

Shalom 08|22

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

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Women's Philanthropy

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Shabbat B'Yachad

Once-in-a-lifetime trip to Israel

By Amanda J. Hornberger

It's been 10 days since our Momentum group returned to the United States and we are all still reflecting on our once-in-a-lifetime trip to Israel. It was life-changing for some in our group. Exhausting for all. The 13 women who traveled together bonded in a way that I don't think any of us expected or can explain.

Nili Couzens was our trip leader and led daily learning sessions. Some key takeaways were learning to listen to the voice of your soul vs. the voice of your body. On the ladder of growth sometimes you have to go down to go up. If G-d had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. Nili also spoke about how we, as moms, are the battery pack of our family. If we aren't charged, our families and us as individuals will suffer.

Our group really learned from one another during our daily reflection time with just our group. Dr. Jennifer Koosed knew just how to draw us out to get us talking, and this group of women not only have fascinating life experiences to share but also wisdom and encouragement for one another. We had great conversations about Jewish life and values and I can't wait to see the ideas and impact of this group.

Luckily, we get to continue to learn and grow together over the next year. Keep an eye out for articles about what we're doing and also planning for the community.



Our gold pashminas, which identified our group, will always hold special memories for us. As Nilli would say: Today is the best day of your life ... until tomorrow!

Inside this edition you'll find thoughts from participants on some of their highlights from the trip. We're also sharing pictures from our jam-packed trip.

Saying goodbye is never easy

By Laurie Waxler

The Federation hosted two special events to say goodbye to two very special people here at the Federation. Our President Bill Franklin is heading to Alaska to celebrate his retirement and should be on his way during the publication of this issue. Our Shlichah, Adi Shalev, will head back to Israel in early August after three years of service here in Reading and Lancaster. We cannot thank these two individuals enough for all they have done for our community, but we did our best!

We celebrated Bill on Wednesday, June 22, at the Federation's Annual Meeting. The event was held at Berks Nature and included nature-friendly activities for the kids, a yummy kosher BBQ dinner and a klezmer band for all to enjoy! Despite a few raindrops, the "indoor-outdoor" setting provided plenty of shelter for the 120 guests, and everyone had a wonderful time.

During the meeting, we shared a video highlighting many of Bill's accomplishments over the past eight years. I encourage you to visit the Federation website (www.readingjewishcommunity.org) and check out the video that highlights many of the services the Federation provides to our community.

On Monday, July 24, about 40 people braved the heat and joined us for a Happy



Federation staff at the Annual Meeting in June. From left, Amanda Hornberger, Laurie Waxler, Brenda Seidel, Margo Levin, Bill Franklin, Adi Shalev and Carole Robinson.

Hour at Sly Fox brewery to say goodbye to Adi. With the variety of attendees at the event, it was evident how many lives she's touched during her time here and how much she will be missed. My guess is that Adi will have many visitors back in Modi'in. Members of her Young Adults group were there to wish her well, as well as reps from local colleges and Jewish community members of all ages.

We will miss Bill and Adi very much and wish them both all the best in their next adventure. While we are still in the midst of interviewing for Bill's position, we will be welcoming a new Shaliach this fall. He will continue in Adi's footsteps and provide a bridge to Israel for community members of all ages. Change is never easy, but we are excited for what our own future continues to hold.

Learning about Legacy Gifts

By Laurie Waxler
Development Director

When I started working in the world of nonprofits, I learned about Legacy Gifts. It was a new term for me, and perhaps it's a new term for you.



A "Legacy Gift" is a planned future gift that designates some part of an individual's estate as a donation to a nonprofit. With over 200 nonprofits in the city of Reading (including the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks) there are plenty of options to consider supporting when planning your estate.

It can be overwhelming to think about your own death, but deep down, we all want to know that

our life had significance and we've made a difference in the world. If you're like me, you want to be sure your family will be cared for first. No one can perfectly predict the final value of their estate, and you don't want to commit a \$10,000 gift to a nonprofit when your estate is only valued at \$11,000. However, if you considered a percentage gift of 1%, your donation would be \$110 and your family would inherit \$10,890. If you considered a 5% gift, it would be \$550 and if you considered a 10% gift, it would be \$1,100 with plenty left over for your loved ones who succeed you.

Legacy Gifts can have a great impact on future generations, and if you're in the midst of writing your will, or it is need of revision, perhaps you'd like to consider a Legacy Gift to our



Federation or to a cause that is meaningful to you. It costs you nothing right now but can leave a lasting legacy for generations to come. Our Jewish Federation is possible today because of the lasting gifts made by previous generations. Current campaign

donations help us fund current programming, legacy gifts will keep us strong for years to come!

If you'd like more information on Legacy Gifts, please feel free to contact me, or consult your estate advisor.

Introducing the 988 suicide and crisis hotline

By Carole Robinson

People experiencing mental health crises now have a three-digit number 9-8-8 to call (or text) and reach out for help. The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is an easy way to directly connect people in crisis with trained Prevention Lifeline counselors.

Vibrant Emotional Health, the nonprofit that operates the lifeline of behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration offered the following statistics citing the need for 988:

- The suicide rate has climbed nearly 30% since 1999.
- From 2016-2017, there was a 10% increase in suicide of young people between 15-24 years old in the U.S.
- Approximately 1 in 5 people above the age of 12 has a mental health condition in the U.S.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people, and the 10th leading cause of death.
- More Americans died from mental health crises and substance abuse in 2018 alone than have died in combat in every

war combined since World War II.

