Builders and Sustainers of Jewish Life in the Berkshires

Major Donors Celebration an opportunity to share ideas on making a difference in our Jewish community

PITTSFIELD – Jewish Federation of the Berkshires will host its annual Major Donors Celebration on Sunday, July 23 at 9:30 a.m., at a new, larger location – Berkshire Hills Country Club. This year’s event will focus on the tremendous impact major donors have on building and sustaining Jewish life in the region, especially over these last few years marked by significant challenges related to the pandemic, antisemitism, and changing demographics.

Celebrating Federation’s Work – 83rd Annual Meeting

Featuring a special presentation on “The State of Jewish Life on Campus”

LENOX – On Tuesday, June 20, at 7:30 p.m., Jewish Federation of the Berkshires will celebrate its work in the community at its 83rd annual meeting, which will be held this year at Shakespeare & Company’s Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre. A review of accomplishments from the past year will be shared and look forward to our plans and goals for the year ahead. Community members are invited to a celebratory reception and schmoozing, followed by a brief business meeting, board elections, and the presentation of the Simkin Schiller Scholarship to Jewish high school seniors who demonstrated high academic achievement and leadership in the Jewish and broader communities. The special guest speaker will be Rabbi Aaron Fine, executive director of UMass Amherst Hillel who will share his insights on “The State of Jewish Life on Campus.”

Summer Culture in the Jewish Berkshires

This summer, Federation partners with local and regional cultural institutions for a compelling lineup of performances and talks.

June 29: “Reflections on Antisemitism and the Cautionary Tale of Cabaret” with Barrington Stage Company

July 9: The Workshop Artist Salon: Probing Collective Memory and Hybridity with Shakespeare & Company

In Israel for Yom Ha’Zikaron and Yom Ha’Atzmaut – and So Much More

By Arlene D. Schiff / Board Member, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Imagine sitting outside on a warm summer day with a cool breeze blowing, while overlooking groves of olive trees, fields in various shades of green, and a large “fishpond” with the city of Afula and several kibbutzim and moshavim in the distance. This is the space I find myself in as I attempt to put into words the incredible opportunity I was given to accompany Dara Kaufman, our Federation’s executive director, to Israel for Yom Ha’Zikaron, everyone stopped when the sirens sounded – everyone! No matter what they were doing, they stopped to observe the 1 or 2 minutes of silence to honor fallen soldiers and victims of terror. On Yom Ha’Atzmaut, the Tel Aviv beachfront parks were filled with large extended families, both Israeli and Arab, having barbecues to celebrate Israel’s 75th birthday. And in Jaffa, dance parties were taking place on rooftops, people were eating at waterfront restaurants, and there was lots of ice cream being consumed.

In Afula, we visited four programs our Federation helps to make possible, interacting on a personal level with the staff and beneficiaries, places not on the typical tour guide’s itinerary, but critical to ensuring that new olim overcome trauma. And two of the four days of the GA were outside of the convention center, providing the opportunity for us to have important discussions in small groups with new olim, lone soldiers, and members of the army who participated in Birthright Israel.

I will never forget how it felt to participate in Masa’s memorial ceremony for Israel’s fallen soldiers and victims of terror. “Forever Connected,” at Latrun (a strategic hilltop in the Avnon Valley which was the site of one of the worst battles in the War of Independence). Seven thousand Jews of all ages came together in a large outdoor amphitheater as the sun was setting to honor the 24,213 fallen soldiers who gave their lives for the Jewish homeland and the many, many victims of terror, some who lost their lives and others whose lives were totally transformed because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Seven thousand people in one space for an hour and a half and the silence was working out in outdoor gems in the sand, windsurfing, surfing, walking along the beachfront, or enjoying the sunshine while lounging in a beach chair.

Jewish Federations of North America’s General Assembly (GA) and a two-day visit to our Partnership2Gether community, Afula/Gilboa.

In accordance with the Federation’s bylaws, additional nominations may be considered when submitted by a petition signed by fifteen Berkshire Jewish Community members.
RABBI REFLECTION

Jewish Teachings on Reincarnation

By Rabbi Seth Wax / Jewish Chaplain, Williams College

Among the most common questions that rabbis get, among the more challenging is when a person asks, “What do Jews believe happens to a person after they die?” It is difficult because often, the person asking the question has recently experienced a loss and seeks ways to stay connected to their loved one who has passed away. By learning about Jewish beliefs about life after death, those asking this question often want support in developing a relationship with the person who has died.

Another reason this question is difficult is because there is no easy and straightforward answer. Likey with so many things in Judaism, there are many different ideas and theories about what happens when we die that are scattered throughout Jewish literature. In some ways, it can be easier to talk about what Jews don’t think about life after death, rather than what we do think. And even that is imperfect.

Against this backdrop are Jewish teachings on reincarnation. With roots in rabbinic literature, these teachings are infinitely intricate and confusing. But they are also imaginative, deep, and inspiring. When I first learned of them a number of years ago, I wanted to learn more. But I always found them opaque and difficult to penetrate. Fortunately, for the past seven months, I have had the privilege of studying Nishmat Adam HaRishon, the final volume in the collection of Kabbalistic teachings of Rabbi Isaac Luria, as taught to his disciple Chaim Vital and arranged by Shmuel Vital. I have done this with a small group, under the guidance of my teacher, Rabbi Ebn Leader. Through taking part in a guided study of this text, my group has been able to encounter some foundational ideas about Jewish approaches to gilgul, or reincarnation. My understanding is still in its early stages, but I’d like to share some of the main ideas that I have encountered that I have found personally meaningful, with the hope that perhaps they might be helpful, or at least interesting, to others.

There is no I – only soul-sparks

According to Lurianic Kabbalah, as we come into the world, we enter as a particular configuration of soul-sparks. These soul-sparks come from an original source that is referred to as Nishmat Adam HaRishon, the soul of the first human being. Drawing on a Talmudic teaching that the first human being was created by one of the earth to the other (B'pri Tama 12a), the Kabbalistic notion holds that at the beginning of time, there was only this one all-inclusive soul of Primordial Human. However, when the Primordial Human ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, their all-inclusive soul split into countless sparks and spread throughout the cosmos, many of which fell into dark places. Ever since then, these soul-sparks have come into the world in a dazzling array of configurations, as different creatures and beings.

This pattern continues to play out for us. When we come into the world, we are constituted of a particular configuration of these soul-sparks. They are drawn from a dizzying array of locations in Adam HaRishon’s soul, along different dimensions of reality, and they manifest in different forms. So it’s not that each creature or person has one “soul.” Rather, according to this theory, each being is constituted by a conglomeration of this range of soul-sparks. We don’t have a soul creature or person has one “soul.” Rather, according to this theory, each being is constituted by a conglomeration of this range of soul-sparks. We don’t have a soul.

Why soul-sparks come together: tikkan

When a collection of soul-sparks comes into the world as a living creature, they enter with a purpose: to bring about tikkan, or healing. This tikkan is limited, however, to the specific soul-sparks that have come together in a person. By engaging in religious practices, connecting with certain people, and living life in a certain way, a person can bring about this tikkan for their soul-sparks that need it. Each person has particular soul-sparks that need tikkan, and we don’t always know who they are and how to bring about tikkan. In fact, not every soul-spark is ready for tikkan in each incarnation. Spiritual guides can help us discern what tikkan we need to engage in, but it’s not always so easy.

While we are on a mission to effect tikkan for the soul-sparks within ourselves, we are not the true beneficiary of that spiritual work. Rather, everything we do for tikkan is about healing the breaches within Nishmat Adam HaRishon. And that all-inclusive soul cannot achieve fullness until every single broken piece is healed and reincorporated back into the whole. That means that the process of tikkan is incomparably long – it takes lifetimes upon lifetimes. But it also means that no parts of ourselves or others will ever be left behind. In order for the soul of Adam HaRishon to be healed, we all need to be healed. This means that all, people, all creatures – everything needs to be recognized, uplifted, and reintegrated into the whole.

What does this mean for us?

A downside of this way of thinking about people and souls is that it doesn’t offer an image of an enduring soul that exists across space and time, and that we can encounter in a heavenly realm. At the same time, I think it offers us a compelling image for what we are called to do when we come into the world. We are tasked with doing our small part, in our own way, to bring healing to all beings. At the end of our lives, our soul-sparks will go off in different directions and take their place in new beings, with new work to do. My sense is that the parts of our personality endure in these new configurations, bringing our unique experiences to these new incarnations. I also think that this approach invites us to reflect on our work in this life, in this world. To ask, what are we being asked to do in this life? To reflect on what healing within ourselves we need to bring about, and how can we support others in their process of healing? It offers a way to think about tikkan onom, while recognizing our limitations, while also inviting us into this cosmic task. May each of us reflect on this call and respond in ways that honor our own healing while also working for the healing of others.

Rabbi Seth Wax is the Jewish Chaplain at Williams College.
overwhelming. Words can't express the experience sufficiently. I encourage you to experience this for yourself via YouTube (Google's Tone Yom HaZikaron Ceremony 2023) and hear the intimate stories of six families who have lost loved ones, bringing the incomprehensible number of those lost down to the level of an individual family’s story.

The following day, Dara and I joined members of the Buffalo, Rochester, and Northeastern New York Jewish communities to experience Yom HaZikaron as part of a larger movement taking place across the country. Our first stop was an Absorption Center (where new immigrants to Israel live and study Hebrew before venturing out on their own) in Ra’anana, about 30 minutes outside of Tel Aviv. Here we experienced new immigrants learning Hebrew in small groups and felt such pride, for many of their dreams of living in Israel have recently come true. While I could not understand what they were saying, the solemnity of the day was felt, and we were swept up in the emotion being expressed through body language, voices, and tears.

Following the ceremony, our group gathered in a circle to speak with three lone soldiers from the United States. One was a high school student from the United States who shared why they chose to enlist in the army (a strong connection to Israel as a result of having visiting family members who live here), their parent’s reaction to their decision (supportive though nervous), their hopes for their lives five years from now (one unsure, two to be active members of Israeli society), and what they wished could be easier as they transition to living as Israelis (having someone to call to help them navigate the bureaucracy of all aspects of Israeli life). Two new olim, one from Russia and one from Canada, also shared why they chose to make aliyah (for one it seemed the right place to start their professional life, and for the other, all in his family but his parents live in Israel and the start-up Nation is the right place to launch his biomedical career); the challenges they experienced (learning Hebrew is difficult and transitioning to a new life challenging); and where they hope to be in five years (working and making lives for themselves in Israel).

On the last day, we met four current soldiers at the memorial for Sergeant Nachson Waxman – the 19-year-old Israel Defense Force soldier who was abducted, held hostage for a period of six days, and killed by Hamas in 1994 – and the Israeli commando officer who was killed trying to rescue him. After they introduced themselves and shared what this day meant to them, we took a short bus ride to the home of one of the soldier’s grandfathers, a Holocaust survivor, who was also included as a teacher, to positively impact Israeli society. Her personal stories of survival, of giving back in service and, at a young age, of her appearance did not allow her to be slowing down. The three soldiers shared four personal reasons for enlisting (more than a requirement for most, for most, it’s a responsibility based on events that happened earlier in their lives) and the impact interacting with Diaspora youth and Israelis (who has had on them (which has allowed them to gain a better understanding of Jewish life in the Diaspora and to see Israel through new eyes). One soldier showed us the home screen photo on his phone of Masada at sunset. He noted that he had been to Masada many times, but walking to the top of the mountain and experiencing the sunrise alongside his American peers allowed him to experience Masada in a different light. The conversation then transitioned to the soldiers asking us questions about life as members of the North American Jewish community. One of them asked us what we were doing to stop the decline of Jews participating in Jewish life, articulating very clearly that they are doing their part to protect the Jewish homeland, but that is quite a lot and they need to engage and feel a connection to Israel as, in his opinion, it is this partnership – the people of each country doing its part – that is going to ensure a strong and vibrant future.

