



# Shalom 01|21

The Journal of the Reading Jewish Community published by the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

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## Loretta Charnoff Endowment Fund to benefit local, world Jewish community

**By Bill Franklin, Carole Robinson and Sari Incledon**

Jewish Family Service (JFS) clients express gratitude in many ways — thank-you notes, JFS volunteer services, and giving tzedakah. The Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Service gratefully acknowledge a very generous bequest from the estate of Loretta Charnoff who died Dec. 15, 2019 at the age of 83.

Ms. Charnoff was a daughter of the late Fanny and Herman Charnoff. She lived most of her life on North 11th Street and then at the B'nai B'rith Apartments for 18 years. Ms. Charnoff was a graduate of Reading High, was a member of Keshet Zion Synagogue and a life member of Hadassah. She enjoyed entertaining visitors with stories from her life and never lost her sense of humor.

Ms. Charnoff, a client of JFS, was very appreciative of the support and guidance she and her family received from our agency for over 40 years. She valued her connection to the Jewish community through JFS and felt a strong bond with her Israeli brethren. She specified that her bequest be divided between JFS and programs in Israel.

Half of Ms. Charnoff's bequest will go to Jewish Family Service and fund a yearly lecture on various social service topics. The Loretta Charnoff Lecture Series will allow us to continue our mission of helping others and honor her memory.



Loretta Charnoff

The Israeli programs that will benefit from her bequest are the Yemin Orde Youth Village, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Joint Distribution Committee. Yemin Orde Youth Village is home to 430 at-risk immigrant children from around the world. It is located on 77 acres in northern Israel. Ms. Charnoff's gift will be commemorated with a plaque on the Wall of Honor outside the dining hall.

The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) is an international non-governmental body who assists Jews throughout the world make Aliyah. Ms. Charnoff's gift will fund an



The Yemin Orde Wall of Honor

Israel absorption center Ulpan classroom in Raanana. The classroom will be named in her honor and her gift will provide it with computers, interactive projectors, and software, as well as furniture and basic room renovations.

The Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is a leading Jewish humanitarian organization, working in 70 countries to rescue Jews in danger. Their JDC-GRID: Tikkun in Action, Europe program encourages Jews to connect to their local Jewish community and supports emerging Jewish leaders who start social enterprises to aid needy Jews in their communities, combat poverty, integrate refugees, promote women's health, and support disabled people. Ms. Charnoff's gift will provide for one such Jewish-led social enterprise that will bear her name.

## Community spirit marks holidays



The season's holidays were marked by community spirit despite restrictions. At left, a Jewish Family Service Friendship Circle participant is ready to collect a Thanksgiving dinner provided by JFS. At right, Rabbis Yosef Lipsker and Brian Michelson lead a menorah lighting outside the Chabad Center, with spectators watching from their cars.

# A look back at an unpredictable 2020

By Richard Nassau  
Development Director

January traditionally is the time to take a look back and a look forward. It is when we pause to assess the past year and begin to focus on the coming year and where we are headed.



There is nobody I know who in January of 2020 could have predicted the type of year that just concluded. Hopefully we do know that 2021 will not be anything near what we have all experienced this past year. Still a look back at 2020 is in order. It was a year that challenged us all and revealed how strong we are as a Jewish community.

What follows are just a few of the programs and services you provided with your gift to Federation's community campaign in 2020. It is your support that made these possible. Thank you.

## JCC

On March 1, our Literatour Berks series was nearing the end of its first year. The program that day featured Jamie Bernstein, daughter of Leonard Bernstein. A crowd of 150 people came together at the DoubleTree in downtown Reading to hear Ms. Bernstein. It was another successful Literatour event that was bringing authors of Jewish-themed books to our community. Just two weeks later at a staff meeting a plan was being put in place for the remaining Literatour programs to be

presented over Zoom.

The second season of Literatour Berks started in October. Its programs continue to be offered via Zoom. At a staff meeting one-month earlier in September, a plan was put in place that when it became safe and was allowed, our Literatour programs would again be done in-person. Not knowing when that might be, the plan shows how each event could be done either virtually or in-person. When we can again gather together, hopefully soon, we are ready.

You can find a complete list of Literatour Berks events on our website. Go to [ReadingJewishCommunity.org/home/Literatour](https://ReadingJewishCommunity.org/home/Literatour).

Last year, the Jewish Cultural Center started offering virtual kids' programs, including many outdoor activities. These programs were designed to keep our children safe while still engaged with their peers and the Jewish community. Programs included a Chanukah Lantern Walk, along with Chanukah kits for ages 8 and under.

We started programs like Find Your Voice. This new program for tweens is offered in partnership with the Exeter Community Library. Our program was one of only five selected nationwide to receive grant support from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. Limited and at capacity with 24 children participating, Find Your Voice looks at topics of social justice, being Jewish and young adult life in America, all while completing social action through service and learning.

## JFS

During 2020 Jewish Family Service replaced in-person visits with phone calls (over 100 each month.) Staff members and volunteers have been reaching out to seniors and other vulnerable members of our community, communicating with out-of-town relatives and, if needed, following up on issues.

Last year the weekly senior group Friendship Circle was unable to meet in-person. In response JFS started delivering meals once a month to all Friendship Circle members. In September, 45 seniors received a Rosh Hashanah dinner.

In 2020 families quickly found themselves in need of help. Grocery store shelves were empty and certain food items were in short supply. The Jewish Family Service Food Pantry suddenly was serving a record number of families. JFS staff responded by developing protocols and with the help of Food Pantry volunteers was ready. The result was a socially safe and distanced distribution of pre-boxed grocery items into food carts for those who walked and the trunks of cars to those who drove. This past October JFS opened a second Food Pantry at the Reading Hampden Seventh Day Adventist Church.

These JCC and JFS programs are a small sample of what you did for our community last year. You helped families facing food insecurity, isolation, lost jobs and kids at home. It was your support of Federation's community campaign that made a difference for people. On behalf of all those you helped last year, thank you.

# Development

Annual Campaign

Women's Philanthropy

Maimonides Society

Your Jewish Legacy

Chai Circle

L'Chaim Society

Book of Life

Letter of Intent

## Leadership program with Rabbi Telushkin

### From online news sources

On Sunday Dec. 6, Rabbi Joseph Telushkin spoke at Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks Virtual Leadership Gifts Brunch. This annual leadership event recognizes and thanks major contributors to Federation's Community Campaign. It is Federation's foremost fundraiser. A total of \$300,000 in campaign contributions was raised from households attending the event.



Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

presented over Zoom.

Rabbi Telushkin spoke about Jewish humor. His presentation addressed the why of Jewish humor. He shared the wit and warmth of Jewish jokes, what they tell us about ourselves and how they reflect the times

in which we live.

Federation President Bill Franklin said: "We're glad even during these difficult times to be able to bring Rabbi Telushkin to Berks County. This annual program is a small way for us to say thank you to our community leaders for their contributions. The pandemic has created unprecedented need, and our community has stepped-up, with people giving both more of their time and their dollars."

## Doing our part for Earth at Tu B'Shevat

### By Adi Shalev

Tu B'Shevat is the Rosh Hashana for trees and the day that symbolizes the beginning of spring in Israel. It is also a good time for us to think about our relationship with the nature around us and around the world.

When I was in elementary school, my school had a program called The Ecological Space. It was started by an Ecological-Educational Farm called "Hava & Adam" in Modiin, where I grew up. The Ecological Space in my school was an extension of this farm.

The farm was founded in 2003 by educator Itzik Gaziel with the aim of raising awareness of the ancient and sacred connection between humans and their environment. The founders of the farm — a group of educators, architects, scientists, environmental and social activists — established this special place as a platform for personal growth and the deep connection. They did this through educating people about their natural environment and demonstrating a sustainable lifestyle.

As an experimental and educational center, the farm strives for ecological self-sufficiency by using solar energy, independent waste treatment, rainwater harvesting, wastewater reuse, ecological construction in a variety of techniques, recycling, and organic agriculture. The farm provides different programs and workshops, where they demonstrate practical ecology. It is a place to learn, to grow, to develop, and to be a small nucleus of change through these programs.

We, as students, could participate in this program and I chose to join.

The Ecological Space was located in a specific area on school ground that was not developed. It was led by a guy named Israel. In the program, we learned different things about nature, such as how to light a fire in a safe way, different kinds of flowers and trees and how to build a mud terrace. I also learned about environmental issues and ecological solutions such as solar energy, independent waste treatment and more.

But the things I remember the most (except for the mud terrace) are all the things I learned about reducing, reusing and recycling. As a young kid, I convinced my parents to take reusable utensils rather than disposable utensils when we went out to picnics. I was aware of nature, how much garbage we produce, and what happens to the garbage after we threw it away. I also learned how long it takes for it to disappear from Earth.

As an elementary school student, I took part in different programs and activities on the farm, and during middle school I volunteered in their summer programs. The things that I learned and experienced during my time there shaped who I am today and impacted different decisions. Before my military service, I did a year of volunteering at JNF, an organization that makes environmental issues a big value in their work.

Take this Tu B'Shevat to think about your relationship to nature. You can start close to

home, and think what you can do to make a good impact and help the environment.

Here are some examples:

**Reduce** - Be aware of the way we consume

- Buy in thrift stores.
- Use your own jars when you buy spices.

- Ask, is it really necessary?
- Ride in carpools.
- Walk or bike instead of driving.
- Use a personal cup / mug rather than plastic.

- Use reusable utensils for picnics.

**Re-use**

- Take reusable bags to the grocery store.
- Use paper that has blank areas for notes.

- Use empty bottle / cans for plants, flowers or candles.

**Recycle**

- Glass, paper, plastic, metals.
- Check with your local solid waste management center for details.

- Make sure that product packaging can be recycled.

Even one thing will make a great impact, so we and our children, and children's children can continue to celebrate Tu B'Shevat every year.

We are working on a program together with the Hava & Adam Farm, stay tuned!

If you would like to read and explore more, visit: <https://eco-israel.org/>

Happy Tu B'Shevat!