- For every one person who dies by suicide annually, 316 people seriously consider suicide.

The 988 line will provide free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Proponents of 988 hope that it will become a more effective, safer alternative to 911. Prior to July 16, most of the people with mental health emergencies ended up dialing 911. However, 911 was not designed to address mental health needs, and callers either

ended up in the emergency room or dealing with law enforcement.

The primary goal of the new number is to ensure that people get immediate help with their crisis and also get connected to ongoing care at the existing network of over 200 local crisis call centers around the United States. According to Xavier Becerra, the secretary of the federal Department of Health and Human Services, "988 won't be a busy signal, and 988 won't put you on hold. You will get help."

Now you know about 988. Pass along the word. You never know who may need help.

Development

Annual Campaign

Women's Philanthropy

Maimonides Society

Your Jewish Legacy

Chai Circle

L'Chaim Society

Book of Life

Letter of Intent

Jewish Federation
OF READING/BERKS
Maimonides Society



"General Practitioner for the Bereaved"

Neil Hoffman, MD
Tower Health

Sunday, September 11

10:00 am - 11:30 am

Jewish Community Center
1100 Berkshire Blvd, Suite 125
Wyomissing, PA

Join Neil Hoffman, forensic pathologist, as he shares stories of his practice over the years and learn how the world of forensic medicine has shaped his philosophies on both his personal and professional life.

Open to all Jewish health care professionals in Reading & Berks County. Includes light breakfast & networking opportunities.

Please register by emailing Laurie Waxler at LaurieW@jfreading.org



DONATE NOW TO OUR JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

Please visit ReadingJewishCommunity.org

Make your gift today!

Annual Meeting filled with fun for all ages



Children's activities were among the attractions at the Federation Annual Meeting on June 22.



Past Federation Chair Bob Caster with his successor in the post, Sheila Bornstein.



Lee Radosh with Ruth and David Spillerman



Adi Shalev is recognized for her three years of work in the community.

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE VEHICLE DONATION PROGRAM



Enjoy tax benefits when you donate your vehicle to JFS. Contact Carole at 610-921-0624 or CaroleR@JFReading.org or go to <https://careasy.org/nonprofit/JFS-Reading>.

Shalom

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Community invited to meet new spiritual leader

By **Amanda J. Hornberger**

Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks is thrilled to welcome our community's newest spiritual leader to Reading, Cantor Ted Prosnitz. Beginning in August, Cantor Prosnitz will be serving as Keshar Zion Synagogue's newest spiritual leader.

The entire community is invited to a meet and greet with Cantor Prosnitz on Thursday, Aug. 25 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the JCC. Light refreshments will be served as we have the chance to meet Cantor Prosnitz and learn more about him and his experiences.

RSVPs are requested by Aug. 23 to info@jfreeding.org or 610-921-0624.

Cantor Prosnitz was invested by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

In addition, JTS bestowed upon him a Master of Arts in Sacred Music. He was awarded the Hazzan Israel Weiser Prize for Excellence in Nusach and the Sara and Samuel Katz Memorial Prize in Liturgy and Nusach. Hazzan Prosnitz has also earned Professional Development Certificates from Harvard University (Teaching the Ancient Near East) and the State of New Jersey (Holocaust Education). His undergraduate degree, a Bachelor of Arts, is from the University of Rochester.

Born and raised in Hackensack, N.J., he attended public school and Hackensack Hebrew Institute; college (University of Rochester); and graduate school (University of Michigan). A life-changing experience one High Holiday season led him to leave the family retail business



and pursue the cantorate. He expects to receive rabbinic ordination/smicha from Mesifita Aduh Wolkowisk in June 2023.

Cantor Prosnitz has served at congregations from New York to Ohio, Michigan to Missouri. He has worked as a chaplain, which he finds is a profound

experience for all concerned, in hospitals and homes; and has loved teaching and tutoring in schools, shuls, and seminary. He has sung in performance at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. As Spiritual Leader, he is looking forward to bringing all his skills and energy to our part of Pennsylvania.

When not occupying himself with text or t'fillah, Ted enjoys reading, watching movies, playing chess and white-water rafting. Together with his wife, Karen, a skating director and figure skating and hockey coach, they enjoy ballroom dancing. They have three adult (all still single!) children: Jared, Reyna, and Rachel.

Cantor Prosnitz is enthusiastic about becoming part of the Berks County community and is eager to get to know everyone.

In memory of Holocaust survivor Helen Berger Comite

Courtesy of the Comite Family

Helena Berger arrived in America in 1948. She spoke seven languages, but English was not one of them. She had not a penny in her pocket, having survived Auschwitz and the Holocaust, which took her parents, her youngest brother, Moshe, other members of her family and community of Velky Rakovec, Czechoslovakia, which is now part of Western Ukraine.

In New York, Helen met, fell in love with, and married Morris Comite, a native of Krakow, Poland, and a Holocaust survivor of Russian Gulags. Helen, or Olga, as she

was fondly referred to by family and friends, spoke little of the horrors she lived through, concentrating on making a home in her new country, raising her family, fiercely advocating for her Jewish Community in Far Rockaway, New York and tending to her home and garden, which was the showplace of her neighborhood.

Helen and Morris sacrificed, stressed education to their children, and raised their identical twin daughters, Harriet and Florence and son, Stephen, all of whom became medical doctors.

