



Shalom04|21

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

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Shabbat B'Yachad

Female resistance is subject of Yom Hashoah keynote

By Amanda J. Hornberger

A major myth of the Holocaust is that the Jews did not put up any resistance to the Nazis. In "The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler's Ghettos," author Judy Batalion brings to light the extraordinary accomplishments of brave Jewish women who became resistance fighters — a group of unknown heroes whose exploits have never been chronicled until now.

The community is invited to gather together on Erev Yom Hashoah on Wednesday, April 7, at 7 p.m. to commemorate Yom Hashoah with Batalion. We will be joined by members of the Bender JCC of Greater Washington for the keynote and candle lighting. Immediately following the keynote you are invited to stay for a reading of names of victims of the Holocaust.

Witnesses to the brutal murder of their families and neighbors and the violent destruction of their communities, a cadre of Jewish women in Poland—some still in their teens—helped transform Jewish youth groups into resistance cells to fight the Nazis. With courage, guile, and nerves of steel, these "ghetto girls" paid off Gestapo guards, hid revolvers in loaves of bread and jars of marmalade and helped build systems of underground bunkers. They flirted with



Judy Batalion

German soldiers; bribed them with wine, whiskey, and home cooking; used their Aryan looks to seduce them; and shot and killed them. They bombed German train lines and blew up a town's water supply. They also nursed the sick and taught children.

Powerful and inspiring, featuring 20 black-and-white photographs, "The Light of Days"

is an unforgettable true tale of war, the fight for freedom, exceptional bravery, female friendship and survival in the face of staggering odds. The book has been optioned by Steven Spielberg for a major motion picture.

If you have a family member who perished during the Holocaust and would like their name read aloud during our event, please email Amanda Hornberger at amandah@jreading.org with the name, age and any other known details by April 5.

Learn more about this unknown Holocaust history when Batalion joins us for a discussion on Wednesday, April 7 at 7 p.m. on Zoom.

Judy Batalion is the author of "White Walls: A Memoir About Motherhood, Daughterhood and The Mess in Between." She has written for *The New York Times*, *Vogue*, *The Washington Post* and many other publications. Prior to her writing career, she was an academic and is fluent in Yiddish and Hebrew.

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.

Vaccine clinic a huge success



Pharmacist Tracy Rossi delivers a COVID-19 vaccination during a community clinic held at the JCC on March 7. She was one of the driving forces behind the event, which vaccinated 320 people. See Page 3 and Pages 10 and 11 for more on the event.

How each of us can make a difference

By Bill Franklin

You can help make a difference.

One way is to support the work of our Jewish Family Service. Carole, Sari, and many volunteers work to give hope to both our Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

Jewish Community

Jewish Family Service (JFS) serves families and individuals struggling with physical or emotional issues of health, aging, relationships or finances. You help people live as independently as possible, ensuring our Jewish neighbors and friends do not become isolated. You help caregivers with aging spouses or parents with adult children

at home. You reassure extended family members who cannot be with their loved ones here in Berks County. You ensure our community members receive services they need. As our senior population ages, you enable JFS to offer ways they can remain engaged with the Jewish community.

The Federation's JFS, with your caring support, helps families and individuals with basic everyday needs. We place a priority on food, health, and shelter by helping to close gaps in utility bills, monthly rent, and medical expenses.

Outside of our Jewish Community

You supply the groceries in partnership

with JFS and Helping Harvest to feed more than 250 families each month at our two Food Pantries. Federation supplements these groceries with donated items like children's books and school supplies. Our pantries are "staffed" by 20 to 40 different volunteers, and new volunteers are always welcome.

As Jews, we know we have an obligation to care for one another. Ensure the safety and health of those around you and the needs of our Jewish community. If you can, please help by giving to the Community Campaign today.

Each of us can make a difference. Together we make change.

Development

Annual Campaign

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L'Chaim Society

Book of Life

Letter of Intent

All-Star Passover Concert scheduled for April 1

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks and PJ Library in Reading are incredibly excited to invite you to a very special musical Passover Seder celebration! Join us for the JKids Radio All-Star

Musical Passover Seder on Thursday, April 1 at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom.

The concert features Jewish kids music superstars Ellen Allard, Shira Kline, Nefesh Mountain, Elana Jagoda, Eliana Light, Rabbi Josh Warshawsky,

Joanie Leeds and Rick Recht!

You can register by visiting our website: <https://readingjewishcommunity.org/>



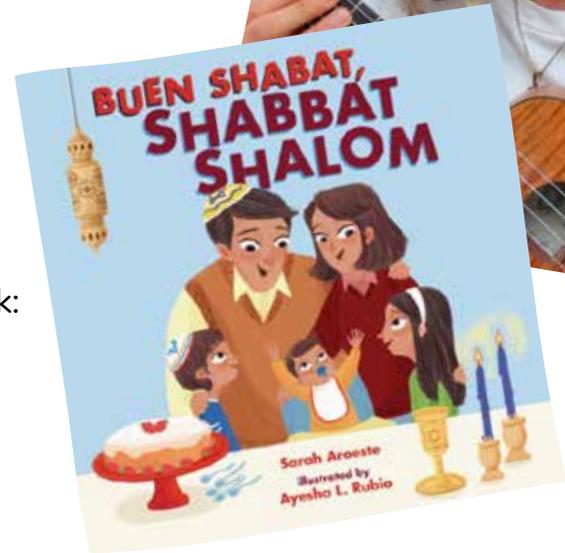
Tot Shabbat & PJ Library Present Ladino Sing Along

Join Sarah Aroeste for some Buen Shabat! Learn about "Magic Jewish Spanish" (also known as Ladino) as Sarah reads from her PJ Library book, "Buen Shabat, Shabbat Shalom", and gets hands clapping and feet dancing with some Sephardic song and fun!

Saturday, April 17, 2021

Zoom Meeting

Time: 10:00 AM



RSVP:

Email RCOS office or Amanda for the link:
temple.office@ohebsholom.org
or
amandah@jfreeding.org



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From the President's Desk

Vaccination event brings sage Jewish wisdom to life

By William D. Franklin
President

Our great sage, Rabbi Hillel, is known for many wise sayings. One of his most famous is:

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?"

This is a prescription for ethical behavior, not only in its content but in its sequence.

First, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" In February, Tracy Rossi, working with Eric Esterbrook of West Reading Drug Store and the Esterbrook Pharmacy, offered to provide and administer more than 300 Covid-19 vaccinations. Our



Jewish Federation, working with Reform Congregation Oheb Shalom, Keshet Zion and Chabad, developed a list of Jewish community members in the 1A category for vaccination. Carole Robinson, Sari Inledon and Brenda Seidel checked our community calendar directory and the JFS client list to make the list as comprehensive as possible. Over 580 community members were contacted by e-mail or phone. We did not receive replies from 216, and we learned 206 Jewish community members had received the vaccine. This left us with 160 Jewish community members to vaccinate. Our first concern was caring for our community.

But "If I am only for myself, who am I?" With our extra vaccines we had the opportunity to share our good fortune and perform a mitzvah. We reached out to our partners in the

Hispanic, Islamic, African-American, and interfaith communities. As a result, 160 members of their communities received the other half of the 320 vaccinations administered by Tracy and her associates. We have received many thank-you notes and several contributions from these very grateful recipients.

And last, "If not now, when?" We were told in early February that most likely we would have 300 or more vaccines available but did not know when or exactly how many. We chose to hold a clinic on a Sunday, put our lists in order, ordered necessary equipment, and established and practiced procedures to efficiently handle 300 people properly receiving vaccinations. On March 2, we were advised that the vaccines had shipped.

On Thursday, March 5, we received them. We sprang into action. Our JFR staff, Tracy Rossi, her pharmacy team and 14 volunteers spent hours calling, filling out required paperwork and managing the logistics three days later, on Sunday, March 7.

We were able to follow Hillel's dictum, and because we were prepared to perform the mitzvah "now". The clinic's success was the result of the intense focus, preparation, and hard work of many people. We are looking forward to working again with Tracy and Eric Easterbrook and our other community institutions to hold several more vaccination clinics. And now that we know what we are doing, we will be ready to do it again.

I am so proud of our volunteers and staff who made it a success. Thank you!

Between Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut

By Adi Shalev

We experience 48 hours of yoyoing between sadness and pride, between difficulty and joy, between sad songs and happy fireworks. Yom Hazikaron, Memorial Day in Israel, is a special day. Even if we do not know any of the IDF's fallen soldiers, and it seems that everyone knows someone, we all experience it with great force.