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**Make your gift  
today!**

From the President's Desk

# Learn from examples and turn our hopes into reality

By William D. Franklin  
President

*"There are stars whose light is seen on Earth though they have long been extinct. There are people whose brilliance lights the world even though they are no longer alive. These lights are brightest when the night is dark, and they light our way."* - Hannah Senesh



Unfortunately, we lost many people in 2020. Here are three whose lives continue to guide us.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks' intellectual contribution to modern Orthodox Judaism was immense. His wisdom and writings are appreciated by Jews and non-Jews across the spectrum of religious belief and within the secular world. Rabbi Sacks wrote, "The Greeks believed in fate: the future is determined by the past. Jews believe in freedom: there is no 'evil decree' that cannot be

averted. Thus, Jews gave the world the idea of hope." He also wrote, "To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope in a world seriously threatened by despair. Judaism is a sustained struggle against the world that is, in the name of the world that could be, should be, but is not yet. Optimism is the belief that things are going to get better. Hope is the belief that we can make things better. Optimism is a passive virtue; hope is an active one. It takes courage to hope." It is no accident that Israel's national anthem is Hatikvah - The Hope. This is a song of the 2000-year-old hope of the Jewish people to return to their homeland, Israel. What Rabbi Sachs' words teach us, is that if we act on our hopes, even if it takes a long time, we can make the world better.

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg never backed down from the challenges she faced and the battles she fought. She fought for equal rights for women and other minorities to attend top colleges, achieve job equality, and professional success. She also fought

repeated bouts of cancers for over 20 years. Her fighting spirit is an inspiration and also gives us hope.

No one thought it was possible to go faster than the speed of sound. But over seventy years ago, Brig. Gen. Chuck Yeager defied orders and broke the sound barrier. His daring spirit teaches us that we cannot let defeatism make us unwilling to tackle the seemingly impossible. Our Jewish history shows us that many times we have made the impossible possible.

The pandemic continues to affect our daily life. It is frustrating and depressing. Being optimistic and hopeful we have creatively adjusted. We continue to have community gatherings, educational programs and fun events using technological features we hardly thought about a year ago. Our community calendar (<https://readingjewishcommunity.org/home/community-calendar>) lists over 20 programs in January. There is Torah study, Tot Shabbat, Literatour authors, cooking classes, youth group meeting, RCOS'

Torah & Tequila, Keshet Zion's Trivia Night and Chabad events. JFR and The World Affairs Council of Greater Reading are hosting a speaker on the state of U.S.-Israeli Relations, and others.

Over 2,100 years ago, Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai argued how to light Chanukah candles. Rabbi Hillel said one more each night; one to eight. Rabbi Shammai said one less each night, eight down to one. As you know, Rabbi Hillel prevailed. Why is this relevant today?

On each night of Hannukah, we increase the light in our homes, lighting an additional candle.

Rav Abraham Kook explained, "The righteous do not complain of the dark, but increase the light; they do not complain of evil but increase justice ... they do not complain of ignorance but increase wisdom." Why use the metaphor of dark and light? Because fighting all the challenges we face requires one thing that light represents: Hope."

May we continue to bring light into our world and work to actualize our hopes.

## Youth, parents invited to MLK Youth Day of Service Jan. 18

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Youth and parents are invited to the third annual Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Day of Service sponsored by PJ Library and PJ Our Way of Reading.

Despite the changes brought on by COVID-19, our 2021 MLK Youth Day of Service will continue with a new outdoor and drive-thru option on Monday, Jan. 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m..

This year's event is presented in partnership with Immanuel United Church of Christ in Shillington.

Youth under 12 (and adults) are invited to a special Lunch Break MLK Youth Day of Service focusing on hunger in our community. Drive by our outdoor setup under the covered walkway at Immanuel UCC (99 S. Waverly St. Shillington, behind Gov. Mifflin High School) and help fill our boxes of dry goods to donate to Helping Harvest.

Pop out of your car to make some bagged meals of rice, beans and pasta at our socially distanced stations before you leave. Masks and social distance measures are required at this drive-thru event.

Our project will benefit Helping Harvest, Berks County's food bank and

the partner organization for our two Jewish Family Service food banks.

Helping Harvest has seen a surge in demand since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, unlike any the organization as seen before. According to a Nov. 11 *Reading Eagle* article, "Helping Harvest typically distributes about 560,000 pounds of food a month in Berks and Schuylkill, but since March that amount has climbed to nearly 1 million. In 2019 the total distribution totaled about 7 million pounds, in 2020 it was estimated to reach 10 million pounds." This growing need continues in 2021.

A complete wish list of items can be found below. Wish list items will be used to create power packs for local families experiencing hunger to pick up at Immanuel later in January. These projects are perfect for all ages, and we hope you can drive by on your lunch break to help feed our neighbors in need!

Donations will be accepted in a drop box outside the JCC through Jan. 18 and will also be collected via contactless pick up during the event.

For questions or more information please contact Amanda at [amandah@jreading.org](mailto:amandah@jreading.org) or 610-921-0624.

### MLK Jr. Youth Day of Service

**Monday, Jan. 18. 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**  
**Immanuel United Church of Christ**  
**99 S. Waverly St. Shillington**

We need YOUR help to make our Day of Service a SUCCESS!

**Donations Needed:**

- Boxes of pasta
- Jars of sauce
- Cereal boxes
- Powerade
- Ramen noodles
- Mac -n-cheese OR Chef Boyardee individual serving
- Granola bar
- Snack bag (pretzels/chips)
- Pack of crackers
- Microwave Popcorn (1 bag)
- Fruit snack
- Applesauce
- Breakfast item (cereal box, Pop Tart, breakfast bar, etc)

### What your mask says about you:



Conscientious



Foggy



Confused



Rebellious



Joker



Frum joker



Forgetful



Star Wars nut



Suspicious



Safe



Safer



Out of this world

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## Shalom

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# Put your life in order in 2021 with Literatour Berks, JFS

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Jewish Family Service is partnering with Literatour Berks for two programs this January that will invite you to organize your life this new year.

The odds of getting hit by a bus are 495,000 to 1. But the odds that you're going to die some day? Exactly.

Join us on Tuesday, Jan. 19, at 7 p.m. with the authors of "In Case You Get Hit by a Bus: How to Organize Your Life Now for When You're Not Around Later."

Authors Abby Schneiderman, Adam Seifer, and Gene Newman are the founders of Everplans and have extensive expertise in the areas of digital estate planning, technology, and consumerism. Based on Abby's personal experience with the sudden death of her brother, this book and session will present a clearly designed and easy-to-follow program to help even the most disorganized reader take control of modern life's burgeoning mess of on- and off-line details. Breaking the job down into three levels, from the most urgent to the technical to the nostalgic, "In Case You



Get Hit By a Bus" takes the anxiety and stress out of putting your life in order.

The next week, Tuesday, Jan. 26 at 7 p.m., Rabbi Laura Geller will join us virtually to discuss her book "Getting Good at Getting Older." The baby boomer generation transformed society in the 1960s and '70s and changed the way the world saw young people. While this generation is no longer young, it is still revolutionary and is now confronting and challenging assumptions about aging by living longer, by being more active than their parents and grandparents, and by simply doing things differently as they age. In the process, boomers are changing the way the world sees older people.

Named a 2019 National Jewish Book Award Finalist in the category of Contemporary Jewish Life and Practice, "Getting Good at Getting Older" is a tour for all those of "a certain age" through the resources and skills needed to navigate the years between maturity (building careers/raising families) and frail old age. Author Laura Geller, Rabbi Emerita of Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills, one of *Newsweek's* 50 Most Influential Rabbis in America, was recognized by nextavenue.org as a 2017 Influencer in *Aging*. She was ordained in 1976, the third woman rabbi in the Reform Movement.

Both programs are free of charge and open to the public and will be held virtually on Zoom. You can register by visiting our website: <https://readingjewishcommunity.org/home/literatour> Signed copies of the book will be available for purchase through the Literatour Berks official book vendor, Reads & Company of Phoenixville.

Thank you to the sponsors and patrons of Literatour Berks for making this event possible.

## Bestselling suspense author to lead program

By Amanda J. Hornberger

*New York Times* bestselling author Hallie Ephron, Edgar Award finalist and five-time finalist for the Mary Higgins Clark Award, writes books she hopes readers can't put down. In her latest novel, "Careful What You Wish For," Ephron introduces readers to a professional organizer, who ala Marie Kondo, begins to ask, "Does this spark joy?" Ephron will join us virtually on Monday, Jan. 4 at 7 p.m.

Emily Harlow is a professional organizer who helps people declutter their lives; she's married to a man who can't drive past a yard sale without stopping. Like other professionals

who make a living decluttering peoples' lives, Emily has devised a set of ironclad rules. When working with couples, she makes clear that the client is only allowed to declutter his or her own stuff. That stipulation has kept Emily's own marriage together these past few years. But the larger his "collection" becomes, the deeper the distance grows between them. Emily has two new clients to distract her: a widow whose husband left behind a storage unit, and a young wife whose husband won't allow her stuff into their house. Emily's meeting with the wife takes a detour when the women end up fantasizing about how much more

pleasant life would be without their collecting spouses. But the next day, Emily finds herself in a mess that is too big to clean up.

Hallie Ephron is the author of "Never Tell a Lie," "Come and Find Me," "There Was an Old Woman," "Night Night, Sleep Tight" and "You'll Never Know, Dear."

You can register by visiting our website: <https://readingjewishcommunity.org/home/literatour> Signed copies of the book will be available for purchase through the Literatour Berks official book vendor, Reads & Company of Phoenixville.

Thank you to the sponsors and patrons of Literatour Berks for making this event possible.

## Speaker to focus on U.S.-Israeli relations

By Amanda J. Hornberger

The World Affairs Council of Greater Reading and Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks are co-sponsoring a lecture on current U.S. Israeli relations and recent peace accords on Thursday, Jan. 28 at 4 p.m. on Zoom. The event features Dr. Lee Lukoff.

Lukoff graduated in 2019 from the University of Georgia with a Ph.D. in Political Science and International Affairs. He holds Master's degrees from Boston College (Political Science) and George Mason University (Public Policy).

In 2008, his research interests include subjects in the areas of American Foreign Policy, Intelligence Studies, U.S.-Israel

Relations, Middle East Politics, and Political Psychology.