As her children became teenagers, she told them how her family hid for

five weeks in the woods and barns near home, where she risked her life to search for and bring them food, before being sent to Auschwitz concentration camp, where she last saw her parents. She was personally assaulted by Josef Mengele and endured starvation and unspeakable conditions and treatment.

Helen's husband, and love of her life, Morris, passed away in February 2006.

Helen Berger Comite passed away on May 27, peacefully, in the home of her daughter Harriet and Alan, with whom she lived for 12 years, with both at her side.

Helen, or Grandma Olga, will always

be remembered and loved by her three children, Dr. Harriet Comite (and Alan Geltman), Dr. Florence Comite (and Marc Khlar), Dr. Stephen Comite (and Anita Slosberg), her seven grandchildren, Marisa Kaplan (and Gareth Goodleser), Dr. Laura Kaplan, Dr. Jonathan Cabin (and Lauren Liebes), Michael Cabin (and Jess Eisner), Matthew, Elliot and Alison Comite, and her five great grandchildren, Sidney, Hazel and Orley Cabin, Elihah Morris and Gabriela Cabin.

Helen will be missed by countless more friends who loved and learned so much of life from her.

Obituaries

Gary L. Adlestein, 81, of Fleetwood. Gary earned his B.A. at Temple University and earned an M.A. in English at the University of Pennsylvania. He was a filmmaker and professor at Albright College, where he taught in the English and Art departments for 51 years. Gary was an

associate in Berks Filmmakers and an experimental filmmaker. His numerous awards include citations at the Black Maria Film Festival and Albright's Shirk Award for Creative and Scholarly Achievement. Gary and his wife, Linda, loved traveling to Europe, where he was always filming. He is predeceased by his son Jason Adlestein in 2017. Gary is survived by his wife, Linda; his sister

Marci Yesser of Florida, and two nieces and one nephew.

Lois (Edelstein) Cohen, 94, of Reading. Lois was a graduate of Penn State University, where she met her husband, Irvin, whom she spent over 70 years until his death in 2021. She enjoyed attending Penn State football games, traveling the world with her

husband and working with him at his business Construction Fasteners. Lois served on the Advisory Board of Penn State Berks, giving many students scholarships to attain a Penn State education. She is survived by her son Richard Cohen and her daughter Helene Bludman, her four grandchildren and their spouses, and her five great-grandchildren.

All Around the Town

Congratulations to **Logan Endy**, who graduated from Exeter High School in June. He will be attending his freshman year at Kutztown

University in September, and his brother Carson will be entering his senior year at Penn State. They are both grandsons of **Aileen Endy**

of Pennside and great-grandsons of **Marjorie "Tootie" Moyer** of Reading.

Mazel tov to **Elaine Safir** on the birth of great grandsons Wyatt and Walker Wadsworth. The parents are Jessica and Patrick Wadsworth and the grandparents are Lori and Scott Faller.

Mazel tov to **Sylvia Wenger** on the birth of her great-grandson Ori Ben. The grandparents are **Janet and Arthur Werner**, and the parents are **Tara and Tal Singer**.

Mazel tov to **Jesse Pleet** and **Elaine Mendelsohn** on the marriage of their daughter Rachel Pleet to Yehonatan Sayag in Giv-atayim, Israel on May 26. Rachel made Aliyah in 2017.

Send good news to Marknem@aol.com or call 610-921-0624. This could include anything from weddings and birth announcements to academic or career achievements by members of our community and their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Meet & Greet with Cantor Prosnitz

Thursday, August 25

6-8 p.m.

Jewish Cultural Center

1100 Berkshire Blvd. Wyomissing

Cantor Prosnitz is excited to meet the entire Jewish community!

Everyone is invited to meet him, enjoy light refreshments and welcome him to Reading.

Join us to welcome Cantor Prosnitz to Reading!

RSVP by August 23rd
info@jfreeding.org or
610-921-0624

Cantor Ted Prosnitz

Keshar Zion Synagogue

Hosted by:



August		Av-Elul	
	Shabbat Candle Lightings		Torah Portions
August 5h 7:56 p.m.		August 6/9 Av Devarim (Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22)	
August 12th 7:47 p.m.		August 13/16 Av Va'etchanan (Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11)	
August 19th 7:37 p.m.		August 20/23 Av Ekev (Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25)	
August 26 th 7:27 pm		August 27/30 Av Re'eh (Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17)	

Lehitraot (Goodbye, for now)

By Adi Shalev

In September 2019, I, my stuff, and the unknown arrived in Reading, PA (after checking where is it on Google Maps). I didn't know what to expect, I was very excited and worried, but I was looking forward to the next two years, which ended up being three years.

I was blessed to be part of the Reading Jewish community. It was wonderful seeing you at the different programs, meeting you at the Federation, having dinners or coffee together, and just being part of the community. I want to thank you for opening up your hearts,

minds, and homes to me.

I was lucky to do so much during my time here, bring my Israeli experience, even during Covid-19! But, it would have been so much harder without my amazing Federation staff, who always supported, helped, and encouraged me.

I'm still processing these 3 years, and I think it will take me a while to really be able to summarize it and understand how it changed me, and how much I grew and learned from this.

I can say it was hard, meaningful,

challenging, rewarding, lonely, belonging, and an experience I'll never forget.

I'm moving back to Israel knowing I left a legacy and was lucky to impact and have meaningful relationships with so many people.

You will always be in my heart, and I will always feel part of the community.

Toda Raba,
Adi Shalev, your Shlichah
shinshinadi@gmail.com

I want to share some pictures with you, but the few I picked can't cover it all!



