

Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

A publication of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serving the Berkshires and surrounding NY, CT and VT

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Pittsfield, MA
Permit No. 19

Vol. 23, No. 2

Shevat/Adar/Nisan 5775

February 13 to March 25, 2015

jewishberkshires.org

MUSEUM TRIP MEMORIES, PG. 2

YOUR FEDERATION DOLLARS AT WORK, PG. 14

THANK YOU, DONORS!, PGS. 15-16

Vibrant Pre-War Vilna Remembered in *The World Was Ours*

Documentary to be Screened by Its Producer at March 27 Knosh & Knowledge



GREAT BARRINGTON – *The World Was Ours* is a one-hour documentary that explores the vibrant and creative life of the Jewish community of Vilna (now Vilnius, Lithuania) between the two world wars. Drawing upon archival photos and footage, excerpts from diaries and letters, and interviews with survivors and scholars, *The World Was Ours* evokes the spirit of a rich literary, intellectual, and artistic community that helped shape many of the great ideologies of 20th century Jewish life.

In 1941, German forces seized Vilna and made it the first urban Jewish community the Nazis set out to exterminate. During the Holocaust, Vilna Jews risked

their lives to save precious books and documents marked for destruction by the Nazis. Locked in the ghetto, fully aware of their imminent annihilation, they continued to present concerts, theatre, and art exhibitions. By the end of war, 95% of the city's Jewish population had been murdered.

Join the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire at the March 27 Knosh & Knowledge for a screening of the film and a Q&A with its Executive Producer, Mira Jedwabnik Van Doren.

Van Doren was born in Wilno (Vilna)

WORLD WAS OURS, continued on page 7

Jewish Genetic Screening Becomes More Accessible Through At-Home Testing Kits

By Diana Burmistrovich

(JNS) – One in four Jews is a carrier of one or more of the 19 known preventable Jewish genetic diseases, according to the Center for Jewish Genetics. Although Sephardic Jews and non-Jews can carry these diseases, they appear twice as often for Ashkenazi Jews as they do for the rest of the population. When both spouses are carriers for a particular genetic disease, the couple has a 25 percent chance of passing the disease on to their children.

Launched in September through the Emory University School of Medicine's Department of Human Genetics, the goal of the JScreen not-for-profit health initiative is to make those statistics appear less daunting.

A carrier-screening program for Jewish genetic diseases, JScreen aims to give families with Jewish ancestry easy access to information and to provide convenient testing. Employing an easy-to-use kit, JScreen allows individuals to test for the 19 known preventable Jewish genetic diseases—which among others include Tay-Sachs, Canavan, and Gaucher—in their



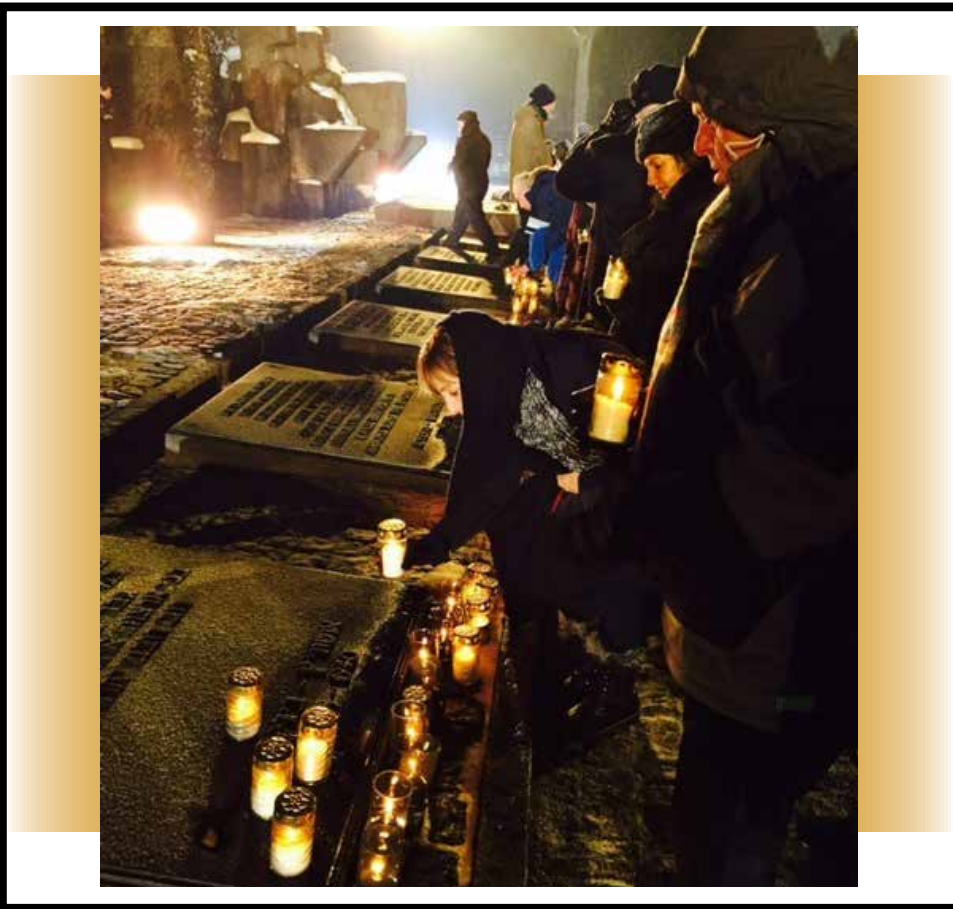
own homes. According to the JScreen website: "The JScreen genetic screening panels are geared toward reproductive

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Survivors, World Leaders Mark 70th Anniversary of Auschwitz Liberation



Approximately 300 survivors of Auschwitz, the youngest now in their 70s, were joined by world leaders on January 27 to mark 70 years since the camp's liberation by Soviet troops. Roughly 1,500 survivors were at the 60th anniversary. Above, Marcy Gringlas, whose father Joseph survived, lights a candle at the ceremony at the site in southern Poland. (Related story on page 23.)

With 'Kavanah', Local Farmer Angus Johnson Embarks on a Kosher Meat Venture

By Albert Stern

The great Jewish thinker Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel identified the key tension in Jewish observance as being created by the effort to maintain a proper balance between *keva* (routine) and *kavanah* (intention). Jewish law and ritual tend to be fixed, comprehensive, and explicit, yet applying an ephemeral spontaneity of the heart to these dictates is essential to their true fulfillment in implementing God's will for this world.

Practically speaking, the myriad hoops that *keva* has us jump through often seem to be the more difficult aspect of observance, but Rabbi Heschel held that *kavanah* poses by far the greater challenge. The sheer multiplicity of rules allows *keva* to exert the greater pull, while *kavanah* must continually be rediscovered and reapplied by the individual from day to day, from action to action. If the mightier draw of *keva* is not resisted, spiritual practice devolves into rote, inertial observance of the letter of the law.



Angus Johnson

This was never enough for our sages, nor is it enough for Angus Johnson, who has recently started Just Good Kosher, an undertaking he hopes will eventually bring a full scale livestock farm and kosher meat processing facility to Berkshire County. *Kavanah* is

KAVANAH FARMING,
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Letters to the Editor

Community Responds to the Museum of Jewish Heritage Visit

To judge by the mail received by the BJV, the 62 Berkshire B’nai Mitzvah students and family members from four congregations who attended the December 7, 2014 visit to the Museum of Jewish Heritage found the experience transformative on many levels. While all correspondents expressed their gratitude to event co-sponsors the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and the Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County, the different impressions of the visit they shared were testament to the richness and power of the experience. Here are some of the things attendees had to say.

Community Bonds

Peter Franck and Kathleen Triem of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire found that making the trip as a community was in itself a highlight. They wrote: “From the outset, the bus ride was great – 3 hours of goofy fun there and back with the kids huddling in the rear of the bus playing their private games and generating many moments of unmitigated joy. These friendships are so valuable to our kids and as parents, we couldn’t be more pleased with the peer groups which have formed. This was a sacred time in itself and to hear the laughter of the children was the perfect counterpoint to the dark past which we were about to experience.”

They added: “Yes, a big part of the trip was to reinforce our Jewish community in the Berkshires, but it also strengthened our relationship with the community of Jews that existed throughout history and that exists around the world.”

Leslie Elias-Saed, also of Hevreh, wrote: “I dreaded when and how I would tell our 7th grade twin boys about the Holocaust. Like a Jewish rite of passage, my husband (Larry Saed) and I knew it was finally time that they learned about this dark period. Being together with fellow Jewish families of the Berkshires allowed our family to share the grief, knowledge, and inspiration that survivor Bronia Brandman brought to all of us. Being together in a small caring group allowed us to face the worst.”

Family & Friends

As the visit was a family-oriented event, some of our correspondents filtered what they saw through a personal lens. Wrote 7th grader Zachary Berlstein of Hevreh: “When the Holocaust survivor came and talked to us, it brought into a new light how horrible it was. When she talked about losing her family, I thought about losing any member of my family and how I would have a hard time moving forward without them. It is really frightening that we feel like we would just not go on, just disappear without them, and these people actually went through that experience and kept going.”



Daniel Saed with Bronia Brandman

Ali Hochfelder of Congregation Knesset Israel echoed that sentiment, writing: “Hearing about her friends and family, and how they were separated, made me think.”

Liza Donlan of Temple Anshe Amunim wrote that while she is deeply aware of the history, this visit “was the first time I tackled it in a deep and emotional way with one of my kids and from the perspective of a mother. I was devastated by the images of the mothers sending children to England on the Kindertransport – troubled to imagine a world in which parents would have to make such a painful choice to separate in hopes of surviving.”

Isaac Tabakin, Liza’s son, had an experience that, sadly, is not uncommon. “It was shocking to see so many pictures of people who lost their lives so early into their lives,” he wrote. “One of the kids in our group pointed out that one of the people looked like one of his closest friends. The tour guide told us that every tour she takes, at least one person says that someone there looks familiar.”

Nor was it easy for parents to witness their children learning about the darkness of this period of history. About visiting the museum’s 2nd floor, which depicts how the Final Solution was implemented, Bob Munch of Hevreh wrote: “As a parent, this was a hard floor to go through, as it introduced my son to what Elie Wiesel referred to as ‘The Kingdom of Night,’ the place where true evil exists. It was hard because that place is here among mankind and not in some other galaxy as so many fantasy or science fiction books would have us believe.”

New Perspectives

There is always more to learn about the Holocaust and from it. Both students and parents gained new insights about history and human nature. Wrote Hevreh’s Makiyla Levy, a 7th grader: “The trip enriched my life by teaching me a more complete perspective on the history of Judaism. We learned how children were taught to discriminate against Jews in their young lives so they would grow up and continue to treat them as lesser people.”

Grace Phair, a pre-confirmation student at Hevreh, learned about what happened in the aftermath of World War II. “Even after the concentration camps were liberated,” she wrote, “the survivors were still not in the clear. When the survivors struggled home, they were met with nothing. No food, no family, no belongings, and now even their townspeople turned their backs. This surprised me.” Genevieve Franck, also a pre-confirmation student at Hevreh, was surprised by “how quickly Hitler was able to take over Germany and try to get rid of all Jews.” Her brother Sebastian spoke for many: “Without this trip, I would not have known so much of the history of the Holocaust.”

Touching History

Hearing the testimony of survivor Bronia Brandman left a deep impression. Isaac Tabakin and KI’s Rosemary Snyder, Aviva Skoblow, and Josie Usow all used the word “privilege” to describe how they felt about meeting Brandman, while Ali Hochfelder wrote that “the things I learned made me realize how lucky I am to have such a life full of privilege.”

Liza Dolan related: “The damage and hatred we humans are capable of, but also the love, solidarity, resilience, and ingenuity of individuals and of the Jewish people were brought to life by the exhibits and the very personal account of the survivor Bronia Brandman. I was deeply affected and continue to think about my own, our own interactions – and what it takes to make a just and civil world.”

Bob Munch wrote: “I admire that she could have endured those horrors and not have succumbed to Hate and Bitterness.” Shared son Jacob, a pre-confirmation student at Hevreh: “It was fascinating and scary to hear what it was like when you know the Nazis are coming and what it is like to be in a concentration camp. It was also pretty amazing and cool that the survivor we met was the only survivor in the *entire world* who was able to get their name taken off the list to go to the gas chambers.”

A Meaningful Visit

Clearly, eyes and hearts were opened by this special experience. Wrote Jack Glantz of KI: “The images and videos surrounding me made me feel more connected, and really put my heritage into perspective.” Ryan Robbins, also of KI, shared that “after the tour I felt very emotional saying I am a Jew.”

Adrienne Franck of Hevreh succinctly summed up its meaning to all those who attended: “I think it was important for us to go on the trip because we are Jewish and we should know more about our history.”

Jewish Victims of Paris Terror Attacks Remembered

To the Berkshire Jewish Voice:

In Paris and around the world, supporters of the democratic right to free speech proudly carry banners reading “I AM CHARLIE.” But the same bloody day of the Charlie Hebdo massacre, four victims were targeted elsewhere because, in the words of their killer, they were Jews. Yohan Cohen (22), Philip Braham (40), Francois-Michel Saada (60s), and Yoav Hattab (21) were murdered.

They are, sadly, not the first victims in France singled out for being Jewish. Frequent attacks were perpetrated by the PLO when I lived there in the 1970s, and they have only grown in intensity while being intensely downplayed, causing many French Jews fearing for their future to emigrate, bewildered at the insensitivity of their government.

Informed people know that anti-Semitism has reared its ugly head under

many guises – in France, elsewhere in Europe, the Middle East, and here at home. The British intellectual, Anthony Julius, wrote: “Anti-Semitism gives lumpen-thinkers the opportunity to barge into debates of genuine intellectual consequence. It is not an ideology; it is instead a protean, unstable combination of received ideas, compounded by malice. Anti-Semitism has a place in the history of ideas, only in the sense that a burglar has a place in the home.”

How do we respond to it on our own soil? Can we feel wholly self-satisfied in our safe place in the world as long as we adhere to political correctness or remain quiet?

Ruth Heuberger
Great Barrington

Federation Thanked for Religious School Funding

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Hevreh recently received its first Religious School subsidy check under the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ 2014-15 allocation.

On behalf of the entire Hevreh community, I thank the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for its current and past financial support of our Religious School.

The Federation’s Jewish Education Grant program has provided much needed financial relief to our Religious School community and, at the same time, allowed us to maintain a high quality

educational experience for our Religious School kids.

We value our relationship with the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and look forward to many years of being a productive participant in the Federation’s ongoing efforts to meet the needs of the entire Jewish community.

Thanks again.
Mark Lefenfeld, President
Hevreh of Southern Berkshire
Great Barrington

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Berkshire Jewish Voice welcomes signed letters on subjects of interest to the Jewish community. Letters are printed upon space availability. The BJV reserves the right to edit all letters for content, length, and style. The BJV does not print anonymous letters, insults, libelous or defamatory statements. For verification purposes, please include full name, home address, and a day and evening telephone number. Send letters to: Berkshire Jewish Voice, 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201, or email: jfb.berkshirevoice@verizon.net.

In My View

A Successful Campaign Complete, Our Donations Will Make a Difference in 2015

By Amy Lindner-Lesser, President, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires



As we close the books on our 2014 Annual Campaign, let me thank all of our donors, solicitors, and volunteers whose collective efforts helped us surpass our campaign goal and raise over \$741,000!

Members of this Federation’s Allocations Committee, who reflect and represent the diversity of the Berkshire Jewish community, are currently busy reviewing grant proposals and debating how to allocate much of this funding in 2015. They will put much thought into many important choices, such as how to balance the need to support a quality Jewish education for young people at our local institutions against the importance of funding identity building experiences for them at Jewish summer camp.

This committee will also determine how, through the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), we will fund our Israel and overseas beneficiaries – the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), the Jewish American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and World ORT. These dollars support the care of fragile Jewish populations, engage new leaders, and help build Jewish community worldwide. In addition, the committee will decide on allocations that will be made to specific social service organizations in Israel that care for elderly Holocaust survivors, abused children, and the disabled.

No doubt there will be much discussion regarding the current needs in Israel and overseas in light of the summer 2014 Gaza War and the recent horrific events in Europe.

The situation in France, which today is home to Europe’s largest population of Jews, is of great concern to us all. Reports of anti-Semitism across Europe have been on the rise for a number of years, and aliyah from France, as well as from the Ukraine, has been steadily increasing over the last two years – well before the assaults last month in Paris. This phenomenon is changing the face of Jewish life in Europe and Israel. It shows the opportunity Israel represents for Jews everywhere and reflects a new complexity of life in the European Diaspora.

Dramatic changes continue to reshape the destiny of the Jewish People, and Federation—through our partnerships in Israel and overseas – is on the leading edge of that story. One example is how aliyah from France is being handled by JAFI. Over the past two years, JAFI has dramatically increased its staffing in both France and Israel to accommodate the rise in inquiries and applications for aliyah. The organization has conducted numerous aliyah fairs and adapted their absorption programs in Israel to meet the needs of rising numbers of French Jews. JAFI has also supported Masa trips for ever larger numbers of French young adults, a large percentage them making the decision to remain in Israel. JAFI has done this, in large measure, with the collective funds they receive from Federations across the country, including our own.

In our community, the Federation is often asked by donors whether there is a case for this “collective” Israel and overseas giving. We are asked if there is a measurable impact of the collective Federation system. We are asked whether we are adapting to the changing realities of the Jewish world.

We need only to follow the reports on television and in the newspapers to know that the answer to all these questions is a resounding “Yes.”

Together we are making an enormous difference!

Rabbi Reflections

Purim: A Time for Celebrations and Hard Choices

By Rabbi Robert Ourach



During March, we celebrate one of the happiest and most fun-filled Jewish holidays of the year. For more than 2000 years, Purim and its story have delighted the Jewish mind and heart. The Book of Esther was one of the last chosen to be included in our Bible – its popularity with the masses almost forced its inclusion. The message of right over might stimulated both hope and commitment.

As Jews living in a free country, we should always take the time and make the effort to really celebrate Purim. As we attend our carnivals and wear wonderful costumes, we must use these moments to shape Jewish identity in our own time for ourselves and for our children. As we read the Megillah, we must really listen to the story and remember its message.

The Megillah teaches us about choices. Do we step up like Mordecai and ultimately accept responsibility like Esther? How much prodding do we need? The Megillah teaches us that the thought of hiding is not an acceptable response.

Confronting our fears in a world that challenges us every day is not an easy task. As American Jews today, we are frequently more fearful than we have been in recent decades. There is more anti-Semitism in the world today. People question whether they should travel to certain destinations. Our brothers and sisters in Israel all too often are faced with threats from their neighbors. Children and adults sometimes have less than 15 seconds to reach a bomb shelter, and yet they face Haman and say “we will survive” and “we will prevail.”

In March of 2015, the Hamans of the world are numerous and real, and they are not just there for the Jewish people. We are at times still at the top of their lists,

but as we saw in France in January, it is not just our people who are under attack. Sadly and far too often today, it is not just our lives that are threatened, but also our way of life. The Hamans of today would eliminate us if they could, but their goals are more far-reaching and extend well beyond the Jewish people. The rights and freedoms of Jews, of Americans, of the French, and of other people around the world are constantly being challenged.

It is precisely because of these challenges that we must know who we are and what we believe. Our faith demands that we partner with God. Our tradition requires us to engage in repairing the world. We must not forget to teach our children these requirements on a daily basis. On more than one occasion, Western civilization has not been kind to our people. What we value in American life frequently makes us happy, but for many of us today, there is dissatisfaction with the values and needs that our society often ignores. The Torah teaches that those who are most needy are not to be ignored. The Talmud teaches that when we save the life of a single individual, we save an entire world. Purim is a time to reinforce these values and to re-teach these lessons.

We know the frightening results of what happens if Haman is not confronted. We must always be present to help our people when and wherever they are in need. And as a people, we must always be ready to stand with others who now face challenges like the ones we have faced throughout our history. We will not turn aside. We will not look the other way. We will always join with others who oppose tyranny and oppression. This Purim and in the days ahead which will most certainly challenge us, let us remember our history, and whenever necessary, let us rise up like Esther and Mordecai. Let us always remember the words of Hillel: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?

Rabbi Robert Ourach is interim rabbi at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire





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A publication of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serving the Berkshires and surrounding NY, CT and VT

Published nine times a year by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Dara Kaufman: Publisher and Managing Editor
Albert Stern: Editor
Rose Tannenbaum: Graphic Design & Layout
Jenny Greenfeld: Advertising Sales Representative and Assistant Editor

Editorial opinions expressed in the *Berkshire Jewish Voice* are those of the newspaper and not those of any individual. Signed editorials do not represent the view of the newspaper, but rather express the writer’s view.

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Serves the Jewish community in Berkshire County and neighboring New York, Connecticut, and Vermont. Voluntary subscription donations: \$18, \$36, \$72, \$108, other.

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DEADLINES

The next *Berkshire Jewish Voice* (Vol. 23, No. 3) will cover the period March 26, 2015 through April 30, 2015. The following edition (Vol. 23, No. 4) covers May 1, 2015 through May 31, 2015. **The deadline for press releases and other written submissions, all of which are subject to being edited, is April 1, 2015. Because of limitations of space and time, please be so kind as to not submit lengthy articles without first contacting the editor. Advertising deadline is April 13, 2015.** For a complete *Berkshire Jewish Voice* schedule, contact (413) 442-4360, ext. 11, or e-mail jfb.berkshirevoice@verizon.net.