Erev Yom Hazikaron begins with a memory siren lasting one minute at 8 p.m. and continues with memorial ceremonies in every city and TV programs in memory of the fallen, one after the other. Communal "singing evenings" with Yom Hazikaron songs take place everywhere. Sometimes it is hard to see because of the tears, and sometimes you cannot even sing along.

My uncle Rafi, Zikrono Livrakha, was an IDF officer. He died 33 years ago in a tragic car accident while on duty. Every year, on Yom Hazikaron, my uncle's boarding school holds a ceremony in memory of the fallen soldiers who attended the school. This is the place where we go to hear the siren and attend the ceremony.

On the day of Yom Hazikaron, most people, including my family, go to a military cemetery. A two-minute siren at 11 a.m. opens the memorial ceremonies at each military cemetery. Tens of thousands of people and masses of soldiers honor the memories of the fallen by placing memorial wreaths, saying kaddish, and remembering them with stories. Next to each grave, there will always be two soldiers to remember and respect the fallen in case this soldier does not have anyone to come. Imagine thousands of people in each cemetery.

On Erev Yom Hazikaron, all places of

entertainment, colleges, stores, and most workplaces close early, so people have time to attend a ceremony in the evening. The unique atmosphere starts then and continues throughout Yom Hazikaron. The air feels heavy, the radio plays only Yom Hazikaron-oriented songs, and on the TV there are only shows related to Yom Hazikaron and to the soldiers' stories. Every school holds a ceremony. Everyone stops what he or she is doing, even if driving, and stands while the siren is on, to respect and remember.

After everyone is back from Yom HaZikaron ceremonies, Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations start in the evening with the Torch Lighting Ceremony broadcast from Jerusalem. This marks the closure of the Yom Hazikaron commemorations and the opening of Independence Day celebrations. The ceremony is held at the burial site of Theodor Herzl. The ceremony is designed to give the day a dignified but festive atmosphere. Twelve torches, symbolizing the Twelve Tribes of Israel, are lit by people who are seen to have made an outstanding contribution to society. This is the ceremony's main highlight. There are also music performances, dances, parades and fireworks.

In addition to the official ceremony, people get together in private parties or in parks and watch performances and more fireworks organized by each city. The next day, the 5th of Iyar, friends and families get together, usually for BBQ, the world Bible quiz is broadcast on TV, the streets are decorated in blue and white, and everyone just spends the day together, enjoying each other and our country.

In just a few moments from Yom Hazikaron to Yom Ha'atzmaut we switch from sadness to joy. Every year, there are many questions. Is it humanly possible to

make such a sharp switch from sadness to joy? How do bereaved families, such as mine, manage to celebrate? Should a weekday be between the two special days to allow for recovery?

Many people say that this balance between sadness and joy is what it is all about. There is an inseparable connection between the sacrifice of the soldiers' lives and our lives in an independent state. This connection symbolizes the complexity of life itself, which naturally and often instantaneously moves between sadness and joy. "And in their deaths they ordered us to live," as Haim Nachman Bialik said. We honor, remember, and cherish them while doing our best to make our small country a wonderful place to live.

I do have some issues with the sharp transition from Yom Hazikaron to Yom Ha'atzmaut. I see how difficult and painful it is to make that transition. On the other hand, I understand the unbreakable connection between these two important days, that in a lot of ways symbolize my country.

I invite you all to attend our community Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut programs:

- Tuesday, Erev Yom Hazikaron, April 13 at 7 pm: we will have a ceremony in honor of the fallen IDF soldiers and victims of terror.

- Wednesday, Yom Hazikaron, April 14 at 7 p.m.: we will have a "Taste of Memory" program where we will get

to hear the story of Guy Boyland Z"L, who died during Operation Tzuk Eitan (Operation Protective Edge), and we will bake his favorite dessert —chocolate cake.

- Thursday, Yom Ha'atzmaut, April 15 between 4:30 and 7 p.m.: Yom Ha'atzmaut drive-thru celebration with a kosher Israeli food truck, Yom Hazikaron & Yom Ha'atzmaut exhibition, gift bag (pre-registration required) and Israeli music!

- Sunday, April 18 at 1 p.m.: special Israeli baking class with the Israeli Pastry chef Lior Mashlach, where we will learn how to bake Kubaneh, a traditional Yemenite Jewish pull-apart yeast bread.

- Wednesday, April 21 at 7 p.m.: special Israeli baking class with the Israeli chef Shay Golan (who won the tv show "Bake-off Israel"), where we will learn how to make Krembo, a chocolate-coated marshmallow treat that is popular in Israel (I LOVE Krembo and don't know anyone who doesn't).

- Sunday, April 25 at 1 p.m.: we will learn about the Good Neighbor Directorate, how it affects the relationship with the Syrian civilians today and other current projects of the IDF.

See Pages 8 and 9 for more information.

I invite you to join me to remember, honor and celebrate, because this is what we do.

Hope to see you then.

Shalom

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It's Simcha Supplement time

If you had or are having a bar/bat mitzvah or graduation (high school or higher) in your family this Jewish year, share the good news with the community. Please submit a few sentences about the person and their accomplishment, along with a photo.

Text and photos can be sent to Marknem@aol.com or to the Federation office.

DEADLINE IS APRIL 30.

Lunch and laugh at April Literatour Berks event

By Amanda J. Hornberger

She owns the only restaurant in Chelm. He's the wisest man in the village of fools. Together, they make an unlikely and lovable pair. They've known each other forever. Finally they manage to connect.

This is not your grandfather's village of Chelm. Yes, the people are often foolish, but their hearts are in the right places. Chelm is a vibrant community with vivid and colorful characters and problems that are relevant today.

Come and laugh and hear the joyful stories of Chelm with author Mark Binder on Thursday, April 22, at noon on Zoom. We invite you to bring your lunch and join us for this funny and lighthearted program!

Binder writes and tells stories for readers and listeners of all ages. A finalist for the National Jewish Book Award for Family Literature, he is the author of more than



two dozen books and audio books for all generations. He tours the world as a performer, transmitting the joy of story across boundaries.

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.



Mark Binder

Mossad rescue mission featured in book program

By Amanda J. Hornberger

In the early 1980s, on a remote part of the Sudanese coast, a new luxury resort opened for business. Catering to divers, it attracted guests from around the world. Little did the guests know that the staff members were undercover spies working for Mossad — the Israeli secret service.

Written by longtime BBC Middle East correspondent Raffi Berg, "Red Sea Spies: The True Story of Mossad's Fake Diving Resort," tells the true story that inspired the recent Netflix drama "The Red Sea Diving Resort." What began with one cryptic message pleading for help turned into the secret evacuation of thousands of Ethiopian Jews and the spiriting of them to Israel.

Learn more about this amazing Israeli story when Berg joins Literatour Berks for a



Raffi Berg and Dani Limor

discussion on Sunday, April 11 at 10 a.m. on Zoom.

Berg will be joined by Dani Limor, a member of Mossad who was active in this mission. Limor served 25 years in the Mossad, with activities including leading the secret operation that evacuated Ethiopian Jews from Sudan to Israel at the command of Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Before

joining Mossad, he was an officer in the Israeli paratroopers, and he fought in four of Israel's wars. He is a founder of the Nachshon School for Social Leadership and is mapping emerging Jewish communities around the world for the Ministry of the Diaspora.

Raffi Berg is the Middle East editor of the BBC News website and has extensive experience reporting on Israel and the wider region. His article, scratching the surface of this story, was the most-read original feature in the history of the site, with more than 5.5 million readers to date.

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.

Intergenerational story time for PJ Library kids

By Amanda J. Hornberger

In "Sadie's Shabbat Stories," Sadie loves listening to Nana's tales, especially about the traveling candlesticks, Kiddush cup, and challah cover they use every Friday night. Will Sadie ever be able to tell her own special Shabbat stories, just like Nana? Based on true stories, this picture book celebrates family history and connections.

Grandparents are encouraged to invite out-of-town grandchildren to join them on Zoom for

this intergenerational story time sponsored by PJ Library.

Grandkids invite your Bubbe and Zayde to join you!

Author Melissa Stoller will be joining us for this fun story time on Sunday, April 25, at 4 p.m. on Zoom.

Stoller is the author of children's books



Melissa Stoller

including "The Enchanted Snow Globe Collection: Return to Coney Island" and "Sadie's Shabbat Stories." She has worked as a lawyer, freelance writer and early childhood educator.

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.

Child of Holocaust survivors to discuss memoir

The following was published at jewishbookcouncil.org. This book will be featured in an April 5 Literatour Berks event.