A graduation party for student's in Adi's Hebrew class who took part in classes for two years

Jewish Cultural Center

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

Chevra

Mahjong

Trips to NYC/Philadelphia

Lakin Holocaust Library

& Resource Center

Shabbat B'yachad

Community Calendar

Together we can: JFS appreciates our volunteers

Jewish Family Service

Food Pantry
Friendship Circle
Counseling Services
Transportation
Financial Assistance
Hospital and
Home Visitations
Living with Loss
Information and
Referral
Case Management
Holiday Programs

By Carole Robinson

Volunteers are the backbone of Jewish Family Service. JFS has more than 50 volunteers who donated 350 hours so far this year to help us make our community stronger. Our volunteers work at our Helping Harvest food pantries, deliver meals, make friendly visits and phone calls, grocery shop, assist at senior events, provide expertise in their professional fields, and present programs to Friendship Circle. They give their time and talents to improve the lives of others.



The JFS Food Pantry volunteers put in hours of hard work to feed our hungry neighbors. In July, we distributed 11,000 pounds of food to 230 households at the Olivet pantry and 5,500 pounds of food to 130 households at SDA. Our pantry volunteers lift heavy boxes, organize the food, bag it, and load cars. They also assist with pantry registration and translation for our bilingual clients. We would not be able to help this record number of clients without our loyal volunteers.

Our meal delivery volunteers reach out to about 50 shut-ins and seniors, combining a friendly visit with delicious food, and letting our oldest community members know we are thinking about them. Some volunteers reach out with weekly phone calls. Other volunteers check-in with our seniors when they grocery shop for them or take them to appointments. Additional volunteers provide a valuable service



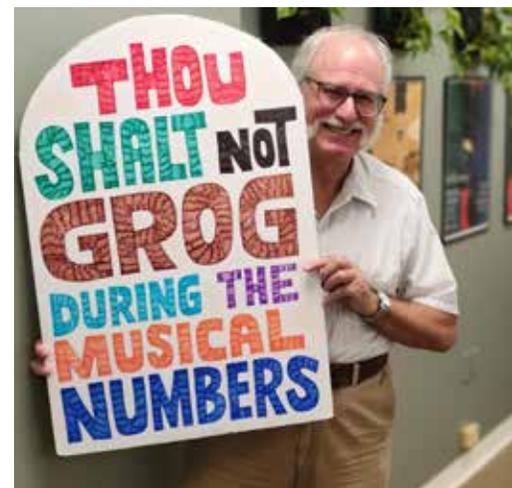
United Way ELU leaders volunteering at the SDA Food Pantry on July 12

by offering educational classes, health insurance counseling, audiologist advice, or entertaining programs. We thank all of you for caring about our Jewish community.

If you would like to make a direct impact and improve the lives of others, please contact me about the following volunteer opportunities: friendly visits, phone calls, food pantry, Excel data sheet entry, JFS committee, meal deliveries, holiday services/meals and Friendship Circle programs at CaroleR@JFReading.org or 610-921-0624.

In the words of Helen Keller, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

Join me in enriching our Jewish community and Berks County!



Mike Pardo presenting an entertaining program on Purim shpiels to Friendship Circle

Volunteering and Tikkun Olam (and vice-versa)

By Joan Sherman

In December 2019, my "person" (spouse, Debra) and I moved back to my "hometown" of Reading. We were eager to leave our 30+ years of career building and craziness in Washington, DC, in favor of winding down our consulting businesses, easing into a simpler lifestyle and ramping up our world travel. Turns out, our decision was well-timed; COVID-19 invaded a few months later and Wyomissing proved to be a much roomier, safer and beautiful place to be.

Despite the horrors and uncertainty of the pandemic, quarantining and our vision to travel coming to a screeching halt, we had each other and small bubbles of family and close friends. Fortunately, we also had the gift of good health and time. Instead of dwelling on our broken, suffering country and world; we tried to focus on our many blessings and take action: Tikkun Olam kicked into high gear!

As a child, I was very active in our local Jewish community – as was my paternal grandmother with whom I was extremely close. So, naturally, I gravitate to old Jewish ladies, right? And, considering Debra and I love to cook and "live to eat" (versus "eat to live"), add food into the mix. So, we reached out to Carole and Sari at Jewish Family Service to offer help. Fast forward, for 2+ years, we have been shopping and delivering bi-weekly groceries, participating in the Jewish Federation/Helping Harvest partnership food pantries and providing transportation to doctor appointments for several local, isolated "aging in place" women. Living just blocks from Helping Harvest, Debra regularly volunteers directly with them as well

Perhaps, a lengthy contextual story but, hopefully, an effective segue to the JFS Volunteer Thank You Luncheon on May 24. It was an inspiring and motivating event! Jay Worrall, President of Berks/Schuylkill



Debra and Joan

Helping Harvest Fresh Food Bank (and quite a dynamic speaker) addressed our group of 30+ volunteers; he shared several surprising facts and figures and impressive details about the people they serve, how their nonprofit has grown and adapted since the pandemic, their partnerships and expansion plans for the future.

Here is some noteworthy information about Berks/Schuylkill Helping Harvest:

- The food bank primarily dispenses food through 320 distribution points (e.g., religious organizations, schools) Hope Lutheran Church is their largest pantry.
- Last year, they served over 110,000 individuals and 9,000,000 pounds of food.
- The local 45,000 sq ft warehouse holds 2,000 pallets & has 8,000 sq ft cold storage
- Food comes from: USDA, Retail grocery and distribution centers or is purchased

• As food insecurity increases exponentially, the needs and numbers of those served doubled from 2019 to 2020 (Pandemic). And those numbers continue to grow.