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Yoav Hattab is Brought to Rest After Paris Attack: Ilanit Kourchia Remembers

By Natan Roi/Jewish Agency

Ilanit Kourchia, director of French Taglit-Birthright – a subsidiary of the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) – is a French native who made aliyah to Israel. En route to the funeral of the four victims of the Paris attack in January, she spoke to JAFI reporter Natan Roi about the condition of the French Jewish community today. Yoav Hattab, one of the victims and the son of the Chabad emissary in Tunisia, was a participant in Kourchia's program – he was considering making aliyah when he returned to Paris, but was murdered on the eve of the Sabbath in the kosher supermarket. He was buried in Jerusalem, along with the three other victims.

Ilanit Kourchia begins with a story. As a child in Nice, France, she had always been interested in Jewish life in Tunis; when she met a young Tunisian Jewish girl who arrived in Paris, the girl told her that on the plane she was told by a young man, "You are coming to France, my sister. Take the Star of David off your neck. You are coming to France – you are no longer in Tunis."

This says it all, Ilanit says.

Yoav Hattab, the son of a Tunisian rabbi, came to Israel on a French Taglit trip, one of thousands of youths who arrive every year to Israel through Taglit-Birthright.

Ilanit, who works with French Jewish youth, insists that the program does not persuade youths to make aliyah. But after many meetings with participants of French Taglit, Ilanit says that she has never heard so many young people saying: I want to return to Israel, I am thinking of living there.

There is something very troubling happening to the Jews of France in the past few years, she explains. "And it started long before [the] events in Paris. Lately, I've been talking to young Taglit participants, after their trip, and asking them what they remembered most from their time in Israel. In the past, they always mentioned visiting the Western Wall or hiking up Masada, but lately, conversations have turned to their volunteering experiences in Israeli homes for the elderly, where they saw the culture of social responsibility in Israel, and the spontaneous dances in the streets with Breslov Chasidim, where they were shocked by the freedom, the opportunity to show their Judaism openly."

Ilanit asked the students – What impressed them more?

And they answered, "The dancing in the streets. The ability to dance freely, proudly, without having to hide that you are Jewish, without having to look left and right. This is something that could never happen in France."

The fact that Jews come to Israel and marvel over the freedom to be openly Jewish, in 2015, only reflects the serious problems that face the Jews of France today.



Ilanit Kourchia, director of French Taglit-Birthright



At the funeral of Yoav Hattab

"I always tell them," Ilanit says, "Don't make aliyah to Israel just because of security problems. Because in Israel too there are security concerns. Rather, make aliyah from deeper reasons, like that freedom to be Jewish in your own home and in the streets as well."

For years, the students have repeatedly told her that they don't walk in the streets with a yarmulke on their heads, because it endangers them – ever since the murder of Ilan Halimi in 2006, the 2012 shooting in the Toulouse Jewish school, and recent anti-Semitic movements growing in Paris.

Roi asked: "What do you think will happen when they arrive in Israel? Will they integrate?"

Kourchia responded: "They say that the Jewish mentality is to work hard and succeed. I remember the interview of the French Jewish actor Claude Lelouch, telling of their small house, his mother who supported them by working as a seamstress, and who in the end succeeded because of this French Jewish mentality – given that most of our community is immigrant."

"The Jews in France have done well there, and I have no doubt they will succeed in Israel, too."

"But there are French Jews who resent the calls for aliyah, because it is not their only option. And I try to understand that – if something happens to your brother, do you not approach him and invite him to your home? For me, I am on my way to the funerals today in Jerusalem...and I connect to this national tragedy in my very blood, as a Frenchwoman who made aliyah to Israel, I connect to my people and my land from the bottom of my soul."

"I was in the Rambam School in Belgium; the school is heavily fortified. I went through heavy security to enter the school, with armed guards all around. I saw images of the Yavneh School in Paris online, and the images are shocking. It's hard to imagine going to school with the feeling that security is shaky. It's terrible that we have only been jolted awake now."

"There is an understanding amongst us, among Jews: Something is happening in Europe, and we Jews in Israel cannot close our eyes to this. It's unclear to me why some French Jews are convinced that Israelis calling for aliyah are doing so out of line – on the contrary, this is an extraordinary thing for the best."

This article was reprinted from Natan Roi's blog at www.jewishagency.org, the website of the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI).

For Embattled French Jews, Mixed Feelings About Call to Move to Israel

By Uriel Heilman

(JTA) – French Jews are feeling embattled. Arsonists have targeted their synagogues, terrorists have attacked their schools and shops, and with only a few exceptions, French society has not united behind them to stop the assaults and harassment.

The solution, according to Israel's prime minister, is simple: Move to Israel.

"To all the Jews of France, all the Jews of Europe, I would like to say that Israel is not just the place in whose direction you pray; the State of Israel is your home," Benjamin Netanyahu said Saturday in Jerusalem, the day after an attack on a Paris kosher supermarket that killed four Jewish men.

"This week, a special team of ministers will convene to advance steps to increase immigration from France and other countries in Europe that are suffering from terrible anti-Semitism. All Jews who want to immigrate to Israel will be welcomed here warmly and with open arms," he said.

But for French Jews, the answer isn't so simple.

"The Israeli government must stop this Pavlovian response every time there is an attack against Jews in Europe," Rabbi Menachem Margolin, the director of the European Jewish Association, told the Israeli news website NRG.

"I regret that after every anti-Semitic attack in Europe, the Israeli government dispenses the same statements about the importance of aliyah rather than take all measures ... at its disposal in order to increase the safety of Jewish life in Europe. Every such Israeli campaign severely weakens and damages the Jewish communities that have the right to live securely wherever they are," the rabbi said.

The crux of the dispute – one that is hardly limited to Netanyahu and Margolin – are divergent views about the viability of Diaspora Jewish life.

On one side are the many Israelis who believe Diaspora Jewry has no future due to anti-Semitism (see: France) or assimilation (see: America), and often believe that Jewish life in the Diaspora is somehow less authentic or legitimate than Jewish life in Israel.

On the other side are many Diaspora Jews who see themselves as part and parcel of their home countries and consider their communities vibrant expressions of Jewish life. In their view, Israeli calls for aliyah in response to the challenges they face are offensive and counterproductive. Instead, they believe, Israel ought to be thinking about how it can help Diaspora Jewish communities thrive.

Netanyahu is hardly the first prime minister to ruffle feathers in the Diaspora this way. In July 2004, then-premier Ariel Sharon irked French Jews with a similar call.

"If I have to advocate to our brothers in France, I will tell them one thing: Move to Israel as early as possible," Sharon told a gathering of North American Jewish Federation leaders. "I say that to Jews all around the world, but there I think it's a must and they have to move immediately."

In response, French President Jacques Chirac told Sharon he was not welcome

in France. Like many non-Jewish government leaders, Chirac bristled at the implication that Jews should leave en masse.

In the United States, Israeli novelist A.B. Yehoshua ignited a firestorm in 2006 when he told the audience at a centennial celebration of the American Jewish Committee that American Jews are only "partial Jews" because they live in the Diaspora.

"Judaism cannot exist outside Israel," he said, according to an account in Israel's daily Haaretz. "Those who do not live in Israel and do not participate in the daily decisions that are made there ... do not have a Jewish identity of any significance."

Yehoshua hit upon a similar note in a February 2013 speech to a group of several hundred American Jews on volunteer and study programs in Israel when he said, "I'm happy to see so many Americans here. I hope you all become Israelis and don't return to America."

Needless to say, they didn't all move to Israel.

French Jews are in a much different situation than American Jews, however, in that they face the threat of physical violence. Add France's serious economic problems and many French Jews agree with the view that the prognosis for their community is bleak.

"We do not have a future here," Joyce Halimi, who attended a vigil for victims of the Hyper Cacher supermarket attack on Saturday night, told JTA. "The government talks, but it's only words."

In 2014, nearly 7,000 French immigrants arrived in Israel out of a French Jewish population of 500,000. That's the equivalent, proportionately, of 84,000 American Jews moving to Israel. The actual number of Americans who immigrated to Israel in 2014 was 3,470.

Additionally, the highly symbolic decision by all four families of the Hyper Cacher attack victims to bury their loved ones in Israel reinforces the message that French Jews have a dim view of their future in France.

Of course, not all of those who are emigrating are moving to Israel. Montreal, Miami, London, and New York all have seen significant numbers of French Jewish newcomers over the last decade or so.

St. John's Wood Synagogue in London now holds a French-language Sabbath service. Montreal's primary Jewish social services and resettlement organization, Agence Ometz, has seen a significant increase in newcomers from France over the last year, JTA reported in November. In 2013, the Italian daily *La Stampa* wrote a feature about the surge of French Jews in New York.

Unlike with Israel, however, there is no precise data about the number of French Jews moving to the United States, Britain, or Canada.

But the migration westward is a reminder that Israel is not the only alternative for French Jews seeking to leave the country.

Traveling with Jewish Taste

Austin, Texas: A River Runs Through It

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



From the earliest days of the Spanish missionaries to the Texas Revolution of 1836 to “Houston” being the first word uttered on the face of the moon, Texans have taken great pride in their heritage. But for all the emphasis on the state’s storied past, while in Austin I could find almost nothing indicating any Jewish historical presence at either the Bullock State History Museum or the State Capitol, and only hints of the Tribe at the LBJ Presidential Library.

It’s not as if we weren’t there. Austin’s history began in the 1830s when Germans, Swedes, and Mexicans arrived in Central Texas and established themselves on the banks of the Colorado River. First named Waterloo, the town was later renamed for Stephen Austin, an impresario for the Mexican government tasked with bringing settlers to the area. In 1839, the city became the capital of the independent Republic of Texas. After the Civil War, Texas permanently re-joined the United States.

The first Jews in Spanish Texas were Sephardim and conversos who came in the early 1800s, well before Austin was established. Although not particularly welcome (when have we ever been?), they contributed to the developing republic. Jews fought in the Texas Revolution of 1836 at both Goliad and the Battle of San Jacinto, the 18-minute confrontation that defeated Mexican President/General Santa Anna. Among them was Dr. Albert Levy, a surgeon during the conflict who later joined the Texas navy.

Other early Texas settlers were members of the Simon family, whose patriarch Alex invested in the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad and founded and helped build the B’nai Abraham synagogue in Brenham in 1885. His son James financed the building of the historic Simon Theater in Brenham.

Later Jewish settlers came from central and eastern Europe after the Civil War. Today, the majority of Jewish Texans are of Ashkenazi descent.

Jews arrived in Austin as early as the 1840s, a mere 10 years after the first settlers. The best known among them were Phineas de Cordova, scion of a Sephardic family of the Netherlands, and his wife Jemima. De Cordova formed a land agency and a newspaper publishing business with his brother Jacob, and then came to Austin, where he published the *Southwestern American*. He became politically active, and served in the Texas Senate for three terms during the Civil War years.

Other notable Jewish families in Austin during this period included the family of Henry Hirshfeld, who fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Hirshfeld and de Cordova were among a small group of Jews who organized the city’s first congregation, Temple Beth Israel, in 1879. The synagogue was built in downtown Austin in 1884, on the site where the Federal courthouse currently stands.

Local Jews have contributed to the development of the state’s cultural and political life. These included Michael Levy, who founded *Texas Monthly* magazine. Austin elected its first Jewish mayor, Jeff Friedman, in 1975, and on the first night of this past Hanukkah, they elected local lawyer Steve Adler.

Austin’s Jewish population, for generations quite small, has in the past 15 years grown fairly quickly, now checking in around 18,000.

The high technology boom of the 1990s caused a huge uptick in the number of new Jewish families coming to Austin, necessitating an infrastructure to serve them. Dell Computers’ founder, Michael Dell, became Austin’s first major Jewish philanthropist, and it was his largesse that made possible the Dell Jewish Community Center Campus in northwest Austin, which houses the local Federation, its JCC, Congregation Agudas Achim, and the Austin Jewish Academy and its Early Childhood Program. And Jewish names do appear on various plaques around town, such as at the Albert and Ethel Herzstein Hall of Special Exhibitions at the Bullock Museum.

Jewish growth in Austin has been so significant that two new Reform congregations have sprung up, supplementing the existing Conservative and Orthodox minyans. The University of Texas hosts both a Chabad House and a Hillel.



Texas State Capitol Building



The exceedingly large lone star in front of the Bullock State History Museum

A recent development has been the move of Congregation B’nai Abraham from Brenham to Austin. The synagogue had not been used for half a century, so a Brenham community member, 86-year-old Leon Toubin, arranged to move Texas’ oldest Orthodox synagogue 90 miles west to the Dell Community Campus. Community members felt that the move would give new life to the 121-year-old white wooden building.

An unfortunate aspect of the change is that the *shul* will lose its listing on the National Register of Historic Places and its status as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark.

Since its founding in 1980, the Texas Jewish Historical Society has grown to over 650 members. It has sponsored and encouraged research, and also has provided a forum for scholars and students of Texas Jewish history. In addition to publishing books and its quarterly magazine, the Society has supported films and videos. It also sponsors regular lectures and an annual tour focusing on locations integral to Jewish history. A permanent archive of source materials and documents, along with family, community, and organizational histories, is located at the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas.

The flagship campus of the university also houses the Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, as well as the Institute for Israel Studies.

As much as Texans love their history, they are also known for loving things to be large. I was reminded of that reputation when coming upon the Darrell K. Royal football stadium, home to the Longhorns, the university’s gridiron team. This enormous arena holds over 100,000 fans. Yep, Texas likes things big.

Speaking of football, an Austinite has advised me, “Football in Texas isn’t a life or death matter.” Pause. “It’s more important.” In fact, the game is so much a part of the culture here that the Chabad House’s website is www.jewishlonghorns.com.

Austin offers myriad things to do and see, and many of the sites are within walking distance of downtown hotels. For the art lover there is the Blanton Museum of Art, home to over 18,000 works of European, modern, and contemporary American and Latin American art, including a large collection of prints and drawings. The Harry Ransom Center is the nation’s largest university-owned collection, and features a Gutenberg Bible, as well as works by all manner of artists.

I recommend the free guided tour through the beautiful pink granite State Capitol building. Opened in 1888, it is the fourth to house the State Legislature, and it is filled with beautifully carved wood, etched glass, and marble inlay. Most of the desks in both chambers are original, with walnut in the Senate and oak in the House.

Reflecting the 6 countries that have laid claim to the territory, the edifice displays the coats of arms of Spain, France, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the Confederacy, and the United States. And,

JEWISH TASTE,
continued on page 6

Texas Chili

Adapted from a recipe in Southern Living magazine

The origin of chili con carne is thought to have been the chuck wagons along 19th century Texas cattle trails, where range cooks prepared meat with the herbs and spices found along the route. The reputation of the dish spread off the trail as well, and an indication of just how popular this stick-to-your-ribs chili became is the legend that Frank and Jesse James would stop to eat a bowl before pulling their bank jobs.

Texans take their chili seriously, and opinions among cooks vary widely on what makes a perfect bowl of “Texas Red.” Some use a variety of meats, some just beef. Some insist the meat be cubed, some ground. But, I am told, you will never see beans in an authentic bowl of “Texas Red” unless they are served on the side.

The trick to any chili, is to simmer on a low heat for a long time. This method serves both to tenderize the meat and build flavor by letting the flavors meld.

Ingredients:
4 pounds boneless chuck roast, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
2 tablespoons chili powder
2 (6-ounce) cans tomato paste
1 quart beef broth
2 (8-ounce) cans tomato sauce
2 teaspoons granulated garlic

Directions:
Brown meat, in batches, in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat.

Remove meat, reserving drippings in Dutch oven.

Add chili powder to Dutch oven; cook, stirring constantly, 2 minutes.

Stir in tomato paste; cook 5 minutes.

Return beef to Dutch oven.

1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground oregano
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon onion powder
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon ground red pepper

Stir in beef broth and next 9 ingredients; bring to a boil.

Reduce heat to low, and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, 1½ hours or until the beef is tender.

Top with crushed tortilla chips and chopped onion, and serve with cornbread and a nice salad to cool the palate.

Makes 9 cups

Guest Op Ed

Is Exile Good for the Jews?

By Jane Eisner

(Forward) The political scientist Alan Wolfe published his latest book about the Jewish diaspora, *At Home in Exile*, in late October 2014, just weeks before Sheldon Adelson uttered his most recent outrageous remarks. Too bad. Adelson's unfortunate rant would have provided another example to prove Wolfe's point.

Adelson, the zillionaire philanthropist and businessman, is not known for temperate, nuanced speech, but even so, he may well have broken new ground on November 9 in a discussion about whether Israel can remain a democracy without agreeing to a Palestinian state.

"I don't think the Bible said anything about democracy. God didn't say anything about democracy," Adelson opined during the first ever conference of the Israeli-American Council, an organization handsomely supported by his cash. "God talked about all the good things in life. He didn't talk about Israel remaining as a democratic state, otherwise Israel isn't going to be a democratic state – so what?"

Adelson's remarks cannot be dismissed as the embarrassing rantings of an old, rich man who doesn't have to worry about being diplomatic; he wields too much power in the Jewish community to be ignored or excused. His statement is contrary to the Israeli declaration of independence, the underpinnings of Israel's special relationship with the United States, and the wishes of a majority of Israelis, who want to see their nation remain a democracy – never mind that it reflects a rather unique approach to Jewish theology.

But such beliefs are voiced by a minority of politicians on Israel's far right, who view Israel's Jewish character as far more important to preserve than its democratic one. They also are an extreme example of the garish Jewish particularism that makes liberals like Wolfe cringe.

The subtitle of Wolfe's new book says it all: "Why Diaspora is Good for the Jews." In it he argues that the Diaspora is a blessing in disguise, that Jews can enjoy vibrant, successful and secure lives in nations where they are and always will be a minority, and do not need the state of Israel to complete their identity.

Considering that half the world's Jews don't actually live in Israel, considering that I'm writing this from a comfortable place in that most Jewish of cities (i.e. New York), in an America where assimilation is far more a threat to the Jewish future than anti-Semitism – considering all that, the first part of Wolfe's argument is impossible to deny.

Even the Israeli establishment has come to accept the reality that Diasporic Jews will not wither away if they don't embrace the classical Zionist dictum to settle in the land of Israel. Visit, study, support, shop, love – there are many ways to maintain the centrality of Israel short of trying to buy an impossibly expensive apartment in Tel Aviv.

But Wolfe goes further. The Diaspora, he writes, is not just good for the Jews who live there, but good for the Jews who live in Israel. Diasporic Jews can actually teach Israel a thing or two. Not, in Wolfe's view, the Sheldon Adelsons of the Diaspora, but those who live as a Jew and as an enlightened-someone-else – that is, a Jew with a universalistic sensibility, one that builds upon the liberal traditions of pluralism and the quest for social justice, a Jew whose identity transcends the confines of tribe and faith.

"Exile is not the enemy of the Jewish state; isolation is. Now more than ever Israel needs the universalism that isolationism abhors," he writes. And later: "What Zionism once negated is what Zionism now most needs."

Here's where I part ways with Wolfe, whose decades of work studying and writ-

ing about American religion I deeply admire. Much as I wish Israel's leaders would embrace more of America's political pluralism – a wish made more fervent every time someone like Adelson opens his mouth – our ability to influence another nation's policies and behavior is limited.

There's something else that bothers me about the binary formulation that Zionism = particularism and Diaspora = universalism. It doesn't take into account the attachment Jews feel for one another and the need for community – even, dare I say it, that squishy word "peoplehood" – that undergirds a Jew's sense of being in the world.

Such attachment doesn't have to take the form of Adelson's crass particularism and unthinking solidarity. But it does require liberals to do something that many of us obviously find difficult: To privilege our own. To be able to say that Jewish tradition is special, that Jews should feel a responsibility to one another that does not negate our responsibility to the wider world but sometimes preempts it.

This makes many of us uncomfortable (and I'm including myself here). We are reluctant to privilege our own when it comes to our support for Israel, or how we educate our children, or who they marry. Our Diasporic embrace of universalism sometimes leaves us in so *pareve* a position that being Jewish is just another attribute, no more significant than where we live or how we vote, and not a guiding principle that we wish to see continued for generations beyond our own.

The sociologist and Forward contributing editor Steven M. Cohen put this in words on Facebook in a post written after attending the first Open Hillel conference last month. While praising the intelligence and commitment of the college students, Cohen said that as a progressive Zionist, he was deeply disturbed by this: "The most fundamental issue (or, 'flaw') was their absolute rejection of any sense of privileging their personal and group connection with fellow Jews, with the Jewish People, and with Israel."

He continued: "Epitomizing the total rejection of any privileging of Jewish connection by these Jews to other Jews was a curious linguistic custom: The word 'Israel' was hardly ever mentioned without 'Palestine' immediately following. 'Israel-Palestine' was uttered so often that I almost came to believe that the two-state confederation had already come into being."

Asking whether Jews can truly be at home in exile is actually a trick question. The easy answer is: Of course, and not just in the obvious sense of pointing to the relative prosperity and security enjoyed by American Jews and other Diasporic communities. "For those who remain scattered around the world," Wolfe writes, "exile keeps alive a tradition far older than Zionism: a people who live among others not like themselves, conscious of their status as a minority, will inevitably develop a sympathy for the underdog."

