshires and volunteered on many committees**

RICHMOND – Peter C. Cohen, 85, died on Thursday, December 8, 2022 at Berkshire Medical Center.

Born in Brooklyn, NY, son of Irving Cohen, an entertainment attorney, and Phyllis, a registered nurse, they moved to Scarsdale, NY where Peter attended high school before graduating from Dickinson College. He served as a US Army reservist following the Korean War.

He lived in the Town of Richmond full time for about 25 years following his retirement from the Madison Avenue world of advertising where he worked for decades in the era popularized by the television series *Mad Men*. At Jordan, Case, McGrath, he produced many commercials, familiar to anyone watching television from the 1950s to the present.

Following formal retirement, he joined an advertising legend to found Avenging Angels, a firm dedicated to producing ads for liberal and progressive causes. Although unremunerative, he had a very rewarding second career. He loved the Berkshires and volunteered as a member of the Richmond Board of Health, the Assessors, the Council on Aging, the Richmond Library, and most recently produced a video for the Town of Richmond which extolled the virtues of life in his adopted town. He was an amateur woodworker, building birdhouses and selling them to benefit the town's new Richmond Library.

Peter leaves his brother, Laurence D. Cohen of Richmond; daughter, Elissa Cohen of Norwalk, CT; son, Adam Cohen, MD and daughter-in-law Margo of Pleasantville, NY; granddaughters Lily, Maya and Ava, and grandson Lincoln.

Services were private at the Richmond Center Cemetery. To honor him, donations in his memory may be made to support the Richmond Library.

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

SLINGERLANDS, NY – Robert S. Cohen, 89, died in his son and daughter-in-law's home on Wednesday, December 14, 2022 after a long, brave struggle with Alzheimer's Disease.

Born November 20, 1933, in Boston, son of the late Saul J. Cohen and Ruth Aronstein Cohen, he lived almost all of his life in Pittsfield. After graduating from Pittsfield High School in 1951, he attended the University of Massachusetts and received bachelor's and master's degrees in Electrical Engineering in 1955 and 1963, respectively. Bob enlisted in the Air Force following college and was trained as a navigator. He remained in active service until 1957 and stayed in the reserves until his honorable discharge in 1968, retiring at the rank of captain.

Spending his entire career at General Electric, Bob was a loyal company man, holding several senior engineering and management positions in the Distribution Transformer and Ordnance Departments. He retired in 1993, as Manager of Field Engineering, after 36 years of service.

Bob loved to be around people and regularly met with friends at various Pittsfield restaurants, card games, the YMCA, and anywhere else that he could find someone to chat with. He was a keen observer of the world, keeping up with the political and financial news of the day. His memory was photographic, and his navigation skills were keen; he could visit a city once and remember precise directions years later. Bob also liked to drive fast (much to his wife's chagrin).

Bob was an avid, accomplished, and fast-playing golfer, nick-named

"the pacer" because he paced while "patiently" waiting for others to hit their shots. He started playing in his early 20s in the Air Force stationed in Texas. He was a longtime member of the Berkshire Hills Country Club and, later, the Country Club of Pittsfield. He was known, after business trips, to sometimes furtively return to the golf course for a quick round before going home.

Bob was a lifelong congregant of Knesset Israel, and Judaism was deeply important to him. He attended daily services for many years and volunteered in several capacities. His devotion to public service also included work on the Pittsfield Solid Waste Committee and the Economic Revitalization Committee (PERC).

Bob will be remembered for his devotion to his friends, outgoing personality, sense of humor, and love of Frank Sinatra's music. He was known for his generosity and desire to care for family and friends. Bob was the person people called when they were in need. Most importantly, Bob was a loving husband, father, and grandfather. He will be dearly missed and will remain forever in our hearts.

In addition to his parents, Bob was predeceased by his twin brother Edward, younger brother Bernard, and cousins Claire Rosenfield and Alma Arlos. He is survived by his loving wife of 64 years, Iris Cohen of Slingerlands, NY; children Jeffrey Cohen (Jackie Gaffney) of Slingerlands, Andrew Cohen (Laurie) of San Francisco, CA, and Ruth Cohen (Robert Thistle) of Lee; seven grandchildren, Hannah and Sarah Cohen, Devan (Ashleigh), Quinn and Carolyn Cohen, and John and Patricia Thistle. Bob is lovingly remembered by his siblings Janet B. Lysy (Dusan) and Stephen J. Cohen, sisters-in-law Christina Cohen and Geraldine Cohen, and brother-in-law Alan Sidman (Sharman). His nieces and nephews include Sherri Lysy, Erin Johnstone (Eric), Kara Lysy and David (Meg) Lysy, Derek Cohen and Cheryl Cohen Owens (Charles), Michael Cohen (Shana), Stasha Cohen (Mark), Mark Woolsey Paige (Sonya), and David Cohen (Kathleen).

Funeral services were held on Sunday, December 18, at Congregation Knesset Israel, Pittsfield.

Please consider donating to the Alzheimer's Association ([www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)) or Congregation Knesset Israel ([www.knessetisrael.org](http://www.knessetisrael.org)).