• Approximately, 1,500 people volunteer throughout the year.

• Overview of Helping Harvest's Strategic Plan:

• More food directed to impact children (Ready, Set, Read & weekend programs)

• Seniors: PA Senior Box Program, Meals on Wheels supplements

• Cooking bulk food: Commercial & Community kitchen, Culinary Arts training for the incarcerated and unemployed

• Investments in more pantries: accessibility, refrigeration, 25 Mobile Markets

• Implementation of Youth Advisory Committee to the board

• Increase Charitable Giving

After the May luncheon, I visited <https://helpingharvest.org> and signed up as a volunteer and just received my clearance certificate. Volunteering is very easy, well organized and flexible. I hope those reading this article will be curious and motivated to do the same.

If volunteering in a warehouse, delivering and/or distributing food directly isn't your thing, there are also plenty of volunteer opportunities through the Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Service, too. The extra-added benefit is building a stronger community and establishing new inter-generational relationships. After all, Tikkun Olam is an intrinsic value of Judaism (ideally, of humankind) — it's simply about kindness, giving back, paying it forward, repairing the world.

"You are not obligated to complete the work but neither are you free to abandon it."

Fun takes flight at Friendship Circle



Summer Friendship circle program – “Birds of a Feather. At left, Vicky Sokoloff with her pet Bareshka. At right, Ian Bachrach enjoys Bird Bingo at Friendship Circle.

JFS gratefully acknowledges a generous donation from the estate of Marsha Goldberg to be used for JFS programs

Friendship Circle August programs

Friendship Circle is held on the first and third Thursdays of each month at 1 p.m. at the JCC. An optional lunch is served, followed by an entertaining or educational program or holiday celebration.

Programs are free; optional lunch is \$7. Contact Carole at 610-921-0624 to make lunch reservations.

Thursday, Aug. 11 - Meet Cantor Ted Prosnitz

Cantor Prosnitz is Keshet Zion Synagogue’s new spiritual leader, and he is looking forward to meeting everyone, sharing his background and leading the group in a few joyous songs.



Thursday, Aug. 25 – Momentum Group Trip to Israel

A fresh perspective on the land of Israel with Amanda Hornberger and Margo Levin. They will talk about their recent 10-day adventure with the Momentum Moms.

Reflections from Momentum

Masada shall not fall again

By Oda Schwab

To understand “Masada shall not fall again,” we must look back to the first century A.D., when Judea, as the territory was then called, was inhabited mostly by Jews but ruled by Rome. While the Jews had not been truly independent for about six centuries, they refused to accept Roman rule, giving Rome frequent headaches.

In 66 AD, a full-scale Jewish war for independence broke out. The Roman legions had sacked Jerusalem by 70 AD, destroyed the Temple, slaughtered Jews by the scores, expelled the survivors, and prohibited all Jews from returning to their ancient capital. Among the last holdouts was a group of people known as the Zealots who had holed up on a mountaintop close to the Dead Sea known as Masada, a nearly impregnable fortress. The palace was built by King Herod, known by the New Testament, to serve as both a winter residence and a getaway in case he was ever forced out of Jerusalem by his subjects in the future.

There were 960 Jewish resistance fighters, men, women, and children when some of the fleeing survivors from the rout of Jerusalem joined the Zealots on Masada. A vastly outnumbered Roman legion soon besieged them. Masada, however, was almost impossible to storm. As the Romans methodically constructed a ramp, then a tower on the ramp, and finally brought in a huge battering ram, the bleak standoff lasted three years.

The Zealots knew they would be overrun the next day as soon as the wall was breached. Those who survived the battle would be crucified or enslaved. Their leader made a dramatic speech in which he inspired them to choose freedom rather than acceptance of defeat and slavery.

First the adult men killed their wives and children. Afterwards, 10 men were selected by lot to kill the rest of the men. They drew lots again to determine which one would kill the other nine. After setting fire to whatever would burn, that



individual fell to his own sword.

Some new recruits to the Israeli Defense Forces take their oath of loyalty to the Jewish state on the summit of Masada as a matter of tradition. There are also those who take it at the Kotel in Jerusalem, a remnant of the sacred Temple. But wherever they take it, the oath ends: “Masada shall not fall again.”

Importance of Masada

It is important to note that Masada is not the central event in Jewish history or the fundamental metaphor that shapes Israel’s soul. Nevertheless, it casts a large shadow over both the past and the present.

As a result of what followed Masada, it gains in historical significance. After more than 1,000 years of Jewish presence in their homeland, the rebellion against Rome marked the beginning of almost 2,000 years of wandering. Jews were despised, oppressed, persecuted, and nearly wiped out during those centuries.

Early Zionists believed that the central problem of the Jews was their homelessness; that trouble and hatred would follow them to the end of the earth; and that to defend themselves they

required a state of their own.

After the Holocaust, the greatest tragedy in Jewish history, centuries of homelessness were put an end to in 1948.

As an event and as a lesson, Masada has been overshadowed by the Holocaust. The contrast between the two tragedies also enhances the grim grandeur of Masada. The majority of the six million people who died in the Holocaust went to their death quietly.