But exile can never grant us one thing: national self-determination. To paraphrase a brilliant essay on the "Zionism of liberty" by Israeli historian Gadi Taub, Israel was created to remedy the tragic choice between being a human being and being a Jew. The crux of Zionism, Taub writes, is "that you don't need to be a Jew in your own home and deny your Judaism outside it."

Diaspora Jews are always struggling to achieve that sense of wholeness, the balance between being human and being a Jew. I never want to lose the first identity, but the more at home we feel here, the more we risk losing the second. And we need both.

This essay originally appeared in the Jewish Daily Forward.

JEWISH TASTE, continued from previous page

echoing the state's reputation for loving everything B*I*G, the capitol's dome, at 308 feet, is 20 feet higher than that of the U.S. Capitol's dome in Washington, DC. And, in contrast to the compact footprint of Boston's Statehouse, the Texas Capitol sits on 51 acres.

The only evidence of Jews I could detect at the LBJ Presidential Library was the taped recording of a conversation with then-United Nations Ambassador Arthur Goldberg. Ironically, virtually every historian featured on the many video presentations about LBJ's public service was Jewish. The Library provides an excellent presentation of the public service career of our 36th president. The many interactive exhibits, video presentations, and even telephones on which one can listen to Johnson's conversations, give an in-depth look at his life in politics. Off limits to us were the 45 million documents stored in the archives.

The Bullock Texas State History Museum is housed in an artfully designed red granite building that on each floor explores a separate segment of Texas history.

Several films are screened daily, including one on *La Belle*, French explorer La Salle's ship that sank off the waters of Texas in the 17th century. Truly special is the restoration work of the ship being done right on the museum floor.

Austin also offers an array of natural wonders. First to consider has to be the expansive National Historic Register-listed Zilker Metropolitan Park, 358 acres of beauty in south Austin that is home to a botanical garden, hike and bike trails, the Lady Bird Lake (named for the First Lady), and numerous outdoor concerts and festivals.

The jewel in the park's crown is the Barton Springs Pool, a 3-acre pond fed by an underground natural spring. Its year-round 68-70 degree temperatures have invited intrepid bathers since the 17th century.

Southwest of town is another botanical wonderland. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is a public garden "dedicated to creating a more sustainable earth through research and education," reflecting the former First Lady's love of, and desire to preserve, native plants.

The area from downtown to the University campus is mostly flat and easily walked. The city offers free guided walking tours of two different historic districts, as well as maps for self-guided tours. Some of the buildings, such as the Millett Opera House (now home to the Austin Club) and the Old Bakery look as if they could serve as sets for an old Western movie.

Events to look out for if you are planning a trip to Austin are the annual Austin Kosher Chili Cookoff on March 1, and the Austin Jewish Film Festival from October 24-30.

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Carol Goodman Kaufman is a psychologist and author with a passion for travel and food. She is currently at work on a food history/cookbook, tracing the paths that some of our favorite foods have taken from their origins to appear on dinner plates and in cultural rites and artifacts around the world. She invites readers to read her blog at carolgoodmankaufman.com and to follow her on Twitter @goodmankaufman.

Your Federation Presents

THE WORLD WAS OURS, continued from page 1

in 1929 to Dr. David Jedwabnik, a noted doctor, and Lydia Baruchson Jedwabnik, a gifted artist. Six days before Hitler marched into Poland (September 1, 1939), 10-year-old Mira sailed with her parents to the United States to visit the New York World's Fair. Unable to return home because of the outbreak of hostilities, she grew up in New York City, studied at the High School of Music and Art, Queens College, Cranbrook Art Academy, the Arts Students' League, and Columbia University, earning a degree in Fine Arts.

As an artist, Van Doren has exhibited widely and her paintings are in numerous private collections. She is also an award-winning pioneer in the art of vitreous enamel on steel, and has been commissioned to create a wide variety of public art. In 1989, Mira formed The Vilna Project, Inc., dedicated to preserving, documenting and disseminating material evoking the richness and diversity of pre-war Vilna. She conducted extensive research toward depicting Jewish life in the city, assembling more than 120 hours of interviews with survivors and scholars in the United States and abroad, and collecting thousands of photographs and other historic material. In 1998, Mira produced a 30-minute short, *Hidden Treasures*, relating the discovery in Vilnius after 50 years of a large collection of books and records that had been hidden from the Nazis in a former monastery during the Holocaust. In 2006, she completed the 58-minute documentary depicting the



Mira Jedwabnik Van Doren

remarkable Jewish community of Vilna before its destruction in World War II. The YIVO Institute awarded her the first Vilna Award for Distinguished Achievement and she has been honored by the Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre for her work on the documentary film.

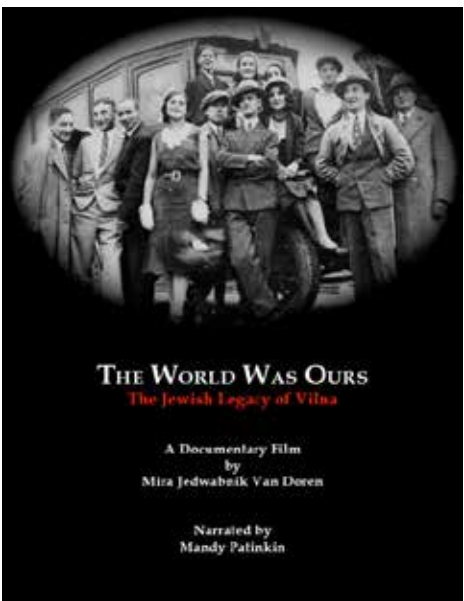
Van Doren will share memories of her family's life in Vilna, and describe the vibrant life of the city – a Jewish cultural and intellectual hotspot – before the war. She will also talk about the post-war efforts of survivors to reconnect in the United States – only about 1200 Jews



A prewar Vilna streetscape

survived the war out of more than 70,000 who had been in the city in 1939. It took more than a decade to produce *The World Was Ours*, and Van Doren will discuss the challenges of creating the documentary, plus her goals for the future.

The 2008 film, which is narrated by Mandy Patinkin, was produced by The Vilna Project, Inc. for Connecticut Public Television (CPTV).



IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Venue: Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

Date & Time: Friday, March 27, at 10:45 (lunch follows at noon)

Advance lunch reservations required for this event.

Email jfb.officemanager@verizon.net, or call (413) 442-4360, ext. 10

Cost: \$11 with fresh farm buffet lunch from Freund's Farm. Program only, \$5.

Robust Turnout for ADL Family Workshop on Anti-Semitism

Over 190 middle and high school students and their parents came together from across the Berkshires to discuss anti-Semitism in their schools and community on January 11, as part of an Anti Defamation League (ADL) family workshop. The ADL program was sponsored by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, in collaboration with area congregations.



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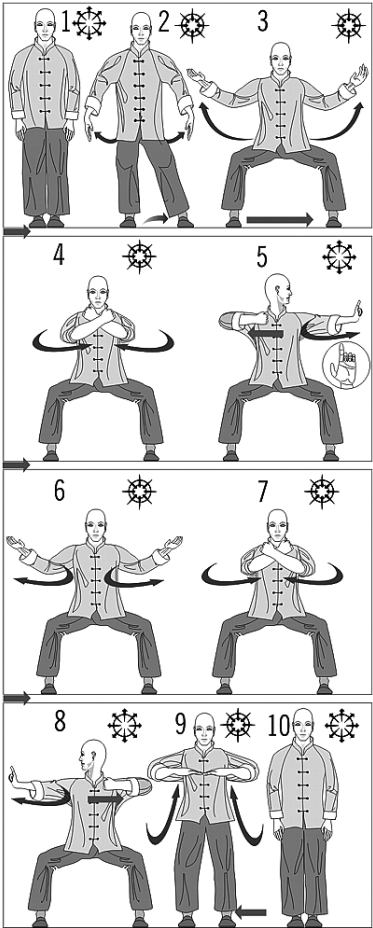
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Your Federation Presents

“Swimming in Air”: Ongoing Qigong Classes with Jeffrey Gordon, March 9

Jeffrey Gordon is a native of Pittsfield and serves the community as an acupuncturist and Qigong instructor. Practicing Qigong is often likened to “swimming in air” and has a rejuvenating and refreshing effect on the body, mind, and senses.



Jeffrey Gordon

Qigong, similar to Tai Chi, is a simple form of exercise to strengthen physical health and calm and focus the mind. It is an ideal form of exercise for older adults and seniors, helping to enhance joint mobility, bone strength, circulation, and balance.

The monthly presentation at Congregation Knesset Israel following the Older Adult Kosher Lunch program will demonstrate the many benefits of Qigong, including a demonstration by Jeffrey and class participation.

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
Venue: Congregation Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Monday, March 9, at 1 p.m.
Cost: Free with Older Adult Kosher Lunch. Program only, \$3.

For further information on all Jewish Federation of the Berkshires programs, please call Nancy Maurice Rogers, Program Director, at (413) 442-4360, ext. 15.

Guitarist to Play Broadway Standards, February 19

Guitarist Doug Schmolze of Great Barrington will play excerpts from his show “Songs of Stage and Screen,” which features tunes from some of America’s greatest composers, including the Gershwins, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Rodgers & Hammerstein, and Leonard Bernstein.

Schmolze also relates the background and historical context of vintage songs of the 1920’s, 30’s, 40’s and 50’s through storytelling and anecdotes, and will also lead a few sing-a-longs. Join him to share the love, pathos, and humor embodied in the timeless classics of the Great American Songbook.

Schmolze studied guitar and composition at the Berklee School of Music, and is the tenor section leader at the First Congregational Church, Stockbridge. He is also also a Certified Music Practitioner, trained in the Music for Healing and Transition Program that provides live music at the bedside for patients in hospital and hospice.



Doug Schmolze

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
Venue: Congregation Knesset Israel

Date & Time: Thursday, February 19, at 1 p.m.
Cost: Free with Older Adult Kosher Lunch. Program only, \$3.

Arts & Letters: Poetry of Sacred Time with Rabbi Rachel Barenblat, March 26

Join poet Rabbi Rachel Barenblat (author of *70 faces: Torah poems*, *Waiting to Unfold*, and the forthcoming *Open My Lips*) for a poetry reading that dips into the wellsprings of Jewish sacred time. Rabbi Barenblat will share Torah poems, motherhood poems, and poems that engage with Jewish liturgy and with the unfolding of our festival year.

The reading, which starts following the Older Adult Kosher Lunch program at Congregation Knesset Israel on Thursday, March 26, will be followed by a question and answer session and book signing.

Rabbi Barenblat serves Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams, and was ordained by ALEPH: The Alliance for Jewish Renewal as a rabbi in 2011, and as a *mashpi’ah ruchanit* (spiritual director) in 2012. She holds an MFA from the Bennington Writing Seminars. A 2012 Rabbis Without Borders Fellow, she participated in a 2009 retreat for Emerging Jewish and Muslim Religious Leaders, and in 2014 served as alumna facilitator for that retreat.

Since 2003, she has blogged as The Velveteen Rabbi, which *Time* magazine named one of the top 25 sites on the internet in 2008. She has been an off-and-on contributor to *Zeek* magazine, “a Jewish journal of thought & culture,” since 2005, and now serves on the board of directors of *Zeek*, as well as the ALEPH



Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

board of directors. She lives in western Massachusetts with her husband Ethan Zuckerman and their son.

IF YOU GO

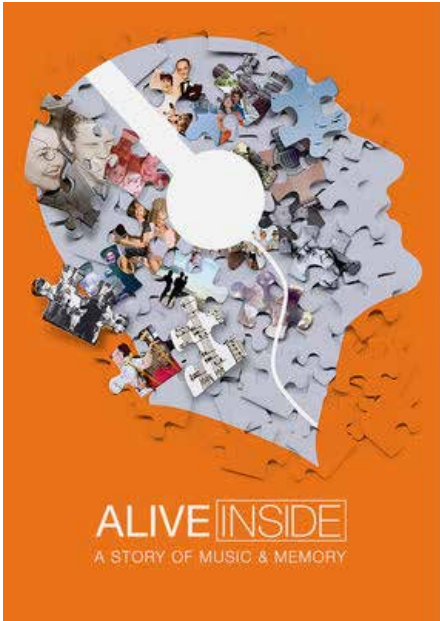
Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
Venue: Congregation Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Thursday, March 26, at 1 p.m.
Cost: Free with Older Adult Kosher Lunch. Program only, \$3.

Film: ‘Alive Inside’ – A Cinematic Exploration of Music and the Mind, March 12

Alive Inside is a cinematic exploration of music’s capacity to reawaken our souls and uncover the deepest parts of our humanity. Filmmaker Michael Rossato-Bennett chronicles the astonishing experiences of individuals around the country who have been revitalized through the simple experience of listening to music. His camera reveals the uniquely human connection we find in music and how its healing power can triumph where prescription medication falls short.

This stirring documentary follows social worker Dan Cohen, founder of the nonprofit organization Music & Memory, as he fights against a broken healthcare system to demonstrate music’s ability to combat memory loss and restore a deep sense of self to those suffering from it. Rossato-Bennett visits family members who have witnessed the miraculous effects of personalized music on their loved ones, and offers illuminating interviews with experts including renowned neurologist and best-selling author Oliver Sacks (*Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*) and musician Bobby McFerrin (“Don’t Worry, Be Happy”).

An uplifting cinematic exploration of music and the mind, *Alive Inside*’s inspirational and emotional story left audiences humming, clapping and cheering at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival, where it won the Audience Award.



IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
Venue: Congregation Knesset Israel
Date & Time: Thursday, March 12, at 1 p.m.
Cost: Free with Older Adult Kosher Lunch. Program only, \$3.

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Your Federation Presents

Esther and Vashti: Speaking Truth to Power, March 5

Is Esther the only heroine of the Purim story? Join Rabbi Jodie Gordon, the assistant rabbi and educator at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, as she examines this intriguing question.

Though Esther and Vashti's stories never intersect in *Megillat Esther*, the stories of these two women weave a vibrant portrayal of women's voices in our tradition. Rabbi Gordon invites attendees to explore the Purim story using Hebrew text, modern interpretation, and feminist commentaries.

After being ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 2014, Rabbi Gordon joined the Hevreh community after having served as their rabbinic intern for two years. She is a graduate of Brandeis University, and spent many years working in the field of informal Jewish education in New York City.

She is passionate about youth engagement, Jewish feminism, and synagogue innovation. Her publications include a chapter in *New Jewish Feminism: Forging the Past and Probing the Future* (Jewish Lights Press, 2011), in which she explores the future of Jewish feminism through the eyes of young Jewish women. Rabbi Gordon lives in Lee with her husband Joshua Bloom, and their daughter, Lola.



Rabbi Jodie Gordon

IF YOU GO
Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
Venue: Congregation Kneset Israel
Date & Time: Thursday, March 5, at 1 p.m.
Cost: Free with Older Adult Kosher Lunch. Program only, \$3.

Two-part Program Celebrates Jewish Author Herman Wouk

The work of author Herman Wouk will be celebrated in a two-part program presented after the Older Adult Kosher Lunch program at Congregation Kneset Israel on February 23 and 26.

Part I is a screening of the 1958 film *Marjorie Morningstar*, a coming of age story based on Wouk's 1955 novel about a young Jewish girl in New York City in the 1950s. The film's trajectory traces Marjorie Morgenstern's attempts to become an artist – exemplified through her relationship with the actor and playwright Noel Airman.

The film's cast includes Natalie Wood, Gene Kelly, and Claire Trevor. The central conflict in the film revolves around the traditional models of social behavior and religious behavior expected by New York Jewish families in the 1950s, and Marjorie's desire to follow an unconventional path. The film is notable for its inclusion of Jewish religious scenes – including a Passover meal, a synagogue sequence, and Jewish icons in the Morgenstern house. These depictions were one of the first times Jewish religion was portrayed overtly in film since *The Jazz Singer* in 1927.



Herman Wouk



Part II will feature a talk about Wouk by teacher, librarian, journalist, poet, and bibliophile Hugh Black, who has presented a continuing series analyzing major American Jewish authors. In this program, Hugh Black will discuss Wouk's faith and how it relates to its fictionalized characters. His career began with *City Boy* in 1948 and his last book was *The Lawgiver*, about Moses, which appeared 2012 when Wouk was 97 years old. Wouk has written numerous works about his faith, including *Marjorie Morningstar*, *Inside, Outside*, *War and Remembrance*, and *The Winds of War*. His historical fiction about Israel includes *The Hope and The Glory*. His non-fiction books in a Jewish vein, which Black will discuss, include *This Is My God* and *The Language God Talks*.

Wouk will be 100 years old in May 2015.

IF YOU GO
Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
Venue: Congregation Kneset Israel
Dates & Time: Monday, February 23 (film) and Thursday, February 26 (lecture) at 1 p.m.
Cost: Free with Older Adult Kosher Lunch. Program only, \$3.

“The Process of Aging,” with therapist Maggie Bittman, March 2

Maggie Bittman, therapist, leads and facilitates a group discussion about “The Process of Aging.” Open to anyone interested in addressing this universal concern, this monthly program has addressed topics such as:

- “Should I Remain in My Home or Downsize?”
- “Aloneness”
- “Staying Active in Your Community”

Topics for discussion change from month to month and are open to suggestion based on the group's preferences.



Maggie Bittman

IF YOU GO
Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
Venue: Congregation Kneset Israel

Date & Time: Monday, March 2, at 1 p.m.
Cost: Free with Older Adult Kosher Lunch. Program only, \$3.

Al Bashevkin, Executive Director, speaks about the work of Northern Berkshire Community Coalition on March 23

There have been many changes for the North Berkshire region since the forming of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition (nbCC) in 1986, and Al Bashevkin has been the group's Director since its inception. A native of North Adams with a Master's degree in Social Work, Bashevkin taught social work at MCLA, practiced medical social work for the Bennington Home Health Agency, worked as the town social worker in Tolland, CT, and led initiatives for the aging at United Counseling Services in Bennington, VT, before returning to the Northern Berkshire community midway through his career.

The mission of the Coalition is to improve the quality of life for people in Northern Berkshire by organizing, supporting, and empowering the community. The Coalition works to achieve its mission with a variety of programs such as:

- nb21, a multi-year project to reduce underage drinking by reducing teenagers' access to alcohol and by establishing strong community norms against underage drinking
- Mass in Motion, which works to promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging active living and healthy eating
- Northern Berkshire Neighbors, which provides support, technical assistance, and leadership development for area neighborhoods
- UNITY (United, Neighboring, Interdependent, Trusted Youth), the Coalition's youth development program, which has been offering innovative, youth-driven programs since 1994.

Other current projects include a teen writing workshop, the Youth Leadership Program, and the “411 in the 413” Youth Conference. The Family Place is a family resource center that works to help link local families with community services. The group also provides forums for com-



Al Bashevkin, NBCC Director

munity issues, with monthly meetings that average over 80 participants on the second Friday of each month at the First Baptist Church in North Adams.

Many local programs in north Berkshire have come into being with the help of nbCC. These include Louison House and the Family Life Support Center, BerkshireRides, Ecu-Health Care, the annual Martin Luther King Day activities, the Interfaith Action Initiative and their Friendship Center Food Pantry, and county-wide activities that include the Berkshire Youth Development Project and an initiative intended to reduce opioid use. Currently, the nbCC has worked to help the north Berkshire community adjust to the loss of a critical service and the jobs offered by North Adams Regional Hospital.

IF YOU GO
Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
Venue: Congregation Kneset Israel
Date & Time: Thursday, March 23 at 1 p.m.
Cost: Free with Older Adult Kosher Lunch. Program only, \$3.

SEE the
Berkshire Jewish Voice
in COLOR at
www.jewishberkshires.org



Your Federation Presents

Volunteers are Vital!

Warm Thoughts in Mid-Winter

By Susan Frisch Lehrer, Coordinator of Volunteers

I'm sitting inside a warm and cozy room while it's -8° outside and reflecting on the last 8 years of working at the Federation as Coordinator of Volunteers and, more recently, also as PJ Library Coordinator. Where has the time gone? That long ago two-year grant for my position has expanded as volunteers are needed for our many programs and projects. We've accomplished so much and will continue to help our fellow Jews in need both locally and abroad. We are grateful for all of the many volunteers who have helped others in our community. The numbers are staggering – over 500 volunteers with over 24,000 hours during the last 8 years! Thank you – *todah rabah!*

The Federation's Tikkun Olam Volunteer program (TOV) is growing and will continue to grow. I enjoy connecting folks in areas where volunteers are needed and am happy to see how many are helping, especially among our children.

I've been reviewing many of the volunteer placements from our kids who receive funding from the Federation for summer camp. Part of the requirement is that they volunteer for at least five hours throughout the year. Some of the ways they have helped are:

- Working (with other kids from their youth groups) to prepare meals for a local shelter
- Delivery of meals to older citizens
- Cleaning Jewish gravesites and placing American flags next to veterans' markers on Memorial Day
- The Hunger Walk fundraiser
- Assisting in their religious schools and synagogues
- Reading to and helping homebound Jewish seniors
- Assisting with our many Federation programs, including concerts, Super Sunday, lectures, PJ Library and family programs, Joe's Project, and office assistance.

We are so thrilled to see what these kids accomplish and pleased that many of them volunteer for more than five hours.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: these kids get it. They understand the Jewish principles of *tzedakah*, *tikkun olam*, and *gemilut chasadim* – in English, justice and righteousness, repairing the world, and acts of loving kindness. We have lots to be proud of in our community, but I think nothing is better than seeing our kids helping others.