He has taught 15 courses as an Instructor of Record on topics such as International Conflict, Global Issues, U.S.-Israel Relations, and American Public Policy. He currently teaches at the University of Georgia's Washington Semester Program and in the Department of Government at American University in Washington, D.C.

In 2017, He was awarded a university grant that allowed him to serve as a Visiting Research Fellow at the Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

During his time at Hebrew University, he interviewed former government officials for

his dissertation on US-Israel Relations in the 1980s.

He is also a founding member of the Early Career Scholars Group of Intelligence Studies in the International Studies Association and has published in the *Journal of Intelligence History*, *American Intelligence Journal*, *Journal of European and American Intelligence Studies*, and *The Encyclopedia of U.S. Intelligence*.

His book reviews have been published in the *Journal of Cold War Studies* and the *International Journal of Intelligence, Security, and Public Affairs*.

Email [info@jfreading.org](mailto:info@jfreading.org) to reserve your spot. Zoom link will be sent out prior to the meeting.

92nd St. Y Programs

Game Nights

Community Shabbat

Reading Jewish Film Series

Great Decisions

Interfaith Mitzvah Day

Yom Ha'atzmaut

PJ Library

PJ Our Way

Leo Camp Lecture

Tech Tuesday

Yom Hazikaron

Art Exhibits

Yom Hashoah

Annual Meeting and Picnic

Purim Carnival

Richard J. Yashek

Memorial Lecture

Kristallnacht Remembrance

Youth Events

Purim Masquerade Party

Bridge

Chevre

Mahjong

Trips to NYC/Philadelphia

Lakin Holocaust Library

& Resource Center

Shabbat B'yachad

Community Calendar

**Israeli cooking class**  
**Ma'amoul with Adi's mom**

Join Adi and her mom for a special Tu B'Shevat cooking class, where we will make traditional Ma'amoul, just like Adi's grandmother makes!

**Sunday, January 24th at 1pm**

To register, email [AdiS@JFReading.org](mailto:AdiS@JFReading.org) or check Reading Jewish Federation weekly emails

# The secret to PJ Library's great power

Originally published in the Fall 2020 edition of PROOF, a PJ Library magazine. Visit [pjlibrary.org/proof](http://pjlibrary.org/proof) for more.

By Meredith Lewis

PJ Library

Back in 1996, Bill Gates wrote "Content Is King."

In this famous essay, the man behind Microsoft predicted that the need for content would grow in the coming century and monetization, though challenging, would grow as well.

Nearly 25 years later, think of all the news sources that compete for your eyeballs every day. Now think about how many of them are paid for. Gates' essay resonates now more than ever.

However, what Gates could not have known at the dawn of the Internet age is abundantly clear to those of us who work in the content world today: Content is king, but context is equally important.

Content, after all, is simply information. It's context that dictates how — and often whether — that information impacts the reader.

When we read something online, the context can be infinitely complicated.

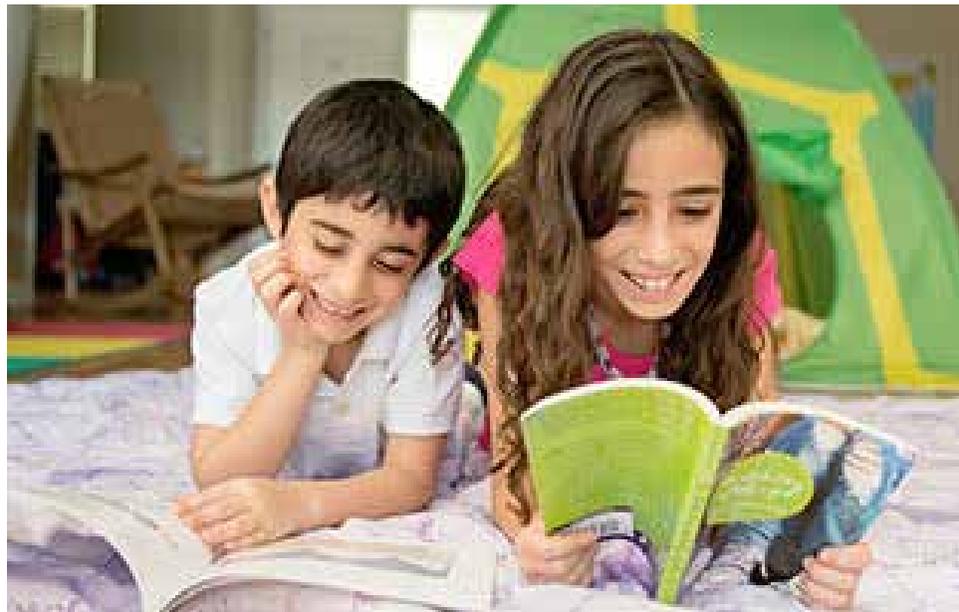
So many factors come into play: where we're seeing the piece, which outlet is behind it, and even who has shared it. Do we know the source? Do we trust it? Content and context need to work together well.

Here at PJ Library, there is an entire team devoted to content.

While most of that team works on the hundreds of books PJ Library sends in the U.S. and Canada each year, some of the program's most popular content is online. There, families can access all kinds of resources, including articles and webinars that address tricky parental topics like anti-Semitism, death, and inequality.

And in the context of 2020, some of the most popular content PJ Library is offering online focuses on COVID-19.

The coronavirus is a brand-new piece of content, as we're all painfully aware at this point, and parenting in this age of COVID-19 brings with it



very real challenges.

But in a Jewish context, there's a lot that's familiar here. Judaism has a long history of dealing with scary topics.

PJ Library's basic advice for talking with kids about difficult issues appears throughout our website:

- Respond to questions honestly, but don't answer questions that your child didn't ask.
- Provide your child with age-appropriate resources, not adult-aimed media, and watch what you say around them.
- Acknowledge, share, and validate their feelings.

Above all, parents are asked to think about the context in which these conversations happen.

Are you responding to a current event, or did your child ask you a question?

Did your kid bring up a topic unexpectedly from the back seat of the car, or were you snuggling together in a safe, cozy spot?

Did the question come from a place of fear or curiosity?

The answers to these questions will affect how parents respond.

And I'd argue that Judaism has always given us this same advice. Our core content — the Torah — has been with us for thousands of years, but the commentary, starting with the Mishnah and the Talmud and continuing into the present day, provides our context.

We can tell so much about what was going on in our communities historically by looking at how questions were asked and answered in the commentary.

Where were we living? What was our relationship with technology? Were we persecuted or thriving? We can even find historical responses to scary viruses.

Our contextualized approach to age-old content is a big part of why Judaism has remained relevant through the centuries.

PJ Library works with that ancient blueprint in mind — the books must stand the test of time. After all, it takes about nine months for a PJ Library book to land in mailboxes once chosen by the book selection committee, which means the team must consider holidays, school calendars, and camp sessions, not to mention what might be going on in more than 160,000 different households.

A lot can change in nine months, so we work to build a system of highly contextualized support: digital activities that can change quickly; interactive activities in the envelopes for families to do on their own time, in their own way; local engagement that caters to particular communities' needs; and peer connectors and microgrants that individualize the program.

Most importantly, PJ Library empowers parents to use the program

in ways that make sense for their families.

This brings us back to our most powerful content: books.

Every reading of the Torah is both the same and different depending on where you hear it and who is reading it; it's one of the most powerful Jewish experiences.

That's true of bedtime readings too. While tens of thousands of kids might get the same book in the same month, every reading of it will be slightly different depending on who's reading and who's listening, what happened that day, and what's going to happen the next. That's how a program that reaches 680,000 children globally can seem like it's speaking to each family's particular needs.

The numbers back this up: Whether in South Africa, Russia, Mexico, Australia, or the U.S., at least three quarters of PJ Library families have indicated in our most recent evaluations that they are very likely to recommend the program to their friends and relatives. These numbers hold steady despite wide variations in demographics, geography, ages of children, parental backgrounds, and levels of Jewish education.

This is the real secret to PJ Library's power: It's not just that PJ Library sends out great content. It's that the program helps families share that content in a deeply personal context.

## Monthly Community Meditation

Join us online for a community meditation on the first Sunday of each month. We will do a guided meditation, followed by opportunity for discussion.

The series will be led by Julie Gabriel LCSW, a Wyomissing resident, who is a therapist and certified yoga and meditation teacher.



We will meet online for 30 minutes on Sunday, February 7th at 7:00 pm.

To register, email [AdiS@JFReading.org](mailto:AdiS@JFReading.org)

# Fort from the King David era found in the Golan

## From online news sources

Excavations carried out by the Antiquities Authority in the Golan revealed a fortified complex from the time of King David, during 11th to 10th centuries BCE, The Jerusalem Post reported.

This unique fortified complex raises new research issues on the settlement of the Golan in the Iron Age.

The archaeologists think that the fort was built by the kingdom of Geshur, an ally of King David, to control the region. The excavation was undertaken prior to the construction of a new neighborhood in Hispin, and funded by the Housing and Construction Ministry and the Golan Regional Council, with the participation of many residents of Hispin and Nov, and students from the pre-military academies at Natur, Kfar Hanasi, Elrom, Metzhar and Qaztrin.

According to Barak Tzin and Enno Bron, excavation directors on behalf of the IAA: "The complex we exposed was built at a strategic location on the small hilltop, above the El-Al canyon, overlooking the region, at a spot where it was possible to cross the river. The c. 1.5 m-wide fort walls, built of large basalt boulders, encompassed the hill. In the excavation, we were astonished to discover a rare and exciting find: a large basalt stone with a schematic engraving of two horned figures with outspread arms. There may also be another object next to them."

A figure carved on a cultic stone stele was found in the Bethsaida Expedition Project in 2019, directed by Dr. Rami Arav of Nebraska University, at Bethsaida just north of the Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee). The stele, which depicts a horned figure with outspread arms, was erected next to a raised platform adjacent to the city gate. This scene was identified by Arav as representing the Moon-God Cult. The Hispin stone was located on a shelf next to the entrance, and not one, but two figures were depicted on it. According to the archaeologists, "It is possible that a person who saw the impressive Bethsaida stele decided to create a local copy of the royal stele."