As we were departing, we inquired how the soldiers dealt with, and what it felt like, for them to transition from such a solemn day in which they mourn the loss of family and friends to the celebration of the Jewish Independence Day. More than one remarked that they were going to several parties because that is what the fallen soldiers would want, for all of us to live our lives to the fullest, celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Jewish homeland that they fought for. I have to say, it was an easier transition than I expected having heard them express the sentiment that they were going to move on from the sadness and experience the joy of the existence of a democratic Jewish homeland. So, that evening we enjoyed incredible Israeli food, danced, and celebrated to the fullest.

When the GA was originally scheduled to take place in Israel to celebrate the Yom Ha’atzmaut, no one anticipated that we would be doing so after 16 weeks of protests related to judicial and other reforms, and with Israeli society in the throes of current events. We could hear the protesters outside the gates of the convention center the first evening as we listened to President Herzog share his message that only through dialogue can we turn “moments of crisis into opportunities” for growth. He announced that his office had developed an initiative called ‘Kol Ha’am - Voice of the People: The President’s Initiative for Worldwide Jewish Dialogue’ - in his words, a Jewish Davos, a collaborative forum that will reflect the full diverse range of Jewish perspectives. Everyone is hopeful this will have an impact on the current societal situation.

The following morning, the protesters’ point of view was exhibited inside the convention center, where GA participants made known their feelings directly to Simcha Rothman, a member of the Knesset who is pushing for the reforms, to the point where breakfast and a session taking dialogue around “What is a Jewish identity?” were disrupted. While feelings have consistently been strongly expressed by all segments of Israeli society, it was gratifying to know that everyone agreed to stop protesting to observe Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut. The first full day of the GA was designed to encourage learning and conversation in small groups. There were four sessions taking place at any given time where we tackled tough conversations and engaged in dialogue on how together, the North American Jewish community and Israelis can advance our shared future. My first session focused on celebrating the racial and ethnic diversity of the Jewish People. It was noted that just like in the U.S., minority groups in Israel are still fighting to have the same rights and to be accepted in the highest levels of government. Several organizations shared the stories of their struggles and it is clear that there is more work to be done to get to a place of equal treatment and opportunity.

This is the first time I had the privilege of experiencing Israel in ways where I was more of a member of the Israeli Jewish community than a tourist.

My second session was titled “Smart and Savvy: The Future of Investing in Israel,” which highlighted the fact that the vibrancy of Israel comes from its investment in the talent and resources in its communities, and this investment continues despite the difficult environment the industry currently finds itself in. The Israeli military invests extensive training in its officers very quickly so they can immediately be effective in their positions, and this results in individuals with a high level of expertise in technology who have ideas for new products and services when their army service is complete, as well as a network of high-quality entrepreneurs. This is why Israel is home to the top 300 tech companies in the world, 200 have development centers in Israel, and these large companies have smaller companies around them that resulted in extensive hubs of expertise. However, currently, both seed funding and late-stage tech funding have diminished. The three panelists encouraged the audience to think about how they can support the Israeli tech economy and establish pathways to capital. Without North American investment, they stated, the tech ecosystem and innovation Israel is known for will decline.

My final session focused on the new age of Israeli philanthropy. Israel has 39,000 listed non-profits that are only partially funded by the government. Today 40 percent of the philanthropy supporting these organizations is coming from Israelis, whereas the Diaspora, which accounts for all was coming from the Diaspora. Two models were discussed. One gets high-tech start-ups to donate stock options to a fund. When these companies are successful and sold, the fund donates in the stock options and donates the proceeds to non-profits working in the youth and education space. To date, 842 companies are part of the program, and $30 million dollars have been distributed. The other is more grassroots, taking advantage of micro-donations using the concept of rounding up. Through Israel’s credit card companies, individuals can designate a charity to which they want their round-up funds to go. So for example if a purchase is made for $825.50, the purchaser rounds that up to $826.00, and the 50 cents is donated to another organization. The average Israeli donates 91.20 cents per month. Today, 20 million shekels per year are distributed to 245 nongovernmental organizations. The process promotes the idea that everyone can give something to society. The audience was encouraged to get Jewish-owned start-ups in the States to donate stock options to help fund local Jewish causes. Orit Petruschka, the director of Israel’s leading venture capital firm, Technology and Social Entrepreneur who founded Round Up, noted that initially, the U.S. North American Jewish philanthropy was for nation-building; today it is needed to be focused on addressing Israel’s current societal challenges.

The last full day of the GA coincided with Yom Ha’atzmaut and was spent in Northeastern New York Jewish communities to experience Yom Ha’Zikaron as part of the GA was designed to experience this for yourself via YouTube (google Israel in ways where I was more of a member of the Israeli Jewish community than a tourist.

While I saw many people at the GA that I knew personally or who were members of a network that I work with through my position at the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, and I was happy to make this connection, I was extremely proud to share that I was attending the GA as a lay leader of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. I am thanks to Dara and the Board of Directors for giving me the honor of representing our community in this way. This experience will be one I will never forget and has allowed me to feel an even deeper connection to the people of Israel.

Meeting and learning with soldiers who participated in Birthright with their US peers.
Puzzles and Solutions in Science and Torah, with Biblical and Talmudic Ethnobotanist

Dr. Jon Greenberg

Dr. Jon Greenberg can be contacted at jon@torahflora.org.

Cancer Research, and has studied with Rabbi Chaim Brovender at Israel’s Yeshivat Hamivtar

He adds: “Many people believe that they must choose between Torah and science. Come learn about the surprising ways that many apparent contradictions between these two ways of thinking have been resolved.

This free program will be presented as part of the Connecting With Community series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a $3 suggested donation for adults over 60 or $7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 21 for the lunch menu.

Dr. Jon Greenberg about the contradictions he’ll explore: “We’ll look at a wide variety of examples, including a strange Biblical metaphor that compares loving children to olive trees, questions that archaeology, genetics, and the science of gravity have raised about the etrog used on Sukkot, matzah baking and the law of Passover, the blessing said before eating mushrooms, and the meaning of a Talmudic passage about the supposed effects of several bizarre folk practices on learning and memory.”

Dr. Jon Greenberg is devoted to biblical ethnobotany to better understand theTorah. He received his doctorate in agronomy from Cornell University, and has studied with Rabbi Chaim Brovender at Israel’s Yeshivat Hamivtar and conducted research on corn, allia, and soybeans at Cornell, the US Department of Agriculture, and the University of Pennsylvania Institute for Cancer Research.

In 2021, he published Fruits of Freedom, a Passover Haggadah with a commentary from the perspective of the history of Jewish food and agriculture. Dr. Greenberg can be contacted at jon@torahflora.org.

For more on Jewish Federation programs, visit our calendar of events at jewisheberkshires.org.

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

We are grateful and proud to live in a community that values Jewish education and investment in our youth as our Jewish community here in the Berkshire chapter of Spanish history through an intimate lens: the testimony of a woman who faced the Spanish Inquisition twice.

In conversation and song, novelist Elizabeth Graver and singer/writer Sarah Aroeste will explore the history and oral traditions of Sephardic storytelling and music through the intersections of race, religion, identity and sacred text through music, storytelling and legend. In the history of the Jewish Holidays: Poems, Stories, Essays (Brandets University Press). Telling and Remembering: A Century of American Jewish Poets (Beacon Press), and Writing Our Lives: Autobiographies of American Jewels (Jewish Publication Society). He lives in Tyringham and can be reached at adelphi.edu.

For more on this program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at jewisheberkshires.org. Dr. Rubin’s seminars continue on July 20 and August 17.

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, June 15 at 10:45 a.m., Jewish Federation of the Berkshires presents another installment of Professor Steven Rubin’s summer-long series of current events seminars.

The current events seminar allows participants to examine and discuss topical and newsworthy national and international issues. The moderator will suggest readings for each session, introduce topics, and offer discussion questions. The seminar will be collaborative and collegial, with all participants encouraged to voice their opinions.

This free program will be presented as part of the Federation’s Connecting With Community Series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a $3 suggested donation for adults over 60 or $7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 21 for the lunch menu.

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A Celebration of Sephardic Culture

A Federation series exploring the diversity of Jewish experience

Kantikas/Songs from Our Grandparents: Storytelling & Music in the Sephardic Tradition

Friday, June 2, 10:45 a.m. at Hevreh

In conversation and song, novelist Elizabeth Graver and singer/writer Sarah Aroeste will explore the history and oral traditions of Sephardic storytelling and music through their own lives, new books, and family journeys.

I, Teresa de Lucena: Reflections on the Trial of a Conessa

Thursday, June 8, 10:45 a.m. at Knesset Israel

Translator Ellen Kanner and illustrator Annie Zeybekoglu tell the story of a complex chapter of Spanish history through an intimate lens: the testimony of a woman who faced the Spanish Inquisition twice.

The Workshop Artist Salon: Probing Collective Memory and Hybridity

Sunday, July 9, 4:30 p.m., Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre at Shakespeare & Company


Torah in the Tarot: Hidden Secrets of the Crypto-Jews

Friday, August 12, 10:45 a.m. at Hevreh

Arts director Laura Mandel, Torah scholar Stav Appel, and Berkshire artist Jonathan Prince examine the Tarot as a vessel through a Judicic lens of understanding to reveal its images as secret vessels for Hebrew letters, Judaic ritual objects, Jewish Holy Days, and legends of Torah.

A Taste of the Sephardic Roash Hashanah Seder

Friday, August 18, 10:45 a.m. at Hevreh

Chef Susan Barocas will lead an interactive cooking demo, food tasting and teaching on how to create meaningful, memorable Roash Hashanah services with a Sephardic Seder of special blessings and symbolic foods.

Visit jewisheberkshires.org for more information
Reflections on Antisemitism and the Cautionary Tale of Cabaret

A Program Presented by the Federation and Barrington Stage Company

PITTSFIELD - Barrington Stage Company (under the leadership of Artistic Director Alan Paul and Managing Director Meredith Lynsey Schade) and Jewish Federation of the Berkshires will present a free panel, “Reflections on Antisemitism and the Cautionary Tale of Cabaret,” at 10:45 a.m. on June 29 starting at 10 a.m. at the Boyd-Quinson Stage, 30 Union Street in downtown Pittsfield.

Join a discussion with Jewish thought leaders on the relevance of art and theater in promoting understanding and combating antisemitism. There will be a 10 a.m. coffee and bagel reception in the Boyd-Quinson Stage lobby. The panel discussion begins at 10:45 a.m. in the theater.

This program is part of Federation’s summer-long Celebration of Sephardic Culture, will be presented as part of the Connecting with Community series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a $3 suggested donation for adults over 60 or 87 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 21 for the lunch menu.

I, Teresa de Lucena: Reflections on the Trial of a Converso

PITTSFIELD - How do you make a complex story of a 16th-century Jewish conversa in Spain accessible and beautiful? On Thursday, June 8 at 10:45 a.m., join translator Ellen Kanner and illus-
tor Annie Zeybekoglu to learn more about how they created I, Teresa de Lucena: Reflections on the Trial of a Converso, an intimate portrait of one woman’s survival and framed it with the religious, political, and social changes that shaped her life.

Ellen Kanner is an independent scholar and teacher who lived and studied in Spain for many years. In 1988, she obtained a copy of the Spanish Inquisition dossier concerning Teresa de Lucena (1467-1543). In I, Teresa de Lucena, Ellen presents the translation she made of the archival materials accompanied by her research notes and personal reflections.

Annie Zeybekoglu is an artist and book designer with extensive commercial and teaching experience. Her work appears in collections in the United States and abroad. Annie designed the book format for I, Teresa de Lucena; her line drawings and art appear throughout the book.

For more on this program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.

Major Donors Celebration

Sunday, July 23
9:30-11:30 a.m.