It's almost Purim, and with that fun-filled holiday we bring a little cheer to our senior adults, especially those who are homebound and in senior facilities. We have a cadre of folks who bake, pack, and deliver *shalach manot* gift bags decorated by our kids. Our volunteers tell me how wonderful it is that every age helps in the delivery



Hamantaschen bakers (clockwise: Marcie Greenfield Simons, Elaine Epstein, Elaine Loveman, Susan Gordon, Elinor Kantrowitz)



Lisa Udel preparing to bake hamantaschen

of over 1000 hamantaschen as far north as Vermont and south to Connecticut.

This outreach is known as Joe's Project, in memory of the late Joe Madison, who started this program with a few of his hiking buddies years ago. We've incorporated this project into our TOV program twice a year, with hamantaschen for Purim and challah and honey for Rosh Hashanah.

This year Purim is on March 5, so we'll need many volunteers the week before to pack (on the morning of 2/24) and then to deliver. And, of course, we need many children to decorate the bags well before then. Please contact me if you can help in any way.

We're also looking for a few volunteers to help with the Federation's Older Adult Kosher Lunch program check in (on Tuesday and/or Thursday), as well as substitute drivers for meals on wheels. Again, contact me if you can lend a hand.

I wish everyone a joyous Purim! Spring will be here before we know it! *Todah rabah* – thank you to all of our volunteers for all that you do. We do appreciate it.

B'shalom,
Susan Frisch Lehrer, Coordinator of Volunteers
Jfb.volunteer@verizon.net, (413) 442-4360, ext. 14.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Make a difference by becoming a part of our caring community!

- Pack Purim care packages on Tuesday, February 24, 10:00 a.m. at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires office.
- Deliver Purim care packages to seniors in assisted living facilities, hospitals, and homebound at your leisure between February 25 – 27.
- Manage check in at the Older Adult Kosher Lunch program at Congregation Knesset Israel from 11:30 a.m. to 12:10 p.m. on Tuesdays and/or Thursdays.
- Substitute drivers needed for selected days to deliver meals from the Older Adult Kosher Lunch Program to the homebound. Hours are 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

To volunteer, contact Susan Frisch Lehrer (413) 442-4360, ext. 14

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' Tikkun Olam Volunteer (TOV) Network connects community members of all ages with Mitzvah opportunities to make a difference in our community.

Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

A publication of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serving the Berkshires and surrounding NY, CT and VT

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Your Federation Presents

“Stories Make Us Human,” told by Paula Lee Hellman, March 16

Paula Lee Hellman holds that: “As a people, Jews have been kept alive by our continual recitation of the stories that make us whole. Storytelling is more than a Jewish activity, however, it is a human one – stories are told to inspire awe, delight, and even transform.”

On March 16 following the Older Adult Kosher Lunch at Congregation Knesset Israel, join Paula and enjoy a story, and discover the depth of Jewish storytelling traditions. Drawing from Torah through Hasidic Masters and beyond, this program will unite attendees with stories told from generations past – some familiar, some new.

Hellman recently retired after 17 years as Educational Director and Family Educator at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire in Great Barrington. Paula has been active in Jewish education since the 1980s, when she was engaged as Elderhostel Coordinator and teacher at Eisner Camp, a wintertime position she held for 7 years. Paula also taught students at Temple Anshe Amunim for many years.

Paula is both a storyteller and story reader. She was the Story Lady at the Lenox Library in the early 1970s when her children were young. Paula graduated from the Bronx HS of Science and received her BA from New York University (University Heights) in English and Theater. She earned a Family Educator Certificate from Hebrew College (Newton, MA). Paula and her husband, attorney David Hellman, live in Stockbridge. They



Paula Lee Hellman

have a blended family that includes adult children, step-children, and grandchildren and step-grandchildren.

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Venue: Congregation Knesset Israel

Date & Time: Monday, March 16, at 1 p.m.

Cost: Free with Older Adult Kosher Lunch. Program only, \$3.

Prepare for Pesach with Rabbi Levi Volovik, March 19

On Thursday, March 19, following the Older Adult Kosher Lunch Program at Congregation Knesset Israel, Rabbi Levi Volovik, Director of Chabad of the Berkshires, will retell the Passover story with Kabbalistic insights. His topics will include:

“What does true liberation mean and is it something one can experience nowadays?”

On Passover, we are strictly forbidden to eat *chametz* (leavened bread) and instead we eat matzah. “Why is it important for a modern day Jew to celebrate Passover and abstain from eating bread and *chametz*?”

“Does it really make a difference to G-d whether we eat a bagel or matzah sandwich?”

“When, as a Jewish nation, did we begin celebrating Passover? Was Passover celebrated while the Jews were wandering in the desert?”

“What’s the origin of four cups of wine?”

“What is the significance of three matzot at the Seder?”

“Why is Elijah invited to the Seder?”

“We read about the four sons in the Haggadah – is it true that Chabad believes in five sons?”

Rabbi Volovik will explore these topics in detail and share mystical insights of how ridding ourselves of *chametz* over the holiday actually refines our characters.

Rabbi Volovik is a graduate of the Rabbinical College of Canada. He, his wife Sara, and their five children have resided



Rabbi Levi Volovik

in the Berkshires since 2004, and serve this community as part of a network of over 4,000 Chabad centers worldwide.

IF YOU GO

Sponsor: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Venue: Congregation Knesset Israel

Date & Time: Thursday, March 19, at 1 p.m.

Cost: Free with Older Adult Kosher Lunch. Program only, \$3.



Spend the Summer or the Year in Israel

ISRAEL TRAVEL & STUDY GRANTS FOR YOUTH

The Michael Nathaniel Shute Endowment Fund

provides grants to Berkshire area youth for formal educational travel or study in Israel.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.
Awards are made within 45 days of receiving the application.
Additional funding is available through the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

To request an application contact the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
(413) 442-4360 or jfb.officemanager@verizon.net

Download an application at
www.jewishberkshires.org



Jewish Federation
OF THE BERKSHIRES

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This program is funded by the Jewish Women's Foundation of Berkshire County and administered by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

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Your Federation Presents

See This Bitter Winter Off With a Sweet Federation Family Fun Day

As the long Berkshire winter draws to a close, families are invited to join the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for another fantastic family fun day on Sunday, March 15. This time we'll be gathering from 2 to 4 p.m. at Ioka Valley Farm in Hancock, and learning about maple sugaring as part of a tour of the farm's maple sugar house – how the trees are tapped, the sap collected, and the syrup made.

The program also includes a reading of the PJ Library book *Picture a Tree*, after which participants will explore the Jewish values embodied in the story. Visitors can also explore the barn, feed the chickens and goats, and enjoy the other farm animals awaiting spring in the Berkshires.

No visit to a sugar house would be complete without a sampling of the product, and all kids, parents, and grandparents

in attendance can choose a snack of ice cream and maple syrup topping or fresh homemade applesauce with maple sugar sprinkles.

This event is free, but please RSVP by March 10 at (413) 442-4360, ext. 10. You can also email at: jfb.officemanager@verizon.net.

March 15 is also Good Deeds Day, and we will be collecting supplies for the Berkshire Humane Society. The shelter's current needs are: large rawhide bones, soft dog treats, cat litter, laundry detergent, paper towels, steel wool pads, Lysol spray, and garbage bags.

Ioka Family Farm is located at 3475 Route 43, Hancock, MA, about 17 miles north of downtown Pittsfield.

This Federation Family Fun Day is co-sponsored by PJ Library.

Insights, Stories, and Song at the Annual Community Passover Seder

Continuing an annual Passover tradition, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires will sponsor a Community Passover Seder at Congregation Kneset Israel. Rabbi David Weiner will lead the interactive and family friendly Seder on the first night of the holiday, Friday, April 3, starting at 6:30 p.m.

Children of all ages, extended family, and friends are all welcome.

The professionally catered kosher menu will be served family style, and feature matzo, karpas, eggs, charoset, maror, gefilte fish, vegetarian matzo ball soup, herb roasted chicken or vegetarian entrée, vegetable, coffee, tea, fresh fruit and dessert.

Cost for the Seder will be \$40 for

adults; \$20 for children 5 to 13; and free for children under 5 years old. Financial assistance is available through the generous support of the Jewish Women's Foundation of Berkshire County. Payments cannot be refunded.

Advance reservations and payment are required. Please complete the form in this issue of the BJV and send your payment to: Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

Please direct all inquiries to Dara Kaufman, Executive Director, at (413) 442-4360, ext. 12.

Congregation Kneset Israel is located at 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.

Check out our website!

www.jewishberkshires.org

INCLUDES A CALENDAR OF PROGRAMS AND EVENTS
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Calling All High School Seniors

2015 College Scholarship Opportunity

Awarded annually to a graduating senior who has demonstrated leadership in the Berkshire Jewish community, this scholarship is made possible through the generous support of the

Henry Simkin and Frances Simkin Schiller and
Dr. Stanley and Fay Simkin Scholarship Fund.

Deadline: April 25, 2015

Download an application on Jewishberkshires.org or pick one up at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA



Jewish Federation of the Berkshires Presents

Knish & Knowledge

Friday, March 27, 10:45 a.m.

A Historical Documentary: *The World Was Ours*
Presented by Producer and Founder of The Vilna Project, Inc.: Mira Jedwabnik Van Doren

LOCATION: Hevreh of Southern Berkshire 270 State Rd, Great Barrington
COST: \$11, includes program and seasonal farm fresh buffet lunch by Freund Farm Market and Bakery. Program only is \$5.



Advance Lunch Reservations Required (413) 442-4360, ext 10 or jfb.officemanager@verizon.net

Like us on Facebook:

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As my parents planted for me before I was born, so do I plant for those who come after me. – Talmud



Anonymous (9)

Ed Abrahams

Norman Avnet

Barbara Bashevkin

Robert Bashevkin

Linda J. L. Becker

Robert Berend

Shelley Berend

Helene Berke

Lawrence Berke

Lee & Sydelle Blatt

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Jewish Federation
OF THE BERKSHIRES

FEATURES AND LOCAL NEWS

Chai Noon: Purim Hoedown Brings the Wild West to the Berkshires

LENOX – For a Purim celebration the likes of which has not been seen since Mordechai busted Ahasuerus's bronco, join Chabad of the Berkshires as they bring the Wild West to westernmost Massachusetts on March 4 at the Lenox Community Center. The party starts at 4 p.m., and will include food, a costume parade, and a reading of Megillat Esther accompanied by a funny and fast moving slide show.

"Wild West in the Berkshires" is a community-wide program, and all are invited to join regardless of affiliation or background," says Sara Volovik, Program Director of Chabad of the Berkshires. "There will be an elaborate Wild West dinner, Pu-

rim costume parade in Western-themed costumes (or any of your choice), music, Western-themed tricks, and *l'chaim* galore."

In the spirit of Purim, participants are encouraged to come in costume and take part in a judged competition – prizes will be awarded to contestants with the most innovative or funniest costumes. Admission is \$20 per adult (\$5 discount for adult in costume) and \$10 per child (\$5 discount for child in costume).

For more information on Chabad's additional Purim festivities or on the holiday of Purim and its observances, or to RSVP, contact Sara Volovik at (413) 499-9899, or visit www.jewishberkshires.com.



Lions and Tigers and Bears – Oy Vey!

Experience the Wonderful Wizard of Shushan at Two Purim Celebrations

GREAT BARRINGTON – This Purim season, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire will host two events with a Wizard of Oz theme.

On Wednesday, March 4, festivities begin with a family pizza party and costume parade at 5:30 p.m. The Megillah will be read at 6 p.m., after which those in attendance can follow the Yellow Brick Road to *The Wonderful Wizard of Shushan!*, a play performed by Hevreh's Confirmation Class (9th-12th grade). Andrea Patel directs.

Hevreh will also host a Purim carnival on Sunday, March 8, from noon to 1 p.m. The carnival

will be run by 7th and 8th grade Religious School students, who invite all comers to step up to the Emerald City of Shushan for an afternoon of games, treats, and prizes.

There will be a costume contest with prizes for the best dressed and most creative costumes. Tickets will be 50 cents per activity and \$5 for 12, with all proceeds going to *tzedakah*.

Hevreh is located at 270 State Road in Great Barrington. Please call (413) 528-6378 for more information.

Three Chances to Explore the Hilarity and Holiness of Purim

PITTSFIELD – Temple Anshe Amunim will be offering a wide range of Purim events designed to appeal to kids and adults as the congregation explores the hilarity and holiness of this unique festival.

On Thursday, March 5 at noon, Rabbi Josh Breindel will lead a festive reading of *Megillat Esther* (The Scroll of Esther). Adults will explore the story's themes of lust and drunkenness while reflecting on its message of powerlessness and strength, and hopelessness and hope. Hamentaschen (pastries filled with poppy seeds) and drinks will be provided. This event is free and open to the public.

On Friday, March 6, after a special Shabbat service at 5:30

p.m., the Temple will hold a congregational dinner. Following the dinner will be a Purim-palooza! Attendees will enjoy a wild and wacky parody of favorite game shows, with a special Anshe Amunim twist! Bring groggers, buzzers and noisemakers and be ready for audience participation at this family-friendly event!

On Sunday, March 8, from 3 to 5 p.m., a family-friendly Community Purim Carnival will be held at the Temple.

This fun and festive event is open to the public and will feature a variety of games and crafts, available for children of all ages. Activities will include a clown, storytelling, music, and more. Traditional carnival foods and hamentaschen will be

available for purchase. Carnival admission is \$5 per child, adults free. Proceeds from the event will benefit the Temple's Religious Education program.

For more information, contact the Temple Anshe Amunim office at (413) 442-5910, or email templeoffice@ansheamunim.org or visit www.ansheamunim.org.

Be Wise... Advertise!

In the
Berkshire Jewish Voice

Contact Jenny Greenfeld
(413) 442-4360, ext. 13
jfb.bjvads@verizon.net

A Very Vegas Purim

PITTSFIELD – Each year, the Knesset Israel Band has taken their Purimspiel celebration to new levels. Seven years ago, Jonathan Denmark recruited a group of KI musicians to put on a musical costume. They called themselves the KI Beatles and played a full set of Beatles songs with Purim-centric lyrics.

The event was such a hit that they returned the following year with "Dylan Plays Purim," for which Dylan's music was re-written with Purim lyrics. Since then, the band has performed as: "A Purim State of Mind: the Megillah According to Billy Joel & Elton John"; "The Beach Boys Play Purim"; "Michael Jackson Plays Purim"; and "The Best of Woodstock Purim." Last year, the Band's creativity shifted to cover a theme rather than a specific band or artist. There

were hits from Crosby, Stills & Nash, Creedence Clearwater Revival, and an instrumental Star Spangled Banner that segued into the Hatikvah, a la Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock.

This year, the band is back with another theme: "A Very Vegas Purim." On February 28th at 7:30 p.m., the KI Band will cover artists who made a mark in the Las Vegas music scene. They will cover versions of songs by Sonny & Cher, Frank Sinatra, Prince, and of course, Elvis Presley. Come check out this unique offering at Knesset Israel. Refreshments and fun Vegas themed activities are included in the price of admission, \$12 for adults and \$6 for pre-Bnai Mitzvah students

For more information, call the Congregation Knesset Israel office at (413) 445-4872.

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Jerusalem street scene, Purim

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Jewish Federation of the Berkshires – Allocation of Resources in 2014

\$859,292

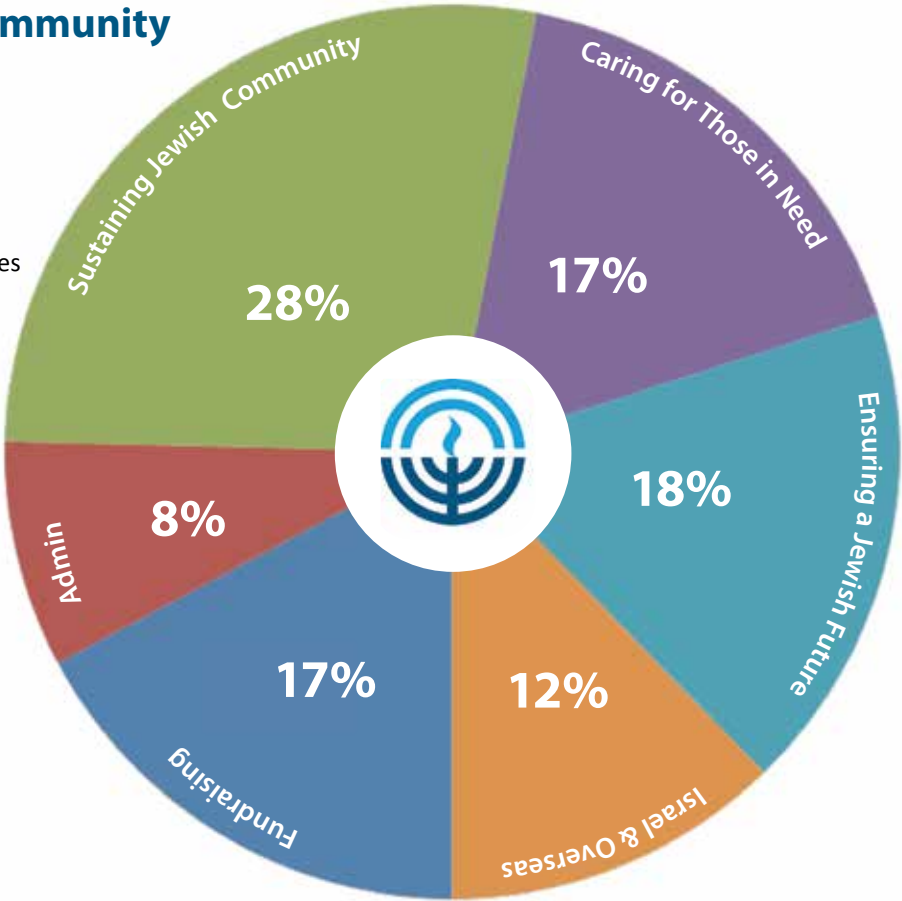
Includes campaign, endowment, grants and other income allocated as of Dec 31, 2014

Sustaining Jewish Community

- Berkshire Jewish Summer Guide
- Berkshire Jewish Voice
- Community Calendar
- Community Programming
- Community Seder
- Co-sponsorships for Local Beneficiaries
- Israel Education
- Jewish Berkshires e-communications
- Jewishberkshires.org
- Jewishly Delicious
- Knosh & Knowledge Series
- Senior Programming
- Shabbat Across the Berkshires
- Stand with Israel Event
- Summer Celebration of Jewish Music
- Yom Ha'Shoah Remembrance

Fundraising

- Campaign Development
- Communications & Marketing
- Leadership Development
- Legacy Circle Program
- Major Donors Program
- Super Sunday
- Volunteer Coordination



Israel & Overseas

- Jewish Agency for Israel
- Jewish Federations of North America
- Joint Distribution Committee
- World ORT
- Ethiopian National Project
- Friends of the IDF
- Haifa Women's Crisis Shelter
- Israel Action Network
- Israel Trauma Coalition
- Yad L'Kashish

Caring for Those in Need

- Emergency Assistance
- Food Security
- Hebrew Free Loans
- Jewish Family Service Social Worker
- Meals on Wheels Homebound Delivery
- Older Adult Kosher Hot Meal Program
- Senior Care Visits
- Senior Holiday Packages
- Tikkun Olam Volunteer Network

Ensuring a Jewish Future

- Federation Family Days
- Holocaust Education Day
- Israel on Campus
- Israel Travel/Study Scholarships
- Jewish Camp Scholarships
- Jewish Education Grants
- PJ Library
- Public School Advocacy
- Taglit Birthright
- UMASS Hillel



----- Building, Strengthening and Caring for our Jewish Community -----

In the Berkshires

Kosher Hot Meals & Care Visits

Provided over **4,500 nutritious meals**, companionship, and care visits for over **350 seniors and homebound**.

Social Services

Provided case management and counseling, through a Jewish lens, by a licensed social worker to more than **45 members of our community**.

Emergency & Specific Assistance

Provided small grants and interest-free loans to cover the **essential needs** of community members.

Jewish Education

Provided a high-quality, meaningful Jewish education for more than **212 children and young adults** through Jewish education grants to six religious schools across the Berkshires.

Federation Family Days

Engaged over **300 parents, grandparents, and children** in Jewish programming and *tikkun olam*, strengthening their connections to the Jewish community and helping them build supportive relationships with Jewish peers.

The PJ Library

Distributed more than **1,200 books and CDs to 106 children**, nurturing their Jewish identity and helping their families embrace Jewish values and traditions.

Jewish Identity

Funded transformative Jewish camp and Israel experiences for **over 34 future Jewish leaders** and enhanced Jewish programming through Hillel at UMASS, Amherst.

Community Programming

Engaged more than 3,500 participants in celebrating Jewish life and connecting as a community through more than **100 cultural, educational, and holiday programs**.

Berkshire Jewish Voice

Primary resource for **over 5,000 readers**, engaging our community in Jewish life and broadening our spiritual, political, and cultural understanding.

Community Relations & Advocacy

Provided **a proactive voice** addressing anti-Semitism, Israel and the Middle East, religion in the schools, justice legislation, and media relations.

Tikkun Olam Volunteer (TOV) Network

Engaged over **300 volunteers** in more than **3,500 hours of service** to the Berkshire Jewish Community.