The fortified city of Bethsaida is considered by scholars to be the capital of the Aramean kingdom



of Geshur that ruled the central and southern Golan 3,000 years ago. According to the Bible, the kingdom maintained diplomatic and family relations with the House of David and one of David's wives was Maacah, the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur.

Cities of the kingdom of Geshur were found along the Kinneret shore, including Tel En Gev, Tel Hadar and Tel Sorag, but such sites are rare in the Golan. Archaeologists will now start researching the possibility that the Geshur kingdom had a more extensive presence in the Golan than was previously

thought.

Following this discovery, changes in the development plans will be carried out together with the Housing and Construction Ministry so that the unique fortified complex will not be damaged. The complex will be developed as an open area along the El-Al river bank, where educational archaeological activities will be carried out, as part of cultural heritage and a link with the past.

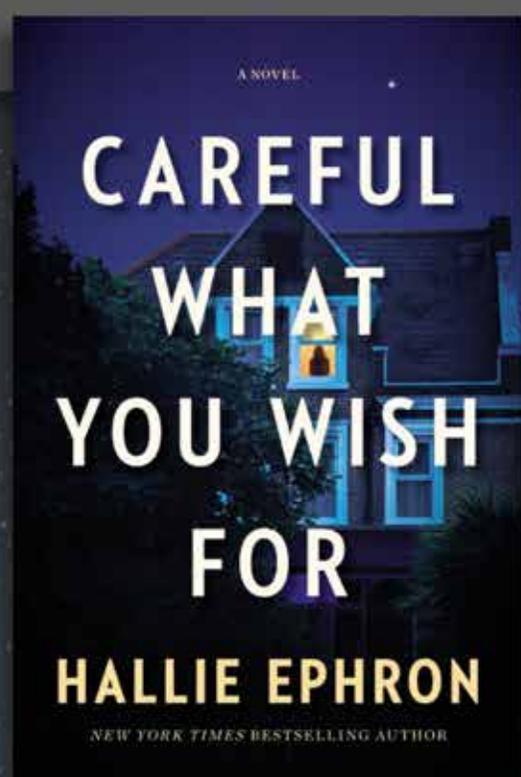
This aligns with the IAA's policy that learning the past through working in the field strengthens the younger generation's bonds with their roots.

## Careful What You Wish For by Hallie Ephron

**Monday**  
**January 4th**  
**7 p.m.**  
**via Zoom**

**Registration required.**

To register, visit:  
[www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org/home/literatour](http://www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org/home/literatour)



Literatour Berks is a program of Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks in partnership with Exeter Community Library and Sinking Spring Public Library.



# Organization finds serious food insecurity problem in Israel

## From online news sources

A newly released report details a worrying increase in the depth of poverty, financial hardship, and food insecurity among Israeli households amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The annual Alternative Poverty Report released by the Latet organization, a nonprofit that provides various welfare and food aid services, shows that during 2020, the number of households living in poverty has jumped from 20.1% of households before the pandemic to 29.3% (now a total of 850,000 households), meaning some new 268,000 households now live in poverty.

Unlike the State of Israel's official poverty report, which measures poverty based on income alone, Latet's Alternative Poverty Report measures poverty according to households lacking in essential needs such as housing, education, health care, food security, and the ability to cover the cost of living.

However, this year Latet did not calculate the report according to the multi-dimensional poverty index but rather conducted research that enables a broader understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis relating to changes in employment and economic status of Israeli households compared to before the pandemic.

According to the new report, today:

- 656,000 Israeli households (22.6%) suffer from food insecurity, compared to 513,000 (17.8%) before the pandemic.

- Among them, 286,000 (9.9%) live in extreme food insecurity, up from 252,000 (8.8%) before the pandemic (according to the National Insurance Institute of Israel).

- About 143,000 (+4.8%) households have been newly categorized as food insecure since the beginning of the pandemic, and 34,000 have been newly categorized as dealing with extreme food insecurity.

- Amid the coronavirus pandemic, 422,000 new Israeli households found themselves in financial hardship. The percentage of the households that suffer from financial hardship jumped from 24.1%, before the pandemic, to 38.6% (an increase of 14.5%). Of the households that reported encountering financial hardship during the pandemic, 77% are Jewish families. In comparison, 58% of the households that reported encountering financial hardship before the pandemic were Jewish.

The study also reports that 86% of elderly aid recipients are experiencing loneliness. Of this group, 21.6% fear they might die at home with no one knowing.

The report also found that during the pandemic, Israel's middle class shrunk by 15.5%, with 29% of the middle class's financial scores decreasing.

Amid the pandemic, 50.7% of Israel's general population reported significant economic damage, while only 19.6% reported significant health damage.

Only 23% of Israeli households

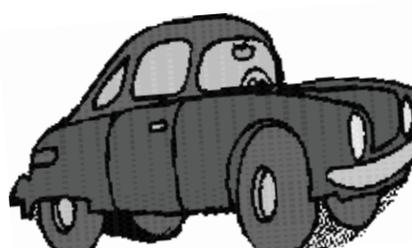


report that their financial condition is standard or above standard, compared to 45% prior to the pandemic.

The need for financial help among

Israel's population jumped by 70% amid the pandemic, and 24% of Israel's population report that they did not get financial help although they needed it.

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or go to  
[www.charitableautoresources.com](http://www.charitableautoresources.com)**

## Getting Good at Getting Older by Lauren Geller

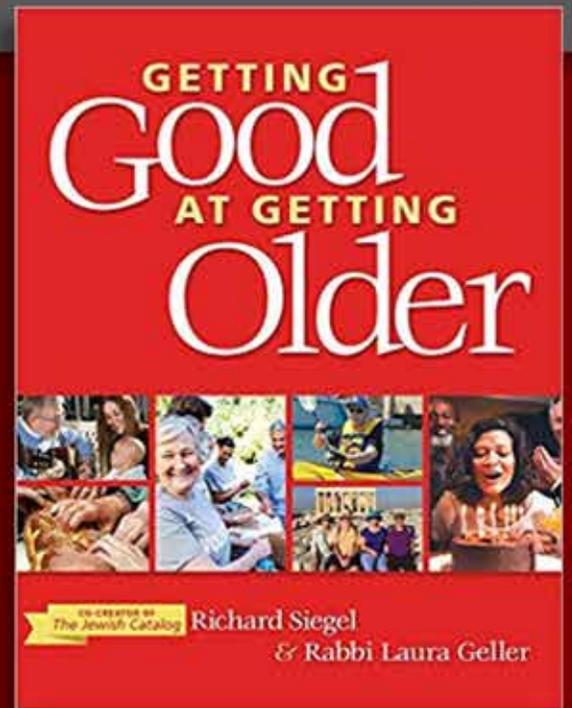
**Tuesday  
January 26th  
7 p.m.  
via Zoom**

**Registration required.**

To register, visit:  
[www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org/home/literatour](http://www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org/home/literatour)



**Co-sponsored by:  
Jewish Family Service**



**Literatour Berks is a program of Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks in partnership with Exeter Community Library and Sinking Spring Public Library.**





# Lishmor Al HaOlam: Guarding the planet

## Let there be light, but not too much

By Andi Franklin and Solange Israel-Mintz

You may not think that light pollution is one of the top 10 ecological problems, yet it is. The amount of excessive, misdirected, and LED blue-white light is doubling every 35 years and flooding and obscuring our night sky. This disappearing darkness has negatively affected every species studied to date, including humans.

Less than 100 years ago almost everyone on the planet could step outside at night and see billions of stars with the Milky Way galaxy splashed across the sky. Today, less than 20% of people in North America can see those stars, and almost no one in the Eastern United States can. That means us. For centuries, the night sky has inspired poets, artists, musicians, and prophets. The stars have guided farmers' planting and seafarers' journeys and taught astronomers about the universe. This encounter with the universe which was once one of the most common of human experiences is, sadly, now one of the rarest.

This disappearing night has also disrupted fragile eco-systems. The growing use of blue-white LED bulbs has been particularly dangerous because they are extraordinarily bright, and they put blue wavelength light into the night. This blue was never present at night, further confusing nocturnal and crepuscular animals, birds, and insects. Millions of birds and monarch butterflies on their twice-yearly migration have been seduced into cities and fatally lost their way. Nocturnal predators, such as owls and foxes, have been illuminated, seen by their prey and, so, starve. Fireflies cannot mate and night pollinators cannot pollinate. Tiny sea turtle hatchlings crawl toward cities instead of the sea because of the brighter lights. It may not seem critical if sea turtles become extinct,

however we are just beginning to understand the importance of any one species for all others up and down the species ladder.

Our personal eco-system has also been affected. Too much of this LED blue light from our smart phones, tablets, and computers at night has played havoc with our circadian rhythm, an order of bodily events that ideally is reset daily by light in the morning and afternoon and darkness at night. This disruption is implicated in a cascade of woes. Unnatural and unnaturally timed light exposure causes poor sleep. This, in turn, causes day-time fatigue, headaches, depression, and weight issues. It makes us more vulnerable to diabetes, heart problems, and strokes. Studies show that it increases tumor growth, especially in breast and prostate cancer. We also need darkness for our mental and emotional health. Darkness reduces external stimuli renewing our spirit and energy. It is thought that regularly viewing the night sky nurtures kindness, optimism and intelligence.

There is good news ... we can solve this. We may not be able to see those stars, but we are, literally, stardust, created out of particles from long-ago star explosions. And we are, uniquely, the material of the cosmos that has learned how to understand itself.

Here is some of what we have learned.

- First, turn off lights when and where you do not need them, especially at night. Put outside lights on sensors so they only light up when tripped.
- Second, change any LED blue-white bulbs to the warmer colored ones, both inside and out. There are also blue light filters for many newer devices that can be activated.
- Third, switch to a dimmer



A view of the stars from Cherry Springs State Park, one of the darkest places in the Eastern U.S.

wattage, again inside and out, and put shields on outside lights so the light only shines down.

The above three strategies immediately reduce light pollution. The next three aid research and provide pleasure.