By Donald Weber

"For much of my adult life I have been haunted by the presence of absence," confesses Esther Safran Foer at the end of her deeply moving memoir, "I Want You to Know We're Still Here." Foer was born in a displaced-persons camp in Lodz, Poland, in 1946 to parents who had managed to evade death—through sheer luck in the case of her mother, Ethel ("My mother spent the war on the run," Foer recounts), and through the brave actions of righteous gentiles, who helped her father, Louis, escape invading Nazis after they massacred most of the Jews living in his Ukrainian shtetl, Trochenbrod (an incident detailed by Foer's son, Jonathan Safran Foer, in his 2002 novel "Everything Is Illuminated").

Growing up in Washington, D.C., Esther Safran Foer felt the disabling weight of her parents' silence about the war. Above all, she was haunted by her father's suicide, which happened in 1954, when she was a young girl. "His death became part of the family canon of unspeakable stories" she tells the reader.

Rather than ignore the repressed horrors her relatives experienced, Foer chose to become "the keeper of memory," the collector of "shards of memory," the historian investigating family trauma. "Finding these links," she writes, "is my calling."

"How do you remember someone who has left no trace?" Foer asks at the beginning of her narrative. How exactly did he survive? What happened to his family—his first family, which he had before he met Foer's mother after the war?

Finding the answers involves both luck and endless detective work; she travels to Brazil, Argentina, Israel, and Ukraine in order to seek out Holocaust survivors who might fill in gaps in memory. The emotional core of "I Want You to Know We're Still Here" recounts Foer and her journalist son Franklin's pilgrimage to the former shtetls of Kolki and Trochenbrod. Mother and son imagine the once vibrant life of her parents' and grandparents' world in Eastern Europe, before the Shoah. The result is a poignant narrative of return and rededication, a physical and spiritual teshuvah to the site of family origins.

"I Want You to Know We're Still Here" is a beautifully written account of a relentless

journey to the genealogical—indeed geographic—core of family trauma to uncover mysteries buried in the mass graves of an old-world shtetl. The memoir concludes with a new-world birth—a grandson who carries Foer family history in his name and soul—symbolizing the promise of the next generation. In uncovering the past, Foer demonstrates how memory can, therapeutically, fill an aching absence.

Hear about this lost family history when Esther Safran Foer joins Literatour Berks on Monday, April 5, at 7 p.m. on Zoom.

You can register by visiting <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.



Esther Safran Foer

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

Community spirit on display at big events

Community traditions remained very much alive in late February and early March thanks to a strong community effort. A drive-in Purim celebration was held at Chabad with involvement from the entire community. Our March Community Shabbat was reimaged with materials and meals for Friday night available to be picked up in advance and enjoyed at home. A Havdalah service was held outside at 555 Warwick Drive, followed by a special online concert by Nefesh Mountain.





Lishmor Al HaOlam: Guarding the planet Let's talk trash!

By Solange Israel-Mintz and Andi Franklin

Whenever Bill Franklin takes out the trash, Andi always has to tell him, "That's not recyclable ... That is recyclable ... You didn't rinse the food out well enough!" Since he clearly did not understand the ins and outs, pardon the pun, of recycling, we thought we would do some research to educate him. But we were the ones who got educated.

The first step was to talk to someone at Berks County Solid Waste Management. We were told that there are 73 municipalities in Berks County serviced by 25 haulers for their curbside pickups. Each of the haulers uses multiple pickup drivers and recycling plants. To make life more complicated, each of the plants has its own specific rules on what is and is not acceptable for recycling.

The next step was to call J.P. Mascaro & Sons, one of the major haulers in our area. The first person said, "We recycle everything!" Follow-up specific questions resulted in him saying that they recycled dirty pizza boxes, plastic grocery bags and even foam packaging. Knowing that this wasn't right, we called back to speak to a different person. She replied "No" to all of the above and more, then reiterated that it depends on the individual pickup driver and the recycling plant to which he or she takes the recyclables. It is also up to the driver to decide whether to take it to a recycling plant or to landfill.

Still hoping to get some clarity on the issue, we contacted Wyomissing Borough Hall. The woman there laughed and said that they have guidelines, but they often change. For example, they recently decided to accept flexible, plastic snack bags. But this is experimental, and residents must first receive a letter of notification. However, borough recycling pickup is only for single-family homes and buildings with four or less families.

Despite the lack of specific direction from our municipalities and haulers, there are some generally acceptable standards:

- Clean and dry, unplasticized cardboard and paper products such as newspapers, stationery and shipping cartons are recyclable.
- Clean and dry glass containers are recyclable, but crystal, Pyrex, mirrors, and light bulbs are generally not.
- Clean and dry aluminum containers are recyclable.



- Clean and dry plastic containers with recycle numbers 1 and 2 are recyclable. The other numbers ... not always.
- Dirty food containers such as pizza boxes, jars with peanut butter or bottles with oil are generally not accepted
- Disposable diapers, Styrofoam, flip flops and plastic grocery bags are usually not accepted.
- If in doubt, throw it in the trash because an item that is not accepted by your specific recycling plant will cause the entire bin to be redirected to landfill.

The best advice is to speak with your local hauler and specific pickup driver to learn exactly what you

may and may not recycle. The tremendous number of variables has created confusion among conscientious recyclers and results in mistakes that contaminate the recycling stream. In a perfect world, recycling would be standardized and simple, but we are clearly not there yet.

Here is another action we can take to contribute to "Tikkun Olam" when considering the environment. Suggest, support and lobby for simplified, standardized and regulated recycle legislation.

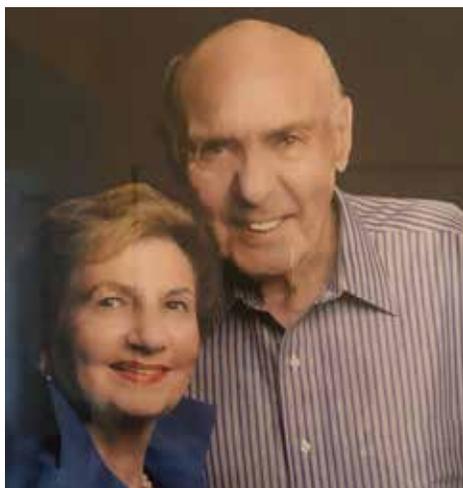
In our next column we will discuss socially responsible investing which benefits our environment and us.

All Around the Town

A hearty Mazel Tov to **Esther and Sid Bratt**, who will be celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary on April 7.

We love good news about members of our community! Please share it by emailing Marknem@aol.com or calling 610-921-0624.

Until next time: Shalom!



Obituaries

Eve M. Pardo, 67, of Reading. Eve pursued art at William Smith College and spent a year abroad in Italy. She studied fashion design at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York and worked at Wamsutta as a textile designer and colorist.

She was very involved at Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom, serving several decades as a teacher in the religious school, a member of the choir and Sisterhood. Eve also worked as a learning support paraprofessional in the Wyomissing School District for 19 years.

She loved nature, cooking, world travel and studying genealogy. Eve used her artistic talents to create beautiful ketubot (marriage certificates) for family and friends.

Eve is survived by her husband, Michael; her daughter Sarah and her

husband, Niall O'Donnell; and son Daniel and his wife, Chrissy. Other survivors include her two grandchildren and a sister, Debbie.

Edith Mendelsohn, 103, a longtime resident of the Manor at Market Square, who previously lived in Wyomissing and Pennside, died on March 17.

Edith was born in Philadelphia, married Reading native Milt Mendelsohn in 1939 and moved to Reading.

Edith worked in the investment department of American Bank and was a regular at the Reading Symphony and the JCC Bridge group. She was a longtime member of Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom. Sadly she was predeceased by her husband, Milt, and children Susan and Jimmy. She is survived by three grandchildren, one great grandchild, and a large extended family.

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The difference between horror and inconvenience

By Rabbi Brian Michelson
Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom



As we prepare to commemorate Yom HaShoah April 7-8, I want to share some thoughts about Anne Frank. During the pandemic I have reflected on her and her family's experience as a way of giving perspective to our current situation. I use the Franks as an example because their story is well-known. However, the same could be said to many others who hid during the Shoah.

Anne, her family, and four others lived in a secret annex over a factory

that was 450 square feet. (New York City has regulations that prevent apartments from being built smaller than 400 square feet.) They did this for just over 25 months. There was one bathroom for eight people. She shared her room with an older, male stranger. Food and assorted necessities were brought in by four trusted people who risked their lives supplying the Jews in hiding.

During the day the Franks and their roommates wore socks and remained quiet so as not to alert those in the factory below of their presence. At night they put up black-out curtains so a passerby would not see light coming from a factory after hours. In the evening they listened to an old, crackling radio for music and news.

In the street below banners with

Swastikas flapped in the wind and goose-stepping Nazis marched daily past their concealed residence at Westermarkt 20.