NEW LOCATION
Berkshire Hills Country Club
500 Benedict Road, Pittsfield, MA

SPECIAL GUEST
Featuring excerpts from "Golda’s Balcony" with acclaimed actor Ann Miller

RSVP BY JULY 10
Register at jewishberkshires.org/celebration or (413) 442-4360, ext. 16

MAJOR DONOR CHAIRS: CAROL AND IRVING SMOLDER

HOMESTATE COMMITTEE

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Hope and Gene Silverman
Jill and Harold Gaffin
Diane Trosendorf and Harold Ginzton
Marathon Greenwich
Liz and Alen Jaffe
Diane Zimman
Janet Fink
Matriy and Elith Katzman
Penny andurry Levy

OPEN TO LEADERSHIP DONORS WHO MAKE A GIFT OF $300 OR MORE TO FEDERATION’S 2023 ANNUAL CAMPAIGN

Program format includes schmoozing and breakfast hors d’oeuvres on the covered porch followed by a theater style program indoors. There will be no assigned seating.

Thank you volunteers Ellen Rosenblatt and the BJV delivery team, Colin Otwisk and Roman Rozenbyum.
Your Federation Presents

“Social Justice and the American Musical,”
a Multimedia Presentation by Singer/ Songwriter Laura Wetzler

Laura Wetzler

FITTSFIELD – On Thursday, June 22 at 10:45 a.m., join singer, songwriter, guitarist, recording artist, and lecturer Laura Wetzler for a multimedia presentation that explores the themes of social justice as expressed in over 100 years of the American musical. This free program will be presented as part of the Connecting With Community series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a $3 suggested donation for adults over 60 or $7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 21 for the lunch menu.

Laura Wetzler has devoted years of study and performance to diverse, multicultural World music, as well as to the history of American popular entertainment and European Art Music. She takes particular joy in sharing the fascinating and beautiful contributions of Jewish-American and African-American artists to our musical cultural heritage. Visit her website: laurawetzler.com

Her recordings include Kabbalah Music: Songs of the Jewish Mystics, which was praised by Robert Sherman of the New York Times for its “superb performances.” Laura sings in seven languages and was featured recently at the International Limmud Festival in Germany and in performances of Ladino songs in the Azores. She has lectured and appeared in concert at Yale, NYU, Brandeis, Merkin Hall, Cami Hall, Brooklyn Museum, at the International Music Conference in Italy, and for Road Scholar, among many other venues.

Laura is also the writer, director, producer, and composer of the multi-award-winning new film. What Happened at the Veterans Home? winner Best Humanitarian Film in Prague and Best Screenplay in Paris and Palm Springs, now streaming internationally. When not singing and lecturing, Laura has done extensive volunteer work with the Jewish community of Uganda on over 50 different projects including creating the Kulanu.org Deaf Education Program for children.

For more on Jewish Federation programs, visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.

We know why you are here.
And we’re here for the same reasons.

More than a destination. It’s a way of life. From one season to the next, we understand.

It’s a set of experiences, qualities and values that fulfill.

We believe your financial advisors should embody these same attributes.

It’s why we’re here. We’re here with you. And for you.

ANNUAL MEETING, continued from page 1

Shakespeare & Company, 70 Kemble Street Lenox.
Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for further details about this event.

Nominated Slate, 2023-2024 Board of Directors Officers (2-year term)

Arlene Schiff, President* (effective January 1, 2024)
Judy Usoy, Interim President*. Treasurer
Stephanie Ifferg-Lamm, Secretary
Natalie Matus, VP*
Elisa Spungen Bildner, VP*
Richard Slutsky, VP

Board of Directors

Term Ending 2024 (3-Year Term): Kathy Fraker and Jane Karl

Term Ending 2025 (3-Year Term): Josh Cutler, Jane Glaser, Leslie Konupsky, Stuart Masters, Michael Wasserman and Audrey Werner.


Rabbinic Appointee (1-year Term): Rabbi Barbara Cohen

*Newly Appointed 1st term. *Newly Appointed 2nd term.

In accordance with the Federation’s bylaws, additional nominations may be considered when submitted by a petition signed by 15 Berkshire Jewish Community members and received by the secretary at least ten days prior to the annual meeting.

Laura is also the writer, director, producer, and composer of the multi-award-winning new film, What Happened at the Veterans Home? winner Best Humanitarian Film in Prague and Best Screenplay in Paris and Palm Springs, now streaming internationally. Laura Wetzler has devoted years of study and performance to diverse, multicultural World music, as well as to the history of American popular entertainment and European Art Music. She takes particular joy in sharing the fascinating and beautiful contributions of Jewish-American and African-American artists to our musical cultural heritage. Visit her website: laurawetzler.com

“Great voice, great writing” was WBAI Radio’s opinion on her work, while the late Pete Seeger called Laura “One of the very best!”

Her recordings include Kabbalah Music: Songs of the Jewish Mystics, which was praised by Robert Sherman of the New York Times for its “superb performances.” Laura sings in seven languages and was featured recently at the International Limmud Festival in Germany and in performances of Ladino songs in the Azores. She has lectured and appeared in concert at Yale, NYU, Brandeis, Merkin Hall, Cami Hall, Brooklyn Museum, at the International Music Conference in Italy, and for Road Scholar, among many other venues.

Laura is also the writer, director, producer, and composer of the multi-award-winning new film. What Happened at the Veterans Home? winner Best Humanitarian Film in Prague and Best Screenplay in Paris and Palm Springs, now streaming internationally. When not singing and lecturing, Laura has done extensive volunteer work with the Jewish community of Uganda on over 50 different projects including creating the Kulanu.org Deaf Education Program for children.

For more on Jewish Federation programs, visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.

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Rabbi Sigal Brier is coming to Kol HaNeshama with years of experience as a congregational rabbi. She is a scholar, spiritual mentor, inspirational teacher, and artist. Rabbi Sigal was ordained at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and is also a longtime faculty member of the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Stockbridge, MA.

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Rabbi Sigal Brier

“I’m looking forward to working with members at the Kol HaNeshama and Sarasota area, starting in July 2023. My role as a rabbi and a spiritual leader is to meet people where they are and provide comfort, teachings, and inspiration.

We celebrate together and when we face life’s challenges, individually and collectively, we are poised to help each other.”

– Rabbi Sigal Brier

For more information, please visit our website khsarasota.org, or call 941-244-2042

Kol HaNeshama

Help Us Welcome Rabbi Sigal Brier to Sarasota!

Laura Wetzler

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And we’re here for the same reasons.

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The Berkshires.
MAJOR DONORS, continued from page 1

“We are thrilled that we have such a diverse group of supporters who understand the unique challenges a small community faces,” says Executive Director Dara Kaufman. “Our Federation could not possibly accomplish all that we do to meet essential needs across the Berkshires, in Israel, and beyond without the inspiring compassion, generosity, and leadership of our major donors. That’s why we are so grateful to Carol and Irving Smokler for stepping up as our major donor chairs.”

This event is a way to share experiences of how Federation impacts the lives of all the Jews in our community – both those who come for the summer season and those who live here year-round. Gathering together gives peers an opportunity to share ideas on how to make a difference in a Jewish community like we have in the Berkshires – small in population, yet one where the need for essential services is as acute as it is anywhere else.

Donors will have the chance to see all that this small community accomplishes, and really understand the impact their support has on sustaining the vital programs Federation provides – care services and social engagement for area seniors, Jewish education for our children, camp and Israel experiences for teens and young adults, security enhancements and training for our congregations, advocacy and support to combat antisemitism, and engaging programming to enrich Jewish identity and connection for people of all ages.

Major Donor chairs Carol and Irving Smokler, having spent a lifetime in leadership positions in the Jewish community and at national Jewish organizations, recognize that the Berkshires is a unique model for how a Jewish community mobilizes itself in a rural environment.

“We have had a home here for over 16 years and have seen the Berkshires-Jewish community develop and change,” says Carol. “When asked to step up as the chairs of this important event, we did not hesitate to say yes. We see the vitality of Jewish life here and know that does not happen by accident.”

She adds, “This federation is compassionate, creative, and strategic in supporting those in need, empowering and educating young people, and creating diverse and inclusive opportunities for every person to feel welcomed and supported in Jewish life. It has all the same needs as larger communities, but far fewer resources. We, as major donors, are its greatest resource in supporting these efforts.”

Indeed, Federation’s campaign has risen nearly 24 percent over the last 5 years and has allowed for many expanded services including increasing staff capacity, additional hours for the community social worker, expanded investment in Jewish education and camperships, and a greater focus on the safety of the community. Federation also significantly expanded its adult and family programming to create more diverse, inclusive, and collaborative opportunities to engage in “doing” and “being” Jewish, outside traditional spaces.

“The pandemic changed our community in so many ways,” says Federation’s president Elisa Schindler Frankel. “Older adults needed more support, families and young people needed opportunities to connect, and an influx of new people seeking a safe haven were looking to engage with this vibrant Jewish community. Despite our small size, we accomplish so much. People see this and want to be involved. We are so grateful for the support of our major donors in helping us grow our campaign to respond to the changing needs of our community.”

The involvement of our major donors has been instrumental in achieving these successes – not only in their generous support of our annual campaign, but in their ever-increasing engagement with Jewish life in the Berkshires and awareness of what this Federation accomplishes year-round in the Berkshires.

Cindy Chazen, who along with her husband Jay Leipis is a member of our Major Donors Committee, puts it this way: “I’ve been involved in and seen many federations in action and this Federation is remarkable. Once I went to the head of one of the largest federations in the Northeast and showed him what Jewish Federation of the Berkshires does with the dollars it raises. His reaction was to say that it was impossible to compare the two organizations. My response to him was to say, ‘Just the opposite. Look at what the Berkshires’ Federation accomplishes and see how much each dollar raised can mean to a community.’”

Cindy and Jay spend five months in the Berkshires each year, and she adds, “It’s important for me to be a part of a vital Jewish community wherever I live. Perhaps some people feel as if they give to their capacity in another place. But we should think of all the Jewish programming and engagement we take advantage of while we are here, and understand that Federation supports almost all of it in some way. Being able to give in both places you live in is a profound double mitzvah.”

Federation board member and host committee member Arlene Schiff and her husband Gary see Federation as providing the critical foundation upon which a strong and vibrant Berkshire Jewish community can exist. “It links us to the efforts of prior generations and provides our small community a connection to Israel and Jews around the world,” shares Arlene, a full-time resident of the Berkshires who raised her four daughters here. “We are proud that Federation offers a pathway for everyone to participate in Jewish life and grateful that, through Federation, we can protect and enhance the well-being of Jews locally and around the world.”

Jane Glaser, a member of the host committee and Federation’s board of directors, is excited to acknowledge how important major donors are to our community. “I want donors to know just how valuable they are to our Berkshire Jewish community,” says Jane. “Each of them has a vested interest in the Jewish life in our community. We look forward to honoring all those who have made that commitment. Federation is truly the pulse of a very diversified Jewish life in the Berkshires. How fortunate we are to be part of the annual campaign and have the opportunity to be part of the future of this Federation!”

Berkshire Hills Country Club is at 500 Benedict Road in Pittsfield. Please register by returning the invitation you have received or online at jewbisher Berkshires.org/celebration. Open to Leadership Donors who make a gift of $1,000 or more to Federation’s 2023 annual campaign.

We should think of all the Jewish programming and engagement we take advantage of while we are here, and understand that Federation supports almost all of it in some way. Being able to give in both places you live in is a profound double mitzvah.

— Cindy Chazen, Host Committee Member

Thank You, Host Committee!

Federation is very grateful to the members of our Major Donors Celebration host committee: Nancy and Mark Belsky, Marjorie and Barry Berg, Helene Berger, Cindy Chazen and Jay Leipis, Mel and Terry Drucker, Jill and Harold Gaffin, Marion Gardner Saar and Len Saar, Jane Glaser, Liz and Alan Jaife, Marilyn and Elitsa Katsman, Pommymy and Gerry Levy, Nancy and Norman Lipoff, Penny and Claudia Pincus, Elaine and Bernie Roberts, Arlene and Garry Schiff, Elisa Schindler Frankel and Larry Frankel, Anne Schnesel, Zelda Schwabel, Hope and Gene Silverman, Elisa Spungen Bildner and Robert Bildner, Dianne Trodman and Harold Grinspoon, Audrey Weiner and Jeff Solomon.