- Fourth, for adults and children of all ages, consider becoming a citizen scientist. Participate in Globe-at-Night, which monitors night light amounts through a smartphone app and sends the data to research centers. This helps scientists better understand the effects of light pollution. More information is available at [www.globeatnight.org](http://www.globeatnight.org) or [www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org)
- Fifth, question what you see in your neighborhood and advocate for better lighting choices. Are those bright signs really necessary? Do those billboards dotting the landscape that show ads using "blue" lighting harmful? Will the zoning officials in our town consider outside lighting as worth their attention? For example,

in Wyomissing where we live, Codes regulating lighting take up two small paragraphs and mostly address lighting in residential areas. A general statement — "No lighting shall be utilized in such a manner to produce a noxious glare or a light intensity greater than one foot-candle beyond the lot boundaries" — is vague and would certainly not apply to commercial spaces, who are the biggest contributors to light pollution.

- Lastly, Pennsylvania's Cherry Springs State Park is one of the darkest places in the Eastern United States, see above picture. It is known for its spectacular stargazing. A visit on a clear moonless night will fill your heart, mind, and soul with the wonder of the universe. Let There be Night!

In our next article we will revisit plastic pollution. If you have any suggestions for reducing, reusing, or recycling plastics please forward them to Solange at [solangeim20@gmail.com](mailto:solangeim20@gmail.com) or Andi at [wfranklin613@gmail.com](mailto:wfranklin613@gmail.com).

January Tevet-Shevat	
 Shabbat Candle Lightings	 Torah Portions
<b>January 1</b> 4:31 p.m.	<b>January 2/18 Tevet</b> Vayechi (Genesis 47:28-50:26)
<b>January 8</b> 4:37 p.m.	<b>January 9/25 Tevet</b> Shemot (Exodus 1:1-6:1)
<b>January 15</b> 4:45 p.m.	<b>January 16/3 Shevat</b> Va'era (Exodus 6:2-29:35)
<b>January 22</b> 4:53 p.m.	<b>January 23/10 Shevat</b> Bo (Exodus 10:1-13:16)
<b>January 29</b> 5:01	<b>January 30/17 Shevat</b> Beshalach (Exodus 13:17-17:16)

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**ZOOM WITH US!**  
January 9th at 10:00 am

# Tot Shabbat

Join Rabbi Michelson for a musical, story-filled interactive hour for children through grade 2. Members & non-members welcome. No registration required. Zoom link available at [ohebsholom.org](http://ohebsholom.org). Future Tot Shabbat dates: 2/20, 3/20, 4/17, 5/15, & 6/12.

# The Israeli secrets to resilience that anyone can learn

**Israel21.com**

How did Israeli Air Force helicopter pilot Noam Gershony go from a near-fatal crash to winning a Paralympic gold medal in wheelchair tennis?

How did a little boy go from the hell of Nazi camps to becoming the chief rabbi of Israel?

How did a 12-year-old girl go from a treacherous four-month trek from Ethiopia to earning a doctorate and directing a nonprofit organization in Israel?

It's all about resilience. The 14 profiles in the book "ISResilience: What Israelis Can Teach the World" — released Nov. 11 by Gefen Publishing House — prove that it's quite possible to succeed in life despite facing terrible tragedies and formidable obstacles.

"I've been living in Israel for almost 15 years and I meet all sorts of people in my travels," says coauthor Michael Dickson, executive director of StandWithUs in Israel. "I've always been convinced there is something special about the way Israelis cope, whether they know it or not. They wake up in the morning and don't know how the day will end. They live with uncertainty and yet they bounce back from personal and national tragedies."

Six years ago, a book started taking shape in his mind.

One of Dickson's first interviews was with psychologist Naomi Baum, then founding director of the Resilience Unit of Metiv, the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma.

Baum's Building Resilience Intervention (BRI) — a training program for caretakers, such as teachers, to build resilience in themselves and in those they care for following any sort of trauma — has been implemented following mass disasters in Israel, the United States, Mexico, Spain, Haiti, Namibia, Nepal and Turkey.

Dickson asked Baum to join his "voyage of discovery." The two began interviewing Jewish and Arab Israelis with inspiring stories of resilience.

"The concept includes two seemingly contradictory abilities: on the one hand to withstand and hang tough, and on the other hand to be spontaneous, to improvise, and to dare to attempt hitherto untried solutions to difficult problems," the coauthors write.

Baum added: "If something bad happens and you are not feeling okay, it is not written in stone. It takes strength and energy, but you don't have to feel as bad as you feel right now. One takeaway message from our book is there are things we can do to increase our resilience and we know what they are."

The authors say the three keys to resiliency are empathy, flexibility and making meaning out of whatever happens. Resilience with an Israeli flavor Of course, Israelis don't have an exclusive on resilience, says Dickson. "But there is something — perhaps the combination of having no other land and having a community that helps them overcome tragedy — that embodies the three keys of resilience with a specifically Israeli flavor," says Dickson.

The 14 profiles chosen from a long list (a sequel may be forthcoming) include famous Israelis, such as Natan Sharansky, who survived brutal Soviet imprisonment and became a beloved Israeli statesman, and less well-known Israelis such as Nadav Ben Yehuda, who was severely injured while saving the life of a Turkish climber on Mount Everest.

There's Amit Goffer, who was paralyzed in an off-road accident and invented ReWalk and UpNRide to get paraplegics and quadriplegics on their feet.

There's Gadeer Kamal-Mreeh, who overcame racism and sexism to become Israel's first female Druze parliamentarian. There's Sherri Mandell, who wrote "The Blessing of a Broken Heart" and "The Road to Resilience: From Chaos to Celebration" in the wake of the murder of her teenage son, Koby.

Humor is a common thread Mandell



*Noam Gershony almost died in a helicopter crash. Six years later he won a Paralympic gold medal.*



*UPnRIDE (and ReWalk) inventor Amit Goffer enjoying a walk for the first time since 1997*

and her husband, Seth, founded the Koby Mandell Foundation to help other family members of terror victims heal.

One of their regular fundraisers in Israel is "Comedy for Koby," a standup show featuring American comedians.

"A very good sense of humor was a common thread through everyone we met," says Dickson. "Some suffered horrific tragedies but still have the capacity to laugh. Natan Sharansky used humor as one of his tools to cope with solitary confinement. He

told the guards jokes because if he could get them to smile it was a win. I expected our interviews to be a sorrowful experience, but they were uplifting and enjoyable because of that sense of humor."

Dickson says they envision two types of readers. "One group is people who already know Israel to a degree. For them, the book will give more color to who Israelis are. The second audience is the general public, who can connect to Israel by seeing Israeli people they admire, respect and may want to be like."

## Our connection with nature-herbalism

Join Keshet Berlinsky Edry, a community Shlichah in St. Paul Minnesota for a conversation about medicinal herbal.

Keshet grew up in a holistic home with a strong connection to the garden and plants with the influence of her mother (a masseuse and acupuncturist).

Keshet holds a certificate of treating aromatherapy and Bach flower remedies from Rediman College in Israel

**Sunday, January 31st at 7pm**

For the Zoom registration email [AdiS@JFReading.org](mailto:AdiS@JFReading.org) or check Reading Jewish Federation weekly emails

# The Israeli supermarkets with a farm in the parking lot

Israel21c.com

When you buy supermarket veggies, you don't know how far they traveled or when they left the farm. And that matters because picked produce loses nutritional potency rapidly.

Now, shoppers in four Israeli supermarkets are able to buy pesticide-free greens and herbs harvested from an indoor farm right on the premises.

"Vertical Field has been operating in partnership with Rami Levy for approximately a year," says Noa Winston, marketing director for Vertical Field.

"Our first Vertical Field farm at Rami Levy was launched in Modi'in. Now we have four farms at Rami Levy branches whose produce is already sold inside the supermarket," Winston tells ISRAEL21c.

"Additionally, we have a farm at the Tel Aviv Port in collaboration with the city of Tel Aviv. We have plans to significantly expand our operations with Rami Levy and to open more farms over the course of 2021."

The indoor farms raise leafy greens and herbs such as kale, lettuce, basil, cilantro, dill, parsley and peppermint.

Bok choy and spinach are now being

planted.

The space-saving vertical containers grow the plants in soil under LED lighting manufactured by BioLed EcoLight Systems based at Kibbutz Tzuba. (BioLed also provides the lighting for Energy Boxes that Innovation: Africa provides to many off-grid African schools and health centers.)

The Ra'anana-based company says that indoor vertical farming uses 90 percent less water than traditional field farming and saves as much as 20 days' time from seeding to harvest in a typical growth cycle. The system is weather- and pest-resistant.

Vertical Field has two installations in New York state — at a supermarket and a restaurant — and has ambitious expansion plans.

"Our goal is to penetrate the global market," says Winston. "We have begun that process starting with the United States, where we have two farms, and we plan to continue to expand there."

"We are also currently developing several promising projects both in the field of vertical urban farms as well as vertical landscaping that will be launched in the USA, in Europe, and other regions."



Leafy greens and herbs growing in a Vertical Field farm at a Rami Levy supermarket.  
Photo courtesy of Vertical Field via Israel21c.org

## Obituary

**Amy (Silverstein) Baker**, 64, of Park City, Utah, and formerly of Reading. She was a graduate of American University, where she studied communications. She worked for NBC in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles. She served on numerous boards dedicated to the arts, health and education. Amy is survived by her husband, Barry Baker, and her three children, Brandace, Bryce and Lane. Other survivors include her mother, Vi Silverstein, her brother Bobby and her grandson Ames.

**Isaac "Ike" Matza**, 85, of Pittsburgh and formerly of Reading. Ike was born in the Bronx and after losing both parents at a young age, he and his siblings grew up in the Jewish Family Service foster system. He graduated with a degree in marketing and traveled the world as a member of the Army Track Team. In the 1960s he began working in the travel industry and was hired by Albert Boscov to be CEO of Boscov's Travelcenter. Ike is survived by his wife, Eila, his sons Tomas and Stefan and their wives, and his grandchildren.