They remained in hiding until betrayed and deported to Auschwitz in a cattle car. Upon arrival, Anne was disinfected, shaven, and tattooed. Soon after she died of dysentery with her sister in Bergen-Belsen. Her family was lost except for her father, who survived.

I will not argue that we are living in challenging times. However, they pale in comparison to what others had to endure to survive savagery beyond our imaginations. We are lucky there are no lineups for the bathrooms in our homes. Some of us have empty bedrooms and space that goes unused. We have ample food that we can even have delivered. We

can afford to eat steak and end the day with a happy hour. Even in bad weather, we can walk outside and breathe fresh air. We pass our chatty neighbors and cherish the warming, noonday sun, Netflix, and the internet. Podcasts entertain us. We Zoom across the globe visiting loved ones. We can enjoy drive-by honks in celebration of birthdays, graduations, and anniversaries. We do not hear the marching of boots outside our doors.

As we commemorate the millions who perished, who suffered unspeakable torment, let us learn from our current situation the hardships of those who lived and died during the Shoah. May we truly understand the difference between horror and inconvenience.

Purim gifts greatly appreciated

Jewish Family Service appreciates Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom's donation of mishloach manot. Thanks to you, JFS delivered gift bags of hamantaschen to residential facilities and appreciative seniors throughout the community.



Keshher Zion Synagogue



PASSOVER 2021/5781

Saturday, April 3

Virtual KZ Passover Shabbat Services at 9:30 a.m.

Sunday, April 4

Virtual KZ Passover Services 9:30 a.m. with Yizkor

KZ Passover Services will be virtual, to participate click the Zoom link below:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85631162395?pwd=ZEZRZzQ2T1VOc2RtY0NxMTNXRjBSQT09>

Meeting ID: 856 3116 2395

Passcode: 094357

Keshher Zion Synagogue

555 Warwick Drive

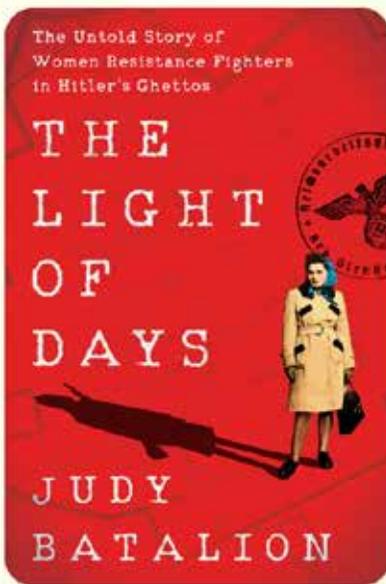
Wyomissing, PA 19610

www.keshherzion.org

Office: (610) 374-1763

Fax: (610) 927-6248

Yom Hashoah Commemoration Featuring Memorial Candle Lighting & Author Judy Batalion



Join us for our annual commemoration of the Holocaust, Yom Hashoah.

Following a candle lighting hear the true, untold story of women resistance fighters during WWII.

Powerful and inspiring, featuring twenty black-and-white photographs, *The Light of Days* is an unforgettable true tale of war, the fight for freedom, exceptional bravery, female friendship, and survival in the face of staggering odds.

Wednesday, April 7th at 7:00 pm

To register scan the QR code:



If Flame Falls on Cedars, Women Leaders Will Put Out The Fire: The Biblical Deborah Reimagined

Wendy Zierler, Ph.D.,
 Sigmund Falk Professor of Feminist Studies and Modern Jewish Literature, HUC/New York

**THURS., APRIL 22
 1:00 PM ET**

Register at huc.edu/HUCConnect

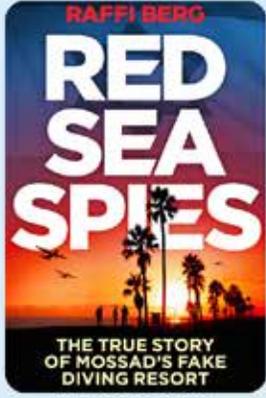


In partnership with HUC-JIR



YOM HAZIKARON & YOM HA'ATZMAUT PROGRAMS

Meet Dani Limor, Retired Mossad Commander with Author Raffi Berg



Written by longtime BBC Middle East correspondent Raffi Berg, "Red Sea Spies", tells the true story that inspired the recent Netflix drama "The Red Sea Diving Resort".

What began with one cryptic message pleading for help, turned into the secret evacuation of thousands of Ethiopian Jews and the spiriting of them to Israel.

Berg will be joined by Dani Limor, a member of Mossad who was active in this mission. Limor served 25 years in the Mossad, with activities including leading the secret operation which evacuated Ethiopian Jews from Sudan to Israel at the command of Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Before joining the Mossad, he was an officer in the Israeli paratroopers and he has fought in four of Israel's wars.

Sunday, April 11th at 10:00 am

To register scan the QR code:



Yom Hazikaron Community Ceremony

On Tuesday, April 13, at 7:00 pm, Erev Yom HaZikaron, we will commemorate IDF soldiers and victims of terror. Join us for the community Yom HaZikaron Memorial Ceremony.

For Israelis, this is one of the most important days of the year as we recognize those who sacrificed their lives for our great country. We see it as our opportunity and responsibility to share the meaning of this day.

Tuesday, April 13th at 7:00 pm

To register scan the QR code:



Taste of memories

Taste of Memories is a commemoration project for fallen IDF soldiers and victims of terrorism. We will connect in a moving cooking experience in memory of Israel's fallen.

In the meeting, we will talk about Guy Boyland Z"L, who died during Operation Tzuk Eitan (Operation Protective Edge).

We will share Guy's story, learn about his passions, and his IDF story.

In honor of Guy, we will bake his favorite dish, which is a simple, sweet, homey chocolate cake.

Wednesday, April 14th at 7:00 pm

To register scan the QR code:



YOM HA'ATZMAUT DRIVE THRU CELEBRATION



Israeli food truck

Tofu Shawarma, Sabich, Falafel, Bourkas, Shakshuka, Moroccan soup. *Kosher



Yom Ha'atzmaut gift bag

*Pre-registration required



Yom Hazikaron & Yom Ha'atzmaut exhibition



Israeli music

**THURSDAY, APRIL 15TH
4:30-7:00 PM**

RCOS/ KS parking lot.
555 Warwick Dr, Wyomissing, PA 19610

*Masks are required.

*Pre-registration required for the Yom Ha'atzmaut gift bag



YOM HAZIKARON & YOM HA'ATZMAUT PROGRAMS



ISRAELI BAKING CLASSES Chef Lior Mashiach

ISRAELI BAKING CLASSES Chef Shay Golan

Lior Mashiach is an Israeli Pastry chef, who lives in Tel Aviv. Lior has worked in the food industry for the past 10 years. She studied the art of classic pastry and bread baking at The International Culinary Center in Manhattan, NY, and has worked in well-known restaurants in New York, Israel, and the number 1 restaurant in the world, NOMA.

Shay Golan, an Israeli chef who won the Israeli tv show- Bake-off Israel, will teach us how to make his signature Krembo.

Krembo is a chocolate-coated marshmallow treat that is popular in Israel and in the class we will learn how to make all the elements: crispy biscuits, real vanilla cream, and the hot chocolate cover!

Lior will teach us how to make **Kubaneh**, a traditional Yemenite Jewish pull-apart yeast bread.

Sunday, April 18th at 1:00 pm

Wednesday, April 21st at 7:00 pm

To register scan the QR code:



To register scan the QR code:



IDF- Good Neighbor

Lieutenant Colonel (Res.) Eyal Dror is a former IDF officer who spent 24 years in the IDF. Eyal spent the majority of his service time in coordination and liaison units working with the Palestinian population. From 2016-2018, Eyal established and commanded the **Good Neighbor Directorate** - an operational unit under the IDF Northern Command - whose function was the management of humanitarian assistance to 250,000 Syrian civilians, in the Israeli Syrian border area, who were severely affected by the civil war in Syria. In his lecture, Eyal will talk about the achievements of the operation, how it affects the relationship with the Syrian civilians today and what other project the IDF is involved in these days.

Sunday, April 25th at 1:00 pm

To register scan the QR code:



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James G. Barrer, DMD Douglas W. White, DMD



A big crowd lines up outside the JCC for our March 7 COVID-19 vaccine clinic.

JFS, Federation mark COVID anniversary by hosting a vaccine clinic

By Carole Robinson

It's hard to believe that it has been a full year since the world came to a halt and turned our lives upside down. The COVID-19 pandemic swept into Berks County in March 2020, and on the anniversary of its arrival, I took a moment to pause and reflect on this tumultuous past year. What I'm particularly proud of is how the Jewish Federation rose to the challenge to help those who needed it the most. This past year, I have highlighted several new initiatives that Jewish Family Service created and today, I wanted to share our latest program — a vaccine clinic.