It was the survivors who contributed to the creation of a state that has fought for its existence every year since it was founded. Israel’s Jews, like those on Masada, feel under siege.

Israel, like Masada, represents the Jews who refuse to be silenced.

There is no happy ending to a mass suicide, of course. Rather than an example to be followed, Masada serves as a warning that Jews should never again be faced with the choice between statelessness and suicide.

The Masada Mentality

The Masada mentality may seem absurd to an outsider. As of 2022, Israel

has the strongest military in the Middle East. The United States is Israel’s most important ally. All of Israel’s wars have been won.

The Masada mentality, however, suggests that trouble lurks around every corner, so focusing too much on the latest negotiating position of an adversary misses important aspects.

Yes, Israel has won all its wars. If it loses one, however, the Jews will find themselves once again at Masada.

During the reigns of King David and King Solomon, Israel was also a dominant power in the region. Its ally was no less powerful than G-d. Any reasonable person would have said, “Don’t be ridiculous. Lighten up.” Nothing bad can happen to you. However, from this position of strength, the Jews later found themselves at Masada.

You might expect that Masada metaphor is a favorite of Israeli hardliners, but this is not the case. Masada taught the Jews that they must never again be forced to choose between suicide and slavery, and every Jew would embrace that lesson.

My Momentum trip reinforced my Masada mentality, reminding me at every step through the Holy Land that freedom is not free, nor is it given to us, it is a constant struggle for survival. As with the anemone coronaria (Israel’s national flower), its fragility lurks around every corner.

Moreover, it reinforced my strong Zionist convictions, which, although they had already existed, are now unquestionable as the simple principle that Israel, like all other nations, has a right to exist in its own territory, and it is the responsibility of every Jew to guard the existence of that land furiously.

Because the siege will never cease, it is our responsibility to teach our children to love the land of Israel and to protect its fortress even with our own lives.

Oda Schwab traveled with the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks group during the Momentum tour of Israel this summer.

Mothers of lone soldiers reunite with children in Jerusalem

Friends of the IDF

35 mothers of lone soldiers currently in Israel on a special trip with Momentum thought they were attending an educational seminar at the new Nefesh B’Nefesh Aliyah Campus in Jerusalem in July when they were surprised by their children serving in the Israel Defense Forces. The mothers were hosted by First Lady Michal Herzog, and the event was coordinated by Momentum and Nefesh B’Nefesh-FIDF Lone Soldiers.

The mothers, many of whom hadn’t seen their sons or daughters since last year, arrived in Israel from all over the world. They came to Israel thanks to Momentum, a global movement that helps women deeply connect to their Jewish values and to the State of Israel.

The mothers of lone soldiers arrived as part of a much larger delegation of 550 women who took part in Momentum’s flagship eight-day trip to Israel, done in partnership with the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs.

The emotional reunion of the mothers with their children in uniform was part of a joint effort between Momentum and the FIDF — Nefesh B’Nefesh Lone Soldiers program. Prior to meeting with their children, they met at the Nefesh B’Nefesh campus, where they heard from Dr. Deborah Gilboa, a physician and international parenting speaker (also a mother of a lone soldier) who spoke about the importance of resilience.

Momentum participant Kim Scop from South Africa was delighted to reunite with her son after not seeing him for four months. “This trip has been amazing. To have a group of people who have this unique thing in common, to be around other mothers who know how it feels and how hard it is to have a child serving in an army who is protecting a country worlds away from where you are is special; all of us understand that every day is a worry. I feel super inspired and grateful to be on this trip.”



“[My son] was one of the first soldiers who I saw come through the doors and he told me that was because the ones who entered the room first were selected based on mothers who cried the most this week. So that’s definitely me! I saw him and jumped off the stage to give him a big hug.”

“As a mother of a lone soldier myself, I know how much they long for the strength that can be found in a parent - especially in a mother - when they leave to defend a country that is so far away,” Momentum Founding Director Lori Palatnik said. “Momentum is proud to support the critical goal of helping Jewish women all around the world connect with Israel and their roots. We are especially privileged to fulfill this dream of our participants, some of whom have been waiting so long to come to Israel because of the Covid-19 pandemic.”

The FIDF-Nefesh B’Nefesh Lone Soldiers Program cares for some 3,500 Olim (immigrants) soldiers from around the world currently in active service. This program, with the full support of the IDF, offers guidance, support, and care for all lone soldier Olim during each stage of their service, after release from the army, and during the adjustment stages to civilian life.

“It’s remarkable for us to have helped assist the emotional reunions of these incredibly devoted and supportive mothers of our lone soldier Olim, who have been required to serve in the IDF upon their Aliyah (immigration to Israel), at far distances from their families abroad,” said Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, Nefesh B’Nefesh co-founder and executive director. “These mothers and soldiers demonstrate for us all how modern-day Zionism is flourishing, and we are grateful to them for the crucial role they play in defending the Jewish State.”

These mothers were provided with Momentum’s finely curated and jam-packed itinerary that helped them connect to Israel. Their schedule also featured highlights specifically catered to them so they could find strength and support in other Jewish women who understand the pain and pride associated with being a mother of a lone soldier. They also met with Israel’s First Lady Michal Herzog, who is a staunch supporter of lone soldiers at the President’s Residence.

“I would like to thank each of you from the bottom of my heart,” Herzog said. “It should not be taken for granted that your children chose to serve in the IDF. And it should certainly not be taken for granted that you are supporting them from afar. As a mother of three former soldiers, I can’t imagine what it would be like to have children serve when you are so far away. But what I can say is that serving will be a life-altering experience for them where they will make friends that will remain loyal to them forever.”