Jewish Women's Foundation

Contributed additional **\$49,000 to tikkun olam** through such programs as subsidized taxi vouchers, Jewish summer camp scholarships, fuel security initiatives, homeless support, and Israel emergency funds.

In Israel & Overseas

Through our partner, the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), our Federation supported:

Delivery of **hot meals and necessary supplies** to the elderly and people with disabilities rendered homebound or living in shelters because of ongoing missile fire from Gaza this past summer.

Food cards, meals-on-wheels, homecare, winter relief, and medicine to more than **150,000 elderly Jews** in the former Soviet Union, many of them Holocaust survivors.

Diapers, formula, medications, and baby equipment to more than **600 babies and toddlers in Argentina**.

Through our partner, the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), our Federation supported:

Aliyah of more than **11,000 Jews fleeing anti-Semitism** in France and war in the Ukraine, helping them create a new life in Israel this past year.

Respite days and camps for more than **70,000 children from southern Israel** caught in the crossfire of this summer's conflict with Gaza.

Jewish education, camp experiences, and Israel experiences for more than **7,500 youths** and young adults from the former Soviet Union.

This is just a sampling of how, together, we are making a difference in the lives of others.

The 2014 Community Campaign Raised \$741,861!

Together We Do Extraordinary Things!

The Board of Directors and staff of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires wish to acknowledge the tremendous effort of over 1,255 donors and more than 100 community volunteers who helped make the 2014 campaign a resounding success. Together we surpassed our goal!

On behalf of those whose lives will be touched by your generosity,

----- Thank You! -----

* denotes Lion of Judah: woman's individual gift of \$5,000 or more
denotes individual donations

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Jewish Women's Foundation of Berkshire County

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- Helene Berger
- Nancy Bernstein
- Judith Brinberg
- Barbara Cohen
- Mimi Cohen
- Phyllis Cohen
- Roberta Cohn
- Brenda Deener
- Sheila Drill
- Terry Drucker
- Janine Engel
- Pat Fingerroth
- Marilyn Fisher
- Lynn Foggie
- Jo Anne Freedman
- Joanna Fribush
- Isabel Friedman
- Laura Friedman
- Louise Galpern
- Lois Ginsberg
- Jane Glaser
- Barbara Glasser
- Patricia Goldman
- Judith Grossman
- Wendi Hauck
- Mimi Heyman
- Miriam Hinds
- Joan Horowitz
- Liz Jaffe
- Julia Kaplan
- Kathryn Karson
- Annbeth Katz
- Marilyn Katzman
- Joan Kleinman
- Sara Koffman
- Maddy Krauser
- Helaine Lender
- Susan Ludwig
- Paula Lustbader
- Ellen Masters
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- Gail Weiss
- Florence Wineberg
- Judy Wrubel
- Shirley Yohalem

FEATURES AND LOCAL NEWS

Temple Anshe Amunim to Host Second Night Passover Seder Service and Dinner

PITTSFIELD – Temple Anshe Amunim, 26 Broad Street, will hold its annual Second Night Passover Seder on Saturday, April 4. The Seder, which will begin at 5:30 p.m., will be led by Rabbi Joshua Breindel, assisted by students from the religious school, who will read from the Haggadah (Hebrew for “the telling”) and lead attendees in Passover songs. This joyous, family-friendly event will be open to all members of the Jewish community and the community at large who would like to experience a Passover service.

Passover celebrates the emancipation of the Jewish people from slavery in ancient Egypt. The second night Seder allows the community to celebrate together and to invite people from outside the Temple’s membership to enjoy the experience with them.

Food is an important part of the Passover ritual. Following the service, participants are invited to share a meal, prepared by Temple members and a local caterer. The meal will include chicken soup with matzo balls, gefilte fish, beef brisket, roast turkey, sweet potato and carrot tzimmes, plus assorted desserts. A vegetarian option will be offered.

Children will be invited to hunt for the afikomen (the unleavened and last item eaten as part of the ritual) and win prizes. Costs are: \$36 for adult members; \$42 for other adults; \$10 for children ages 10 through 18; and children under 10 free.

Reserve by March 28 by calling the Temple Office at (413) 442-5910, via email to templeoffice@ansheamunim.org, or visit www.ansheamunim.org.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו
kid-de-sha-nu 'a-she-r ha-'o-lam me-lekh e-lo-hey-nu 'Adonai 'at-tah bar-ukh
sanctified us who the universe king (of) our God Lord are you Blessed



במצותיו, וצונו על אכילת מצה.
ma-tzah a-chi-lat 'al v'tsi-vanu be-mits-vo-tav
matzah to eat and commanded us with his commandments

Chabad of the Berkshires to Host a First Night Seder, and Facilitate Sale of ‘Chametz’

PITTSFIELD – Chabad of the Berkshires will host a communal Passover Seder on Friday, April 3rd at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 1 West Street in Pittsfield starting at 7 p.m.

The Seder, its theme “The Unbroken Chain of Jewish Existence,” will take participants through the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, as well as help participants understand the Seder’s relevance to today’s Jews. Included in the Seder will be the traditional hand-baked *shmurah matzah*, the ritual four cups of wine, and a delicious four-course Passover dinner that includes homemade gefilte fish, an array of unique salads, chicken soup, a gourmet entrée, and delectable desserts.

“Passover is a time when families sit together and discuss our rich heritage” said Rabbi Levi Volovik, Executive Director of Chabad of the Berkshires. “At Chabad, every Jew is part of our family.”

Seating is limited and reservations are required. Cost is \$36 per person and \$18 per child under the age of ten. There is no charge for children under the age of three. Rabbi Volovik says no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

For more information or to make a reservation, call Sara Volovik at (413) 499-9899. Reservations can be made online at www.jewishberkshires.com.

The Chametz ‘Sale’

Every year for the duration of Passover (this year April 3 through 11), Jewish *halachah* (law) prohibits the consumption, possession, or derivation of any benefit from leavened food items – ‘*chametz*’ in Hebrew.

Rabbi Volovik explains the practice: “*Chametz* remaining in a Jew’s possession during Passover may not be used, eaten, bought, or sold even after the holiday. Therefore, any chametz remaining must be sold to a non-Jew, and may then be ‘bought back’ following Passover. A rabbi acts as the agent to both sell the *chametz* to the non-Jew on the

morning before Passover begins, and to buy it back on the evening it ends.”

This year Rabbi Volovik has created a new way for local Jews to sell their *chametz* conveniently, having posted a free online ‘Sale of Chametz’ form on the Chabad of the Berkshires website, www.jewishberkshires.com, that will empower him to act on their behalf in the sale.

Rabbi Volovik says those who are not technologically inclined and would like to have their *chametz* sold the old fashioned way can contact him at (413) 499-9899.



Family Yachad Passover to be Celebrated at Hevreh, March 29

GREAT BARRINGTON – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire will be hosting a Yachad Passover on Sunday, March 29, for school-aged children and their families from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Families with little ones under 5 are welcome to join together for singing and a special pre-Passover snack at 11:45 a.m.

Explore and celebrate in anticipation of Passover! Families

will make their own special Seder supplements with songs, stories, and games. Questions will be asked – four of them, in fact – and participants will act out the story of the Exodus in order to explore what the Passover holiday means to Jews today.

The event will take place at 270 State Road in Great Barrington. Please call (413) 528-6378 for more information.

Second Night Passover Seder at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

GREAT BARRINGTON – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire will be hosting a Second Night Passover Seder on Saturday, April 4, at 5:30 p.m. All are invited to attend this special evening. The celebration will be led by Rabbi Robert Ourach and Rabbi Jodie Gordon, and will feature a delicious traditional Passover buffet, catered by Carlucci Simons Catering of Chatham, New York. Seder plates, matzoh, ceremonial wine, and grape juice will be provided. Please feel free to bring your own table wine. Vegetarian or fish options available upon request only, and *must be*

made in advance.

Space is limited, prepaid reservations are required by Friday, March 27. The cost for adults is \$40 per person; children ages 5 – 12 are \$18; and children under 5 are free. If the cost is prohibitive, please contact the office at (413) 528-6378. Please make checks payable to Hevreh, and mail to 270 State Road, Great Barrington, MA 01230.

The Seder will take place at Hevreh, located at 270 State Road in Great Barrington. Please call (413) 528-6378 for more information and to make reservations.

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FEATURES AND LOCAL NEWS

Local Rabbi's Essay Featured in 'Keeping Faith in Rabbis: A Community Conversation on Rabbinical Education'

Rabbi Rachel Barenblat of Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams has contributed an essay to a recently-published anthology of essays titled *Keeping Faith in Rabbis*. The book, co-edited by Rabbi Hayim Herring, Ph.D., and Ellie Roscher, addresses a key issue in Jewish life: how communities might best invest in rabbis while both trusting tradition and embracing change.

Keeping Faith in Rabbis attempts to answer the question of how should the Jewish community train rabbis to lead in the present day, when many American Jews outside of Orthodoxy feel distant from Judaism as a religion. Herring and Roscher say they aim to curate a community conversation that highlights the voices of rabbis, academics, and lay leaders representing a diverse background of age, gender, geography, and denomination.

Rabbi Barenblat's essay, titled "In the Right Direction: *Hashpa'ah* and Spiritual Life," focuses on spiritual direction. Spiritual direction (in Hebrew, *hashpa'ah*, a word which comes from the root denoting ever-flowing divine abundance) is

the practice of walking with someone and helping them deepen their relationship with God through everything that unfolds in their life.

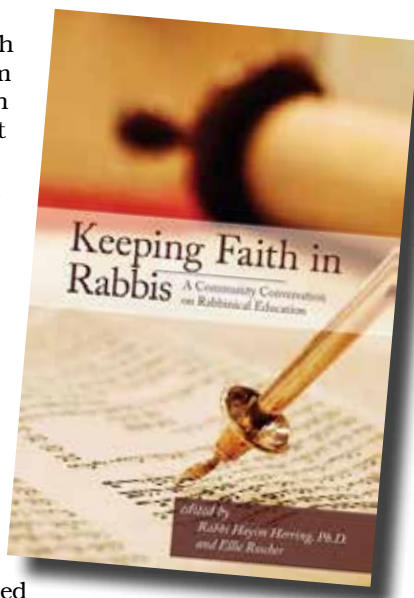
"I wrote about spiritual direction," Rabbi Barenblat explains, "first because of its core in the ALEPH rabbinic program – that's something which makes the ALEPH program unique and which I think other programs would benefit from implementing. Second, because it has been hugely important to my own spiritual formation as a rabbi. Spiritual direction is part of how I keep my own spiritual wellsprings replenished even as I serve a congregation and raise a child."

Barenblat, who has served Congregation Beth Israel for four years, is author of several collections of poetry, among them *70 faces: Torah poems* (Phoenicia, 2011), *Waiting to Unfold* (Phoenicia, 2013) and the forthcoming *Open My Lips*, a collection of liturgical poems due from Ben Yehuda Press in 2015.

Editor Hayim Herring says: "My deep hope for *Keeping Faith in Rabbis* is that it will fuel continued conversations in

person and online, and through workshops, presentations, and inclusive tables where decisions about rabbinical education are made. For those of us who care about Jewish communities and the potential impact that rabbis have, there is too much at stake to let the conversations be limited and disconnected."

Keeping Faith in Rabbis is available online at Amazon and at www.avenidabooks.com.



Two Talks Exploring Jewish Theology

GREAT BARRINGTON – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire will host Georgetown University Ph.D. candidate Michael Friedman for two presentations that explore Jewish theology through an ecumenical lens. The first talk will be during the February 27 Kabbalat Shabbat service at 6 p.m., and the second on Sunday, March 1, at 11 a.m.

The topic of the Friday presentation is "Why Don't Jews Talk about G-d? What We Don't Say and Why It Matters." This will explore God's relative "absence" in contemporary Jewish life. In Friedman's view, Jews rarely discuss God in any detail, and the liberal Jewish community has emphasized Jewish continuity and *tikkun olam* as the bedrock of Jewish life. At the same time, a large number of Jews have begun to look elsewhere (to meditation and yoga, for instance) seeking out spirituality. Friedman will consider how these trends came to be and consider where the Jewish community can go from here.

Friedman's topic on Sunday is "Jewish and Buddhist Ethics: Mindfulness in Both Traditions." During this text-based study, Friedman will explore Jewish and Buddhist techniques of ethical cultivation. What can the Jewish tradition of "*mus-sar*" (character development) teach about how to be more

intentional in our lives? What can the Buddhist tradition of "*lojong*" (mind training meditation) teach us about how to relate more compassionately to others? And what do these two traditions offer each other?

Michael Friedman is currently pursuing his doctorate in the Department of Theology at Georgetown University, where his research focuses on the intersection of Jews and non-Jews, with Jewish-Buddhist encounter as a case study in interreligious engagement and contemporary Jewish spirituality. Before coming to Washington D.C., he earned a Master's degree from Harvard Divinity School in Buddhist Studies and a Bachelor's degree cum laude and with distinction from Yale University in Religious Studies and Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations. Over the past few years, Friedman has been affiliated with Harvard University as a researcher for their Pluralism Project, the Lawrenceville School as a Woods Teaching Fellow in Religion & Philosophy, Jews United for Justice as a Jeremiah Fellow in community organizing, and the Wexner Foundation as a Graduate Fellow in Jewish Studies.

The talks will take place at Hevreh, located at 270 State Road in Great Barrington. Please call (413) 528-6378 for more information.

Second Season of Discussion Communities to Cover Passover Prep and Talmud Study

GREAT BARRINGTON – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire will host its second season of Discussion Communities with classes titled "Preparing for Passover" and "Talmud Study for Everyone" (back by popular demand and again led by Sid Freund).

Passover Prep

"Preparing for Passover" is a two-part session. Part 1 focuses on holiday cooking, and will cover many aspects of the Passover dinner from the Seder plate (and ways to make it personally relevant) to the holiday meal itself. This will not be a cooking demonstration, but a discussion and opportunity to share favorite recipes, which the facilitator will scan and e-mail to attendees. Passover Holiday Cooking will be held on Monday, March 16, from 1–2:30 p.m.

Part 2 focuses on creating a dynamic and meaningful Seder experience. Whether one is leading their very first Seder or their 30th, this Discussion Community will offer ideas for creating a memorable, relevant evening. Attendees should bring ideas and traditions to share. This Discussion Community will be held on Monday, March 23rd from 1–3 p.m.

"Preparing for Passover" will be facilitated by Hevreh congregant Hinda Bodinger, who says: "When I realized that spiritual development was part of the Mom job description, I knew I had a lot to learn. The more I learned, the more passionate I became about Passover, which provides an unparalleled opportunity to creatively engage, include, share the values we hold most dear and make memories that can last a lifetime." She adds: "From plagues with props



Sid Freund

(Ping Pong balls for hail, anyone?) to the Four Questions in any of 300 languages and styles (Klingon, Ancient Aramaic, Shakespearean, Lawyeresque), there are a range of options far beyond The Maxwell House Haggadah."

Talmud Study

Beginning again on May 13, Dr. Sid Freund will reprise his "Talmud Study for Everyone" Discussion Community. Sessions will be held at 9:30 a.m. on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month through September. (Due to the High Holidays, the September dates will be the 9th and 16th of September.)

"Talmud Study for Everyone" will focus on ancient Jewish civil laws, many of which formed the foundation of our modern laws. Participants will sit as judges and lawyers and engage in spirited debate on the merit of cases, and unravel the thinking of our sages. Knowledge of Hebrew is not a prerequisite to experience the challenges and satisfactions of Talmud study, and all classes



Hinda Bodinger

are taught in English.

Facilitator Sid Freund has been the Superintendent of Schools in New York and Connecticut. He attended eight years of Yeshiva studies in New York City, and has had a longtime interest in Hebrew texts.

Hevreh's Discussion Community program

Ongoing since last May, these programs aim to bring together people with common interests in an informal setting to exchange ideas. Led by professionals in the field or by informed lay leaders, groups typically meet for 3-4 sessions, then decide whether to continue. Future sessions on a wide variety of topics are now being planned.

The programs will be held at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road, Great Barrington, and are free and open to the public. Drop-ins are welcome, regardless of where in the cycle a group might be.

For more information, contact Hinda Bodinger at hindabodinger@gmail.com or call (413) 528-3280.

Hevreh of Southern Berkshire Selects New Senior Rabbi

GREAT BARRINGTON – At a well-attended special congregational meeting held in late January, Hevreh of Southern Berkshire elected Rabbi Neil P.G. Hirsch as its senior rabbi.



Rabbi Neil P.G. Hirsch

Alan Kaufman and Carol Beyer, Hevreh's Rabbinic Search Committee (RSC) Co-Chairs since the search process began 2 years ago, released the following statement: "This is a terrific choice for Hevreh. With Rabbi Hirsch teamed with Rabbi Jodie Gordon, Hevreh's vibrant and creative Assistant Rabbi and Religious School Director, Hevreh looks forward to a future filled with fulfilling and dynamic worship, programming and community involvement, and a vibrant and engaging Religious School. Hevreh is in a great position to meet the needs of the congregation and the greater Jewish community."

For the past five years, Rabbi Hirsch has been the Assistant and then Associate Rabbi at Temple Shalom, a 65-year-old congregation in Newton, Massachusetts with 725 members. During that time, reported the Hevreh RSC, he has shared in all rabbinic responsibilities for this large congregation, and gained an understanding of the needs of every age group. Rabbi Hirsch's wife, Liz, will be ordained in May at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, the Reform movement's rabbinical school in New York City. She is also in the process of securing a position in the Berkshires.

Rabbi Hirsch's employment at Hevreh will begin on July 1, 2015.



FEATURES AND LOCAL NEWS

KI Presents: ‘Life Choices and Mortality – Facing the Inevitable’

PITTSFIELD – Congregants of Congregation Kneset Israel responding to Sara Davidson’s 2014 book about Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi, *The December Project*, have initiated a group to discuss issues surrounding the topic of the book – the very personal and often avoided subject of mortality. Titled “Life Choices and Mortality – Facing the Inevitable,” the program will begin on February 23 and continue for one or two additional sessions.

In the book, Davidson reports on her weekly visits to Rabbi Shalomi, then 85 years old. In conversations fueled by the awareness that his life was nearing its end, Shalomi offered Davidson a navigation guide for “the December of life” she might share with others. Over a 2-year period, the writer and rabbi consciously explored the changes he experienced as he dealt with his weakening condition through his unique spiritual lens. The book concludes with a series of exercises for people to use in their own group discussions so that they can benefit from the wisdom of a unique American rabbi, who was a survivor of Nazi terror, a Chabad-Lubavitch rabbi who left the fold, a figure in the countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the founder of the Jewish Renewal movement.

Davidson writes: “Despite years of meditation and spiritual practice, I feared that death would be a complete annihilation. Reb Zalman, by contrast, felt certain that ‘something continues.’ He said he didn’t want to convince me of anything. ‘What I want is to loosen your mind.’” Throughout the book, Davidson intertwines his biography, his physical decline, and her reservations about his beliefs. Rabbi Shalomi, z”l, died on July 3, 2014 at the age of 89.

Reading the entire book is not required. Excerpts from the Group Study Guide offered by the author will be available at each session.

The three lay facilitators of organizers promise a forum



Rabbi Shalomi and Sara Davidson

free of judgment and filled with open-hearted self-examination. Maxine Bookless, a Pittsfield native who just returned to the Berkshires in September, has extensive management expertise working in higher quality elder care. Marcie Greenfield Simons is currently a chaplain intern at Baystate Medical Center, working with both hospital and hospice patients. Myrna Hammerling, Director of Adult Education and Programming for Congregation Kneset Israel, began her third career in her mid-fifties after earning a Masters degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary.

The organizers invite other

Berkshire older adults interested in discovering their own unique paths to the “December of Life” to join them. The group will meet on two (maybe three, if requested) Monday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m. on February 23rd and March 2. The fee of \$25 for the series is payable in advance to Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201 or at the first session. Please call Myrna Hammerling at (413) 445-4872 ext. 16 or email mhammerling@knesetisrael.org to reserve your space or for further information. Registration will be limited to 18, so those interested are encouraged to register early.

Yachad’s Blanket Creations Will Keep County Kids Toasty



Yachad Youth Group members met on a cold January night to wrap up a blanket making project started at the NFTY-NE December Institute, a Winter Break confab held at Camp Eisner in Great Barrington. The group made 22 blankets, which were donated to Berkshire County Kids’ Place in Pittsfield.

Youth Group Donates Funds Raised at Pittsfield Crop Walk



Dvora Gitlitz, Social Action Vice President of Yachad Youth Group, presents a donation of \$400 to the Jewish Federation’s Older Adult Kosher Hot Meal program to Dara Kaufman, the Federation’s executive director. The funds were raised by area teens through their participation in the Pittsfield Crop Walk this past fall. Yachad Youth Group is a collaboration of Temple Anshe Amunim’s PFTY youth group and Congregation Kneset Israel’s USY youth group.

WANDERING JEWS
WONDERING JEWS
CULTURAL JEWS
MIXED MARRIAGE JEWS
MIXED UP JEWS
NON-JEWS
LGBT JEWS
CREATIVE JEWS
JEW BU’S
PASSIONATE JEWS
QUESTIONING JEWS
NON-HEBREW-READING JEWS
YESHIVA JEWS
PART-TIME JEWS
NEW JEWS
OUTREACH JEWS
YIDDISH SPEAKING JEWS
SEARCHING JEWS
POLITICAL JEWS
APOLITICAL JEWS
HIGH-HOLY-DAY JEWS
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OBITUARIES

Robert “Bob” Shindler, 89, volunteer for many Jewish organizations

PITTSFIELD – Robert “Bob” Shindler passed away at Berkshire Medical Center on Sunday, January 25 after a brief illness.