JFS recognized that we had a problem on our hands. Since the vaccine became available in January, JFS has been fielding desperate calls from community members anxious for the vaccine. Over 3.5 million Pennsylvanians qualify to receive the vaccine in Phase 1A, but the rollout has been slow as the vaccine distribution has been limited and very chaotic. To compound the issue, older people who are not tech savvy or do not have access to the internet have been experiencing difficulties getting the vaccine, as available time slots quickly fill up with those who are computer literate.

Looking at the staggering data of how COVID-19 is affecting the elderly population — 98% of Pennsylvania deaths from COVID-19 (23,615 as of March) were of people 50 and older — the Jewish Federation knew we had to help. Federation board member and pharmacist Tracy Rossi was unwavering in her determination to provide a vaccine clinic for the Jewish elderly community, enlisting her employer, Esterbrook Pharmacy and the West Reading Drug Store, to provide the vaccine.

The Jewish Federation quickly leaped into action, forming a Vaccination Committee, headed by Jeff and Sheila Bornstein and Tracy Rossi. We had a month of organizational meetings, determining logistics, formulating lists of community members and praying the vaccine would arrive as promised. Volunteers were enlisted to place phone calls to those seniors without email, often calling repeatedly until they were able to speak directly to the person. After contacting as many of our seniors as we could, we offered vaccines to the Hispanic, Islamic, African American and interfaith communities, along with our fellow tenants at 1100 Berkshire Blvd.

Our COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic was held on Sunday, March 7, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. We were able to provide vaccines for 320 people, including seven shut-ins. This amazing event would not have been possible without our hard-working volunteers. Thank you to pharmacists Tracy Rossi and Tom Mancuso, Dr. Nicholas Rossi, Dr. Linda Bloom and Dr. Karen Wang for administering the vaccine. We also



Michael Farrara gets his COVID-19 vaccine.



Jeff Bornstein assists Mike Pardo at the check-in desk.

appreciate the dedication of our clinic volunteers: Sheila and Jeff Bornstein, Ann Marie Ferguson, Andi Franklin, Jennifer Koosed, Paul Missan, Jim Rothstein, Nancy Russo, Pam Russo and Sharon Scullin. Thank you to phone callers Sheila Bornstein, Sue Farrara, Haia Mazuz, and Andi Wallach for their perseverance and to photographer Michael Farrara. I would also like to thank Brenda Seidel for her invaluable help making our clinic a success.

We apologize if we inadvertently failed to contact you. This clinic reinforced the Federation's need to have up-to-date contact information. We did not have time to send out a mailing and needed to contact people by email

or phone. Unfortunately, some of our contact information is out of date. Please make sure that we have your correct phone number and email so that we can contact you quickly. If you have an unlisted number, we promise not to publish or share it; it will only be used for emergencies or special circumstances, such as a COVID vaccine clinic.

As Duke Ellington said, "A problem is a chance for you to do your best." I am proud to be part of JFS and the Jewish Federation, working with our team of volunteers to do our best to meet the needs of the Jewish community, as well as the larger Berks community during this pandemic.

Community expresses thanks for vaccine opportunity

Dear Mr. Franklin:

I was one of the people who received a COVID vaccine last Sunday at the Jewish Federation. I can't tell you how relieved I was to get a phone call telling me to come in and get the vaccine. The friendliness and efficiency of your volunteers were outstanding.

I have included a check for the Federation in appreciation of your act of kindness and help for the community in combatting this horrendous disease.

**Sincerely,
Sheila Konczewski**

Dear Mr. Franklin:

We wanted to thank you for offering COVID vaccines today. It was very kind of you to open the vaccinations to workers at 1100 Berkshire. Some feel that a huge weight has been lifted off our shoulders, and we were on every list imaginable in the county.

Please accept the enclosed as a token of our appreciation for your Cultural Center. Thank you again to you and your staff.

**Sincerely,
Alan and Susan Ehrlich**

Dear William,

Through your prompt and thoughtful action. I am much relieved having gotten the first dose of Moderna vaccine by the Esterbrook team at the JCC this afternoon.

It could not have been a better run operation replete with entertaining comments of applicants stumbling over the vaccine application question: "Are you pregnant?!" That would be a miracle was one response that made me laugh.

My partner in line was a delightful octogenarian leaning on his cane, yet stoic, and visibly relieved to be getting his vaccine today after, like me, turned away from countless other sites.

It was such a diverse crowd brought together under JCC's roof today — a

real tribute to your community outreach and no doubt you scooped up many who would have had little luck getting the vaccine.

I'll be pleased to make a donation to continue your good work.

**Very grateful,
Tim Flowers**

Dear Carole and JCC staff:

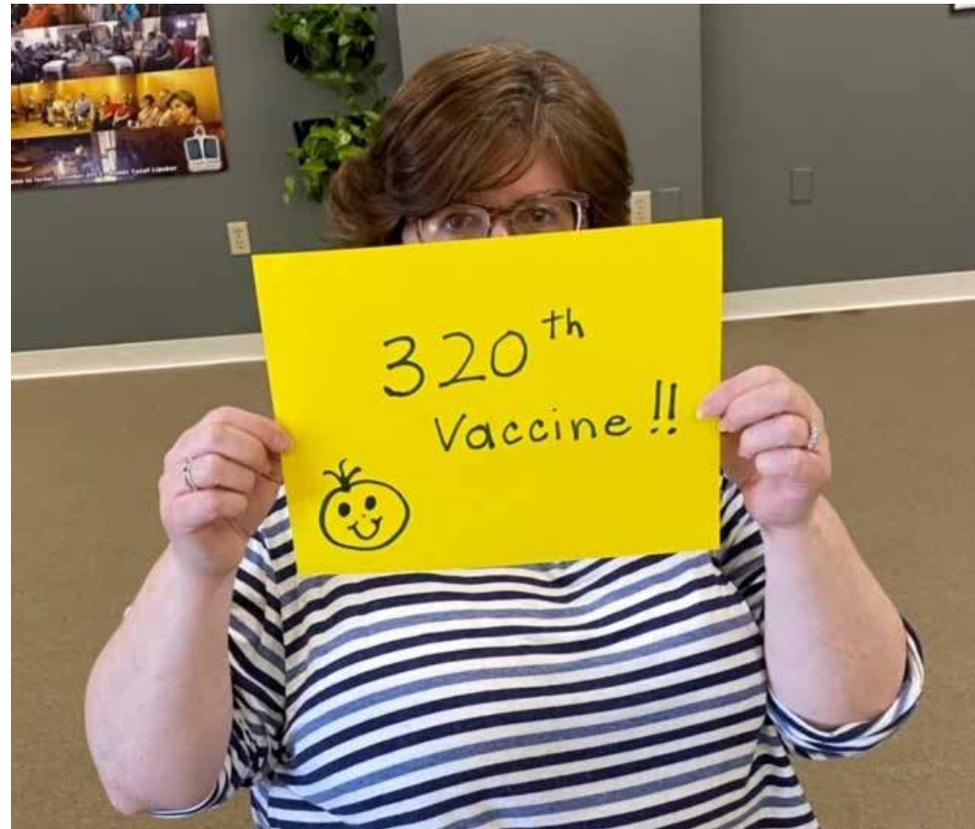
THANK YOU so much for all the time and effort you put in to arrange the COVID vaccine clinic for our community.

THANK YOU even more (and to Tracy) for giving hope and solutions to our homebound population. I don't know if or how I would have been able to get my mom vaccinated without you!

Andi



Dr. Linda Bloom and Dr. Karen Wang.



Last shot of the day.

Kol HaKavod (Bravo) to RCOS

Congratulations to Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom, which was recognized by the Berks County Commissioners for hosting a community COVID-19 testing event.

COUNTY OF BERKS, PENNSYLVANIA
Office of the Commissioners

Services Center, 13th Floor
833 Court Street
Reading, PA 19601

Phone: 610.478.6136
Fax: 610.478.6293
E-mail: commissioners@countyofberks.com

Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair
Kevin S. Barnhardt, Vice Chair
Michael S. Rivera, Commissioner

Ronald R. Seaman, Chief Administrative Officer
Christine M. Sadler, Solicitor
Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk

February 22, 2021

Mr. Nic Cohen, President
Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom
555 Warwick Drive
Wyomissing, PA 19610

Dear Mr. Cohen:

We would like to express our appreciation to you and your congregation for your generous offer to host the COVID-19 testing event held in Berks County from February 13th – February 17th of this year.

Your support allowed many residents of Berks County to receive this vital testing in an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. We understand that this event may have caused interruptions in your normal daily activities and are appreciative of your tolerance of these changes. The hospitality of your congregation in providing the use of your parking area, along with access to work and break areas within your facility, was instrumental in the success of this effort.