**Donna J. Eisenberg**, 80. Born in Philadelphia, she was a daughter of the late Samuel and Jean Chadwin. She is survived by her husband of 60 years, Sorrell Eisenberg, her son; Neil Eisenberg, West Lawn, and two grandchildren; Brittany Eisenberg, Wyomissing, and Matthew Eisenberg, Sinking Spring; as well as her brother, Steven Chadwin, Conshohocken. She graduated from high school in Philadelphia and soon became an Army wife and started a family. Donna was a lifelong member of Hadassah. She was treasurer of the JDRF organization for many years. Donna was a member of Congregation Shomrei Habrith. Donna was an avid Mah Jong player and enjoyed watching her grandchildren participate in extracurricular activities as well as watching her son on the tennis court.

## 3RD ANNUAL MLK YOUTH DAY OF SERVICE: LUNCH BREAK

Monday, January 18, 2021

11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Immanuel UCC

99 S. Waverly St. Shillington

### OUTDOORS

Meal kits will be assembled in a covered outdoor walkway at socially distanced stations.

### DRIVE THRU

Donate dry & canned goods from your car via our contact-less drop off.

### COVID-SAFE

Masks are required and social distance measures will be maintained throughout the event.

### FOOD BANK

All food items and meal kits will be donated to Helping Harvest, the Berks County food bank.

### DONATIONS

Let's help our neighbors experiencing hunger! Donations accepted the day of the event or at drop boxes at the JCC or IUCC.



CO-SPONSORED BY JEWISH FEDERATION OF READING/BERKS AND IMMANUEL UCC

# Israeli group provides masks to U.S. children

Israel21c.org

Israel-based humanitarian organization SmartAID kicked off a unique US initiative, "Millions of Masks for Children," in Washington State.

In partnership with shipping company DHL and Washington-based PPE manufacturer FLTR with warehousing support from SEKO Logistics, SmartAID is distributing a million FLTR facemasks to kids served by 15 childcare and youth programs throughout the state, including refugee and tribal communities.

"At SmartAID our core mission is to harness the power of innovation, data and technology, and our extensive network of partners to save lives, alleviate suffering and empower communities to live the kind of life they value. It's absolutely critical to protect children from Covid-19 by providing masks. Washington State is just the start," said Shachar Zahavi, founder and CEO of SmartAID.

Millions of Masks for Children is the brainchild of Zahavi and SmartAID volunteer Trang Le.

"By supporting childcare organizations, we're providing the support that parents and families need to be able to focus on



getting back to work during this chaotic time," said Le, who is also a volunteer with Restart Partners.

"We were fortunate to connect with Trang Le and Shachar Zahavi with Millions of Masks for Children and quickly realized our partnership could create immediate impact in Washington State and beyond," said Jason Lemelson, chief executive officer of FLTR.

"We believe this initial donation is the start of something much larger and look forward to continuing to help in any way



Mayor Dana Ralph of Kent, Wash., left, and SmartAID volunteer Trang Le handing the first box of donated masks to a local boy, kicking off the Millions of Masks for Children initiative. SmartAID

we can."

According to Zahavi, nearly 280,000 American children have been diagnosed with Covid-19 since March 2020. During the first week of December, 112,000 children were diagnosed — a record number since Covid started, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

"This extremely generous donation of a million child-size face masks will help keep everyone in our state safer, from our essential childcare providers to the families of children in their care," added Deeann Burtch Puffert, CEO of Child Care Aware of Washington.

Zahavi said Utah is next. "Our goal is to reach all 50 states," he said.

## Join us for a fun night of music trivia

From Federation staff

Music Trivia Nite will be held Sunday, Jan. 17, at 6:30 p.m., sponsored by Keshet Zion Synagogue and the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks.

This event will highlight trivia from many musical genres, including pop, Broadway, country, rock and even some Israeli/Hebrew, covering the period from the 1950s through the early '90s.

"Trivia Guy" Jim Marlin will direct this virtual show via Zoom.

Prizes will be awarded to the top three finishers. Please register at [www.readingjewishcommunity.org](http://www.readingjewishcommunity.org).

Looking forward to a fun night.

## All Around the the Town

Congratulations to **Aaron Gantz** for being named senior director of economic development by the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance. She will be responsible for management of business attraction, business retention and expansion in Greater Reading. In addition, she will lead efforts to position Berks County as the location of choice for new investments.

\*\*\*

Mazel tov to **Ellen and Don Abramson** on the birth of their granddaughter Ruth Leora Abramson on Nov. 28. Ruth's parents are Joseph and Debbie Abramson.

We love good news about members of our community! Please share it by emailing [Marknem@aol.com](mailto:Marknem@aol.com) or calling the JCC office at 610-921-0624.

Until next time: Shalom!

## 3RD ANNUAL MLK YOUTH DAY OF SERVICE: LUNCH BREAK

### DONATIONS NEEDED

- Boxes of pasta
- Jars of sauce
- Cereal boxes
  - Powerade
- Ramen Noodle
- Mac -n-cheese OR Chef Boyardee individual serving
  - Granola bar
- Snack bag (pretzels/chips)
- Pack of Crackers
- Microwave Popcorn (1 bag)
  - Fruit Snack
  - Applesauce
- Breakfast item (cereal box, pop tart, breakfast bar, etc.)

Donations accepted on day of event or at drop boxes at JCC or IUCC.



CO-SPONSORED BY JEWISH FEDERATION OF READING/BERKS AND IMMANUEL UCC

## Invincible summer

By Carole Robinson

As wintry weather arrives and COVID-19 infections rise across the nation, there is an unprecedented need to provide food for those struggling with food insecurity in America. According to statistics from Helping Harvest, 13% of the population of Berks



County lives in poverty and faces hunger issues. Food insecurity is worse in winter when impoverished families need to make a choice between paying utilities or purchasing food. Many families affected by the pandemic and its economic fallout are seeking food assistance for the first time.

The Jewish Federation is responding to this crisis in our community. Jewish Family Service, in partnership with the Hampden Heights Seventh Day Adventist Church and Helping Harvest, inaugurated a second monthly food pantry on Oct. 28. The pantry, located at the church in Muhlenberg Township, provides food for an underserved area. In October, we served 60 households and in November, the number increased to 75. We expected an even higher number at our December pantry. At the Olivet food pantry, we distributed 17,500 pounds of food to almost 200 households in both November and December.

Both pantries are operating as drive-through pantries to provide food safely and efficiently to our struggling neighbors. Volunteers always wear masks and maintain social distancing whenever possible. Food is distributed on a first come, first serve basis, so many clients arrive early, often before the Helping Harvest trucks get onsite. Volunteers direct the cars to form lines, and recipients are asked to stay in their cars. Although no proof of income or signatures are required, clients are checked in and provide their names, addresses, and number of people in the household. To expedite the loading process, the intake volunteer places a number on the car's windshield indicating the number of separate households in the car. The car then pulls up to the loading area where pre-packaged boxes of shelf-stable food (such as pasta, canned fruit and vegetables, and peanut butter), bags of fresh produce, dairy, and frozen meat are loaded in the trunks of the cars. Once loaded, the car drives off and the next vehicle pulls up.

Our outdoor food pantries, though safe and efficient, present additional challenges. The days of sweltering in the summer heat are a distant memory. Now we encounter frigid weather and freezing extremities. Another big challenge facing our volunteers is how to load food for three or more households in one car! Our loyal volunteers need to be commended for their hard work, their commitment to our mission to feed the hungry, and their unwavering courtesy and compassion shown to food pantry recipients. Thank you to our most recent crew of volunteers — Ellen and Paul Schwartz, Cynthia and George Balchunas, Irving Ehrlich, Annette Peppard, Sam Kabakoff, Raymond Gehring and Mike Robinson.

Many food pantry recipients are grateful



*Clockwise from top left, Jewish Family Service Olivets Food Pantry volunteers George and Cynthia Balchunas and Irving Ehrlich and Paul Schwartz; and a recipient/volunteer at the JFS food pantry at Hampden Heights Seventh Day Adventist Church.*

for our volunteers' hard work and express their appreciation in a variety of ways. One woman placed a hand-written note on her window to "Volunteers": "Thank you for your time and effort in this worthy project." Numerous clients exclaim "God bless!" as they drive off. One young man reached into his pocket, pulled out a small wad of crumpled bills, and insisted on donating it to us. The response that touched me the most came from a small child who couldn't stop squealing with delight when he was handed a new book, donated by the United Way.

Although my toes were numb and my nose was cold, I felt warmed by the support of our volunteers and the gratitude of our clients.

Albert Camus wrote, "In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer." Join me in fostering an "invincible summer" in your heart and in the lives of those most needy by volunteering at one of our food pantries or by donating to the JFS food pantry fund. For more information, contact me at 610-921-0624 or CaroleR@JFReading.org.

# Jewish Family Service

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Home Visitations

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Case Management

Holiday Programs

## Help is available

**Jewish Family Service wants to help Jewish community members who are struggling due to COVID-19. JFS is ready to assist individuals and families facing eviction, utility shut-off, and food scarcity.**

**For assistance, contact Carole or Sari at 610-921-0624.**

**Your phone call to JFS will be kept confidential**

# Jewish Media Summit focuses on need for unity

## Jewish News Syndicate

Media representatives from 30 countries joined online in December to discuss the right of Jews throughout the world to intervene in what's going on in Israel, as well as Israel's new diplomatic ties and the influence of social networks on the hatred of Jews amid the coronavirus.

The Government Press Office, in cooperation with Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, hosted the fourth International Jewish Media Summit on Dec. 7, held virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Minister of Diaspora Affairs Omer Yankelevitch of the Blue and White Party shared the message that "all Jews are responsible for one another is a not just a saying, but a true call to action that during this time, we must connect Jewish communities near and far."

"Today," she related, "in the face of a common crisis, Jews near and far must stand as a united people. Now is the time to leverage our power as a 15-million-strong global family by working together and building new bridges of cooperation ... solidarity is rooted in our texts, our traditions, and is a part of our nature."

"We are a family," she continued, "and in a family, when one hurts, everyone feels the pain. When one succeeds, everyone rejoices. That is one of the secrets and foundations of the Jewish people. Now, solidarity is needed more than ever."

Earlier in 2020, the Blue and White Knesset member introduced a bill that requires consultation with the Diaspora on matters regarding world Jewry, such as religious pluralism, worship at the Western Wall and security.