The son of William and Rachel Shindler, Mr. Shindler will be known for many things but mostly for volunteering at many Berkshire County and Pittsfield organizations, most often with his wife, Elaine. The couple recently celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary.

Perhaps foremost in the minds of those who knew him was his love of and concern for all manner of veterans matters, including the Jewish War Veterans, of which he was the local commander. He was a longtime member, 70 years, of the American Legion, practically from the day he was discharged from the United States Army following service in Europe during World War II. For his work on behalf of veterans, he was honored by Veterans’ Services as Veteran of the Year for Pittsfield in 2004, a feat commemorated in stone at Memorial Park. He was a longtime member of Congregation Knesset Israel where, along with his brother-in-law, Eddie Skoletsky, he served faithfully on the Knesset Israel Cemetery Committee.

Mr. Shindler, along with Elaine, worked tirelessly as dedicated longtime volunteers with the Older Adult Hot Kosher Meal Program, which is run by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

Many will also remember him for the Press Box Restaurant on Eagle Street which he ran with his uncle, Hy Shindler, after the war.

As Rabbi David Weiner, spiritual leader of KI, noted, “Through his volunteering in the community, committee participation at KI, work with the Jewish War Veterans, business ventures and generosity with his time, Bob made a difference in many of our lives. We are going to miss him.”

Mr. Shindler leaves his wife, Elaine Shindler; son, Marty and his wife Roberta Shindler; daughter, Lori and her husband Bruce Fish; and four grandchildren, Michael and Perri Shindler and Larry and Alexander Fish.

Funeral Services took place on Wednesday, January 28, at Congregation Knesset Israel with Rabbi David Weiner officiating. Burial followed at Knesset Israel Cemetery. Contributions in memory of Bob Shindler may be made directly to The Bob and Elaine Shindler, KIZayde and KIBubbe Endowment Fund at Congregation Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201, dedicated to enhance and beautify the Knesset Israel Cemetery.

Joseph Zasloff, 89, researcher in the politics of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia

WILLIAMSTOWN – Joseph Zasloff, husband, father, grandfather, professor emeritus of political science, and expert on the politics of Southeast Asia, died on Wednesday, December 17.

Dr. Zasloff would have turned 90 in February and had Parkinson’s disease. Up until the end of his life, he retained all of his intellectual faculties and his generosity, empathy, and

engagement in the world and in the lives of his family and friends. His family and the world have lost a great man.

Dr. Zasloff was born in 1925 in Pittsburgh, PA. His parents, Harry Zasloff and Anna Shuset Zasloff, were Jewish immigrants from Ukraine and Bessarabia. At age 18, he was drafted, and served as a radio operator in General Patton’s Army in World War II. He was wounded in Alsace, France, when, cut off from his unit, he escaped German tanks by running into a cellar and then a barn, where he hid for three days until, as he wrote, he “slithered past a parked tank and hobbled several miles to reach our rear echelon.” He was awarded a Purple Heart and Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster for bravery.

He described his Army service as opening the horizons of his world and inspiring his lifelong involvement in international affairs. Under the GI bill, he earned a BA/MA in political science at the University of Pittsburgh, then went on to earn a PhD at the Institut de Hautes Etudes Internationales in Geneva.

His interest in Southeast Asia began in 1959, when he was given a teaching assignment at the University of Saigon. He would go on to become a leading researcher in the politics of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, publishing seven books.

Up until the age of 39, he described himself as a “lonely bachelor.” He met his wife, Tela, on a blind date, and after three dates, they were engaged to be married. Together, they raised four children: Anne, Eva, Beth and Karen, and became grandparents to eight. This past spring they celebrated 50 years of marriage.

After retirement from 49 years at the University of Pittsburgh, the couple moved to Williamstown, where the family had always spent the summers, together with his oldest friend and colleague, Mac Brown.

Dr. Zasloff loved playing tennis, skiing, and having dinner conversations with a close circle of friends. He and his wife enlarged their house to make room for their growing extended family. He will live on in all his acts of generosity and in the hearts of all who loved him.

The funeral for Joseph Zasloff was held on Friday, December 19 at Congregation Beth Israel, North Adams. Burial was private.

Herbert Michael Krasnow, 98, started scholarship at Berkshire Community College

PITTSFIELD – Herbert Michael Krasnow, 98, died on Friday, December 12 at the Meadowbrook of Granby Nursing Home in Connecticut.

In one word, he was called “Poppa” by his family. In a few words, he was “smart” and “entrepreneurial.”

Born in Providence, RI, on October 30, 1916 to Maurice and Esther Krasnow, Mr. Krasnow met his soul mate Zelma (whom the family lovingly called “Momu”) at age 16 and spent the next 80 years devoted to her and their marriage. Mrs. Krasnow passed away April 25, 2013. They would have celebrated their 75th year anniversary on September 18, 2013.

Mr. Krasnow went to

Townsend Harris High School in New York City and was a classmate of Jonas Salk. He also attended Baruch College in NYC and studied accounting. He was a good businessman and could complete the *New York Times* crossword puzzles in a flash and was a master at the word game “Boggle.” He was sociable and loved to dance with Zelma whenever the occasion arose.

His father was a watchmaker and Mr. Krasnow started his own business along with his brother, Buddy. “Krasnow Brothers” was a manufacturing jeweler of rings. He was a member of the New York Jewelers Benevolent Association in NYC. Mr. and Mrs. Krasnow retired early and moved to Pittsfield. They spent 30 years loving their home and shared it with family and friends enjoying the culture in the Berkshires.

He was a volunteer at Tanglewood and tutored students at Berkshire Community College and Pittsfield High School. The couple started a scholarship fund, which remains active, to help underprivileged students finance their education at Berkshire Community College. Herbert will now join Zelma and be remembered by his family: son Peter; daughter Stephanie; daughters-in-law Christine and Heather; grandchildren Christopher, Erica, Mark, and Kristian; grandsons-in-law Dan and Heino; great grandchildren Samantha, Phillip, Max, Maya, and Hunter; nephew Paul; nieces Paula and Jackie; and other relatives and close friends who made his life meaningful.

Graveside services were held on Sunday, December 14, at Beth David Cemetery in Elmont, NY.

Rest in peace, Poppa. The family acknowledges the great and loving care given to Herbert and Zelma by the Meadowbrook of Granby facility staff. Memorial donations can be given to the Zelma & Herbert Krasnow Scholarship Fund at www.berkshirecc.edu/give.

Samuel Banks Shapiro, exceptional automobile mechanic

GREAT BARRINGTON – Samuel Banks Shapiro, son of Hilda Banks Shapiro and the late Leonard Shapiro, died unexpectedly at home on Saturday, December 20.

Mr. Shapiro was predeceased by his wife Jennifer in 2000. He was well known locally as an excellent and exceptional automobile mechanic.

He was a devoted and loving father to the three children who are his survivors, daughter Paige Marie; and sons Nicholas Leonard and Mathew William. He is also survived by his sisters, Serena, Karen, Claudia, Miriam and Stephanie; and his brothers, Andre, Mark, Jonathan, Jason and David. His brother Mitchell predeceased him in 2002.

Funeral arrangements were made by Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home in Great Barrington.

George Frenkel, 93, fled Nazis and was proprietor of Royal Cleaners in Pittsfield

PITTSFIELD – George Frenkel, 93, of 122 Ann Drive, died Friday evening, January 2, at his home following a long illness.

He was born August 29, 1921 in Austria Hungary, the second of three boys, to Sigmund and

Paula Frenkel. His father was raised in western Ukraine and emigrated to Hungary as a result of his service in the Russian army during World War I. His mother was Hungarian.

When Mr. Frenkel was four years old (and after a failed Communist revolt led to the expulsion of all foreign nationals), his father was forced to move his family and dry cleaning business 40 miles northwest to Wiene Neustadt, a suburb of Vienna, Austria. The Frenkel family lived there for twelve years until 1939, when the business was expropriated. The elder Mr. Frenkel, Sigmund, was taken to Dachau concentration camp, and the three brothers were forced to flee as a result of Austria’s new anti-Semitic laws. George and his younger brother, Henry, fled to a Jewish refugee youth farm in England, run by an expatriate Austrian Jew, where they spent the next 18 months working. Their older brother, Alfred, served in the British-Jewish Brigade in Palestine.

In the mid-1940s, George and Henry were able to immigrate to Bridgeport, CT, by virtue of having an American cousin there. One year later, his mother and father rejoined the family in Bridgeport. Two years later, George and Henry enlisted in the US Army, where George served as a medic in Texas. Shortly after the end of World War II, George and his parents moved to Pittsfield, where they first worked for and later became partners in Royal Cleaners.

In 1947, Mr. Frenkel met his wife of 55 years, Shirley A. Raymond, in her home town of Northampton, where he was conducting business with her father, Adolph D. Raymond, the proprietor of Twin Cleaners of Northampton. They were married on January 28, 1948 in Northampton and thereafter settled in Pittsfield.

In 1953, he bought out his father’s interest and became sole proprietor of Royal Cleaners until he sold the business in 1995. He employed over 500 people. Mrs. Frenkel was stricken with Multiple Sclerosis, which eventually disabled her and confined her to bed for the last fifteen years of her life, which ended on June 25, 2003. George lovingly and unselfishly cared and provided for her and insisted that she remain at home for those last 15 years.

In the course of his 67 years in Pittsfield, Mr. Frenkel was an active member of Congregation Knesset Israel, Temple Anshe Amunim, the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, the Jewish War Veterans, and the Rotary Club. In those rare hours of the week when he was not working or caring for his wife, he enjoyed stamp collecting and playing poker.

He is survived by his sons, Raymond, and his wife Margaret, of Amherst; Steven and his wife, Ellen, of Fair Lawn, NJ; daughter, Wendy Frenkel-Garofalo, and her husband, Antonino of Lanesboro; nine grandchildren, Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Dr. Deborah Frenkel; Nadia, Erica and Kiara Garofalo; Alana and Andrew Frenkel; and five great grandchildren, Lucas and David Charland; Akiva and Simone

Frenkel; and Sirus Frenkel. His son, Andrew J. Frenkel, died as a result of a tragic accident in April of 1965.

Funeral services were held Monday, January 5, at the Devanny-Condron Funeral Home with Rabbi Josh Breindel, spiritual leader of Temple Anshe Amunim, officiating. Burial followed in the Temple Anshe Amunim section of the Pittsfield Cemetery. Memorial donations may be made to Hospice Care in the Berkshires in care of the funeral home.

Herman Gerald Berkman, 91, extensive career teaching and consulting

ADAMS – Herman Gerald Berkman, 91, of 1 Berkshire Square and Stockbridge Bowl, died on Tuesday, January 6, at Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield.

Born in Monticello, NY on April 29, 1923, son of the late Isaac and Rebecca (Dorf) Berkman, Dr. Berkman earned his Bachelor’s Degree in Public Administration and Economics from New York University in 1947 and went on to earn his Master’s in Regional Planning and his PhD in Economics from the University of Wisconsin in 1956.

Dr. Berkman had an extensive teaching career, having been a professor at New York University and the University of Wisconsin. He had also been a lecturer and instructor for many colleges and universities around the world. He was a consultant to many urban renewal agencies and planning committees, and was a life member of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials and Phi Beta Kappa.

A lover of classical music, Dr. Berkman first came to know the Berkshires through Tanglewood. He had a strong interest in all the arts, attending local museums, theatres, and the dance, attending Jacob’s Pillow frequently. For many years dogs were among his best friends, especially Samoyeds. He enjoyed bird watching and all aspects of nature.

Dr. Berkman took delight in seeing his nieces and nephews and their families grow into adulthood as well as the children of his friends. He was well known for his generous nature. He was capable of showing interest in almost everyone he encountered. He will be missed.

Dr. Berkman is survived by two nephews, Josh Weinstein of Shelburne Falls, and Eugene Sommerfeld of Danvers; and two nieces, Susan Sommerfeld of Melbourne, FL and Laura Macauley of Worthing, England. He is also survived by seven grandchildren and five grandnieces and three great-grandnieces and great-grandnephews. He was predeceased by his three sisters, Sarah Horowitz, Ruth Sommerfeld, and Pearl Weinstein; two nieces, Muriel Horowitz and Arlyne Smith; and his close friend of sixty-eight years, Linwood Dodge.

Funeral services and burial were private. Memorial donations may be made to the Berkshire Humane Society, 214 Barker Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

OBITUARIES

Sidney Novick, 88, honored for WWII efforts with Navy

PITTSFIELD – Sidney Novick, 88, of 15 Lillian Street, died peacefully early on the evening of Friday, January 16.

Born in Pittsfield on May 17, 1926, the son of Samuel and Celia Kleckman Novick, he attended schools in Pittsfield and was a graduate of Pittsfield High School. He enlisted in the Navy with the outbreak of World War II and as a Seaman First Class participated in the invasion of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. He was honored with a victory medal for his efforts.

After the War, Mr. Novick graduated from DeVries Institute in Chicago and returned to Pittsfield to marry Mildred Lubin in 1950. They were married for 65 years and were always together. They raised two sons.

Mr. Novick worked initially for Pittsfield Paint and then went on to an owner partnership of a painting company that addressed residential and commercial properties in the Berkshires. He was a member of Congregation Knesset Israel and the Jewish War Veterans.

Besides his wife, he leaves two sons, Steven Novick of Norton, MA and wife, Eleanor, and Robert Novick of Shutesbury, MA and his partner, Sharon Hennessy; grandchildren, Scott and his wife, Erin; Katherine Novick and her partner, Jon Potts; and Kelsey Novick and her fiancé, Kyle Minahan; and brother-in-law, Gordon Adelson and many special nieces and nephews.

Funeral services took place on Monday, January 19 at Congregation Knesset Israel with Rabbi David Weiner officiating. Burial followed at Knesset Israel Cemetery, Pittsfield.

Robert "Bob" Bach, 94, career in audio electronics

LENOX – Robert "Bob" Bach, 94, died on Sunday, January 11. From the Bronx to the Berkshires, Mr. Bach lived a long life filled with deep love of his family, an inquiring mind, a ready smile, and an abundant sense of humor.

Born to Russian immigrant parents in the Bronx, NY, he lived in Hancock, Williamstown, and Lenox. He first fell in love with the area as a camp counselor at age 17, when he was able to sneak in and experience some of the first Tanglewood concerts.

Mr. Bach had a multi-dimensional career in audio electronics that spanned the early age of audio broadcasting through to the digital age, and was linked to his love of recorded music. He could name the piece of any classical work after hearing only a few bars. As a young boy, he built and operated shortwave radios. This led to his work in electronics during his Navy service in World War II building radio stations in the Philippines, and as a civilian technician in the Korean War.

After completing his bachelor's degree from City College of New York, Mr. Bach worked with the Federal Communications Lab, Philco, Columbia University's Radiation Laboratory, and Fairchild Recording before opening his own company, Bach Sales Corporation, representing innovative and leading brands. From the first stereo headphones developed by Koss to the cutting edge technology and design of the famed Danish company Bang & Olufsen, he worked to expand access to the best in new sound engineering in the greater New York area. In 1967, he was founder and publisher of *db Magazine*, filling a gap in the fast growing world of audio engineering.

In 1952, Mr. Bach married the former Suzanne Gordon, whom he knew was the love of his life the first time he met her. His love remained undiminished over 62 years of marriage. In 1963, they purchased a home and acreage in Hancock and devoted countless hours to the renovation of the farmhouse, eventually transforming the barn into an extraordinary home. In the 1980s and 90s, he operated Brodie Mountain Country Antiques before moving to Williamstown.

In addition to his wife, Mr. Bach leaves three children, Claudia (Philip Smart, Seattle), Raymond (Sylvie, Strasbourg, France), and Jonathan (Yukiko Koga, New York City); grandchildren, Amanda and Gregory Smart, and Julian, Matthew, and Claire Bach; and brother-in-law, Albert Gordon. He was a supportive and sympathetic listener and wonderful storyteller whose imaginative characters and stories captivated generations of children. His gentle demeanor, dapper appearance, kindness and boundless sense of humor were appreciated by all who knew him.

Memorial contributions may be made in his honor to Doctors Without Borders, PO Box 523, Hagerstown, MD 21741-5022 or in care of Flynn Dagnoli Funeral Homes, 74 Marshall Street, North Adams, MA 01247.

David Jacobs, 91, freelance writer and syndicated columnist

HANCOCK – Mr. David Jacobs, 91, of 181 Goodrich Hollow Road, died Sunday afternoon, January 25, at the Mt. Greylock Extended Care Facility following a long illness.

Born in Queens, NY, on November 20, 1923, son of the late Robert and Etta Waldman Jacobs, he was educated in the schools there and was a graduate of City College.

A newspaper writer by profession, Mr. Jacobs served as the editor for the Long Island Press and upon moving to the Berkshires, he became a freelance writer and syndicated columnist for different publications. His column, "View from the Hollow," was widely read.

He was a member of Temple Anshe Amunim and was a US Army veteran of World War II.

Mr. Jacobs is survived by his wife of 11 years, Suzanne "Bernie" Jacobs and his two daughters, MeMe Rasmussen of San Carlos, CA and Etta Jacobs of Watertown, NY; his stepchildren, Lisa Miller and Alan Fox; his grandchildren, Erik Rasmussen, Ryan Rasmussen and Ryan Howe; his nephews, who were like sons to him, Ed, Alan, Andy Rogoff; and his first cousin, Roselind Schwartz. He was predeceased by his first wife, Dr. Rita Jacobs, who died on December 1, 1993; and his sister, Bena Rogoff.

Graveside services were held Wednesday morning, January 28 in the Temple Anshe Amunim section of Pittsfield Cemetery with Rabbi David Weiner, spiritual leader of Congregation Knesset Israel, officiating. Memorial donations may be made to the Temple Anshe Amunim Elevator Fund (26 Broad Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201) or the Hancock Volunteer Fire Dept., both in care of the Devanny-Condron Funeral Home.

Minnie Dorothy Cohen, 94, worked at Knesset Israel for 40 years

PITTSFIELD – Minnie Dorothy Cohen, 94, died on Saturday, January 31, at home in the company of her son, Howard.

Born on July 29, 1920 in Montpelier, VT, to Rabbi Max and Miriam Cohen, Mrs. Cohen enjoyed growing up in the countryside with a large family. She married Jack Cohen on February 16, 1941. He predeceased her on

May 27, 1995. The couple called Pittsfield their home right from the start, where they raised their children, Howard and Sandra.

Mrs. Cohen was a secretary of Congregation Knesset Israel for 40 years, and longtime congregant, and enjoyed her interaction with everyone who passed through the doors. She was looked upon as a friend, an organizer, and a person who could be counted on at all times.

An avid mah jong player, she loved the afternoons hosting her girlfriends with luncheons, conversations, and friendly games. She enjoyed traveling and was a crossword puzzle solver. She also loved shopping for shoes, clothes and jewelry and always looked like a fashion plate! She was the last of her family's generation, and is now at rest with her husband, Jack, and her siblings, Benjamin Cohen, Philip Cohen, Morris Kane, Eva Kaye, and Faye Buff, and her son-in-law, Leon Wolf.

Mrs. Cohen leaves behind her loving son, Howard and his wife, Ann; her daughter, Sandra Wolf; her five grandchildren, Jill Hawkins and her husband, Keith, Melissa Cohen, Kimberlee Cohen, Michael Wolf and his wife, Yoko, Gary Wolf and his wife, Heather; and her great grandsons, Colton and Ryan. She will be lovingly missed by all whose lives she touched. The family would like to express their sincere thanks to Hospice Care in the Berkshires and Berkshire VNA for the extraordinary care and compassion given to her.

Funeral services took place on Tuesday, February 3 at Congregation Knesset Israel, with Rabbi David Weiner, spiritual leader, officiating. Burial followed at Knesset Israel Cemetery. Contributions in memory of Minnie Cohen may be made to the Jack and Minnie Cohen Endowment Fund at Congregation Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

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Mazel TOVS

Mazel tov to Glenn Duffy and Jeannette Benham on their engagement! Glenn is the son of Jim Duffy and Debora Cole-Duffy of Dalton; Jeannette is the daughter of Frank and Antoinette Benham of Hinsdale. A July 2015 wedding is planned. Congratulations to Josh Cutler and Jessica Passetto on their recent engagement!

Mazel tov to Natasha (Bates) Anderson (daughter of Sharon Wiles), Ryan Anderson (Natasha's husband), and Vadim Yoslavsky (family friend and Pittsfielder) for all receiving BAs in Nursing from University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Kudos to Carr Hardware & Supply Company and its owners Bart and Marshall Raser for being featured on the CBS reality program *Undercover Boss* last December. Millions of viewers saw True Value President and CEO Jon Hartmann's positive experience with the store and its employees. Carr was also featured in the November issue of *Hardware Retailing Magazine*, which focused on the success of its MRO (maintenance, repair, and operations) and rental businesses. Carr Hardware was also recently awarded the 2014 LED Retailer of the Year from Greenlite, the leader in energy efficient lighting. The award is presented to the top retailer in the country for operational excellence from both a consumer and business partner perspective. Carr Hardware earned full points in the areas of Merchandise Sales and Program Representation. Carr also received full points for its strong business relationship practices in the areas of Retailer Reliability, Effective Communication, Management Interaction, and Community Integration. Carr Hardware employs over 80 career professionals at 4 locations throughout Berkshire County. We wish them continued success.