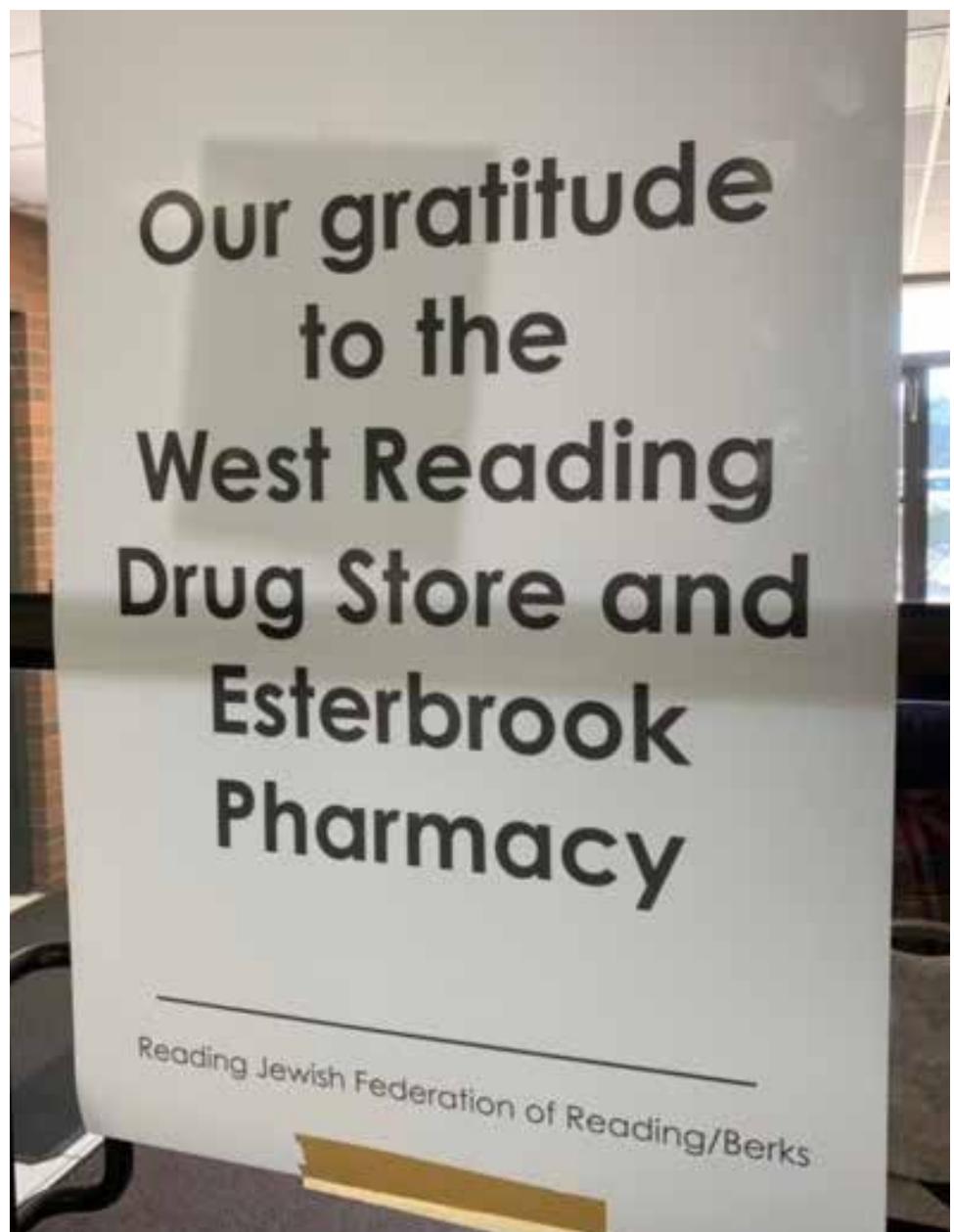
Please pass on to your leadership, congregation, and staff, our gratitude for their understanding and for their willingness in making these facilities available. Public/private partnerships such as this have been, and continue to be, instrumental in the community response to COVID-19.

Sincerely,
Berks County Board of Commissioners

Christian Y. Leinbach
Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair

Kevin S. Barnhardt
Kevin S. Barnhardt, Vice Chair

Michael S. Rivera
Michael S. Rivera, Commissioner



A sign in the waiting room expresses our thanks for the businesses that made our successful JCC vaccination clinic possible.

Museum to showcase women who helped build Israel

Israel21c.org

How many "she-roes" of Israel can you name? Maybe you would start with Golda Meir, Israel's first and only female prime minister. Or the tragic and courageous spy Sarah Aaronsohn and paratrooper Hannah Senesh. The list would include physician Vera Weizmann, the first First Lady of Israel, who helped establish Chaim Sheba Medical Center, now the largest hospital in the Middle East; and second First Lady Rachel Yanait Ben-

Zvi, who taught Jerusalem women how to grow vegetables, milk cows and make cheese so their husbands could go out and build the state.

These and many other women who played — and continue to play — important roles in the history and culture of Israel will be immortalized this year when the Israeli Women Museum opens in Haifa.

The museum will showcase at least 100 noteworthy but not necessarily well-

known women, from architects to lawyers to choreographers, says founder Yael Nitzan. A curator, art historian and TV producer, Yael Nitzan has overcome many roadblocks and setbacks in realizing her dream of opening Israel's first museum dedicated to women. "It was a struggle," she admits. "Now with corona, the world has everyone sitting and listening, and in three months I accomplished what I could not accomplish in the past six or seven years."

Nitzan gained help of the Haifa Foundation in raising funds for the project, and she was given the rights to a former private school building in which the collections will be housed.

"There are currently about 45 women's museums in the world, the most famous of which are the Women's Rights Park in Seneca Falls, N.Y., and the Women's Art Museum in Washington," she said. "The fundamental challenge in establishing a museum is not only in raising resources, but in creating a diverse and significant human and ideological infrastructure. The Israeli Women Museum must be a magnet of significance to the whole, or at least to large sections of, the population in Israel."

This will be Israel's first museum dedicated to the females responsible for weaving together its social, agricultural, and business fabric. "Our museum will be

on women in history and women in the arts," Nitzan explains. Women like Hannah Maisel, who emigrated to Palestine in 1909 and founded the region's first agricultural training institute for women. And women like Rachel Roos Hertz (Harel), a Dutch Resistance fighter who moved to Israel in 1950 and became active in the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO).

Artists to be included run the gamut from Ziona (Siona) Tagger, one of the most important female Israeli artists of the early 20th century, to contemporary painter Haya Graetz Ran.

"Women in Israel contributed greatly to the establishment of the state, contributed to the construction of the infrastructure of settlement, education, defense, law, government, society, culture, cinema and theater," Nitzan says. "But although they left their mark, they did not receive proper recognition and respect in building society."

Nitzan invites anyone to contribute photos or items relating to Israeli Jewish, Arab Druze, or Christian women, and even artists, poets and leaders from the Holocaust era who did not get to Israel. She can be reached through the museum's Facebook page or by email. Donations for the project are being funneled through the Haifa Foundation.



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A chance to meet the 'Fauda' team



Our community took part in a Zoom meeting featuring cast members from the hit Israeli TV show "Fauda," which can be viewed on Netflix.



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in Reading Sue B. Viener Memorial Fund of Jewish Federation of Reading Berks

Poetry corner

Heads or Tails

Looking out
 the sky is gray
 an effort to keep
 sad thoughts at bay
 and so to text or phone
 a friend (I say to myself)
 is much the better way to
 begin the tasks
 the ones that must be done
 despite the fact that they are
 not fun – Congratulations
 (I murmur to myself)
 you've won – the Devil's
 plan has been outdone and
 though the sky may show

no sun, the telephone's
 ring will be rung
 and talking I will be with
 one who might be, as I am
 drear, and I will offer
 a bit of cheer –
 and if not (I say)
 it will be glad
 the other way

 A winning coin
 it could be said
 whether it lands on
 tails or heads.
 — Nancy Knoblauch



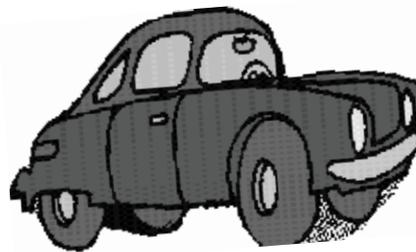
This year Sammy was determined not to forget to count the Omer.