About Our Guest Performer – Annette Miller of Shakespeare & Company’s Golda’s Balcony

In 2000, Annette Miller originated the role of Golda Meir in Shakespeare & Company’s production of Golda’s Balcony. This American play, which tells the story of a Jewish woman’s life, was acclaimed by the Wall Street Journal, as Best Actor of the Season in regional theater for her performance as Gladys Green in _The Waverly Gallery_ and as Vera in _4000 Miles_. She received the 2018 Berkshire Theater Critics Association Award for Outstanding Actor in a Leading Role for her portrayal of Golda Meir.

Annette’s latest film, _You Will Not Play Wagner_, was co-written by Annette Miller, who received the 2023 Berkshire International Film Festival, as well as the Miami, Sarasota, Chicago, and Vancouver Jewish film festivals. She played Mrs. Tanken in the Oscar-nominated 2022 Netflix film _Don’t Look Up_.

Annette has performed on Broadway, Off-Broadway, in regional theaters, and on film and television. She had been a leading actor at Shakespeare & Company for the past 25 seasons and was acclaimed by the Wall Street Journal as Best Actor of the Season in regional theater for her performance as Gladys Green in _The Waverly Gallery_ and as Vera in _4000 Miles_. She received the 2018 Berkshire Theater Critics Association Award for Outstanding Actor in a Leading Role for her portrayal of Rutherline in _Mothers and Sons_.

Annette’s latest film, _You Will Not Play Wagner_, was featured in the 2023 Berkshire International Film Festival, as well as the Miami, Sarasota, Chicago, and Vancouver Jewish film festivals. She played Mrs. Tanken in the Oscar-nominated 2022 Netflix film _Don’t Look Up_.

Annette adds, she is “proud to be an active member of the Berkshire Jewish community and its Federation.” Look for more about Annette Miller and her role as Golda Meir in the next issue of the Berkshire Jewish Voice.
Your Federation Presents


PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, July 13 at 10:45 a.m., join singer, songwriter, guitarist, recording artist, and lecturer Laura Wetzler for a multimedia presentation that explores the breadth and influence of Jewish comedians including Eddie Cantor, Fannie Brice, Danny Kaye, Jerry Lewis, Sid Caesar, Imogene Coca, Jack Benny, Mel Brooks, Totie Fields, Belle Barth, Joan Rivers, Sarah Silverstein, and Amy Shum.

This free program will be presented as part of the Connecting With Community series at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a $3 suggested donation for adults over 60 or $7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 21 for the lunch menu.

For Laura’s bio, please see page 7.

For more on Jewish Federation programs, visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.

Jewish Community Comes Together for Shabbat Across the Berkshires, June 16

NORTH ADAMS - On Friday, June 16, at 6 p.m., Shabbat Across the Berkshires will bring together members of the Jewish community from throughout the county for a joyous, musical, and family-friendly Kabbalat Shabbat service hosted by Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires.

Join friends from across the Berkshire Jewish community as we come together for a Shabbat service, led by rabbis, spiritual leaders, and members of the Berkshire Jewish Musicians Collective. The service will be followed by a festive oneg.

Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires is at 53 Lois Street in North Adams.

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

Sponsored by:
- Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
- Berkshire Minyan
- Congregation Ahavath Sholom
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- Congregation Knesset Israel
- Hevreh of Southern Berkshire
- Temple Ahavah Amunim
- Berkshire Hills Hadassah

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Your Federation Presents

Jewish Community Day Kicked Off Federation’s Annual Campaign With Spirit

What a special Jewish Community Day we had at High Lawn Farm on May 21. Nearly 400 happy revelers showed up to celebrate our Jewish community and enjoy being together with old and new friends. Gathering together was the perfect way to celebrate Super Tzedakah Week and kick off Federation’s Annual Campaign 2023! Special thanks to Super Tzedakah Week chairs Lara and Jonathan Denmark. It’s summer in the Jewish Berkshires – check out the Jewish Summer Guide insert in this paper for all that’s going on. We hope to see much more of you!

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROL SMOKLER, KARA THORNTON, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS
Your Federation Presents

With gratitude to the volunteers, board members, staff and raffle donors who made Jewish Community Day possible!

OUR DEDICATED SUPER TZEDAKAH WEEK CHAIRS:
Jonathan and Lara Denmark

OUR EXTRAORDINARY VOLUNTEERS:
Susan Kopelowitz, Roger Matus, Ofer Kaufman, Wendy Robbins, Gail Lansky, Michele Tuvel, Jane and Howard Jacobs, Julie Quain, Alice Cande, Nance Levine-Ebert, Andy Ebert, Alexandra Warshaw, Ellen Heffan, Lisa Fletcher Udel, Carol Smokler, Kathryn Potts, Lonnie Solomon, Elie Katzman, Nancy Cook, Ken and Robin Baer, Bob Lezberg, Emma Lezberg, Kara Thornton, Dan Michaels, Mark Snowise, and Mark Usow.

OUR DEDICATED BOARD MEMBERS
Elisa Schindler Frankel, Natalie Matus, Richard Slutzky, Elisa Spungen Bildner, Judy Usow, Stephanie Ilberg-Lamm, Judith Cook, Gail Orenstein, Len Schiller, Rabbi Seth Wax, Arlene Schiff, Josh Cutler, Kathy Fraker, Michael Ury, Jane Glaser, Stuart and Ellen Masters, and Michael Wasserman

OUR GENEROUS RAFFLE DONORS:
CARR Hardware, The Clark, Concepts of Art, Barrington Outfitters, Norman Rockwell Museum, High Lawn Farm, Domaney’s Liquors and Fine Wines, Shakespeare & Company, and Barrington Stage Company

AND A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR AMAZING STAFF
Rabbi Daveen Litwin and Molly Meador, who planned this meaningful event, with support from Liz Irwin, Kathi Todd, Albert Stern, Jenny Greenfeld and Mark Cohn.
WHEN OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS US, WE ARE THERE

HELP US BE THERE! MAKE YOUR GIFT OR PLEDGE TODAY!

Your gift to the Jewish Federation’s 2023 Campaign will bring dignity and care to the vulnerable and elderly, build and strengthen the Jewish identity of our children and young adults, support vital community programs, and create meaningful Jewish life across the Berkshires and beyond.

JEWISH LIFE FOR YOUNG FAMILIES
You help young families in the Berkshires embrace Jewish values and traditions while building a supportive community with Jewish peers through family programming, PJ Library, and volunteer opportunities.

RESOURCES TO FIGHT ANTI-SEMITISM
You help young people stand up against hate through anti-bias education in our public schools. You also combat anti-Semitism and the BDS movement through community programming, national advocacy, and security resources.

DIGNITY & COMPASSION
You provide older adults and homebound individuals with nutritious meals and stimulating programming served up with a side of companionship and compassion through our Connecting with Community program and Kosher Meals on Wheels.

JEWISH EDUCATION & VALUES
You nurture a strong Jewish future by providing a high-quality, meaningful and affordable Jewish education for hundreds of children through critical grants to all of our local Jewish religious schools.

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY
You strengthen, sustain, and connect our community through hundreds of educational programs, holiday celebrations, and the Berkshire Jewish Voice, which bring people together and engage them in meaningful Jewish life.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS & ADVOCACY
You help provide a proactive voice in our community, public schools, media, and government, addressing anti-Semitism, social justice, Israel, and other issues important to our community.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT & EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE
You help individuals facing unexpected challenges and life transitions receive the support they need through the Federation’s social worker. You also provide a safety net of emergency assistance due to COVID-19.

A STRONG JEWISH IDENTITY
You help young people across the Berkshires and at UMASS Hillel build strong Jewish identities and become future leaders through scholarships for Jewish camp and Israel experiences, as well as leadership development and holiday meals on campus.

A SAFE PLACE TO CALL HOME
You help tens of thousands of new immigrants, who are fleeing anti-Semitism in Europe and the war in the Ukraine, build better lives for themselves and their families in Israel through job training and support services that ease their transition.

FOOD SECURITY, HEALTHCARE, & WINTER RELIEF
The war in Ukraine and safe resettlement of Jews fleeing the region has been long and difficult but you help the most vulnerable with shelter, transportation, blankets, and heaters. You also bring food, home health aides, and medicine to those in need.

A CLOSE & CARING RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL
You help connect the Berkshire Jewish Community with Israel and you also help provide programs for at-risk students, shelter for abused women, and support services for disabled youth.

CARRYING IN TIMES OF CRISIS
When crisis hits, in the Berkshires or around the world, you help mobilize local resources to respond with immediate relief and longer-term recovery. From support through COVID-19 to the crisis in Ukraine, you help deliver an SOS response.

Donate online at jewishberkshires.org Thank you for making a difference!
Let's Discuss My So-Called Selfish Life

PITTSFIELD - In her documentary My So-Called Selfish Life, filmmaker Therese Schecter challenges the social taboo of a childless life and the expectation that female identity is equated with motherhood. Schecter places this decision firmly in the context of the larger conversation about reproductive choice.

This film will be screened beginning in June and Rabbi Pamela Wax will convene a follow-up conversation and text study of both secular and Jewish sources at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, on Monday, June 19 at 6:30 p.m.

This session will be hybrid. All are welcome. After you register, you will receive instructions on how to stream the film.

Find out more and register at knessetisrael.org/event/lets-discuss-my-so-called-selfish-life.html.

Judaism Disrupted, Book Talk at Knesset Israel with Rabbi Michael Strassfeld

PITTSFIELD - Fifty years after the publication of The Jewish Catalog, a best-selling and groundbreaking DIY guide to Judaism that he co-wrote, Rabbi Michael Strassfeld has written Judaism Disrupted: A Spiritual Manifesto for the 21st Century.

He will be the guest speaker in conversation with Rabbi Pamela Wax following Shabbat morning services at Knesset Israel on Saturday, July 15, and reflect on the 50 years of American Jewish life. While The Jewish Catalog was focused on how to build a Jewish life, this latest book answers the question: Why build a Jewish life?

As Jews increasingly feel alienated from the rituals and practices of Judaism, Strassfeld believes that Judaism "should be offering wisdom and practices to help us take the most precious gift we have been given—our life—and live it with meaning and purpose.” The book sets out 11 core principles that can serve as a guide for life's journey. These principles offer ways for cultivating qualities such as courage and creativity, including commitment to social justice and to this planet.

In addition to The Jewish Catalog, Rabbi Strassfeld has written The Jewish Holidays and A Book of Life: Embracing Judaism as a Spiritual Practice, in addition to co-authoring A Night of Questions: A Passover Haggadah with Rabbi Jodie Gordon. As a rabbinic scholar, he has been a rich resource for Jews in search of a contemporary Judaism as he co-founded the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

Join Rabbi Strassfeld for this discussion and conversation.

Holy Rollers!

GREAT BARRINGTON – On the Sundays of June 11, July 9, and August 13 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., join with the Hevreh community for a casual 15 to 25 mile bike ride through the beautiful Berkshire Hills.

Each Holy Rollers ride is a chance to meet others from our community, get some exercise, and enjoy the great weather. Rain or shine, we will ride through the beautiful Berkshire Hills.

Contact the Hevreh office (413-528-6378) or visit hevreh.org/summer for more information.

How to Repent and Why

A July Lunch n’ Learn with Rabbi Neil Hirsch and Other Learning Opportunities at Hevreh

GREAT BARRINGTON – On the Wednesdays of July 5, 12, 19, and 26 from 11:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., join Rabbi Neil Hirsch of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire for a lunch and learn seminars on “How to Repent and Why.”

Write Rabbi Hirsch:

T’shuvah, understood as repentance, is often discussed but little understood. The traditional Jewish texts on the matter keep things up in the rafters, when for each of us, the concerns about t’shuvah are fiercely personal. After all, who among us would say that we have never the beautiful scenes in which we inhabit.

“...alone I cannot lift my voice in song—then you come near and sing with me. Our prayers fuse, and a new voice soars. Our bond is beyond voice and words, a voice that is an awakening of the whole community.”

In addition to his weekly learning opportunities at Hevreh High Holy Day Choir, Rabbi Mark S. Cohen will address different prompts, begin the process of t’shuvah, and use classic Jewish texts, as well as explore specific understandings of t’shuvah from thinkers like Maimonides and use contemporary interpretations to explore how one actually performs t’shuvah.