MOMENTUM 2022



Too many memories from which to choose...The Kotel was always magical, but particularly so late Friday night. By the time we left Shabbat dinner to walk back to the hotel, the boisterous crowds that had filled the plaza earlier had dispersed. Now, only a few people remained. The energy earlier in the day was amazing; but the quiet of Friday night was deep and moving. One of the Israelis on our bus wrapped her arms around a few of us and we quietly sang HaTikva standing before the Kotel.

Jennifer Koosed

My most memorable moment was leaving the building and heading to the Kotel in complete silence. I was not prepared for all of the feelings that I would feel simultaneously as I took that walk. Tears flooded my eyes and I linked arms with a member of our group that I bonded with on this trip. We approached the crowded wall holding hands. When there was an opening, I instinctively pushed her forward and rather than take the space alone she pulled me alongside her. We prayed at the wall together and are forever bonded by the experience.

Jenn Gurwitz

I feel the general sisterhood during the trip was special. I got to know some Jewish women from our area that I didn't already know.

Lisa Nemeroff

I had my conversion ceremony on June 17th; on July 4th we landed in Israel. Being Jewish in Israel was an incredible experience and reinforced that I made the right decision. My favorite memory was our first visit to the Kotel. The experience was powerful. We walked out from the Aish HaTorah building to the Kotel in complete silence. The silence allowed us to truly take in the importance of what we were about to experience and I was crying before I even saw the wall. Once we reached the wall a spot opened up and I prayed at the wall while holding hands with one of the amazing women on this trip. I started this trip not knowing any of the women I would be traveling with and left with a group of friends that I know will be around for a long time.

Jillian Storch



MOMENTUM 2022



The most meaningful memory for me was walking together in silence with our group to The Kotel. I could feel the presence of the millions of women who prayed there before and it was incredible to feel that connection. Another highlight was the very moving talk that Alon Wald gave at Ammunition Hill. He spoke about his father's courageous and noble decision to fight for Israel's independence and its complex impact as he fell on the very first day of fighting, leaving behind a 10-month-old Alon. The loss of his father was met with an abundance of surrogate fathers — his father's comrades-in-arms. These men not only never let Alon face life's major moments alone, but they were there for the more ordinary and mundane parts of growing up when a child needs a father just the same.

Stephanie Rotenberg



The group discovered Golda ice cream shops and highly recommend it to anyone traveling to Israel! Yum!!

The enlightenment, relationships and memories made on this trip was a memory within itself. This was my year to be in Jerusalem/Israel. The Kotel experience was moving for our entire group. And no matter we could always agree that ice cream was necessary.

Antoinette LaPrince



I most appreciated the ability to bond with 12 other women from my community, most of whom I did not know, or know well, before going. To be able to experience Israel together, to share a lot of laughter and some tears and to come home feeling a deeper connection to these women is invaluable and very special.

Tracy Weiss

Speaking to my Neshama

The second day on the trip was overwhelming in the best possible way. I was moved by all of the speakers, both formally and personally, who blessed my journey with wisdom and metaphors that I can apply to nearly every aspect of my life. The program is so informational, and inspirational and speaks to my neshama in many ways.

Our tour of Tel Aviv was amazing. One highlight was visiting the Batae Ethiopian Israeli Heritage Center and meeting the founder, Ashager Araro. From hearing her family's story of returning home to Israel to learning Ethiopian dances and then getting to taste all of the amazing vegan food, the experience is unforgettable and something I will remember for life.

Our private tour guide did an amazing job collaborating with Momentum to give us a unique tour that showed us the beautiful city. It was so easy to see all of the magic within mundane everyday life in Tel Aviv.

Our walk and sightseeing was followed by a visit to the Anu museum of Jewish people. This was such a bittersweet experience. It was so amazing to learn about Jews in every corner of the world through museum education. The experience was immersive and told a beautiful story of our collective history. The part of this education that was less than sweet was seeing the adversity and pain Jews have endured throughout history. Yet despite this adversity, our collective experiences with persecution and resilience are not what defines Jews. It is all of the contributions Jews have made in the arts, music, history, medicine, science, and every discipline and area of life that make our people so great.

The most impactful part of my day was going shopping and to dinner with my new Israeli sisters. Anna, Dor, Tsvia, and Yael helped me pick out a new dress, helped us order, and created a safe and intimate space for me to open up about my difficult decision to leave an abusive relationship and choose wellness for myself and my child. Nothing can compare to the solace of taking the risk to be vulnerable and being received with nothing but chesed and encouragement.

These will be women I will stay connected with and hopefully continue to have life-long friendships and sisterhood with. I could never have imagined being able to make such strong connections so quickly. This speaks to the many values of Momentum and will change my relationship with my Jewishness, the greater Jewish community, and Israel.

— Erica Cohen



Visiting the Batae Ethiopian Israeli Heritage Center

MOMENTUM 2022



It was truly an unbelievable experience which enabled me to focus on my Jewish roots as well as being a mother. I plan to share what I learned with my own daughters so they one day can have a Jewish home of their own. I am grateful for the new friendships made and the special bond the 13 of us now share. I look forward to the spark we will be able to ignite in our community.