Mazel tov to Harry Albert on his bar mitzvah!

Mazel tov to Avi Snowise on his bar mitzvah!


To Rhoda and Philip Kaminstein, who recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, mazel tov!

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FEBRUARY

Monday, 16 Closed for Presidents Day

Tuesday, 17 Chef's Choice of vegetable lasagnas, minestrone soup, Italian beans, Italian bread, cookies, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.

Thursday, 19 Squash, chick pea, and red lentil stew**#, brown rice, breadsticks, pudding, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.
At 1 p.m., "Songs of Stage and Screen" with singer and guitarist, Doug Schmolze.

Monday, 23 Open faced turkey sandwiches#, cabbage soup, mashed potatoes, roasted Brussel sprouts, whole wheat bread, peaches, and tea.
At 1 p.m., film "Marjorie Morningstar" based on the 1955 novel by the same name by Herman Wouk. A talk about Wouk's work will follow on Thursday, February 26.

Tuesday, 24 Meat leftover day

Thursday, 26 Tuna noodle casserole, beets, biscuits, raspberry pillow cookies, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.
At 1 p.m., "The Great American Jewish Authors" talk by Hugh Black will be about the work of Herman Wouk.

MARCH

Monday, 2 Veal stew**#, vegetable soup, noodles, garlic bread sticks, fruit cocktail, and tea.
At 1 p.m., "The Process of Aging" with therapist, Maggie Bittman.

Tuesday, 3 Roasted chicken**#, salad, parve noodle kugel, asparagus cuts 'n tips, Challah, brownies, and tea.

Thursday, 5 Dairy leftover day.
At 1 p.m., "Esther and Vashti: Speaking Truth to Power" with Jodie Gordon, Assistant Rabbi and Educator at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire.

Monday, 9 Sweet & sour meatballs**#, chicken soup, rice, peas, salad, rye bread, parve chocolate pudding, and tea.
At 1 p.m., "Qigong – A Simple, Natural Exercise to Enhance Your Well-being" with licensed acupuncturist, Jeffrey Gordon.

Tuesday, 10 Lemon chicken**#, celery rice soup, mixed vegetables, oven roasted potatoes, multi-grain bread, tropical fruit salad, and tea.

Thursday, 12 Grilled cheese and tuna sandwiches, tomato rice soup, beets, salad, croutons, dessert TBD, coffee, tea, and milk for coffee.
At 1 p.m., screening of film "ALIVE INSIDE."

Monday, 16 Roasted chicken**#, zucchini rice soup, salad, oven roasted root vegetables, Challah, apricots, and tea.
At 1 p.m., "Stories Make Us Human" with Paula Lee Hellman, former educational director and family educator at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire.

Tuesday, 17 Corned beef and cabbage**#, potatoes and carrots, brown rice, marble rye bread, applesauce, and tea.

Thursday, 19 Dairy leftover day.
At 1 p.m., Rabbi Levi Volovik, Director of Chabad of the Berkshires, will retell the Passover story with Kabbalistic insights.

Monday, 23 Turkey stew**#, rice, salad, bread TBD, mixed fruit, and tea.
At 1 p.m., Al Bashevkin, Executive Director, will speak of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition.

Tuesday, 24 Meat leftover day

Thursday, 26 Dairy leftover day.
At 1 p.m., Rabbi Rachel Barenblat will read from her book of poetry, "Poetry of Sacred Time."

Monday, 30 Closed for Passover preparation

Tuesday, 31 Closed for Passover preparation

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WORLD AND NATIONAL NEWS

Survivors Return To Auschwitz Determined To Share Their Stories

By Toby Axelrod

KRAKOW, Poland (JTA) – What kept you alive? Did your non-Jewish friends reject you? Could you ever forgive?

Those were some of the questions posed by Jewish young adults to Holocaust survivor Marcel Tuchman on Monday at the Galicia Jewish Museum here.

"What kept me alive was having my father with me," said Tuchman, 93, a physician from New York who was born in Poland and survived several concentration camps, including Auschwitz. "And another thing was the hope I had that one day I will be able to tell the story to the likes of you, so you can tell it to the next generation."

His meeting with young Jews was one of many such encounters taking place in and around Krakow on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Soviet army's liberation of Auschwitz, where an estimated 1.1 million people were murdered – many of them gassed.

On January 27, in a tent set up around the gaping entrance to the Auschwitz-adjacent Birkenau concentration camp, survivors and their companions were joined by dignitaries from more than 40 countries for ceremonies that may well mark the final time that so many Auschwitz survivors are together here again.

Halina Birenbaum, who survived Auschwitz as a child, described to the crowd of 3,000 her impressions of the Nazi camp 45 miles east of Krakow, calling it "a bottomless pit of hell that I could not get out of."

"All around us was electric barbed wire. Rows of barracks, stinking mud ... a disgusting mass of people all in lousy wet rags, with numbers and shaven heads," she said. "Those gray faces with legs like sticks, wearing those muddy clogs. Nothing reminded you of anything human."

Roman Kent, president of the International Auschwitz Committee, which was founded by a group of Auschwitz survivors, said his experience in the camp was "more than enough to keep me awake at night until the end of time."

He added: "How can I ever forget the smell of burning flesh that permeated the air" or "the cries of children torn from their mothers' arms."

While survivors cannot forget, others simply must remember. Otherwise, Kent said, "the conscience of mankind would be buried alongside the victims."

Tuesday's memorial was sponsored by the World Jewish Congress, the USC Shoah Foundation and Discovery Communications, whose subsidiary,

Discovery Education, is working with the Shoah Foundation to develop digital teaching materials about Auschwitz. The event also featured the screening of a short documentary, "Auschwitz," co-directed by the famed filmmaker Steven Spielberg, who started the Shoah Foundation.

In a moment of disequilibrium, survivors watched the film about their former place of imprisonment, sitting in front of the very gate through which cattle cars once passed, delivering so many Jews to their deaths. Just outside the tent, a light snow was falling on the remaining barracks of Birkenau, surrounded by barbed wire.

Ronald Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress, addressed the crowd.

"Auschwitz never goes away," he said. "This awful place stands as a reminder that propaganda leads to anti-Semitism ... that anti-Semitism will grow if nobody speaks out."

Anti-Semitism, he said, "leads to places like Auschwitz."

He added: "After the recent events in Paris and throughout Europe and around the world, I cannot ignore what is happening today. Jews are targeted in Europe once again because they are Jews."

The ceremony was the culmination of several days of events



Auschwitz survivor Marcel Tuchman, 93, meets with Jewish students in Krakow on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the camp by Soviet soldiers, Jan. 26, 2015. (Photo: Toby Axelrod)

and meetings attended in total by some 300 Holocaust survivors. Few of them were actually liberated at Auschwitz. But all passed through its gates.

Today they are in their 80s and 90s, and fit enough to have traveled from Israel, America, Argentina and elsewhere.

A group of survivors who was to visit the Auschwitz exhibit on Monday never got beyond the infamous gate, marked "Arbeit Macht Frei" – so crowded was this threshold with eager journalists who had come from around the world. And yet the hubbub didn't seem to faze them a bit. In fact, most of the visitors seemed determined to tell their stories to all who inquired.

"I know that we're getting old and have to make sure that the memory doesn't die with us," said Irene Weiss, 84, of Fairfax, VA, who traveled with her daughter Lesley. Her key message to today's youth: "[Don't] be deceived by demagogues."

On Monday at a ceremony for visiting survivors, Spielberg, whose Oscar-winning movie *Schindler's List* was filmed partly in Krakow, told the survivors, "I found my own voice and my own Jewish identity thanks to you."

Spielberg, whose USC Shoah Foundation has interviewed more than 50,000 Holocaust survivors since it was founded 21 years ago, said he was first confronted with the Holocaust as a child reading the numbers on his grandfather's arm.

Edgar Wildfeuer, 90, came

here this week from Argentina with his daughter, Doris Wildfeuer, wanting to show her both the camp he survived and city where he grew up: Krakow, with its parks and market squares, its church spires and streetcars. They planned to visit the street where he had lived and the synagogue where he had his bar mitzvah.

Wildfeuer, who was deported to Auschwitz in 1944, lost 32 relatives.

"I was the only one left," he said.

Still, his daughter said, "He wanted to show me not only that place but the place where he grew up and was happy."

Tuchman, too, recalled a happy childhood in Poland. But when the question of forgiveness came up before the youthful crowd on Monday evening, he paused.

"Forgiveness is a very complicated thing," said Tuchman, who came with his son Jeffrey. After the war, he testified on behalf of a German engineer who had overseen slave laborers, including Tuchman himself, in Auschwitz.

But Tuchman also dealt out his own justice. In postwar Germany, he and a fellow survivor spied a man who had tortured them.

"He was a sadist: He pounded on our stomachs when we were sick with diarrhea," Tuchman recalled. "We recognized him on the street and grabbed him, and beat the hell out of him."

EU Court Annuls Hamas' Inclusion On Terrorism Blacklist

LUXEMBOURG (JTA)— A European court annulled Hamas' inclusion on a blacklist of terrorist groups, saying the 2001 decision was based on press and Internet reports and not legal reasoning.

The decision Wednesday by the Luxembourg-based General Court of the European Union kept Hamas' assets frozen for three months pending appeals and emphasized that it does "not imply any substantive assessment of the question of the classification of Hamas as a terrorist group."

"The General Court finds that the contested measures are based not on acts examined and confirmed in decisions of competent authorities but on factual imputations derived from the

press and the Internet," it said.

In a statement, Moshe Kantor, the president of the European Jewish Congress, ridiculed the reasoning.

"All the judges had to do was read the Hamas Charter and then have someone translate the thousands of videos and statements released to the public in Arabic which openly call for and glorify the murder of innocent civilians, men, women and children," he said.

Hamas' military wing was added to the first European Union blacklist of terrorist groups, issued in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington.

Hamas' political wing was blacklisted in 2003.

Stabbing Tutorial Being Shared on Palestinian Social Media

JERUSALEM (JTA)— Palestinian social media networks are showing a video on proper stabbing techniques.

The video began circulating on Saturday, the Israeli news website NRG reported.

Two masked men in black wearing black-and-white checkered keffiyehs present demonstrations on how to turn the knife after stabbing, as well as how to stab quickly and walk away.

At the end, in Arabic writing, the video says, "What are you waiting for? Rise up and stab."

In December, two Israel Police officers were stabbed near the Lion's Gate in Jerusalem's Old City.

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Calendar – Ongoing Events Around the Community

Continuous – Chabad of the Berkshires “Smile on Seniors,” or “S.O.S.,” volunteer program to serve senior citizens in the Berkshires. Information for families who can benefit and volunteers: Rabbi Levi Volovik at (413) 499-9899 or visit www.jewishberkshires.com.

New England Holocaust Institute & Museum – The North Adams museum remains open at 45 Eagle Street, and is open for tours by appointment. Founder Darrell English is also available to bring selections from his collection of Holocaust artifacts to presentations for organizations, schools, and private functions. For museum tour scheduling, call Mr. English (413) 663-1840 or email at neholocautinstitute@gmail.com. To schedule offsite presentations, call Ed Udel at (413) 446-8409. Website: www.neham.org.

Monthly – Gourmet ‘Senior Lunch Bunch’ at Congregation Beth Israel, 53 Lois Street, North Adams. Information: (413) 663-5830.

Monthly – Volunteers from various congregations, provide a Jewish service, social interaction, and entertainment to residents at Great Barrington’s Fairview Commons and the Great Barrington Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. Information: Don Victor at (413) 528-3742.

Monthly, Second Thursday, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. – Journeys in Prayer: The Golblum Tefilla Institute, with Rabbi Weiner. Join in evening minyan, then spend the next hour in song and study related to the Shabbat morning service. This workshop aims to elevate and deepen the experience of prayer at Kneset Israel. Congregation Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road. Information: (413) 445-4872.

Monthly, fourth or fifth Sunday – Volunteers from Congregation Beth Israel, 53 Lois Street, North Adams “Take and Eat” program deliver hot meals for all North Adams clients of “Meals on Wheels.” Information: (413) 663-5830 or office@cibiweb.org.

Sundays (second of each month) – Berkshire Hills Society of Israeli Philatelists meet. Discuss Israeli and American stamps. Coffee and donuts. Information: Ed Helitzer, (413) 447-7622, daytime.

Sundays, 10:15 a.m. (every six weeks) – Congregation Ahavath Sholom Book Club. Contact Walter Orenstein: ptcpa@roadrunner.com for titles, dates, and location.

Sundays, 10:30 a.m. (every seven weeks) – Congregation Ahavath Sholom’s “Bagels and Brainstorms.” Contact Guy Pancer, GPancer2@sbcglobal.net or (860) 435-2821 for topic and location.

Mondays at 6:45 p.m. and Thursdays at 7 p.m. – Course: “Adult Introduction to Hebrew” with Esther Benari-Altmann at Temple Anshe Amunim, 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield. Open to the community at large. Registration, full information: (413) 442-5910, ext. 12, or taaschool@gmail.com.

Tuesdays, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. – A weekly Torah Portion of the Week study group at Congregation Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, with Myrna Hammerling who holds a Masters in Judaic Studies from Jewish Theological Seminary. Free. Information: (413) 445-4872, ext 16.

Wednesdays, afternoons during the school year – Children from Temple Anshe Amunim and Congregation Kneset Israel study together in special “CHAI – the Community Hebrew Afternoon Initiative” program. Kindergarten to Bar-Mitzvah age. Information, Esther Benari-Altmann, Director of Education, at eba@ansheamunim.org or (413) 442-5910, ext. 12.

Wednesdays, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. – optional meditation 11:30 a.m. to noon – “Yoga @ KI” with instructor Jane Rosen at Congregation Kneset Israel

social hall, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield. \$5 per class for Kneset Israel members; \$10 for non-members. Open to the public. Information: Jane Rosen at (413) 464-0173 or janerosen@berkshire.rr.com.

Wednesdays, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road, Great Barrington, offers “an hour of morning stillness” with Nina Lipkowitz, a certified Kripalu Yoga Teacher. Donation of \$10 is asked for from non-members. Information: (413) 528-6378.

Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m. – Explore the stories behind the story of the weekly Torah portion at Tea and Torah, at Chabad of the Berkshires, 450 South Street, Pittsfield MA. Led by Sara Volovik, the course is intended to outline a spiritual road map for day to day life. Using the weekly Torah portion as a starting point, participants will learn from the Talmud, Midrash, and Chasidic masters, as well as from the insights of others in the class. The course is free of charge, and no prior background in Hebrew or the subject matter is necessary.

Wednesdays, from 4 to 5 p.m. – Beginning Prayer Book Hebrew, with Myrna Hammerling. This class delves into the meanings of the traditional prayers for holidays, daily services, Shabbat services, etc. – and studies the structure of Hebrew words for better understanding of the vocabulary of our prayers. Prerequisite is basic Hebrew reading ability. Congregation Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield. Information: (413) 445-4872.

Wednesdays, 7 to 9 p.m. – Rehearsals for the B’Shalom Chorale of the Berkshires at Hevreh of Southern Berkshires, 270 State Road, Great Barrington. Dues for the season are \$50. Information: (413) 531-8706 or BShalomChoraleoftheBerkshires@gmail.com.

Thursdays, at 10:30 a.m. – Weekly Halacha (Jewish Law) class conducted by Rabbi Emeritus Harold Salzmänn at Temple Anshe Amunim, 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield. Information: (413) 442-5910.

Thursdays, from 10:45 a.m. to 12 p.m. – The Book of Samuel, with Rabbi David Weiner. Explore one of the pivotal books of the Bible using the resources of literary and historical scholarship. Please bring your own copy of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible). Congregation Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield. Information: (413) 445-4872.

Thursdays (fourth of each month) – Hadassah Book Club. For times, locations of meetings, and further information about the books: Jane Rosen at (413) 464-0173 or janerosen@berkshire.rr.com.

Thursdays, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. – Modern Hebrew Conversation, with Esther Benari-Altmann. Teens and adults join together for lively study of Modern Hebrew with an expert instructor. Congregation Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield. Information: (413) 445-4872.

Fridays, last of month, time varies with candle lighting – Chabad of the Berkshires’ “Friday Night Live,” traditional Kabbalat Shabbat service. Information: (413) 499-9899 or visit www.jewishberkshires.com.

Fridays, at 8:15 a.m. – Meditation with Rabbi Rachel Barenblat in the Congregation Beth Israel sanctuary, 53 Lois Street, North Adams, overlooking the Berkshire mountains. Silence, chanting, and meditation designed to help prepare for Shabbat. All welcomed. Information: (413) 663-5830 and www.cibiweb.org.

Fridays at noon – Course: “Adult Introduction to Judaism,” with Esther Benari-Altmann and Rabbi Joshua Breindel at Temple Anshe Amunim, 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield. Open to the community at large. Registration, information (413) 442-5910, ext.12, or taaschool@gmail.com.

Fridays, from 3:30 to 4:15 p.m. – Kids Kabbalat Shabbat at Temple Anshe Amunim, 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield, with Esther Benari-Altmann. For children 2 to 5, and caregivers. Stories, song, dance, play, candle lighting. Share Kiddush and hamotzei. Free for members. Non-members: full year \$50 or \$5 per session. Information: (413) 442-5910, ext. 12 or eba@ansheamunim.org.

Fridays, usually first of each month at 5:30 p.m. (followed by a family style Shabbat dinner at 6:15 p.m.) – Congregation Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield. Shirei Shabbat (“Songs of Shabbat”). Unique service combines melodies from Carlebach, Debbie Friedman, and Camp Ramah to create a ruach (“spirited”) filled family friendly experience. Cost \$18 per adult, \$36 family maximum. Dinner reservations are due by the Monday before services. Full information: (413) 445-4872, ext 11.

Fridays, 5:45 p.m. at the evening service – “Welcoming Shabbat.” Imbibing insights into the rhythms and opportunities of the seventh day, refracted through psalm and prayer. Congregation Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield. Information: (413) 445-4872.

Saturdays, from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. – “Torah Plus! – Exploring the Bible” Weekly study of Torah and some less-often studied Biblical texts. At Temple Anshe Amunim, 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield. With Rabbi Josh Breindel. Free. Open to the public. Information (413) 442-5910 or templeoffice@ansheamunim.org

Saturdays at 9:45 a.m. – Temple Anshe Amunim, 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield offers a weekly Shabbat program for preschool children. Yearlong costs: \$100 per child for Temple members, \$150 per child for non-members. Information, (413) 442-5910, or eba@ansheamunim.org.

Saturdays (second Saturday of month when possible) from 10 to 11 a.m. – Monthly alternative Shabbat Service at Congregation Kneset Israel library, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, Featuring mindful movement, breathing, guided imagery, and meditation inspired by concepts from the weekly parshah, with Jane Rosen. Be sure to call ahead to see if service will be held. Information: Jane Rosen at (413) 464-0173 or janerosen@berkshire.rr.com, or Kneset Israel at (413) 445-4872.

Saturdays, afternoon, time varies with sundown, please consult the calendar – Genesis Rabbah, with Rabbi David Weiner, between mincha and maariv. Explore selections in translation from this remarkable fourth-century compendium of discussions regarding life, the universe and everything, all connected to some of the most familiar stories in the Torah. Congregation Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield. Information: (413) 445-4872.

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FEATURES AND WORLD NEWS

KAVANAH FARMING, continued from page 1

of the essence for Johnson, who as a farmer defines this quality as encompassing “proper treatment and food for the animals, care for the land, and respect for employees. Jews choose to set an example, and if we can’t do it with food, what can we do it with?” What’s more, it irks him that *kashrut* is often more a label than an expression of *kavanah*, and that’s something he is trying to change through his work.

As his name might suggest, Angus Johnson is a Jew by choice, having converted in 2009. His roots are Scottish, traceable back to Grantown-on-Spey in 1136. His family came to America in 1621, the year after the Mayflower sailed, and he is a 5th generation New England farmer. He presents as an earnest individual, whose anecdotes suggest that he is no stranger to a clash of wills when he feels his principles may be compromised. From the life story he relates that has led him to the kosher meat business, it is also clear that he is a spiritual seeker, a very sincere and determined one.

As a youth, Johnson was a passionate Methodist, leader of the regional youth group and spiritually active in the church. But in early adolescence, he became disenchanted with what he considered the leadership’s hypocrisy and, after a dispute with the local bishop, he left the fold. His quest eventually led him to explore other religious pursuits, including Eastern religious traditions. Ultimately, he formed a decades-long association with the Buddhist sect led by Thich Nhat Hanh,

the monk whose followers used to set themselves on fire during the Vietnam War. Though he isn’t a “BuJew,” Johnson says Eastern ideas inform and enrich his current religious thought and practice.

After falling for an Orthodox Jewish woman named Dr. Allison Bell he met at a festival of Contra dance, he decided that if he was going to be serious about her, he was going to have to learn everything he could about Judaism. The woman started him off on this autodidactic pursuit by giving him a copy of the Mishnah; eventually, his bookshelves held more than 400 books about Jewish thought, religion, history, and culture. Unbeknownst to Allison, he also approached a rabbi, who after the prescribed three efforts to dissuade his conversion, agreed to study with him.