Join the Hevreh community for this unique series of opportunities to explore t’shuvah. This month’s lunch n’ learn will begin on July 13 and continue through September.

How to Repent and Why

Join Rabbi Neil Hirsch for a July Lunch n’ Learn and our first opportunity to speak with Rabbi Cohen about t’shuvah.

Enriching Our Daily Practice with Rabbi Neil Hirsch

On Mondays, 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. on Zoom from June 20 to August 22, join Rabbi Neil Hirsch for a July Lunch n’ Learn and our first opportunity to speak with Rabbi Cohen about t’shuvah.

Enriching Our Daily Practice

Rabbi Hirsch will lead two follow-up discussions of the book at Knesset Israel. One will take place on Monday, July 30 at 10 a.m. on gender, gender and gender confusion, and a steep section. We will convene following Shabbat services and kiddush lunch on Saturday, August 26.

Feel free to attend either or both conversations.

Rabbin’ with the Rav

Get out your hiking boots and bug spray! This summer, Rabbi David Weinier of Knesset Israel will be sharing his love of the outdoors with us all.

Join him as he leads a friendly group of other outdoor enthusiasts for walking, scemoozing, beautiful views, and maybe a little Torah among the trees. All programs are free, but registration is required at knessetisrael.org/RWPV.

Azaleas in Pittsfield State Forest on Sunday, June 4

If the timing is right, the azaleas will be blooming in Pittsfield State Forest. This will be a moderate 2.5 to 3 hour hike, covering about 5.2 miles, with a steady, but manageable, 935’ climb alongside Lulu Brook, then up the park loop road to the State Forest’s treasure, a grove of wild azaleas. After enjoying the steady, but manageable, 935’ climb alongside Lulu Brook, then up the park loop road to the State Forest’s treasure, a grove of wild azaleas. After enjoying the

Join Rabbi Strassfeld for this discussion and conversation.

A Legacy of Values: Writing Your Ethical Will

PITTSFIELD - What do the biblical Jacob, Nachmanides, Gluckel of Hameln, Sholem Aleichem, and Dr. Andrew Weil all have in common? They each left ethical wills for their descendants.

In this class, you will learn the history of ethical wills, read some classic and contemporary examples, and through different prompts, begin to write your own.

Rabbi Pamela Wax on three Mondays, June 12, 19, and 26 from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. for this hybrid class at Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road. To register: knessetisrael.org/event/ethical-wills.html.

How to Repent and Why

Join Rabbi Neil Hirsch for a July Lunch n’ Learn and our first opportunity to speak with Rabbi Cohen about t’shuvah.

Enriching Our Daily Practice

Rabbi Hirsch will lead two follow-up discussions of the book at Knesset Israel. One will take place on Monday, July 30 at 10 a.m. on gender, gender and gender confusion, and a steep section. We will convene following Shabbat services and kiddush lunch on Saturday, August 26.

Feel free to attend either or both conversations.

Rabbin’ with the Rav

Get out your hiking boots and bug spray! This summer, Rabbi David Weinier of Knesset Israel will be sharing his love of the outdoors with us all.

Join him as he leads a friendly group of other outdoor enthusiasts for walking, scemoozing, beautiful views, and maybe a little Torah among the trees. All programs are free, but registration is required at knessetisrael.org/RWPV.

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Chabad to Host
WSJ Journalist
Gregory Zuckerman on July 15

LENOX – On Saturday, July 15, Chabad of the Berkshires will host award-winning journalist Gregory Zuckerman. All are invited to this lunch and learn following Shabbat services on the back porch of the Lenox Community Center, 65 Walker Street. Gregory Zuckerman is a special writer at The Wall Street Journal. He’s an investigative reporter and a 27-year veteran of the paper who writes about business and investing topics, and is a three-time winner of the Gerald Loeb Award—the highest honor in business journalism. Zuckerman wrote the “Heard on the Street” column and covered hedge funds, private equity, and the credit markets for the paper.

Enjoy an intriguing afternoon engaging in Zuckerman’s behind-the-scenes tales about The Wall Street Journal: stories about meeting Donald Trump, grilling Bernie Madoff, adjusting to dramatic changes in the media world, and getting home in time for Shabbat. Services begin at 10 a.m. and conclude at approximately noon. RSVP to this event by calling (413) 499-9899 or emailing jewishberkshires@gmail.com or via the website jewisberkshires.com. Chabad of the Berkshires is located at 450 South Street in Pittsfield.

Summer Shabbats with Temple Anshe Amunim
Kabbalat Shabbat, Hikes, Study, and Tanglewood Havdalah
PITTSFIELD – Temple Anshe Amunim is a Reform Jewish Congregation that promotes engaging and widespread participation in services, education, and cultural and social action programs.

Kabbalat Shabbat
Join TAA at 5:30 p.m. every Friday night for Shabbat services. All are welcome to join in person or via zoom. Please reach out to the Temple office for the link to Zoom.

Torah Study
At 9:30 a.m. every Saturday, TAA hosts 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.

Shabbat Hikes
Join Temple Anshe Amunim for Shabbat hikes all summer long. On June 17, visit Canoe Meadows in Pittsfield. On July 1, explore the Appalachian Trail beginning at Kirkner Road in Dalton. For each hike, please meet at the Temple at 10:45 a.m. Most hikes are accessible for all levels. Pre-registration is required; call the Temple office at (413) 442-5910 to register.

Tanglewood Havdalah
LENIX - Pack your picnic gear, dinner, and beverages and join TAA on the lawn at Tanglewood on Saturday, July 17 at 7 p.m. for a brief Havdalah service, followed by a 900 concert at 8 p.m. Look for the blue and white balloons! A ticket to the concert may be purchased at the gate or in advance online. No pre-registration is required.

The Temple, located at 26 Broad Street in Pittsfield is an accessible building. For more information, contact the Temple Anshe Amunim office at (413) 442-5910 or email our Temple email address at taa@ansheamunim.org or visit www.ansheamunim.org.

LOCAL NEWS

Enjoy Summer Challah-Day with Chabad – Plus a Weekly Torah & Tea Gathering
PITTSFIELD – Join Chabad of the Berkshires’ co-director Sara Volovik for instructive sessions on how to prepare two baked staples that often bookend a festive Jewish meal – challah and babka.

On Thursday, June 22 at 1 p.m., Sara promises “an afternoon of unity and inspiration as we learn the feminine art of challah making.” Participants will knead and braid challah dough that they can take home and bake for Shabbat dinner.

Sara will conduct a challah babka bake, sharing baking tips and tricks while experimenting with new flavors and techniques. Suggested donation: $36.

“Torah and Tea for Contemporary Women”
Women are invited to join Sara Volovik for “afternoons of inspiration and camaraderie to nourish mind, body, and soul.” Enjoy an outdoor summer lunch while learning insightful and practical Kabbalistic gleanings from the weekly Torah portion. Wednesdays, June 14 and June 28 and July 12 and July 26.

Chabad at The Lenox
Farmers Market
On the Fridays of July 7 and July 21, Chabad will be selling homemade challah, mandelbreads, knishes, pastries, and more at the Friday farmers market at 80 Church Street in downtown Lenox. Visit their table from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. RSVP to these events by calling (413) 499-9899 or emailing jewishberkshires@gmail.com or via the website jewisberkshires.com. Chabad of the Berkshires is located at 450 South Street in Pittsfield.

Spiritual Uplift Outdoors and Indoors with Chabad
Plus an Independence Day barbecue
LENIX & PITTSFIELD – On Tuesday, July 4 at 2 p.m., Chabad of the Berkshires co-director Rabbi Levi Volovik on “an exploratory nature hike with meaningful moments of spiritual connection” at Kennedy Park. All are invited regardless of background or affiliation.

The hike will be followed by an Independence Day barbecue at Chabad of the Berkshires at 450 South Street in Pittsfield. This event begins at 4 p.m.

Enjoy the hike, the BBQ, or both of these free events. RSVP by calling (413) 499-9899 or emailing jewishberkshires@gmail.com.

Ongoing Talmud Study
PITTSFIELD – On consecutive Wednesdays starting June 21 and continuing through July 19, join Rabbi Volovik for what he promises will be “an intriguing Talmud class. It will give you the opportunity to feel like you are in Yeshiva for one hour a week.”

Classes are conducted in English at the Chabad House in Pittsfield. No previous experience is necessary. Reservations appreciated.

Enjoy a B.L.T. (Bagels, Lox, and Tefillin) at Chabad of the Berkshires
PITTSFIELD – Sundays at 9 a.m. on July 2, 9, and 16, join Chabad of the Berkshires for a power breakfast to nourish body and soul. Wrap Tefillin, recite a prayer. And then enjoy bagels, lox, and cream cheese with freshly brewed coffee and a little time to schmooze.

No prior experience necessary. Chabad of the Berkshires is at 450 South Street in Pittsfield.

WE’RE HIRING!
Food Service Director for Kosher Lunch Program (part-time)
Jewish Federation of the Berkshires seeks a part-time Food Services Director to run the daily operations of our kosher lunch and kosher meals on wheels program in a welcoming environment that meets the nutritional needs of the Jewish older adult population.

The Food Service Director develops, plans, coordinates, and executes the preparation of 20–40 kosher meals, three days a week for most of the year and two days a week during the summer. Full training on kosher dietary laws and ongoing support for compliance is provided.

25-28 hours a week. This position offers an opportunity to work with caring individuals who share a commitment to helping those in need and strengthening the Jewish community.

For a full job description visit jewishberkshires.org/news-announcements/kosher-service-director
**LOCAL NEWS**

**Scholar-in-Residence Ruth Messinger**

A local collaboration to host the noted social justice advocate county-wide on August 18-20

Through a collaboration of congregations and institutions throughout Berkshire County, Ruth Messinger will serve as scholar-in-residence on the weekend of August 18 to 20, speaking at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire in Great Barrington on Friday evening, at Pittsfield’s Knesset Israel on Saturday morning, and at Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires in North Adams on Sunday morning.

This scholar-in-residence program has been generously co-sponsored by Knesset Israel, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire in Pittsfield beginning on Sunday morning at 11:30 a.m., and the Berkshire Jewish Voice.

Ruth Messinger will conclude her Berkshire residency at Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams, speaking on the topic of “Our Democracy: If We Can’t Keep It.” Light refreshments will be served. Pre-registration is required at cbiberkshires.com/event/ruthmessinger/.

The beautiful outdoor labyrinth at CBi will be available for private walking meditation prior to Ruth Messinger’s talk. Immediately following Sunday’s program, a guided walking meditation through the labyrinth will be facilitated by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat and/or Rabbi Pam Wax. This will be a special opportunity to integrate Messinger’s message of “walking the talk.”

For further information about each individual program, contact the host congregation. For general information about the weekend, you may contact Rabbi Pamela Wax at pwax@cbiberkshires.com.

**Summer Shabbat Services and More at Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires**

NORTH ADAMS - With summer now upon us, Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires keeps on celebrating Shabbat with friendly, welcoming services.

Shabbat Services

Saturday morning services are scheduled on June 10, June 24, July 1, and July 8 at 9:30 a.m. Join CBi on Shabbat morning to celebrate Shabbat with prayer, song, and poetry. You will hear some words of Torah (and some words about Torah) as all present bask in Shabbat’s sweetness. All CBi Shabbat services bring a unique style to the bimah and the CBi choir provides beautiful harmonies. Please use the CBi calendar to RSVP for all services and events – cbiberkshires.com/calendar-of-events/. Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires is at 53 Lois Street in North Adams.

**Young Family Fun at Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires**

NORTH ADAMS - Families with young children can experience the beauty of Shabbat services at Congregation Beth Israel’s Young Families Program.

Kids’ Art at MASS MoCA on Sunday, June 5 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Meet up with Cory Buckwalter, CBi member, artist, and art educator, in the lobby at 1040 Mass MoCA in North Adams. Visit KidSpace — a child-centered art gallery and hands-on studio. Make art together, then explore the SaLeWiT gallery with Cory. Families must register by Monday, June 3.