During a panel titled "Does Your Opinion Matter: Should the Jewish Communities of the World Have a

Voice and a Vote in Israel's Internal Affairs?" a pre-recorded video of Israelis sharing their thoughts on the bill showed more opposition than support for the bill.

However, the speakers unanimously expressed support.

Former Consul General of Israel in New York Dani Dayan characterized the current relationship between Israel and the Diaspora as one described by a lack of knowledge of each other and of proper communication.

"We believe we know them, and they believe they know us, but not so much," he stated, praising the Knesset bill. "I want to hear what my brethren say, though I don't have to agree with them. The process [of consultation] is more important than the outcome."

Ruderman Family Foundation executive director Shira Ruderman said that Israel and world Jewry lack "a common goal."

Moreover, she explained, "Israel is willing to listen to American Jewry only when it comes to donations or lobbying for Israel in Washington, D.C. Most Jews in Israel do not understand American Jewry well enough, and we have lost our shared mission. If Israel really wants to function as the nation-state of the entire Jewish people, this must change."

'Focus on our common destiny' Sandy Cardin, CEO of Our Common Destiny, said that the bill makes world Jewry feel welcome and taken seriously, as well as encourages them to participate in Jewish life. "It will strengthen us as a people, as a nation, and unity is much needed during this physical isolation," he said.

"Israel is the state of the Jewish people no matter where they live—it doesn't mean that they can dictate



Participants in the International Jewish Media Summit listen to an address from Israeli President Reuven Rivlin on Dec. 7. Media representatives from 30 countries took part in the online meeting.

what happens in Israel, but it does mean that they should be consulted before making decisions that affect Jews in other locations," he said.

Cardin added that "it is creating an arena where Jews worldwide can only increase their sense of mutual responsibility and help us focus on issues that help us focus on our common destiny."

He called for Israelis to understand the "great sense of affiliation and connection" that world Jewry has with Israel and for a separation of politics from Jewish peoplehood.

May Samra, director of Enlace Judío—a Mexico-based news site with local, international, Israel and Jewish-related news—expressed that communities in the Diaspora often suffer anti-Semitic attacks and consequences because of Israel's political choices, so it makes sense that they should be able to express an opinion and participate in the process of decision-making.

Addressing how the coronavirus crisis has placed the Jewish identity of hundreds of Jewish communities around the world in genuine danger,

Israel's President Reuven Rivlin said "we have lost many loved ones, have seen many businesses and lives destroyed, shuls and schools have closed, Jewish organizations face difficult choices, and Jewish newspapers have closed."

"The role of the Jewish media is so important," he continued, "not only for helping us all stay connected to our communities but for being the voice of the communities, especially when it comes to fighting anti-Israel hatred and BDS."

Concluding the summit, GPO Director Nitzan Chen said: "The international Jewish Media Summit has become a main platform in which Jewish media leaders from Israel and the world deal with critical issues for the Jewish Diaspora.

"I have no doubt that this summit, especially during the coronavirus crisis, strengthens the bond between the State of Israel and its government and public opinion leaders among dozens of Jewish communities around the world, which desire close ties with decision-makers in Israel."

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# Israeli firm solving the secret plastic recycling

## From onlinenews sources

It's the green industry's dirty little secret: "dirty" plastic can't be recycled. Some 91% of the plastic we put aside for recycling can't actually be recycled because it's dirty.

That means that the plastic mayonnaise or shampoo container you carefully placed in the plastic bin at the curb is most likely headed for landfill rather than being repurposed into something friendlier for the planet.

The same is true for used plastic from agriculture.

And forget about those plastic supermarket bags — they're not recyclable at all.

Indeed, as of 2015, only 9% of the plastic produced in the United States was recycled.

In 2017, the dirty plastic secret burst into the open when China, which used to take the majority of the world's plastic waste, declared that it would accept only "clean" plastic.

Suddenly, cities across the globe had nowhere to send their plastic. Some even began removing recycling bins and pickups.

"The price of plastics has plummeted to the extent that it isn't worth recycling," Jamie Smith, general managers of Green Recycling in the UK, told the *Guardian* newspaper last year. "If China doesn't take plastic, we can't sell it."

Dirty plastic eventually found its way to other parts of Asia — Indonesia and Vietnam in particular — but unless it's meticulously cleaned, which is not economically viable, it usually ends up buried or burned. This has become a huge environmental hazard.

Now an Israeli company has the solution. Israeli recycling firm Alkemy

of Beit She'an has mastered turning dirty plastic into plastic sheeting used in construction to seal surfaces, says Noah Hershcoviz from investment banking firm A-Labs, which has been assisting Alkemy with branding and fundraising.

Hershcoviz adds that 70% of the distributors in Israel selling this type of plastic sheeting "use Alkemy as the main product for their construction clients."

Projects include Israel's growing number of highway tunnels, as well as stadiums and military installations.

"When you use a product for sealing, you want the best product there is. You don't want there to be any breach of water or roots," Hershcoviz explains. "We meet all the standards of the modern construction business."

Alkemy's potential market is large: Allied Market Research estimates the global market for building and construction plastics will be worth \$105 billion by 2025.

Research firm Reports and Data puts the total even higher, at \$128 billion by 2026.

The Alkemy system strings together several off-the-shelf standard industrial machines that, when run according to Alkemy's methodology, heat (without burning) the dirty plastic to "normalize" its texture and form before outputting it into a ready-to-make sealing product.

There's no need to ship the raw plastic to one facility for sorting, another for cleaning and a third to fashion the end product. And its construction-ready plastic sealant products (dubbed Armadillo, Rhino, Cricket and Elephant) are "just



A construction worker using plastic sheeting. Photo courtesy of Alkemy

the tip of the iceberg," Hershcoviz says.

Through partnerships, Alkemy aims eventually to output more sophisticated products — for example, a complete recycled plastic garbage bin, including wheels and hinges — customized for individual market needs.

Alkemy's plastic can be used for any kind of product except those where 100% purity is required — so, no food containers or baby bottles.

"Alkemy found a way to make dirty plastic recycling economically viable so there are no excuses for the continuous addition of plastic that pollutes our planet," Hershcoviz says.

Part of the reason Alkemy's system makes financial sense is that waste sent to a landfill is subject to a "tipping fee" — a tax on the disposal.

Send the same plastic waste to an Alkemy system and the Alkemy partner can waive the tipping fee and share the revenue from the resulting plastic product.

But it's Alkemy that may make the biggest global impact, targeting a mostly untouched market since current plastic recycling systems work mainly with clean "virgin" plastic. And as stricter environmental regulations kick in, Alkemy's true alchemy may be just around the bin.

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Dr. Robert Seesengood (Th.M., Princeton Theological Seminary; Ph.D., Drew University) is Professor of Religious Studies and Associate Dean at Albright College, Reading, PA. He is the author of numerous articles and five books, all on the subject of biblical studies. He's currently at work on *American Standard: The Bible in U.S. Popular Media and Culture* (Blackwell).

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# Jewish groups lay out priorities for Biden, Congress

**From online news sources**

As President-elect Joe Biden's cabinet shapes up and the final few days of the 116th Congress tick by, national Jewish and pro-Israel groups are planning out their agendas for the next administration and new Congress.

Priorities and approaches, laid out in a series of interviews with Jewish Insider, vary from group to group, but frequent themes for at least three — including J Street, the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Federations of North America — unsurprisingly include diplomacy with Iran, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and tackling domestic antisemitism.

Some of the organizations, like JFNA, have communicated with Biden's transition team in the weeks following the election. The group laid out a detailed set of priorities in a memo to Biden's transition team, according to Elana Broitman, JFNA's senior vice president for public affairs, that fall into several categories including COVID relief, increasing nonprofit security funding and fighting anti-Semitism. Broitman added that the organization is pushing legislators to codify the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of anti-Semitism, prioritize healthcare and increase efforts to support Holocaust survivors.

J Street's policy agenda includes reentering the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and deescalating military tensions, rolling back Trump administration actions the organization sees as antithetical to Israeli-Palestinian peace, opposing annexation and settlement expansion and otherwise promoting peace.

Dylan Williams, J Street's senior vice president for policy and strategy, said the Biden administration should take a number of major early steps toward peace, including reestablishing a separate consulate in Jerusalem to serve Palestinians, reissuing State Department guidance on discussing settlements and reinstating and expanding humanitarian aid to the Palestinians, including through the U.N. agency tasked with working with Palestinians.

Williams added that the organization has urged Palestinian leadership to take advantage of the opportunity that this new administration provides and change its policy of paying Palestinian prisoners jailed for terrorist activities — something the Palestinian Authority is reportedly working toward. "I think that you will see a vast amount of opportunity for improvements in U.S.-Palestinian relations, in the event that Palestinian leadership follows through on those discussions," he added.

In the longer term, Williams argued that Congress will be critical in pushing back against "deepening occupation and creeping annexation," and called for legislators to investigate the Trump administration's efforts to "blur the distinction between Israel and the settlements," introducing new measures to clarify that distinction and conducting oversight of how Israel is using American aid.

J Street communications director Logan Bayroff added that he's hopeful the Biden transition team and Congress will signal their commitment to reentering the Iran deal to counter what he described as the Trump administration's efforts to foreclose the possibility of diplomacy with Iran.

"Trump's trying to start a lot of fires and deliberately trying to provoke the Iranians into saying, 'Well, we can't work with any American administration,'" Bayroff said.

The American Jewish Committee, which opposed the JCPOA in 2015, is taking a more restrained approach.

"We had grave concerns about the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," said Jason Isaacson, the group's chief policy and political affairs officer. "We will be urging the Biden administration to work in close coordination with our European and Middle East allies."

The group — in contrast with J Street — will encourage the administration not to "remove from the U.S. negotiating arsenal the leverage that exists because of the sanctions imposed under President Trump," Isaacson added.

AJC intends to focus on two pieces of legislation it supported during the current session of Congress but which Isaacson said are unlikely to pass this year: the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act and the Partnership for Peace Act.