After exploring Judaism in depth, he related, he came upon the one book that distilled the essence of everything else he had been reading, one that epitomized the spirit of the Jewish people and convinced him that he should convert to the faith. Was it something by Heschel? Buber? Solovetchik? Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi perhaps?

“It was this book called *Born to Kvetch*,” said Johnson, referring to Michael Wex’s classic exploration of Yiddish that purports to capture the language and its speakers in all their many moods. When asked what it was about *Born to Kvetch*, he said that after reading about how Yiddish works to insulate the Jews from their antagonists – about how Yiddish has helped the

Jewish people survive – he understood himself better. Viewing what he learned from the book through the lens of his Scottish roots, he realized that like the Jews, the Scots had long been oppressed, in his people’s case under the yoke of the British. From *Born to Kvetch*, Johnson said he understood that Jews are a people that think the same way he has his entire life, and so he knew he had to convert, through an Orthodox process, to Judaism.

(When contacted for a comment, Michael Wex wrote: “Although I’ve never been shy about claiming that *Born to Kvetch* incorporates a great deal of accurate and not always easily accessible information about the practice of Judaism, I’d certainly never expected it to have so, uh, decisive an effect on anyone’s spiritual life, let alone that it might help to *kasher* a relationship based on [English folk] dancing.”)

Allison eventually became his wife. “The *ketubah* is an important document,” he says. “It lays out responsibilities.” As a practicing Jew, Johnson had two decisive insights about *kashrut* that ultimately let him to found Just Good Kosher. The first occurred after he first visited the kosher section of the supermarket and scrutinized the ingredients of the food on the shelves. “It was nothing I would want to eat,” he remembers, citing the unhealthy artificial additives he recognized in the list of ingredients. Where was the producers’ intent, he wondered. How could they put out food they know isn’t good? “Just because something has *hechsher* doesn’t mean it’s good,” he asserts.

The second insight came to him after an episode at a farmer’s market. Johnson says he has long worn a wide-brimmed fedora – felt in the cold months, straw in the warmer weather. Underneath, he wears a yarmulke. One day, a friend tipped his hat, exposing the hitherto concealed skull-cap and outing him as a Jew. “Farmers know and care about developments



Just Good Kosher chickens are cage-free and eat corn grown on the farm

in farming,” says Johnson, and at the time, were in an uproar about the egregious violations of labor law and financial irregularities uncovered at Agriprocessors Inc., a kosher slaughterhouse and meat packing plant in Postville, Iowa, run by Orthodox Jews.

“There was an uproar,” Johnson says, “and I took flack for their atrocities. What they did was a desecration of *kashrut*.” The Postville affair spurred some reform of kosher meat processing, and for Johnson, it reaffirmed his belief in the importance of *kavanah*. Ultimately, Johnson wants to create an agricultural yeshiva that will teach young Jews how to sustainably farm on a commercial basis. His expertise is valued by agronomists and livestock breeders – in March, Johnson is going on his first visit to Israel, where he will be consulting with cattle experts on the best ways to introduce longhorn cattle. Apparently, European breeds don’t always thrive in the Israeli climate, and the thinking is that longhorns – a hardy animal originally from the Mediterranean – might do better.

Last summer, Johnson began farming locally with pasture-raised chickens on land leased from Noble Farm, on New Lenox Road in Pittsfield. To date, he’s provided birds for meals at Congregation Knesset Israel and Williams College Hillel chapter, along with eggs. Ultimately, he wants to open a full scale livestock operation and kosher slaughterhouse, which will require an onsite *mashgiach* (supervisor of *kashrut*), a *shochet* (who slaughters the animals according to Jewish law), and, most importantly, a market. Johnson realizes he will have to look beyond the Berkshires for a reliable market, and has contacts in urban centers in the Northeast. He believes the methods he will use to raise his animals – “birds and

beef in the sun and open air just do better” – will enable him to deliver an end product that sells at a viable price point, despite the overhead of maintaining a kosher operation.

Aside from the challenges of the *keva* associated with slaughtering livestock – for example, birds must be inspected 5 or 6 times during the process, and are considered *traif* (un-kosher) if they fail at any stage – Johnson also has to cope with the character of the kosher meat consumer.

“One side of the spectrum has organic awareness, but not necessarily a concern about *kashrut*,” he explains. “Those concerned with *kashrut* are not necessarily the most concerned about organic farming.”

Johnson says his efforts are as much about raising consciousness as raising animals. In producing meat in this community that is safe to consume, in taking care of the soil and water of the land he farms, and in applying *shmita* principles that call for field rotation every two years, Johnson says he hopes to provide a model for farmers who are “responsible for where we live and to the people who consume our food. *Kavanah* is not just about eating kosher. It’s about what we do. It’s about *tikkun olam*. It’s how you treat workers.”

And, he adds, “it’s about what we’re saying in the *Shema*,” a prayer that “struck home” when he first read it.

Love the Lord your God and... serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, I will give rain for your land at the proper time, the early rain and the late rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine and your oil. And I will give grass in your fields for your cattle.

And you will eat and be sated.



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Israel Pledges \$8.75 Million To Fund Ebola Fight

(JTA) – Israel pledged \$8.75 million to a United Nations fund aiming to halt the spread of the Ebola virus in West Africa.

The donation to the Ebola Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund, which was launched in September, represents the largest per-capita investment by any country, the U.S. Fund for UNICEF said in a December 26 statement.

The Israeli government asked that a portion of the pledge be earmarked for the United Nations Children’s Rights & Emergency Relief Organization, or UNICEF, to provide services for children affected by the virus.

Caryl Stern, president and CEO of the U.S. Fund for UNICEF, thanked Israel for

the contribution “and for recognizing that children are especially vulnerable during emergencies.”

“Although progress has been made in controlling Ebola,” she said, “much remains to be done to fully stamp out the disease and provide care to children whose lives have been upended by it.”

Israel already has sent mobile field hospitals and medical cargo to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, and medical specialists to operate the clinics and train local health workers.

Ebola has infected nearly 19,000 people and claimed over 6,900 lives across West Africa.

WORLD AND NATIONAL NEWS

GENETIC TESTING, continued from page 1

risks, not personal health risks.” Consequently, the BRCA gene mutation is not screened for with this kit.

While testing for genetic disorders is nothing new, JSscreen’s accessibility is. The kit is easily acquired through the initiative’s website at www.JScreen.org, and the test allows a saliva sample to be sent directly for analysis. The program works closely with the individual, obtaining doctors’ orders when needed and providing updates on the status of the sample until results are sent out approximately four weeks later.

Touting the initiative as community-oriented, JSscreen’s website provides resources that aim to make couples feel comfortable in proceeding with their family-planning efforts. This includes explaining the reasons for getting tested, as well as statistics.

“JSscreen hopes to act as a resource for the community to do genetic testing and make a big impact in growing healthy families,” JSscreen spokesperson Patricia Page told JNS.org.

The program grew out of the work of Randy and Caroline Gold, who were surprised to find out that their daughter, Eden, had the genetic disease Mucopolysaccharidosis Type IV (ML4), despite their having both undergone genetic testing before starting a family.

When they learned that their genetic test had screened for less than half the conditions common in people of Jewish descent, the Golds made it their mission to spread the word about expanded Jewish genetic disease screening. They launched the Atlanta Jewish Gene Screen, an organization that partnered with the Victor Center for Prevention of Jewish Genetic Diseases at Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia, and Emory Genetics from 2010 to 2012.

“Screening for Jewish genetic diseases is an issue that is as much a Jewish communal issue as it is a public health issue, and in order to create a standard, one has to understand both parts of the equation,” Randy Gold told JNS.org in late 2011, when he was named the Jewish Federations of North America’s “Jewish Community Hero,” earning a \$25,000 grant.

“We as a Jewish community focused very, very clearly in the 1970s on Tay-Sachs screening, and today many people know to be screened for Tay-Sachs. But sadly, the conversation never evolved, to ‘now it’s Tay-Sachs

and a second disease,’ or a third disease or a fourth disease, and the laboratory companies never created a standard for the panel of diseases that Jews should be screened for,” Gold said. “We are promoting awareness in the Jewish community and creating that standard for doctors and laboratories across the country to follow in screening for all 19 known preventable Jewish genetic diseases. There should never be another couple who gives birth to a child affected by a Jewish genetic disease because the parents didn’t get screened for all 19 known preventable Jewish genetic diseases.”

Through JSscreen, the Golds are hoping to standardize genetic screening, make it more accessible, and lower its cost. For individuals with health insurance, the cost of JSscreen should not exceed \$99, and is often much lower, depending on one’s provider. For those without insurance, the self-pay rate for the program is \$599, with options for financial assistance to those who cannot otherwise afford it. JSscreen also offers an option called JGift, through which individuals can send \$99 towards testing to friends and family.

The main priority of JSscreen’s work is to reassure couples that their future children are not susceptible to an increased risk of acquiring any of the devastating diseases associated with Jewish genetics.

“When we do find a carrier couple, we offer a variety of options to help them have healthy children. Without screening, the couples would not have known they were at risk,” said Karen Aronovitz Grinzaid, JSscreen’s program senior director at the Emory School of Medicine’s Department of Human Genetics, in a statement.

JSscreen specialists counsel carrier couples on potential options that include in vitro fertilization (IVF), donated sperm or egg, and adoption. Each case can be matched up with a personalized consultation. It was such individualized counseling that allowed the Golds to later have a healthy baby girl through IVF.

“The Golds’ story inspired Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Human Genetics to create JSscreen, a program that makes screening for the full panel of Jewish genetic diseases simple, convenient, accessible and affordable,” Page told JNS.org.

Deily — An Online Platform that Collects, Organizes, and Explains the World’s Religions

Spiritual seekers and autodidacts will enjoy visiting Deily.org, a first of its kind online resource that aggregates information about world religions in an easy to use and easy to search website.

From its mission statement: “We are a community dedicated to sharing and explaining the world’s religious content - including sacred texts, prayers, sermons, lectures, and teachings. We believe that a collective exploration of religious meaning will connect us to our faith, our understanding, and ultimately to one another in a manner that benefits the common good.”

The site’s main page features links to religious content (200,000+ pieces of content and growing) - including passages of canonical text, talking head lectures, and full length documentaries that originally aired on television, as well as sermons, hymns, prayers, and teachings from the world’s major religions. Visitors can also filter by religion - Deily’s Jewish content is exceptionally strong.

Individuals and organizations who join as members (at no cost) may create their own profiles and pages to add, praise, explain, flag (when inappropriate), and request explanations of religious content. Churches, temples, synagogues, universities, and other charitable organizations may claim their own

pages to share content, extend their reach, and raise funds. (An organization’s tax-free status will be verified before they may accept donations via the site.)

Students will find Deily to be an exceptionally helpful resource, but anyone wishing to broaden their understanding and appreciation

of world religion will find hours of engaging material to explore.



‘The Economist’ Names Tel Aviv a Top Start-Up City

As no surprise to fans of Tel Aviv, *The Economist* recently named the White City as the second best start-up ecosystem in the world. Israel now has the

highest density of start-ups of any country and now ranks second only to Silicon Valley as the best start-up city in the world. Well-done, Tel Aviv!

Israeli couple welcomes birth of 100th great-grandchild

JERUSALEM (JTA) – An Israeli couple welcomed the birth of their 100th great-grandchild.

Michael Mittwoch, 92, and his wife, Marion, 90, celebrated the bris of Dagan Raz last week, according to Israeli media reports. They called the new baby and their other great-grandchildren “our answer to Hitler,” Ynet reported.

The Mittwochs were born in Germany and each fled to England after the Nazis came to power.

After World War II they made their ways separately to Israel and met on Kibbutz Kvutzat Yavne. They then became two of the founders of Kibbutz Lavi in the Galilee, and they also were the first couple to be married there, according to Ynet.

Their five children live in Israel.

The new baby was named after Maj. Dagan Wertman, 32, a Golani Brigade doctor who was at officers’ school with the baby’s father and was killed during Operation Cast Lead at the end of 2008.

Congregation Kneset Israel
16 Colt Road, Pittsfield
ONGOING MINYANS

Sunday8:45 a.m. and 7 p.m.
Tuesday 7 p.m.
Friday7 a.m. and 5:45 p.m.
Saturday, 9:30 a.m. and evenings approximately 30 minutes before sunset

CANDLE-LIGHTING

February 13..... 5:05 p.m.
February 20..... 5:13 p.m.
February 27..... 5:22 p.m.
March 6..... 5:31 p.m.
March 13..... 5:45 p.m.
March 20..... 6:39 p.m.

See “Berkshire Jewish Congregations and Organizations” on page 25 for information on all regularly scheduled services in the area. Contact a congregation directly if you wish to arrange an unscheduled minyan.

Survey: One Quarter of British Jews Have Considered Leaving Due To Anti-Semitism, On the Uptick in The UK

(JTA) – Nearly half of Britons hold an anti-Semitic view and one quarter of British Jews have considered leaving because of rising anti-Semitism, two new surveys found.

The surveys were released together in January by Britain’s Campaign Against Anti-Semitism, or CAA. The reports came out less than a week after four Jewish men were killed in a Paris kosher supermarket by an Islamic extremist.

One CAA survey found that 58 percent of British Jews believe that Jews may have no long-term future in Europe and that over half of British Jews say that they have witnessed more anti-Semitism in the past two years

than ever. The CAA survey also found that 45 percent of the British Jews surveyed feel their family is threatened by Islamist extremism.

Some 2,230 British Jews were given a link to complete the online survey. Several methods were used to ensure a wide and varied sample, according to the CAA.

“The results of our survey are a shocking wakeup call straight after the atrocities in Paris,” Gideon Falter, chairman of the Campaign Against Anti-Semitism, said in a statement. “Britain is at a tipping point: unless anti-Semitism is met with zero tolerance, it will grow and British Jews will increasingly

question their place in their own country.”

Along with showing that nearly half of Britons hold an anti-Semitic view, the other survey carried out by YouGov for the CAA also found that one in four Britons believe that “Jews chase money more than other British people” and one in five believes that “Jews’ loyalty to Israel makes them less loyal to Britain than other British people.”

YouGov polled a nationally representative sample of 3,411 British adults.

Some 269,000 Jews live in Britain and equal 0.4 percent of the population. Hate crimes against Jews in London more

than doubled to 299 last year, according to the Scotland Yard. This represented a rise of 128 percent over the corresponding period in 2013, when there were 131 hate crimes, The Jewish Chronicle of London reported Wednesday.

British police said last week that they were increasing patrols in areas with large Jewish communities following deadly terror attacks by Islamists in Paris. Scotland Yard said officers were in constant liaison with the community.

The European Jewish Congress (EJC) also published the results of a survey conducted this month among 504 adult Britons that showed 15 percent

of respondents agreeing that the government should consider identifying businesses owned by Jews or Muslims as such. EJC President Moshe Kantor said those percentages “should shock us into action.”

Additionally, the Community Security Trust, the Jewish security watchdog group in Britain, recorded 1,168 anti-Semitic incidents for 2014, the highest annual total ever. The group reported that the number of incidents from last year was more than double the 535 from 2013, and it marked the first time that the number exceeded 1,000 in a calendar year. The previous record was 931 incidents in 2009.

CULTURE AND ARTS

'Letters to Afar': A New Way to Tell the Story That Must Forever Be Retold

By Albert Stern

Letters to Afar, an audiovisual installation that will be on view at the Museum of the City of New York through March 22, transforms 6 hours of silent home movies and documentary footage filmed in Poland in the years preceding the Second World War into a unique immersive work of art. Precisely because it does not include even a moment of wartime footage, *Letters to Afar* stands as one of the most emotionally devastating portraits of the Holocaust era, capturing as it does a centuries-old Jewish culture on the threshold of its destruction.

Imagined and executed by Hungarian artist Peter Forgacs from archival footage from the vaults of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, the installation is backed by an evocative original soundtrack by The Klezmatics that wafts through the gallery. The footage Forgacs works with is, on its own terms, largely artless, and was filmed between 1922 and 1939 by Jewish immigrants to the United States returning to Poland on family visits or fundraising missions. Much of it consists of people waving or mugging (or diffidently refusing to mug) at the camera; of streetscapes in cities like Warsaw and Lvov; and of rural life in backwater towns and shtetls, where the cameramen clearly represented rare and exciting visitors from the modern world.

The artist's basic approach is to take apart each individual film on three adjacent screens, perhaps replaying a snippet of footage while varying its sequencing on each projection, perhaps juxtaposing different locales or people. Roughly 10 films run simultaneously. At times, Forgacs speeds up or freezes the action so that the viewer might notice different details – of the environment, an expression, or a gesture – thus forging direct emotional connections to the people captured on camera. Each station of the exhibit focuses on a specific locale within Poland, with the exception of "Etude," in which Forgacs uses footage from all locations to create a film that could stand on its own as a powerful work of art.

Films that document the past can often be nostalgic exercises that invite the viewer to marvel at, to mock, or to simply reminisce about the bygone – the goofy fashions, the pastimes people once found entertaining, or the rusticity of places in which they lived. But since we are viewing the lives of Polish Jews of the 1920s and 1930s, nostalgia is utterly absent in *Letters to Afar*. As contemporary viewers, we know that dark forces were gathering, and a much bigger story that no one we see on film could truly be aware of was about to begin. The peculiar Jewish world we see onscreen was not made outmoded by the modern world, it was purposefully destroyed by it.

I experienced an unexpected counterpoint to *Letters to Afar* on the morning of my visit to New York, when I began my day by exploring the now-ended exhibit "Assyria to Iberia at the Dawn of the Classical Age" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The show examined the expansive influence of the Assyrian Empire on the ancient Near East and beyond, its imperial heyday coinciding with Biblical events such as King Sennacherib's sacking of cities in the Kingdom of Judah recounted in *Chronicles*. I found it remarkable to be surrounded by the kinds of objects that Old Testament-era Jews might have seen, the artifacts somehow stripping away the thick layers of history separating our ancestors from us today.

From a Jewish perspective, the key artifact in the exhibit was the House of David stele – a humble object lent by the Israel Museum that is so far the only known archaeological record of King David outside of the Bible. While the stele may or may not confirm the existence of David, I thought about the contrast between the magnitude of influence that the stories of the Jewish people have had and still have in the world, and the physical meagerness of a six-letter inscription on a single stone unearthed from the desert. The imposing relics of Assyrian imperial might on display were just that – relics. Meanwhile, as the song goes, *am Yisrael chai*.

Leaving the Met for the Museum of the City of New York, I walked 20 blocks uptown and 3000 years into the future of the Jewish people. As you step into *Letters to Afar*, you are immersed in images of one of the richest expressions of the civilization



that had been held together by the stories and faith birthed in ancient times. You see, un-sentimentalized, the shtetls, the yeshivas, the markets, the synagogues, the ghettos. You see, as they were, yeshiva *buchers*, shy *cheder* students, bearded rabbis, village babushkas, blasé urban sophisticates, graceful young women, harumphing salarymen, wretched beggars. You notice small, arresting moments, like a father lovingly touching his daughter's hair as he urges her to wave at the camera, two young girls cracking up, an awkward peasant dance nobody seems to be enjoying. Yet for all the artistic care invested in the installation, the true power of *Letters to Afar* derives from a simple declarative sentence from the exhibit's introduction on the gallery wall.

Ninety percent of all Polish Jews were killed during the war.

A darkness was about to descend. To the west, factories were starting to churn out machines of war, and an ideology of hate was being instilled in a nation whose soldiers would soon

move east, bringing with them cameras of their own to record their work. The men, women, and children seen in *Letters to Afar*, would have nowhere to flee. Their world would soon feel the full weight of a modern army upon it, as part of a war that in many ways was hatched and waged specifically to eliminate them.

They didn't stand a chance. *Letters to Afar* shows that heartbreaking reality as well as any depiction of the Holocaust in any medium I have encountered.

In my first few months working as editor of this publication, I had the opportunity to write about encounters with survivors of the Holocaust, both my own and others'. The shared impression all of us convey is of how old these survivors are, and how soon it will be before none of them remain with us. In this issue, we've published a story about the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Without the testimony of those who were there, how will the story of this catastrophe of the Jewish people be told?

With *Letters to Afar*, Peter Forgacs has forged a powerful new way of telling the eternally important story of the Holocaust, through his art restoring the humanity of the perished. While wartime images that record murderous acts and the postwar footage of camp survivors will forever bear testament of the savage crimes committed, the pedestrian home movies transformed by *Letters to Afar* are shattering because they do not capture the victimization of the people portrayed; rather the installation captures a moment before the worst had happened, a moment before the worst had to happen. Images from the Holocaust years are suffused with inevitability – of cruelty, inhumanity, and death – whereas *Letters to Afar* captures instances of grace, humor, and workaday life in a world that was imperfect, but at least still intact. It would not stay that way for long.

If you go – and if you can, you must – approach your visit more like going to a movie than a museum, and give yourself the time for it to work on you. I spent two hours, while a friend said he spent more than three. As each individual creates his or her own experience by choosing which film sequence to view and for how long, no two visitors will have quite the same experience, nor will an individual revisiting the installation have the same experience twice.

Originally commissioned and installed for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, *Letters to Afar* is worthy of a permanent home there and/or in a venue like New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in our nation's capitol, or even Yad Vashem. *Letters to Afar* deserves to endure as a testament of what was lost and, more importantly, who was lost in the darkest days of the 20th Century.

The Museum of the City of New York is located at 1220-1227 Fifth Avenue (East 103rd to 104th Streets) in Manhattan. Website: www.mcny.org