Admission to KidSpace is always free but there is a fee for other parts of the museum. CBi will cover the cost of the first tickets for the first 25 children to register; adults will need to purchase their own tickets at the applicable rate: $8.18 if 10 or more attend and $29 if fewer than 10. RSVP to cbiberkshires.com/event/kids-art-at-mass-moca/.

Potluck Shabbats By the Pool on Friday, June 9 and Friday, July 21 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at a private home in North Bennington, VT

Sip wine, eat, play, and sing. There’s no better way to celebrate Shabbat in the summer than with friends, good food, and song. RSVP to Rabbi Jarah Greenfield at rjabgreenfield@gmail.com for exact location.

CBi’s family programs are sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. See all the scheduled family programs at cbiberkshires.com; upcoming family-events/. Masks are required indoors.

**Jewish Theological Seminary in the Berkshires Returns for Another Summer Season**

LENOX - The Jewish Theological Seminary has served as the intellectual and spiritual center of Conservative Judaism for 130 years, training outstanding leaders and strengthening Jewish life in North America. Join Knesset Israel and Jewish Theological Seminary in the Berkshires this summer for lively and thought-provoking lectures and conversations with three leading thinkers from the Jewish world.

All events take place on Friday mornings, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre at Shakespeare and Company, 70 Kemble Street in Lenox.

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged. Tickets for each lecture are $15. Please pre-register at https://inspired.jtsa.edu/Berkshires2023 to avoid lines at the door.

For more information, contact Lynett Petman at (212) 678-8821 or lpetman@jtsa.edu.

Session I: Friday, July 7: “Revisiting Zionism: Thought Charting a Path Forward,” with Dr. Arnold M. Eisen, Chancellor Emeritus and Professor of Jewish Thought, JTS

Session II: Friday, July 21: “In the Narrow Places: Jeremiah and His Artistic Interpreters,” with Rabbi Gordon Tucker, Vice Chancellor for Religious Life and Engagement, JTS

The date might be the one in the Jewish calendar, the thread leading up to the High Holy Days, is referred to as the hometzon (the narrow road).

Marking the final weekend of this period, we will explore some evocative passages in the Book of Jeremiah and in the Book of Lamentations, traditionally attributed to the prophet. We will also reflect on how Jeremiah’s later interpreters in midrash, visual art, and music (including Leonard Bernstein) continued to find meaning in these texts.

Rabbi Gordon Tucker is the author of scores of articles on Jewish thought and law. An anthology of his writings was published under the title Torah for its Intended Purpose. He has also published Heaney Torah, a translation and commentary on Abraham Joshua Heschel’s three-volume work on rabbinic theology, as well as a commentary on Pirkei Avot. Rabbi Tucker is senior rabbinic scholar of Temple Israel Center in White Plains, NY, and a senior fellow at the Hartman Institute of North America. He previously served as assistant professor of Jewish Thought and Ethics at the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago and as dean of The Rabbinical School at JTS.

Session III: Friday, August 4: “Law in Context: Uncovering the Mother’s Perspective in Traditional Sources on Abortion,” with Dr. Shira Billet, Assistant Professor of Jewish Thought and Ethics, JTS

Can a closer look at Jewish sources move us beyond the entrenched simichet or pro-life/pro-choice binary of American public discourse today? This session examines traditional sources that have played a central role in constructing Jewish perspectives on abortion.

Participants will explore the complex interplay between the legal aspects of these sources and the stories from women’s lives in which they are embraced to uncover a complex and nuanced Jewish perspective on abortion.

Dr. Shira Billet’s research is focused on 19th-century and early 20th-century German Jewish philosophy, both in history, and its relevance today, in relation to contemporary conversations in philosophical ethics. Her current book manuscript focuses on the themes of courage, truthfulness, intellectual humility, and fidelity as public virtues – as virtues of citizenship in the public square, and of individuals in relation to communities.

Presented in partnership with Knesset Israel and in cooperation with Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. Supported in part by Vaynman Foundation, Trees of Life, Alan L. Hyman, MD; Brenda and Fred Landes, MD in memory of Harold Landes, and an anonymous donor from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.
Volatility Matters

Did you know that if your volatility is too high or if your portfolio risk is too low, then there is a chance of achieving your long-term goals goes down? Controlling your portfolio’s volatility is one of the key tasks for your investment manager.

At Renaissance, we can help you achieve the right portfolio balance to meet your unique goals and tolerance to risk.

Did you know that if your volatility is too high or if your portfolio risk is too low, then your chance of achieving your long-term goals goes down? Controlling your portfolio’s volatility is too low, then your chance of achieving your long-term goals goes down? Controlling your portfolio’s volatility is one of the key tasks for your investment manager.

At Renaissance, we can help you achieve the right portfolio balance to meet your unique goals and tolerance to risk.

And our senior leaders are always available to explain the balance to meet your unique goals and tolerance to risk.

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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 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 note: Starting in June and continuing through the summer months, lunch will not be prepared on Tuesdays. Tuesday lunches will resume in the autumn.

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

The menus listed below are planned, but may be modified depending on availability of ingredients. When making a reservation, please inform us if a person in your party has a food allergy. Adults 60 and over:

$3 suggested donation. Adults under 60: $7 per person.

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

What’s for Lunch?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JUNE</th>
<th>JULY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MONDAY, 5........... Meat loaf, gazpacho, French fries, green beans, whole wheat bread, and tea biscuits.</td>
<td>MONDAY, 3........... Hot dogs &amp; hamburgers**#, potato chips, coleslaw, pickles, vegetarian beans, hot dog or hamburger roll, and watermelon.</td>
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<tr>
<td>THURSDAY, 8........ Maudeh (Sephardic chicken &amp; potatoes)**, salad, crusty white bread, and parve rice pudding.</td>
<td>THURSDAY, 6........ Greek salad platters**+, hummus, pita bread, and apricots.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MONDAY, 12.......... Stir fried chicken, rice, Oriental blend vegetables, pumpernickel bread, and pineapple.</td>
<td>MONDAY, 10......... Meat loaf**+, tomato juice, mashed potatoes, peas, rye bread, and applesauce.</td>
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<tr>
<td>THURSDAY, 15........ Fresh fish**, noodle kugel, broccoli, challah, and pudding.</td>
<td>THURSDAY, 13........ Fresh fish**, pineapple juice, French fries, salad, green beans, muffins, and grapes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>THURSDAY, 22........ Tuna salad &amp; cottage cheese platters**, three bean salad, farmer’s loaf, and cookies.</td>
<td>THURSDAY, 20........ Fishsticks#, sweet potato fries, roasted cauliflower &amp; broccoli, salad, farmer’s loaf, and pudding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MONDAY, 26.......... Roasted chicken in red pepper sauce (ajvar)**#, rice pilaf, mixed vegetables, seedless rye bread, and grapes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>THURSDAY, 29........ Falafel#, mango juice, stuffed grape leaves, tahini sauce, mini Greek salad, pita bread, and baklava.</td>
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PLEASE NOTE: 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.
Care for a Lifetime
The health and wellbeing of you and your family—at all ages and stages—is at the heart of CHP.

Our multiple locations and mobile health clinics make getting the care you need easy. From medical and dental to behavioral health, physical therapy, and nutrition services, we have you covered. Visit chpberkshires.org for more information.

Reflections from Jerusalem

This past spring, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire’s post-B’nai Mitzvah Family trip to Israel spent 10 days exploring Israel, with a special visit to Afula-Gilboa, our Jewish Federation Partnership2Gether region. These students were fortunate to be supported by the generosity of Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. Here, one of the student travelers shares reflections from a day in Jerusalem.

By Sadie Honig-Briggs

Today was one of those days where you find yourself out of your body. You feel like you’re looking at the moment from a viewpoint above. See: the first days of summer, walking down the street when everything is green and full of warmth and light. Watching the people you love laugh together. Reading the news and wondering how it’s possible that we’ve come so far but somehow can’t help but move backward at the same time.

Today was one of those days, and even after the fact I am still thinking about it, now fully inside my body and my head.

We started off at Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust museum. I knew going into it that it was going to be intense. I’ve been learning about this mass genocide since I was ten years old, but I don’t think I fully understood the atrocities until going to this museum. The experience of winding your way down a vast triangular hall, each room taking you through another stage of what slowly became the brutal murder of 6 million people, is indescribable. You feel your body seizing more and more each time you see a new picture, a new first-hand account. You clench your hands tighter and tighter with every baby doll, every toy you pass, knowing that a real child held it in their arms as they got on a packed train. When you look down the hallway you can see the beginning of the museum: a video of Jewish life pre-World War II. If you turn around and face the end of the building, you see the view of Jerusalem through the window; an ending that represents the future, still holding everything we and our people have lost.

I found myself trying to make sense of it all. There’s no rationalizing what was done to the Jewish people and countless other people, so I tried to put myself in their shoes. I imagined what I could have done, what I would have tried to do to survive. I thought about what it would have felt like to wear that star, to be on one of those trains, to be standing on the edge of one of those pits. It’s too much to imagine, it makes me feel sick, but then I remember that real people lived through, or didn’t live through those things. It’s terrifying.

Despite that, I think it’s so important to learn about and to experience in that way. I now feel more connected to the history of a community that I have the privilege to call mine. Being there made me deeply realize that I want to carry on the traditions and values of Judaism not only because I love them, but also because of the people who were silenced too soon – because it was important to them, it’s important to me.

This idea of our culture and traditions being so important, the fact that they can connect us to our past came full circle tonight. Shabbat arrived and the city went quiet, families gathering around their tables to celebrate. We made our way to the local Reform synagogue and we joined in their service. I didn’t know the tune to most of the songs, nor the people, nor the language at times, but I knew the feeling. The feeling of singing together, of listening to toddlers play in the back of the room. The feeling of standing as a community, as one people who love and care for one another, even if they’ve never met before. And later that night when we sat down to eat with Rabbi Jodie Gordon’s family, I knew the feeling of being welcomed into someone’s home, of smiling and laughing and eating together.

This is why we take this trip, why we make this pilgrimage. It is so we can have these out-of-body experiences, whether they are caused by shock and horror and heavy history, or by joy and hope and found family. It is so we can learn knowing why we came: to learn more about ourselves, about where we came from, and about where we’re going.
TRAVELING WITH JEWISH TASTE

Open Sesame
By Carol Goodman Kaufman

Many Sunday mornings throughout my childhood, my dad would pick me up from Hebrew School and head toward Sam Mandell’s deli on Columbus Avenue. While he shopped for pastrami and rolled beef, I would gaze at the counter top, on which sat boxes adorned with the image of a mustached and turbaned man. And every once in a while, if my prayers were answered, he (my dad, not the man) would buy me a bar of said man’s halvah.

Of course, Joyva still uses the man with the turban as its logo, but I no longer dream about halvah. Unless, of course, it is the variety of the candy found at Mamlechet Halvah (Halvah Kingdom), one of the dozens of food stalls found in the Mahaneh Yehudah market in Jerusalem — and I’m sure of it when I see other open-air markets. In fact, the “king” has several stalls tucked in among the market’s many alleys. His offerings are true ambrosia. And “variety” is the operative word.

I don’t have any data on how much sesame we Americans consume, but I know Americans probably eat 50,000 tons of the seeds every year. That’s a whopping eleven plus pounds a year. And most of that is in the form of tahina. The Mizrahi branch of our Jewish extended family had been using sesame seeds for thousands of years throughout the Middle East and Africa before the establishment of the modern State of Israel. But after the Declaration of Independence, many Arab countries expelled their Jews, and between the years 1948 and 1951, over a quarter of a million came to Israel. They brought their cusine with them, and sesame seeds were part and parcel to many of their dishes. Here in the States, the seeds are used mainly to flavor and garnish various foods, such as our beloved bagel.

Jews also have used sesame oil for non-culinary purposes. In fact, the Mishnah even has a discussion about whether or not sesame oil is suitable for kindling Shabbat lights. The late Gil Marks writes, “Talmud explained, ‘What would Meir have done if only olive oil was permitted for the Sabbath lights’ who have nothing but sesame oil?” Apparently, olive oil was not readily available to the captives by the rivers of Babylon.