Jodi Radosh



It was an amazing experience praying at the Kotel, but I was extremely intrigued about the Women of the Wall Movement. Its goal is to secure the rights of women to pray at the Western Wall, also called the Kotel, in a fashion that includes singing, reading aloud from the Torah and wearing religious garments. We ventured past the security to the left of the Kotel to the area designated for the women of the wall. The women have been met with great opposition around reading Torah at the Kotel. This side of the wall has been utilized for women to wear prayer shawls, pray, and read Torah. Although there has been progress, there appears to still be room to grow. Learning about the Women's Rights Movement and the special place at the Kotel for the Women of the Wall was a highlight of my trip.

Shelly LaPrince



KZ completes Ukraine donation drive



The Kesher Zion Social Action Committee has completed its donation drive for Ukrainian relief. Lisa and Alan Levine have collected the supplies from the synagogue and dropped them off at Tower Health, who in turn will deliver them to Ukrainians in need. The committee and congregation thank all who donated and pray for an end to this senseless war.

Poetry corner

Never Without

*O give thanks unto the Lord,
For his mercy endureth forever.
— Psalm 136*

*There is never
without
God
God is everywhere
always*

*When we lie down
And when we rise again
We say our prayers
alone or with one another
Some will worship incessantly
Some willfully ignore
Some have never heard
Some shun*

God is One

— Nancy J. Knoblauch

A Recipe of Love

*With arms around each other,
Two hearts so full of love!
If the world could embrace these feelings,
Could there be any need for hatred?
Never any love!
Contemplation of love for one another is the
answer in my heart.*

*So, gather with arms around each other,
let's be sisters and brothers, it is simple and
so right!
Look above, there's a sea of stars,
Illuminating the world throughout with
boundless love for all!!*

— Ethel Engel

Summer Is Here

*Summer is here, warm weather, flowers
and a pool,
today's kids would say everything is cool.*

*Go on a vacation to anywhere you want to
go,
as long as you have enough of what we
used to call dough.*

*My flowers are growing, so are my
tomatoes,
I'll soon have loads of peppers and
potatoes.*

*I love the days of summer and the sun,
I sit and watch the kids having so much
fun,
they yell and jump to one toy to another,
or to see who can throw a ball further.*

*I take the sun as much as I can,
Then go inside where there is a fan.*

*This weather will not last very long,
so I sit and sing and sing a song,
that says I love everyone and the USA,
I am running out of words, so this is all I
have to say.*

— Tootie Moyer

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Big Cheese makes big difference



Members of the Federation staff volunteered at the United Way's Big Cheese event on June 17 at Penn State Berks. Together they helped pack 250,000 meals for families experiencing hunger in Berks. Federation is a proud partner organization of United Way of Berks County.

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Federation Honorial - Memorial Card Information

Please mail your payment with complete information to the Jewish Federation, PO Box 14925, Reading, PA 19612-4925 or bring to the Jewish Cultural Center, 1100 Berkshire Blvd, Suite 125, Wyomissing. You may set up a "savings account" for the purpose of sending cards. Please contact the Jewish Federation at 610-921-0624 for further information.

Contributions as of July 22

Federation Jewish Community Campaign

In memory of:

Neal Jacobs – Dena and Vic Hammel
Helen Olga Comite – David Goldberg
Lois Cohen – Rob and Yvonne Oppenheimer

Jewish Family Service

In honor of:

Berna Sherman's special birthday – Anne Percelay
Birth of Elaine Safir's twin great-grandsons Wyatt & Walker Wadsworth – Louise Zeidman
Birth of Lori and Scott Faller's twin grandsons Wyatt & Walker Wadsworth – Louise Zeidman
Birth of Sylvia Wenger's great-grandson – Louise Zeidman
Abby Goldberg's graduation from Brown University – Al and Betsy Katz

In memory of:

Lorna Adelman – Louise Zeidman
Susan Weiss's mother – Terri Hafetz
Helen Olga Comite – Haia and Meir Mazuz
Dr. Barry Loigman – Helene and Henry Singer

Honorials and Memorials

Contributions may be made to the following Funds:

Federation Jewish Community Campaign
Jewish Family Service
Leo Camp Lecture Fund
JFS Food Bank
JFS Taxi Transportation Program
Holocaust Library & Resource Center
Doris Levin Fund
Sue B. Viener Memorial Fund for PJ Library
Harry & Rose Sack Fund
Evelyn Thompson Fund

Harry & Rose Sack Fund (Adult Programming)

In honor of:

Nyla Simon's new job and home – Albert and Nancy Sack

Get well/speedy recovery:

Mareyna Simon – Albert and Nancy Sack

In memory of:

Virginia "Gege" DuBois (Nancy Sack's mother) – Albert and Nancy Sack
Margaret Auchter – Albert and Nancy Sack
Lois Cohen – Albert and Nancy Sack

Ukraine Emergency Relief Fund

In honor of:

Ken Blumberg's 90th birthday – Margie and Alan Leisawitz

JFS TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

This program provides transportation to members of the Jewish community, age 60 and over or those with disabilities, who have no other way of getting around. It allows participants to retain their independence and keeps them from becoming homebound and isolated. This service can be used for medical appointments, synagogue attendance, shopping and other errands.

It is easy to participate. Purchase a book of 25 taxi tickets from the Federation at a cost of \$25. Each coupon is worth \$3. The phone number for Reading Metro Taxi is printed on the ticket book. Call the company and arrange your ride. At the end of the ride, sign your coupon(s) before giving them to the driver. Tipping is left to the passenger's discretion. The coupon does not include the cost of tipping.

This program is subsidized by the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

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