### **Nikki Katz (Goode), 83, teacher, attorney, social worker**

GREAT BARRINGTON – Nikki Katz (Goode) 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 inspirational in that she never sat still. A teacher before marriage and children, 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.

At the age of 43, she pivoted to be a full-time law student, was on law review, and was among the top of her class. She retired when it was time to spend more time with her grandchildren and could be found taking her granddaughters on shopping sprees and to get their nails done, spectating sporting events, or building Thomas the tank engine trains.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Pauline and Harry Goode, and her husband Fred Katz.

She is survived by her twin sister Ruth Davis (Goode) and brother-in-law Jerry Davis; three children Alissa Whiteman (Chuck), Jeff Katz (Helene), and Mike Katz (Linda); and 12 grandchildren Jordan, Danny, Justin, Noah, Trevor, Damon, Sarah, Hannah, Matthew, Michael, Christopher, and Danielle.

A graveside service was held on Monday, December 26, at Ahavath Sholom Cemetery, Great Barrington. Please consider donating to the Lewy Body Dementia Association at [www.lbda.org](http://www.lbda.org) or Hebrew Senior Life, the facility that took amazing care of Nikki for the last few years, <https://www.hebrewseniorlife.org/>.

### **Dr. Stuart Sarason Kuller, 85, gregarious, hilarious, and loyal to the end**

WEST STOCKBRIDGE – Stuart Sarason Kuller, DDS, MAGD, passed away on Thursday, 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; dentistry, woodworking, home building, and maintenance. He was also a dedicated caregiver to family and friends, a classical music aficionado, 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.

Stuart is survived by his wife, Carol Israel Kuller; daughters Robin Kuller of Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Betsy Kuller Jelisavcic of New York City; son-in-law Vladimir Jelisavcic; and four grandsons.

Donations in Stuart's memory may be made to The West Stockbridge Historical Society/West Stockbridge Chamber Players, 9 Main Street, P.O. Box 266, West Stockbridge, MA 01266.



## Create a Jewish Legacy Campaign

Please remember the Jewish Community in your will.

## 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 so different, and yet....

In advance of their talk, Sadie Honig-Briggs, a freshman at Monument Mountain Regional High School in Great Barrington, responded to her experience 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

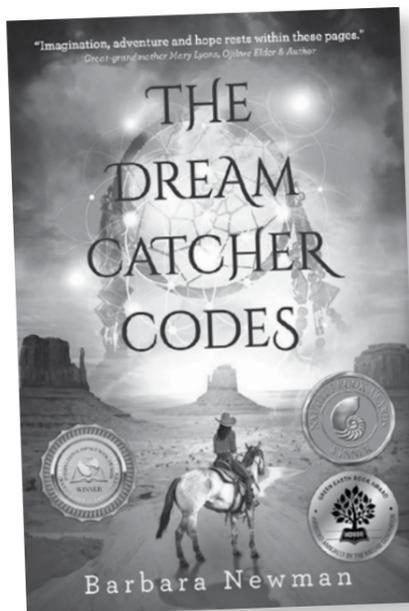
In the depths of the waters / streaks of sunlight lit the fish of a million colors, / a kaleidoscope dancing in the waves, / moving to the currents of change.

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, and light up the fire of change that rests in all of us.

The Codes, stored in a magical Crystal Horseshoe, 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 Horseshoe. 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 horseshoe 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, from the West, with a passion for 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, and Falcon travel the world, fight evil, and use their combined strength to find the stolen piece of the horseshoe, 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 might go to climate activists like Greta Thunberg and Jerome Foster II, or to laws that cut down on fossil fuels. Really though, climate activism 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 core thing 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 and stories are sophisticated, 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 acknowledging 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 deep 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 creative director, leaving an indelible mark on popular brand culture. After hearing an NPR story about the American cowgirl, she was so inspired, she left 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 Tyringham with her family and many pets. Sadie has always loved anything to do with the arts, so in 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 actually 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

speak to you about *Rashi's Daughters* and my research, and I'll speak for free, 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 publishers, 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 were. *US News & World Report* is 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!

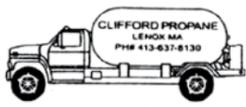
**Maggie Anton** was born Margaret Antonofsky in Los Angeles, California. Raised in a secular, socialist household, she reached adulthood with little knowledge of her Jewish religion. All that changed when David Parkhurst, who was to become her husband, entered her life, and they both discovered Judaism as adults. In the early 1990s, Anton began studying Talmud in a class for women taught 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 trilogy, *Rashi's Daughters*, was born, to be followed by *National Jewish Book Award* finalist, *Rav Hisda's Daughter: Apprentice*, and its sequel, *Enchantress*. Then she switched to nonfiction, winning the Gold Ben Franklin Award in the religion category for *Fifty Shades of Talmud: What the First Rabbis Had to Say about You-Know-What*.

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## CULTURE &amp; ARTS

## 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 the genre, true crime books seem to require a similar admixture of elements – an overview of the workaday lives of the people touched by the crimes; details of their relationships with the monster living in their midst; an overview of that monster's pathology and origins; 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 follow a formula, what distinguishes the better true crime books is 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 history.