Elsewhere in the Diaspora, Indians called their Jewish neighbors Shanwar Teli (Saturday oilmen) because they made their living by preparing and selling sesame seeds for thousands of years throughout India. Our extended family had been using sesame seeds for many years. Great for propagation. Not so much for gathering and selling sesame oil. The sobriquet came from the fact that the Jews refrained from working on Shabbat.

Experts disagree on the exact origins of the sesame plant, but it likely originated in Asia or East Africa. Documentary evidence supports both claims. Ancient Egyptians are reported to have used the ground seed as a flour. But it was widely used in Asia as well. At least one early Hindu legend claims that sesame seeds are blessed by the god Yama and therefore represent immortality.

The Chinese have employed the seeds for at least 5,000 years, and not just for food. They have burned the seed’s oil and used the resulting soot to prepare the highest quality ink. The substance is variously known as India ink and Chinese ink, adding to the confusion regarding the seed’s origin.

Much further west, the Romans ground their sesame seeds with the spice cumin to make a spread. “Sesame boasts two special features: 1) the oil is stable enough to resist rancidity; and 2) the seed itself is high in protein, thiamin, and Vitamin B6. But it’s the wonderfully nutty aroma and taste that makes it think of heaven on Earth.

If you’ve ever read “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” from Tules of the Arabian Nights, you’ll know that, at least in one version, sesame seeds were once thought to have magical power enough to open a cave holding magic treasure, as in “Open Sesame [not Popeye’s “Open Sez Me!”] However, it turns out that this phrase only appears in Antoine Galland’s 18th century French translation of the Tales. My sources tell me that no earlier Arabic reference to “open sesame” can be found anywhere.

However there’s always a “however”, the fact remains that farmers may indeed have developed an incaution of sorts around the time of the sesame harvest. According to agricultural sources, timing is everything when it comes to harvesting the plant. If one waits too long, the pods can burst open and scatter the seeds widely. Great for propagation. Not so much for gathering and selling. But reap too early and the flavor of the seed, and its oil, will be blah.

So, “open sesame” may be what farmers chant when they hope to catch the seeds!

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 illustrations 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.

INGREDIENTS:
1 large butternut squash, cut into 3/4 by 1/2 inch wedges
2 red onions, cut into 1 1/4 inch pieces
3/4 tablespoons olive oil
4 tablespoons light tahini paste
1 1/2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons water
1 small clove garlic, crushed
4 tablespoons pine nuts
1 tablespoon za’atar
1 tablespoon coarsely chopped parsley
Maldon sea salt
Freshly ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS:
Heat the oven to 425 degrees. Cut the squash and onions in a large bowl, add the oil, a teaspoon of salt and some black pepper, and toss well.
Spread, skin down, on a baking sheet and roast for 40 minutes until the vegetables have taken on some color and are cooked through. Keep an eye on the onions: they may cook faster than the squash, so you need to be ready to remove them. Remove from the oven and leave to cool.
Put the tahini in a small bowl with the lemon juice, water, garlic and a quarter-teaspoon of salt. Whisk to the consistency of honey, adding more water or tahini as necessary. Pour the remaining oil into a small frying pan on a medium-low heat.
Add the pine nuts and half a teaspoon of salt, cook for two minutes, stirring (watching carefully!), until the nuts are golden brown, then tip the nuts and oil into a small bowl.
To serve, spread the vegetables on a platter and drizzle the sauce over all. Scatter the pine nuts and oil on top, followed by the za’atar.

Roasted butternut squash and red onion with tahini and za’atar

Adapted from one by Yotam Ottolenghi
Serves 4
Berkshire Jewish Film Festival Returns with In-Person Screenings

LENNOX – After three years in a virtual format, the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival (BJFF) will once again be presented in person this summer in the Duffin Theater at Lenox Memorial Middle and High School, 197 East Street in Lenox.

The series starts on July 10 and continues every Monday through August 7. Films will be shown on Mondays at 4 p.m. All presentations are open to the public. Tickets are $8.50 per person. All seating is general admission. Single tickets are only available on the day of the show.

Season passes are available at knessetisrael.org/filmfestival. For information on filmmaker talkbacks and other related events, please visit the BJFF web page at berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org.

Organized by Knesset Israel, the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival is generously supported by MountainOne, Greylock Federal Credit Union, Berkshire Bank, Jesse & Bernard Wolfson Family Foundation, Harold Grinspoon Foundation, John Bergman Charitable Fund, Marcia & Albert Schmier, and Spitz-Tuchman Charitable Trust. Proceeds benefit the Hebrew School at Knesset Israel.

Information at berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org or (413) 445-4872, ext. 10.

BJFF Film Synopses 2023

July 10
4 p.m.
Our (Almost Completely True) Story
Making an unlikely couple, both Jerry Sroka’s and Mariette Hartley’s characters bond over the indignities of being out-of-work actors of a certain age, while navigating the seniors’ singles scene. A life-affirming dramedy that “sparks with wit and depth as it celebrates love and romance while reflecting on the challenges of growing older.”

8 p.m.
Four Winters
Against extraordinary odds, over 25,000 Jewish partisans fought back against the Nazis and their collaborators from deep within the forests of Eastern Europe, Ukraine, and Belarus. Along with stunning archival footage, the last surviving partisan tells their story, sharing their stories of resistance. Transformed from young innocents raised in closely knit Jewish communities and families to fierce partisan soldiers with enduring hope and grit, they exhibited magnificent courage and deep humanity. Local resident Michael Stoll, who is featured in the film, is scheduled to appear in person.

July 17
4 p.m.
The Museus of Isaac Bashevis Singer
In the mid-1960s, Isaac Bashevis Singer established an army of female translators — more than 40 women — who helped spread his work. He chose his translators carefully and was inspired by their presence, often falling in love with them. Nine of the women who were intimately familiar with the man and work are still here. Theirs will be the only voices heard in the film, as they allow us a glimpse into his complex personality and personal life.

8 p.m.
Reckonings
Reckonings is the first documentary feature to chronicle the harrowing process of negotiating German reparations for the Jewish People. It captures the anger on one side, the shame on the other, and the anguish for all as talks broke down and failure seemed imminent. By confronting the past, German and Jewish leaders charted a better future for desperate and traumatized people.

July 24
4 p.m.
Sleepwalking through marriage, an older couple beset with unspoken regret gets a much-needed spark with the arrival of Izzy (the effortlessly magnetic Lior Ashkenazi), a sexy, middle-aged hedonist who loves hosting karaoke parties in his posh penthouse.

July 31
4 p.m. - 2 short films
Grossman
David Grossman, one of Israel’s most notable authors, shares the rare and captivating connections between his life and his novels. The film follows the writer up close and takes the viewers on a personal journey into his life and work of an exceptional human being.

Castles in the Sky
Filmmaker and professor Pearl Gluck’s provocative dramatic short film centers on Malike, a Holocaust survivor and sex-ed teacher who has been leading a secret life for decades, performing slam poetry on the Lower East Side. Castles in the Sky features commanding performances from actor Lynn Cohen, who died in 2020, and poet Venus Thrash, who died in 2021.

8 p.m.
Where Life Begins
Each summer, Esther travels with her French Ultra-Orthodox family to a farm in Calabria to harvest etrog for Sukkot. Trapped by the suffocating rituals of her faith, the despairing and curious Esther captures the attention of the farm owner. Their brief encounters help Esther find her path. In this visually sumptuous and deeply moving film, there is a subtle portrayal of self-realization.

August 7
4 p.m.
Queen of The Deuce
Born in Salonika, Greece, Chelly Wilson came from a religious Sephardic family. At the start of World War II, leaving her family and children behind, she emigrated to America and built a business that ultimately turned a dark yet lucrative corner when she entered the world of pornographic film theaters located alongside the X-rated shops on 8th Avenue, known as The Deuce.

8 p.m.
March ’68
Hania and Janek are students in Warsaw in 1968. When the government’s persecution of Jews starts to gain strength, Janek, whose father is a government official, and Hania, who is Jewish and whose parents have lost their prominent jobs, join other university students protesting the government’s actions, changing their lives forever.

August 14
4 p.m.
The City Without Jews
H.K. Breslauer’s 1924 silent masterpiece is the tragicomic story of the fictional Austrian city of Utopia. The story follows the political and personal consequences of an antisemitic law forcing all Jews to leave the country. When the citizens of Utopia come to terms with the loss of the Jewish population and the resulting economic decline, they must decide whether to invite them back. The satirical events transformed into an all too-horrific reality. The silent film is accompanied by live original music composed by renowned klezmer violinist Alicia Svigals and silent film music legend pianist Donald Sosin.

8 p.m.
Farewell Mr. Haffmann
In this gripping wartime thriller probing issues of conscience and character, a French-Jewish jeweler is caught in a Faustian pact that will change the fate of all involved. When the Nazis occupy Paris, Joseph Haffmann (Daniel Auteuil) arranges for his family’s escape and hastily signs over his humble shop to trusted right-hand man François (Gilles Lellouche). As fortunes reverse, Haffmann is now at his employee-turned-collaborator’s mercy, trapped hiding in the basement to avoid deportation. Impeccable performances and unpredictable twists mark this superbly crafted morality tale based on an award-winning play by Jean-Philippe Daguerre.

Organized by Knesset Israel, the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival is generously supported by MountainOne, Greylock Federal Credit Union, Berkshire Bank, Jesse & Bernard Wolfson Family Foundation, Harold Grinspoon Foundation, John Bergman Charitable Fund, Marcia & Albert Schmier, and Spitz-Tuchman Charitable Trust. Proceeds benefit the Hebrew School at Knesset Israel. Information at berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org or (413) 445-4872, ext. 10.
Dear friends about the challenge around saying Kaddish for her father who wasn’t told them, hey, let’s get together. Let’s create some stuff and just see what comes with the arts.”

else and if possible, something that combined my study of Judaism and love of it

he adds. “I didn’t want to be a pulpit rabbi. I knew I wanted it to be something

smicha

studies, he became the first Black person to whom JTS conferred

Kolot Chayeinu, a congregation in Brooklyn he describes as “unaffiliated, what

be presented outside New York City. This performance will be presented

and the identity of being an artist and really foreground the arts, then suddenly people have something to galvanize and organize around.”

people who possess an artistic bent, Rabbi Pinkney also seems to be a born organizer. As he recounts the personal and professional development that led him to this point in his career, what becomes clear is that he possesses a talent for being able to recognize and then access the resources that might be available through established institutions to further his goals. His adeptness at being a born organizer. As he recounted the personal and professional development that

In New York, he says he began to “my first Kabbalat Shabbat when I was at Oberlin not really even knowing what to

earnest. I never can truly understand what it is when they ask me to faith in me what I think I have. At some point, it feels like it is

that a number of these pieces are going to have a life of their own beyond the year of the fellowship,” says Peri Smilow: “What that means is that we will have

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shidduch

This is part of the reason that Pinkney says she was involved behind the scenes “in making the shidduch” between The Workshop and key people in the Berkshires to make performance possible. She approached Amy Handelsman, managing director of Shakespeare & Company — and this is where the intersectional networks in which Rabbi Pinkney has participated began to pay dividends. Handelsman first met Pinkney through her own participation in LABA, where she was exploring her fascination with boxing (as a spectator and participant) through the lens of ‘War and Peace.’ Although the two were in different LABA cohorts, she had been a teacher at NYU Tisch while Pinkney was at JTS and, she says, she helped to talk Labas into flying in Rabbi Pinkney to participate in their fellowship that from happening, and Handelsman moved to the Berkshires to take the job at Shakespeare & Company. While here, she got involved with Hevreh, “Then, Peri, the artist-in-residence, said to me, ‘You really need to meet this guy who runs this workshop, called The Workshop.’ And I said, Kendell, So it all kind of came full circle.”

Looking for additional funding for the event, Handelsman approached Federation, which soon signed on as a partner in presenting the salon. “We have a large Jewish constituency and we’re also very involved in diversity work,” she says. “This will be wonderful for us as a theater in a kind of partnership, because we’ve worked with the Federation before and I wanted to work with Kendell, and the artists seemed really fascinating to me.”

