

## Women in Jewish Stories

Sharon Kenigsberg | Director of Community Development, Jewish Long Beach

These days, it seems like our in-boxes are flooded with countless opportunities to participate in meaningful, educational and entertaining webinars. Each offering has merit and there is not always time to partake in each one. However, it is not often that you get a notice that brings various parts of your world together. That is how I felt when I opened the email about an upcoming webinar on Tuesday, May 11 at 9:00 am, entitled “Women in Jewish Stories.”

This national webinar is hosted by PJ Library (see below) and Jewish Federations of North America National Women’s Philanthropy (two groups that Jewish Long Beach are very much a part of). This meaningful conversation moderated by journalist Abigail Pogrebin will offer teachings from Jewish women who lead, give, and tell Jewish stories. How have the stories of Jewish women been told throughout time? How should this storytelling



Author Mara Rockliff

change in the wake of COVID-19, given the added pressure placed on mothers during this time? Meredith Lewis, PJ Library’s director of content, education, and family experience, will lead a discussion with Annie Polland, the new executive director of New York’s Tenement Museum; Ruth Behar, author of *Lucky Broken Girl*; and Mara Rockliff, author of *Try It! How Frieda Caplan Changed the Way We Eat*.

The surprise came when I read that one of the speakers had written a book about one of our own local legends, Frieda Caplan.

Dr. Frieda Rapoport Caplan became the first woman in the United States to own and operate a produce company. Just

over 60 years ago, she founded Frieda’s, Inc., a specialty produce company in Los Alamitos, California. Frieda revolutionized the specialty produce industry, initially, as the first woman selling produce in the Los Angeles wholesale produce industry, then by gradually introducing more than 200 exotic fruits and vegetables to America. Because of Frieda, what might have been exotic in the 60s, 70s or 80s, is commonplace today.



Frieda Rapoport Caplan in her warehouse.

What local market doesn’t carry kiwi, jicama, or even bean sprouts, to name a few of the products she brought to our kitchen tables?

In 2016, Jewish Long Beach Women’s Philanthropy paid tribute to Frieda with a screening of the documentary about

her life and career, “Fear No Fruit.” The film chronicled Frieda’s rise from being the only woman in the Los Angeles Wholesale Produce Market to becoming a successful entrepreneur. Frieda, who still went into the office four days a week, well into her 90s, passed away in January of 2020 at the age of 96.

Her daughters and granddaughter carry on the business legacy of Frieda’s. CEO, Karen Caplan explains in her blog “What’s on Karen’ Plate” how a children’s book about Frieda came to be.

*Okay, so maybe I am a little prejudiced, but when a well-published children’s book author contacted me three years ago and said she planned to write a book about my mom, Frieda Rapoport Caplan, I was so excited! I’ve always found kids are fascinated (and grateful) when they discover that it was my mom who is credited with introducing kiwifruit to America in 1962. Honestly, who can imagine a world before kiwifruit?*

*Here’s how it happened. About three years ago, Mara Rockliff—an author of more than 75 children’s books—sent an ordinary email to our company. Mara had taken a trip to Israel organized by the nonprofit PJ Library for children’s authors and illustrators, and she was inspired to think about Jewish subjects she might write about. When she got back, she dug around and found an amazing resource called the “Jewish Women’s Archive,” and decided to scroll through the listing alphabetically. There are hundreds of women listed, so thank goodness my mom was listed under “Caplan” near the front of the alpha listing. As luck would have it, the photo image under my mom’s listing was a green kiwifruit slice, not an image of her face like most everyone else’s!*

*That spurred Mara to research Frieda a bit more, and in the end, Frieda’s story was too intriguing to pass up. We are so proud that Mara chose to write about our mom, and delighted that children and adults alike will be inspired by her story through this book.*

Just one seemingly ordinary email brought together memories of a former Lion of Judah, and the good works of two of the organizations supported by Jewish Long Beach. I for one, certainly look forward to participating in this webinar. Please join me by registering at: <https://bit.ly/2RNG481>.



Frieda’s daughters: Karen (left) and Jackie.