AIPAC declined to discuss its policy agenda until it announces its priorities for the new Congress, but spokesman Marshall Wittmann said: "We look forward to working with the incoming administration and Congress on an agenda of further strengthening the U.S.-Israel relationship and advancing our mutual interests in the region."

Each group will also have to contend with a potentially divided Congress, should Democrats not sweep January's Senate run-offs, and a shrunken Democratic majority in the House, which will likely create hurdles for lawmaking on a range of issues.

While Williams was not optimistic

about the possibility of bipartisan compromise, he noted that a divided Congress is "a situation we've been in for some time."

"I can't point to anything that we're not pushing for anymore, just because the Senate doesn't happen to be held by Democrats," he added.

Leaders from AJC and JFNA highlighted their groups' abilities to work with both Republicans and Democrats.

"AJC has always been an organization that values nonpartisanship, that worked with members of Congress from both sides, administrations of both parties, that hews to the center representing the broad mainstream of the American Jewish community," Isaacson said. "I believe that in the center lie solutions to many of the problems we're discussing." "We've been in the business of advocacy on issues of concern to our community for more than a century... We have found ways over the years to work with leaders on both sides of the Hill and both sides of the aisle," Isaacson continued. "I believe the message from the voters is stop playing games. Try solutions."

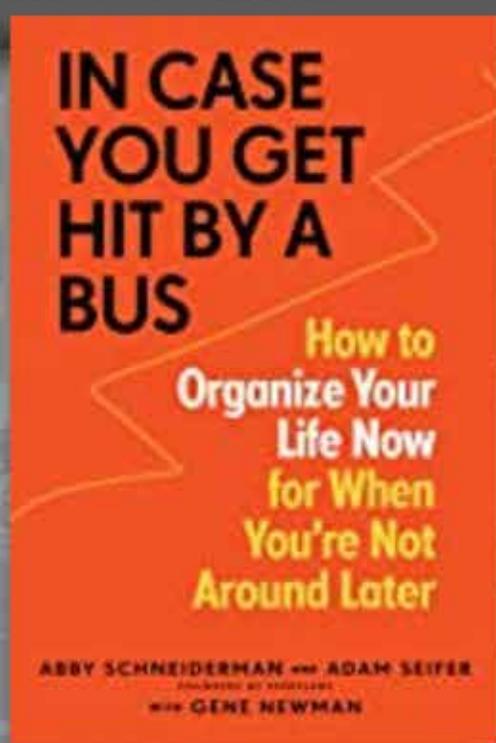
JFNA President Eric Fingerhut said his organization is in a similar position. "Our strength is in bipartisan work," he said, noting JFNA's longstanding relationships with officials in Washington and among state and local legislators. "This is, I think, the moment when the longstanding work of our community to build relationships on all sides comes to fruition," Fingerhut said. "We're in a very strong position to put forward the priorities of the Jewish community... We have leaders who are on both sides of the aisle, and we've always had that."

## In Case You Get Hit by a Bus

by Abby Schneiderman, Adam Seifer, Gene Newman

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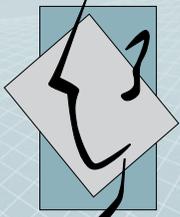
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**Birth of Sharon and Ron Berman's new grandson** – Andy and Corinne Wernick  
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**Birth of Sharon and Ron Berman's new grandson** – Debbie, David, Scott, Mark and Abby Goldberg  
**Marriage of Beth and Bob Caster's son Morty to Carmen Colmenarez** – Debbie Goodman and John Moyer, Anzie and Edward Golden

**Honorials and Memorials**

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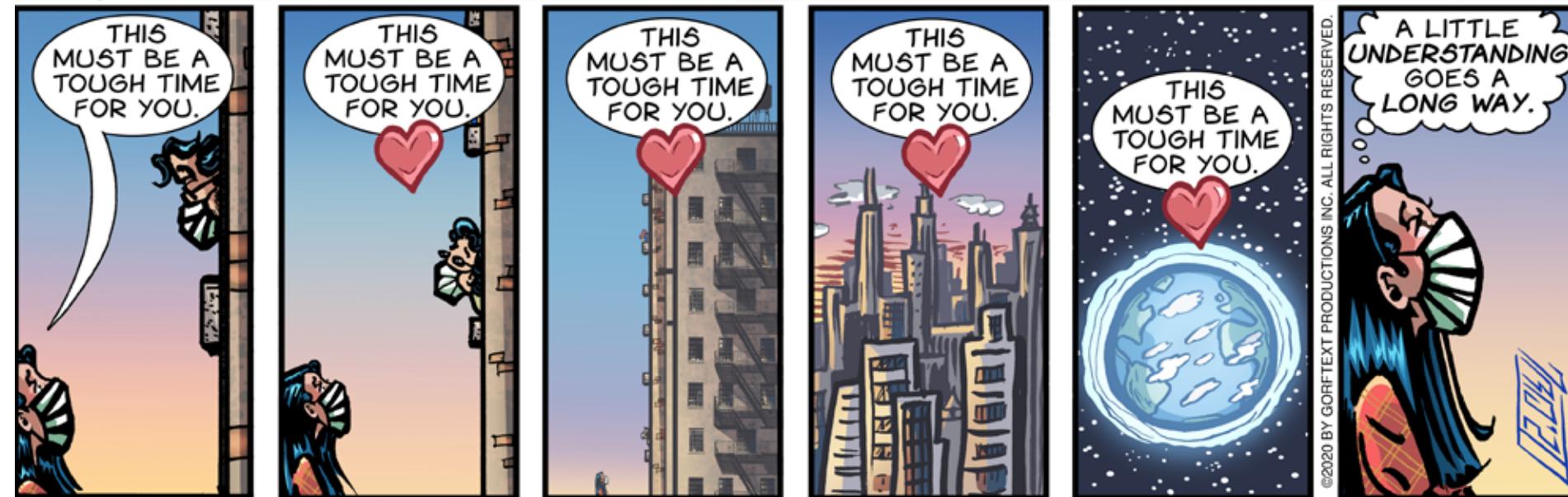
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**Birth of Ellen and Don Abramson's new granddaughter** – Gaye and Glenn Corbin  
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In memory of:  
**Stanley Ferber (Sari Incledon's father)** – Gaye and Glenn Corbin

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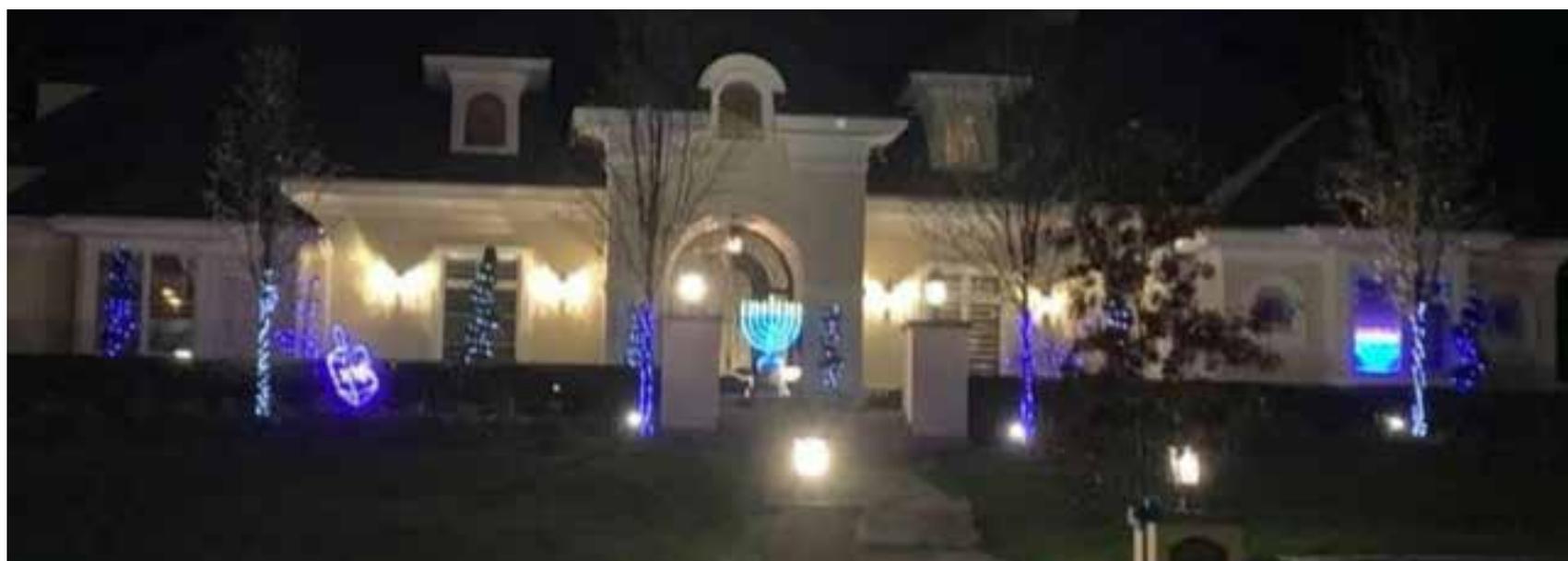
# Bringing light in dark time at Chanukah



*Close to 150 people enjoyed a fantastic fourth night of Chanukah drive-in concert at Chabad. Tuning in to their radios participants could hear the concert streaming. Hot latkes, donuts, hot chocolate and treat bags for the kids were all prepackaged. The cupcake menorah was done a little differently due to an uptick in local COVID-19 cases. Each participant was prepared to get two cupcakes — one to decorate and add to our menorah and the other to decorate and eat. Instead, each person got both to keep and enjoy, and our menorah got a different makeover in order to keep everyone safe. The event was co-hosted by Chabad, Reform Congregation Oheb Shalom and Kesher Zion Synagogue with thanks to the Jewish Federation for their support.*



*A community Chanukah lantern walk on the grounds of the Reading Public Museum on the third night of the Festival of Lights..*



*A holiday decorating change of pace: Chanukah lights at the home of Dr. David Lichten of Wyomissing.*



*Chabad held a donut making class on Zoom along with Chabad of Chester County, left, and a pre-Chanukah mad science show held on Zoom featuring Professor potato latke's entertaining oil, smoke and fire experiments.*