Says Smilow: “Collaboration among nonprofits just doesn’t happen a lot, for understandable reasons. People don’t have a lot of money, and there are all kinds of reasons that folks tend to stay in their own neighborhood and do what they know. And what is unusual about this is that each of these entities is successful in their area of operation. Federation does a tremendous job of supporting all kinds of amazing Jewish life activities in the Berkshires. And what is unusual about this is that each of these entities is successful in their area of operation. Federation does a tremendous job of supporting all kinds of amazing Jewish life activities in the Berkshires. And...
Have you ever seen a place that was so...
CULTURE & ARTS

YIDSTOCK: The Festival of New Yiddish Music Returns

Performances by The Klezmatics, David Krakauer’s Mazel Tov Cocktail Party, and Frank London and the Yidstock All-Stars

AMHERST – The Yiddish Book Center announces the return of the annual YIDSTOCK. The Festival of New Yiddish Music from Thursday, July 13, to Sunday, July 16. The four-day festival features a diverse lineup of new performers and audience favorites and promises to be an unforgettable event for fans of Yiddish music and culture.

Tickets for YIDSTOCK: The Festival of New Yiddish Music, plus a full lineup of programs, are available at the Yiddish Book Center website, yiddishbookcenter.org.

YIDSTOCK Artistic Director Seth Rogovoy curated this year’s lineup, which includes favorites like Merlin Shepherd, Nigunim Trio, and Lorin Sklamberg alongside new performers, including Forshpil, Midwood, and Sam Sadigursky. In addition to the music performances, the festival includes workshops, talks, films, and conversations with the artists.

The 11th annual YIDSTOCK festival also introduces a new program called “Festival Artists-in-Residence.” This inaugural year features Eleanor Reissa and Socalled, who will make surprise appearances with other performers and lead short, casual sessions exploring their creative process.

“Last year we were able to regain our footing with a live festival after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Rogovoy. “This year, we are thrilled to be able to present three artists and groups making their YIDSTOCK debuts, as well as several international artists. We look forward to the magic and surprises that can only happen at a live event, which often provides a platform for spontaneous cross-pollination and jamming between performers.”

Concert Details

The Klezmatics, the Grammy Award-winning modern klezmer band, will kick off the festival on Thursday, July 13, at 8 p.m.

On Friday, July 14, at 2 p.m., Yidstock newcomer Sam Sadigursky will perform excerpts from “The Solomon Diaries,” his suite for duo, accompanied by accordionist/multi-instrumentalist Nathan Koci. Sam’s musical composition is inspired by photographer Marissa Scheinfeld’s visionary project, The Borscht Belt.

Rehearsals and the concert will be at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road in Great Barrington.

The festival will culminate with the YIDSTOCK All-Stars, led by Frank London, on Sunday, July 16, at 7 p.m. This once-in-a-lifetime grouping will perform a globally oriented program called “YIDSTOCK All-Stars: The Finale” that features klezmer and Yiddish talent including vocalist Eleanor Reissa, Montreal-based Josh Dolgin, aka Socalled, the de facto godfather of “klezmer hip hop,” clarinetist Jake Shimulman-Ment and Forshpil, an international group founded in 2003 in Riga, Latvia, and led by vocalist Sasha Lurje and keyboardist/arranger Ilya Shneyveys.

The Festival Artists-in-Residence, “Festival Artists-in-Residence,” this inaugural year features Eleanor Reissa and Socalled, who will make surprise appearances with other performers and lead short, casual sessions exploring their creative process.

Although The Workshop is just emerging as a platform for the work of JOCISM artists, it can take 5 or 10 or 15 years in order to see a full-blown product in the world. And so, our hope is to stick with our fellows through the duration of their careers and the duration of their creating these projects. And we also know that audiences are incredibly curious as to what we’ve been doing.” Join Federation and Shakespeare & Company on July 9 to find out.

THE WORKSHOP, continued from page 25

innovative work.

Says Rabbi Darren Litwin, Federation’s director of programming and community engagement, “We are excited to partner with Shakespeare & Company and The Workshop to explore ‘being Jewish’ beyond the traditional narrative associated with Judaism and to embrace broader, multi-racial, and multi-cultural perspectives.”

Although The Workshop is just emerging as a platform for the work of JOCISM artists of Color, Jewish indigenous, Sephardi & Mizrahi artists and culture-makers, Pinkney says he is in it for the long haul. For some of the fellows, artistically expressing their identities as people of color has often seemed easier than expressing themselves as Jews. The Workshop is an opportunity for these artists to explore their Jewishness in new and unexpected ways.

“The Workshop is built around providing an intensive fellowship, experience, and community for these fellows. I’ve figured from being an artistic director and from being an artist myself, it can take 5 or 10 or 15 years in order to see a full-blown product in the world. And so, our hope is to stick with our fellows through the duration of their careers and the duration of their creating these projects. And we also know that audiences are incredibly curious as to what we’ve been doing.”

The B'Shalom Chorale

GREAT HARRINGTON – B’Shalom Chorale, conducted by Jack Brown and accompanied by Joe Rose, begins nine weekly rehearsals, on Wednesday, June 7, from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The first concert will be on Wednesday evening, August 9.

The Chorale is open to people of all faiths, who have a pleasant singing voice and the ability to stay on pitch. Choral experience is preferred, as is a love of singing four-part music. The ability to read music is helpful, but not mandatory. Rehearsals and the concert will be at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road in Great Barrington.

Dues are $50. Please RSVP to the Chorale: (413) 418-1836 or email: bshalomchorale@gmail.com.

Sponsored in part by a grant from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

The B’Shalom Chorale is a tax-exempt non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

B’Shalom Chorale Seeks Singers for its Ninth Season

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Join Federation and Shakespeare & Company on July 9 to find out.
Alan Paul, Barrington Stage, and the New Production of Cabaret

By Linda Burghardt / Special to the BJV

Elie Weisel is known for saying, “In Jewish history there are no coincidences,” and the celebrated author, Holocaust survivor, and Nobel laureate certainly knew when he was talking about what it means to come through the Holocaust – the downright bashert – of Alan Paul and Barrington Stage Company.

Paul arrived in Berkshire County from Washington, D.C., toting bags packed with books, art, and musicals and a considerable talent for rejuvenating the classics, along with unique skills at mixing classical and popular culture into potent new blends of sound, scene, and sensibility. He gracefully took over as artistic director of Barrington Stage from its beloved director, Julienne Boyd, who retired at the end of the 2022 season after leading the company for 27 years.

“Barrington Stage Company is a major force in Berkshire County, a place that’s full of people who feel a strong sense of ownership of the arts scene here,” said the recently installed 38-year-old artistic director in an interview. “I wanted to make it part of it. I also want to help make it bigger.”

Barrington Stage is the fastest-growing arts venue in Berkshire County, with 60,000 patrons attending shows at the award-winning theater every year. Paul’s goal is to build on the theater company’s legacy as an incubator for new plays and musicals created from a wide range of perspectives. “Musicals are my first love,” he said, “and I plan to make the advancement of musical theater a cornerstone of my vision.”

In fact, Paul had worked with both acclaimed artists and young debut performers and set off the season with sets of new plays and musicals as well as those in the theatrical canon in his role as associate artistic director of the Tony Award-winning Shakespeare Theatre Company. Here, in Pittsfield, the concept of providing opportunities to give new voice in a variety of genres has long been enshrined in the artistic legacy of the BSC, and its talents have found a smooth fit, virtually an embrace.

“My productions are the same; even the chemistry is there. We admire the same plays, the same productions. It was clear right from the start that we’re a natural together,” Paul explained. “The theater where I worked in D.C. used to put on Cabaret. I directed the musical there, and it had a great box office record. I’m going to build on that success here.”

For Paul, the dynamic combination of past experience and new goals, particularly in his role as artistic director of a theater, which he says is a cornerstone of the community, will rise this summer to a new production of the legendary Cabaret, a content-rich musical that is likely to both delight and offend audiences in profound and subtle ways when it runs from June 14 to July 8 on the Boyd-Quinson stage.

It’s dark, it’s devastating; it’s drenched in debauchery and despair. Yet audiences can’t help but find moments of humor and beauty in a story about how a person can find happiness after surviving the Holocaust and how he found his freedom. “It’s a tightrope walk. It’s a very timely play,” Paul points out. “There’s plenty of cross-dressing and cross-gender experiences in today’s society.”

And thanks to the efforts of Paul, who will direct the show, this award-winning musical-masterwork about the Jazz Age in late 1920s Berlin will once again offer its carefree hedonism and tragic-comic depiction of between-the-wars culture and society.

“Cabaret may be about Europe in a particular time and place, but its themes and characters are universal,” Paul insist. “I grew up in a D.C. suburb in a big Jewish family. Each of my three siblings and I became a bar mitzvah,” Paul said, with warmth and feeling. Even then, with the city because of having family there, Paul said he plans to become an active member of the community here, as well. “The Berkshires are a magical place for theater, and I love all the facets of art and architecture that exist here in this very aesthetically-minded area.”

In addition to the art world, he plans to get involved in the Jewish community.

“I grew up in a D.C. suburb in a big Jewish family. Each of my three siblings and I became a bar mitzvah,” Paul said, with warmth and feeling. Even then, at the tender age of thirteen, he was interested in the theater. “My bar mitzvah party theme was Broadway,” he added. “Today, I couldn’t be happier that we’ll be putting on two shows this summer with Jewish themes.”

Opening the 2023 summer season on the St. Germain stage, and running from June 24 to June 17 will be the world premiere of a play called The Happiest Man on Earth, a one-man show about an Auschwitz survivor who grapples with how a person can find happiness after surviving the Holocaust and how he found his freedom. “It’s a heartfelt story about the war as well. The play is based on an actual memoir by Eddie Jaku, an author whose work pays tribute to those who were lost by telling their story.”

“My mother was very involved with survivor groups when I was growing up,” Paul explained, remarking about his childhood in Potomac, Maryland, a close-in suburb of Washington, D.C. “I developed a strong sensitivity to me. Judaism has always been a big part of my identity. And I feel strongly that this is a piece that speaks to the moment, to embodying the great fear of Holocaust survivors that what happened to them will be forgotten.”

And through artistic programming at the BSC, Paul hopes to keep these memories alive and, with some good planning and hard work, extend them to new groups of people. “We might not yet have the knowledge and familiarity with Jewish themes of this nature.”

“This summer will be the trifecta of Jewish entertainment,” Paul said, “with Cabaret and The Happiest Man on Earth and three nights of Mandy Patinkin, arguably the most significant Jewish Broadway performer of our time.”

The BSC will offer seven other productions this season, each unique, including a play about the Harlem Renaissance called Blues for an Alabama Sky about which Paul says thoughtfully, “We will all identify; we will all be able to see ourselves in each other’s stories.” It is scheduled to run from July 8 to August 5 on the Boyd-Quinson stage.

Paul sees his role as artistic director of such a vital organization in the Berkshires as the BSC as having components that transcend directing plays and spearheading the artistic efforts of the theater. “I want to get involved in the effort to expand the robust educational programming in the community and help develop a year-round presence for the stage company. To do this, I’ll be looking for ways to tie our programming into the community itself,” he says. “I also want to put on plays that will encourage the growth of a younger crowd of theater-goers.”

One facet of this vision has led him to partner with the Williamstown Theater Festival by planning the production of A New Brain, scheduled for August 16 through September 9, which Paul said he hopes will alert North Country residents and vacationers to the high level of theatrical entertainment at the BSC. “I love collaborating and getting new ideas and energy by sharing our views on what’s important and how to make our vision real,” he says. “All the theaters working together will help build a thriving theater community here.”

But he says he is aware that artistic work has risks: “It’s a tightrope walk. You’re in the hot seat. You have to please the people as well; you can’t let them down. But when you do please them, there’s no greater pleasure. And nothing could make me happier than to have this challenge.”

Linda F. Burghardt, Ph.D., is the Scholar-in-Residence at the Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center in New York and a part-time resident of the Berkshires.