## Synagogue Directory

**Beit HaLev (I)**  
P.O. Box 2279  
Seal Beach, CA 90740  
Contact: Rabbi Galit Levy-Slater  
Phone: 562-493-2680  
Email: duets@icloud.com  
Website: www.galityomtov.com

**Beth David (R)**  
6100 Hefley St.  
Westminster, CA 92683  
Contact: Rabbi Nancy Myers  
Phone: 714-892-2623  
Email: tbdavid@templebethdavid.org  
Website: www.templebethdavid.org

**Chabad of Los Alamitos & Cypress (O)**  
12340 Seal Beach Blvd. Suite B-219  
Seal Beach, CA 90740  
Contact: Rabbi Shmuel Marcus  
Phone: 714-828-1881  
Email: smarcus@jewishcypress.com  
Website: www.chabadlosal.com

**Chabad of West Orange County/  
Congregation Adat Israel (O)**  
5052 Warner Ave.  
Huntington Beach, CA 92649  
Contact: Rabbi Aron David Berkowitz  
Phone: 714-846-2835  
Email: info@chabadhb.com  
Website: www.chabadhb.com

**Congregation Lubavitch (O)**  
3981 Atlantic Ave.  
Long Beach, CA 90807  
Contact: Rabbi Yitzchok Newman  
Phone: 562-596-1681  
Email: yitzyg@aol.com

**Congregation Shir Chadash (I)**  
6440 Del Amo Blvd.  
Lakewood, CA 90713  
Contact: Rabbi Mariana Gindlin  
Phone: 562-429-0715  
Email: csclakewood@dslextreme.com  
Website: www.CongregationShirChadash.org

**Congregation Shalom of  
Leisure World, Seal Beach (C)**  
Mail to:  
PO Box 2901  
Seal Beach, CA 90740  
1421 Northwood Road  
Seal Beach, CA 90740  
Contact: President Carol A. Stern Levine  
Phone: Direct - 562-505-3622  
Phone: Membership - 562-430-7040  
Email: congshalomlwsb@gmail.com

**P’nai Or (I)**  
3955 N. Studebaker Road  
Long Beach, CA 90808  
Email: info@pnaior.org

**Shul By The Shore (O)**  
3801 E. Willow Street  
Long Beach, California 90815  
Contact: Rabbi Abba Perelmuter  
Phone: 562-621-9828  
Email: rabbi@shulbytheshore.org  
Website: www.shulbytheshore.org

**Temple Beth Ohr (R)**  
15721 E. Rosecrans Ave.  
La Mirada, CA 90638  
Contact: Rabbi Mark Goldfarb  
Phone: 714-521-6765  
Email: office@tbohm.org  
Website: www.tbohm.org

**Temple Beth Shalom (C)**  
3635 Elm Avenue  
Long Beach, CA 90807  
Contact: Rabbi David Cantor  
Phone: 562-426-6413  
Fax: 562-426-7824  
Email: office@tbslb.org  
Website: www.tbslb.org

**Temple Israel (R)**  
269 Loma Ave.  
Long Beach, CA 90803  
Contact: Rabbi Scott Fox  
Phone: 562-434-0996  
Email: info@tilb.org  
Website: www.tilb.org

**Temple Ner Tamid of Downey (I)**  
10629 Lakewood Boulevard  
Downey, CA 90241  
Contact: Rabbi Daniel Mehlman  
Phone: 562-861-9276  
Email: info@downeytemplenertamid.org  
Website: www.downeytemplenertamid.org

**(C)=Conservative  
(I)=Independent  
(O)=Orthodox  
(R)=Reform**



PJ Library sends free Jewish children’s books to families across the world every month.

PJ Library shares Jewish stories that can help your family talk together about values and traditions that are important to you.

A program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, PJ Library is made possible through partnerships with local Jewish organizations, such as Jewish Long Beach and Alpert JCC. Families raising kids from birth through 9 years old with Judaism as part of their lives, are welcome to sign up. For more information contact Sharon Kenigsberg at [sharonk@jewishlongbeach.org](mailto:sharonk@jewishlongbeach.org).

Frieda was a longtime friend and supporter of our Jewish Community through Women’s Philanthropy as a Lion of Judah.



Jewish Long Beach Women’s Philanthropy is inspired and guided by our tradition of tzedakah (righteousness/charity) and tikkun olam (repairing the world). Along with 157

Jewish Federations in North America, we seek to provide significant opportunities for women to affirm their Jewish identity and spirituality, to be proactive in evolving issues of concern to women, to engage new leaders, and to inspire other Jewish women by our examples. For more information about getting involved with Women’s Philanthropy, contact Sharon Kenigsberg at [sharonk@jewishlongbeach.org](mailto:sharonk@jewishlongbeach.org).