April ☆ Nissan Iyar



- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| April 2
7:12 p.m. | April 3/21 Nissan
Chol Hamo'ed Pesach (Exodus 33:12-34:26) |
| April 9
7:19 p.m. | April 10/28 Nissan
Sh'mini (Leviticus 9:1-11:47) |
| April 16
7:26 p.m. | April 17/5 Iyar
Tazria/Metzora (Leviticus 12:1-15:33) |
| April 23
7:33 p.m. | April 24/12 Iyar
Acharei Mot/Kedoshim (Leviticus 16:1-20:27) |
| April 30
7:41 pm | |

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Wednesday, April 28
12pm on Zoom

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Israel Book Group: 'Israel Matters'

By Moisey Schneider
and Bill Franklin

Dr. Mitchell Bard is the executive director of the nonprofit American Israeli Cooperative Enterprise and a leading authority on U.S.-Middle East policy. His book shows a deep love for the land of Israel and a deep respect for the complexities of its existence. It is densely layered, wildly diverse, alternately brash and philosophical, but always fascinating beyond belief.

Bard helps us to understand the past and look to the future of the Jewish State. This comprehensive text will give you a practical understanding of the State of Israel, its historical importance, and its relevance today — why Israel matters! It is especially helpful in connecting young readers with the broad scope of Israeli history and culture and with the content and moral dilemmas of Israeli's daily life.

He presents an Israel full of political debate, cultural clashes and the human dilemmas of real people. Israel's historical, political, and cultural factors shape the Jewish state today and reinforce its importance to American interests.

Israel is a small country yet occupies a large place in the hearts and souls of many diverse people. To Jews, it is Eretz Yisrael our ancient homeland, heroically reestablished after 2,000 years. This scrap of desert is center stage for many of the world's miracles and spiritual struggles for more than 5,000 years. Its archaeological wonders exhibit its historical and religious significance to many faiths.

The book also shows Israel's beautiful beaches, scenic deserts and geological wonders, exciting nightlife and excellent art scenes. This helps readers form their own relationship to this wonderful country and to see and

feel it through a variety of historical, political and cultural perspectives.

To show that Israel matters to all Jews, the author introduces us to the opinions of American teens. Alex, 17, of Portland, Ore., says, "The security of Israel matters to me because I want my kids, my grandkids to visit the place I call home."

Gabrielle, 19, of Ambler, Pa, writes, "Israel is a spiritual icon, providing religious refuge and symbolism to people around the world and is a leading innovator to medicine and technology."

Natalie, age 16, of Bloomfield, Mich., explains: "My biggest fear is that Israel will not exist for my children and grandchildren. Israel is at a do-or-die state every day, and without the support of teens like me, who knows what will happen in the future. Israel's fate lies in our hands."

This book would be a wonderful text for a teen course on Israel. The author presents the complex issues about Israeli politics and life and Israeli's current and future problems. He also offers many great questions for discussion.

Bard shows the story of Israel as the most exciting, dramatic and fascinating one of the 20th century. Some stories are sad, some are painful, but all are interesting and inspiring. This book is peppered with little known facts, such as a map of British Mandate Palestine showing that what is now Jordan was the largest part of Palestine. He also points out that the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design was founded in 1906 and the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra in 1936.

If ever there were a time to explain to a wide audience, why Israel matters, it is now. This book does that and with it, so can you..

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The Misadventures of Rabbi Kibbitz and Mrs. Chaipul
by Mark Binder

**Thursday
April 22nd
12 p.m.
via Zoom**

Registration required.

To register, visit:
www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org/home/literatour



The
Misadventures of
Rabbi Kibbitz and
Mrs. Chaipul

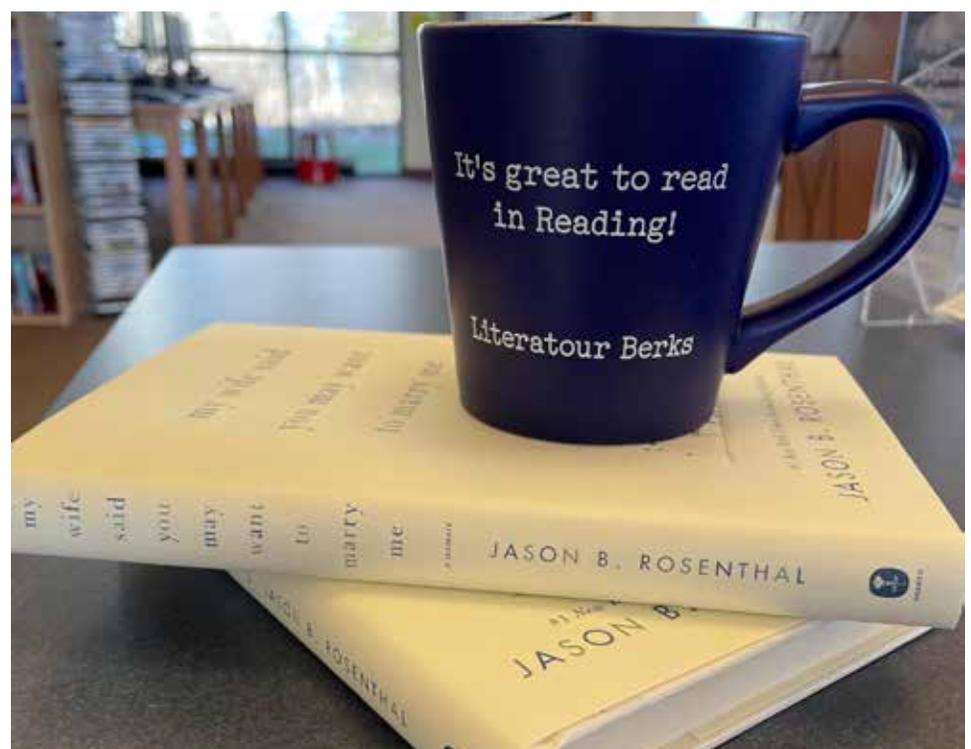


Mark Binder

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

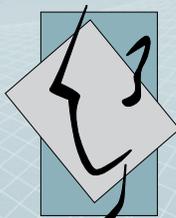


Feeling right at home at Literatour Berks brunch



This year's Literatour Berks brunch featured food for participants to take home and an online presentation by Jason B. Rosenthal, author of "My Wife Said You May Want to Marry Me," on dealing with grief. Tracy Weiss, left, gets ready to share one of the special brunch baskets. At right, Mike and Sue Farrara enjoy the program and the meal. Comments from participants after the event: "it was amazing! Great presentation! I really enjoyed the conversation and incorporating audience questions smoothly into the presentation." Special thanks to our Literatour Berks sponsors and patrons for supporting our second season!

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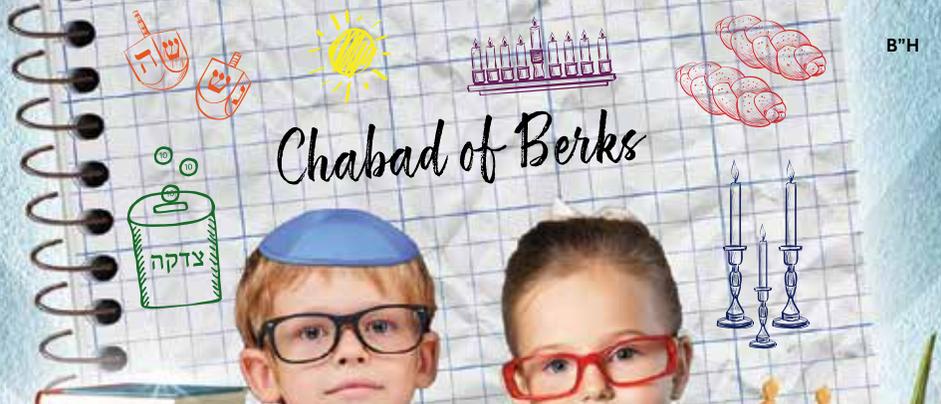
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Understanding the 'If Only Israel' syndrome

By David Harris

CEO, American Jewish Committee

"If Only Israel (IOI) syndrome," a term I began using several years ago, is the misguided notion, peddled in the name of Israel's "best interests" by some in the diplomatic, academic, and media worlds, that if only Israel did this or that, peace with the Palestinians would be at hand.

Poor Israel. If only it had the visual acuity of these "enlightened" souls, everything would be hunky-dory. After all, according to them, Israel holds all the cards, yet refuses to play them.

The thinking goes: Why can't those shortsighted Israelis figure out what needs to be done — it is so obvious to us in Brussels, Paris, Dublin and Stockholm, in our ivory towers from Cambridge to Berkeley, and as commentators on BBC and CNN — so the conflict can at long last be brought to a screeching halt?