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 another (of 12-year-old 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 readers, but one 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 stories, Metzger's narrative lays bare how easily public safety, which so much depends on goodwill, can be breached by an evildoer 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 perpetrator of fathomless evil.

In December, the BJV caught up with Metzger, who shared her motivations and experiences in writing *Hidden Demons*, as well as a surprising 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 away (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 Savarese was walking to school one morning, and this guy just tries 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 with (former Massachusetts state senator) Ben Downing, whose father was the DA at the time. Everybody has some connection. After that, I never let my kids wait 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, and then her granddaughters Amy and Allison Boyington also used to babysit. 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 everything was okay. I got friendly with the Boyingtons. 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 when I spoke to him, he led me to Philip Shallies, the man whose truck Louis Lent was driving. Phil Shallies and his sister had kept scrapbooks of everything about the case. I read through everything, took notes on

everything. Then, one thing leads to another. You call somebody, interview them, 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 tried to [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 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 this story and retelling 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 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 either 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 his 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 still is holding the power. He lets out little bits when he's in a jam, when he's worried about something. He's not telling 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, when 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 you.' I said, '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 ask Lew 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 not a policeman. I don't want to know. I just wanted to talk to Lent to see if I could get a more

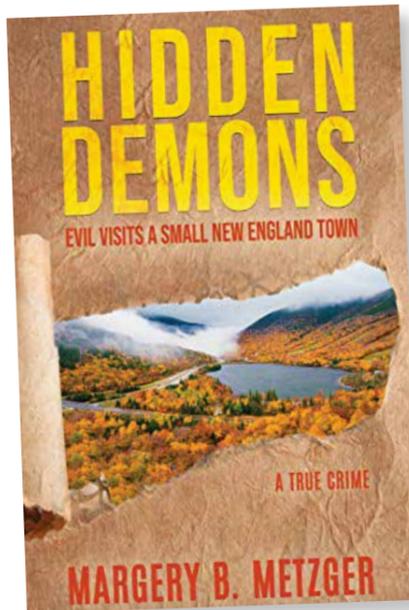
balanced picture of what was going on. I knew all along I'd never get the truth out of him. And he didn't want to talk to me. After [Lent's friend] called me, it scared me enough that I just did not want to go there.

**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?**

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 / 'Cause you can 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 criminal. My focus was that I saw a lot of heroes in this. First of all, Officer Owen Boyington – he nabbed Lewis Lent. He was talking to Lent about trying to kidnap Rebecca Savarese, and he asked the right questions. All of a sudden, after three years where nobody could make heads or tails out of who killed Jimmy Bernardo, Owen Boyington put it together in just a few minutes. It just clicked for him. He knew it. And to me, that was brilliant.

When you had the task force [that investigated Lent's crimes] come together, they were so well organized that they became the example that the FBI used for setting up its way of solving serial killings. They still use protocol that Pittsfield established. And then I saw the brilliant work of the judge. He was able to get through all the trials – and there was no appealing of anything that he did because he was strictly by the book on everything he wrote. The DA, Gerard Downing, was incredible. He knew that he had to try the cases in Massachusetts because Lent would get the full penalty that he would not get in New York. He knew that Lent would never tell the Wood family what he did with Sara Ann, and he just stuck to his guns. It was not easy for Downing. He really took a lot of flak. So I saw it in a very different way than maybe a lot of true crime buffs would read a book and say, oh, this guy's so awful. Well, Lent was awful. But I also saw a lot of really good police work, a lot of good work in the courts. And that was what I wanted to highlight, as well.

*Hidden Demons: Evil Visits a Small New England Town* by Margery B. Metzger is available at The Bookstore in Lenox and through Amazon in hardcover, paperback, and ebook editions. An audiobook will also be available in the near future.



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## BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

## 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 kvell about the children whom we've rescued from around the world through Youth Aliyah. Or I could rhapsodize 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 *mo'adon*, 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." (as in the "nes" on the Hanukkah dreidel.)

Fast forward to 2022, where the varieties of coffee drinks available in Israel rivals that at any Italian café. 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 cafés 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 café 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 Ban 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 Lavee 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 Golda variety, related to the Arabica bean, one of the very ones with which Gindal 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 Yahel 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
- ¼ 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.

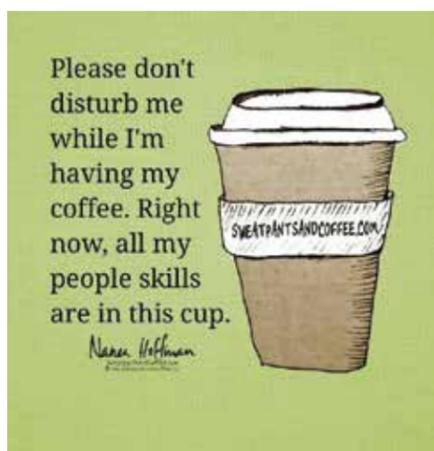
Heat the pot on a medium flame. As the liquid becomes hot, it will begin to foam up. Keep an eye on the pot. Don't let it boil or the coffee will be bitter.

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 stanzas 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.

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