Thus, if only Israel stopped any settlement building. If only Israel understood that Gaza's tunnel-diggers and rocket-builders do not really mean it when calling for the Jewish state's extinction. If only Israel restrained itself rather than responding to terrorist attacks against Israeli targets. If only Israel stopped assuming the worst about Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas. If only Israel went the extra mile with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. If only Israel got beyond its Holocaust trauma. If only Israel...

The point is, for the IOI crowd, it always seems to boil down to Israel. And the syndrome has only been strengthened by its adherents' assessment of the current Israeli government, of course.

Many media outlets branded Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as "hardline," or some variation thereof, from the get-go. Their word choice simply reinforces the notion that the conflict is all about alleged Israeli intransigence, while avoiding any descriptive judgment of a seemingly unassailable Mahmoud Abbas, other, perhaps, than "aging."

It is important to underscore a few basic points too often lost in the din. First, the current Israeli government follows on the heels of previous governments that sought to achieve peace based on a two-state settlement with the Palestinians — and failed. Each of those governments went far in attempting to strike a deal, but, ultimately, to no avail.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak, joined by President Bill Clinton, tried mightily to reach a pathbreaking agreement with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. As confirmed by Clinton in his autobiography, the answer was, in effect,

a thunderous rejection, including denying any historical Jewish connection with Jerusalem, accompanied by the launching against Israel of a deadly wave of terror attacks, which came to be known as the second intifada.

And, not to be forgotten, a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon also took place during the Barak era. It was met by the entrenchment of Hezbollah, committed to Israel's destruction, in the vacated space.

Then, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who had also earned the media's label of "hardline," defied his own Likud Party — indeed, he left it to create a new political bloc — and uprooted thousands of settlers to leave Gaza entirely. It was the first chance for Gaza's Arab residents to govern themselves. Neither the occupying Egyptians nor Ottoman Turks had ever done this.

Had Gazans seized the opportunity in a constructive manner, they might have created unstoppable momentum for a second phase of significant Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. Instead, Gaza quickly turned into a terrorist redoubt.

Then, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert pressed hard for a deal with the Palestinians on the West Bank. According to the late Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat, the Israeli offer "talked about Jerusalem and almost 100% of the West Bank." Not only was it not accepted, but there was no counterproposal from the Palestinian side.

Netanyahu inherited a situation in which: (a) Hamas holds power in Gaza, digging tunnels and amassing missiles to attack Israel, and teaches children to aspire to "martyrdom"; (b) Hezbollah continues to gain strength in Lebanon, thanks to Iran, and has an estimated 100,000+ missiles and rockets, which its leaders claim can reach any point in Israel; (c) the Palestinian Authority has been AWOL for years from the negotiating table; and (d) Iran continues to call for Israel's destruction, while enhancing its own military capability, entrenching itself in Syria, and supporting Hamas.

So, before Israel gets further lectures on what needs to be done, perhaps we should take stock of what is transpired — and why.

There have been several bold Israeli efforts since 2000 to create a breakthrough — and repeated failures. And that does not include Netanyahu's unprecedented 10-month settlement freeze and the Palestinian Authority's refusal to seize this opportunity to break the stalemate.

The vast majority of Israelis yearn for peace and understand the price the country will have to pay in territory and, presumably, displaced population. Poll after poll proves their readiness, but only if they are

assured that lasting peace, not new phases in the conflict, will be the outcome. Tellingly, few see that possibility on the horizon anytime soon, though when an opportunity came from the United Arab Emirates, linked to Israel dropping any plans for annexation in parts of the West Bank, Israel quickly chose the UAE deal.

Israelis do not have to be pushed, prodded, nudged, cajoled, or pressured to seek a comprehensive peace beyond the current treaties with Egypt and Jordan, and now, notably, normalization agreements with the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. More than any other nation, they have lived with the absence of true, lasting peace for nearly 73 years, and know full well the physical, psychological, and economic toll it has inflicted on the country.

Rather, they must be convinced the tangible rewards justify the risks for a small state in a tough area. Those rewards begin with acceptance of Israel's rightful place in the region as a Jewish-majority state living in secure and internationally recognized borders. And that, more than settlements, checkpoints, or any of the other items on the IOI bill of particulars, gets to the essence of the conflict. The 2005 Gaza disengagement, not to mention the earlier withdrawal from the vast Sinai Peninsula, demonstrated that settlements (and checkpoints) can be removed if needed. But until the Palestinian side recognizes Israel's legitimacy, and stops viewing the Jewish state as an "interloper" that can be defeated militarily or swamped by "refugees" — who are in most cases third- and fourth-generation descendants of the original refugees from a war started in 1948 by the Arab world — then whatever the IOI folks call for will be a secondary issue in the real world.

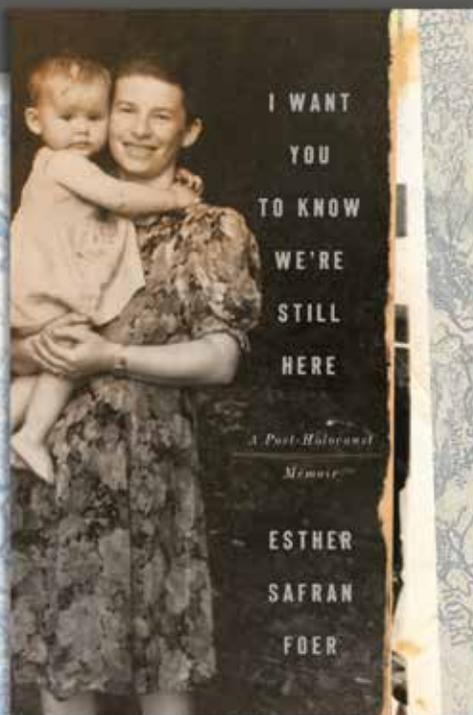
Until this recognition is reflected in Palestinian textbooks, where children have been taught for generations that Israelis are modern-day "Crusaders" to be driven out, the hope for a brighter future, alas, is dim.

Until the Palestinian Authority succeeds in building a serious and accountable governing structure, Israel will have no choice but to operate in the West Bank to prevent attacks against its civilian population.

And until the forces seeking Israel's annihilation can be contained, there will be a long shadow cast over the road to peace. Some argue this view gives the spoilers too much power. Rather, it simply acknowledges the inescapable realities faced by Israel.

Israel does not need still more lectures on the importance of peace. Rather, it needs genuine partners, starting in Ramallah. Without them, peace remains elusive. With them, it becomes inevitable.

I Want You To know We're Still Here
by Esther Safran Foer



Monday
April 5th
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via Zoom

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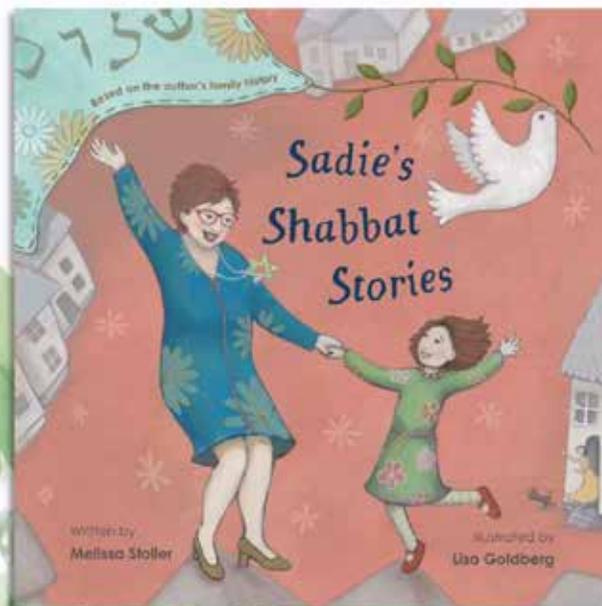
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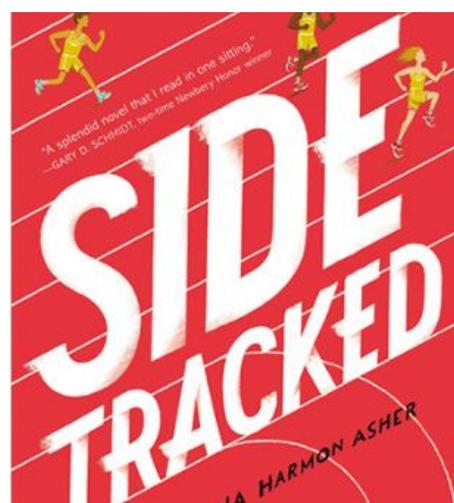
Community youth practice Tikkun Olam at Opportunity House

As part of the Tikkun Olam program led by Adi Shalev, teens in grades 10-12 are making lunch for the people at Opportunity House. Participants in March were Harry, Will, Melanie, Joshua, Jacob, Sam and Ruby.

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