

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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Reunited and It Feels So Good

Major Donors Celebration 2022 a chance to be together at long last



Major Donors Celebration Co-Chairs Robert Bildner and Elisa Spungen Bildner

PITTSFIELD – On Sunday, July 24, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires celebrates its Major Donors with a festive musical brunch at the Country Club of Pittsfield.

This will be our first in-person Major Donors Celebration in two years, a chance for supporters of the Berkshires' Jewish community to catch up with one another while connecting to Federation.

Our event co-chairs are Robert Bildner and Elisa Spungen Bildner, longtime Berkshire homeowners who will share their story of how awakening to Federation's importance to all parts of this Jewish community led them to become ever-more active as donors and leaders who are helping this organization fulfill its vital mission.

Speaking at the event will be Frederic L. Bloch, senior vice president and chief growth officer of ADL. His role involves raising awareness of ADL, improving the experience of all its constituents, and driving revenue to meet the demands of the communities that the organization serves. He'll provide a national perspective about the work of

MAJOR DONORS,
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Federation's Annual Meeting 2022

"Responding to the Crisis in Ukraine" with our overseas partners to be among this year's topics



Jewish Federation
OF THE BERKSHIRES

who demonstrated high academic achievement and leadership in the Jewish and broader communities.

Responding to the Crisis in Ukraine

Representing Federation's overseas partner, The Jewish Agency For Israel, one of our distinguished guests will be Roman Polonsky, JAFI's regional director for the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Germany. This seasoned veteran of Russian media and Israeli politics will join us via Zoom from his post in Eastern Europe and share how JAFI and other Jewish groups supported by Jewish Federations of North America are responding to the crisis in Eastern Europe, and what the future might hold for the embattled nation of Ukraine.

Representing the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), will be Alexandra Shklar, a senior director of Strategic Partnerships based in New York. She recently travelled to JDC refugee camps in Europe and will share firsthand experiences from her travels and talk about JDC's work around the conflict in Ukraine.

"This past year, the pandemic continued to challenge us in so many ways," says Dara Kaufman, Federation's executive director, "but our community exhibited its compassion and resilience

in so many ways. The commitment people have shown to supporting one another here at home and stepping up to provide vital lifesaving support for the people of Ukraine inspires me on a daily basis."

The Mount is at 2 Plunkett Street in Lenox. Please visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org for further details about this event, including COVID-19 protocols that may be in place.

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It's Summertime in the Berkshires

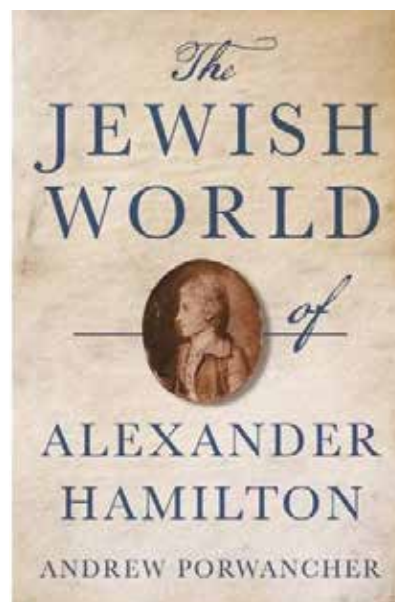


"Green calm below, blue quietness above..."

While not written about the Berkshires, John Greenleaf Whittier's line about green calm and blue quietness certainly captures something of the spirit of summer in these hills – as does this Stephanie Blumenthal photograph "Tulip Leaf on Blue Background." The Sheffield artist has a different image in the "Art of the Hills" exhibition of local artists' work currently at Berkshire Museum. For more on Blumenthal's work and the show, please see page 14.

Knosh & Knowledge Returns!

Join us for "The Jewish World of Alexander Hamilton," with Professor Andrew Porwancher on June 24



GREAT BARRINGTON – After a two-year hiatus, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' popular Knosh & Knowledge returns with a summer lineup of compelling speakers.

On Friday, June 24 at 2 p.m., join us as Professor Andrew Porwancher discusses fresh evidence that Alexander Hamilton was born Jewish. He'll explore Hamilton's alliance with American Jews at the dawn of the republic in a talk based on his book *The Jewish World of Alexander Hamilton* (Princeton, 2021), winner of the Journal of the American Revolution Book of the Year Award.

Knosh & Knowledge programs take place at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Road in Great Barrington. For more on this free program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.

Proof of vaccination and masking are required at indoor Federation events.

In his book, Andrew Porwancher debunks a string of myths about the origins of this founding father to arrive at a startling conclusion: Hamilton, in all likelihood, was born and raised Jewish. For more than two centuries, his youth in the Caribbean has remained shrouded in mystery. Hamilton himself wanted it that way, and most biographers have simply assumed he had a Christian boyhood. With a detective's persistence and a historian's rigor, Porwancher upends that assumption and revolutionizes our understanding of an American icon.

A native of Princeton, New Jersey, Andrew Porwancher earned degrees from Brown and Northwestern before completing his Ph.D. in history at Cambridge. Currently, he serves as the Wick Cary Associate Professor at the University of Oklahoma and the Ernest May Fellow at Harvard University's Belfer Center. In 2017, Porwancher won the Longmire Prize for innovative teaching. He is now at work on his fourth book, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Jews* (Princeton).

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Rabbi Reflection

Learning (and Teaching) How to See the Beauty and Joy Inherent in Learning Torah and Fulfilling *Mitzvot*

By Rabbi Levi Volovik



Many years after graduating and going their separate ways, a group of one-time students met at a reunion and were joined by their former professor, who led them in a lively discussion. "After all these years," the professor began, "what would you say was the most exciting day in your life?" One said it was his wedding day; another recalled the birth of a child;

a third said it was the day he received the job of his dreams; another related a trip of a lifetime.

And on it went. After each memorable moment shared, the professor interjected with the same comment: "Well, and the day after?" In response to the students' questioning reaction, the professor explained: "No doubt these were all important, exciting events and significant milestones in your lives – but what happens when it is all over? Does the joy and thrill that you experience continue to build momentum through the days and years that follow? Or does the memory fade the day after?"

We recently celebrated the holiday of Shavuot, which is our "annual reunion," reliving the magnificent moment when we all as one stood at Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah. When thundering through the silence, G-d proclaimed His "agenda" for a world filled with peaceful co-existence, unity, justice, kindness, sanctity, and respect. In that glorious moment, He transformed us into a holy nation with an awesome responsibility. And just so that the memory of that exciting, uplifting moment does not fade, every year, we renew our 3,334-year-old commitment and realign with our time-tested legacy to the dedication of life of Torah, *mitzvot*, and positive action that we joyfully accepted at Sinai.

The *parshiyot* (portions) in the Book of Numbers in our present Torah readings started with a rundown of numbers giving us the count of the Children of Israel according to their tribes. In our technological age, when computers can calculate sum totals with the press of a button and even a census can be carried out "online," having someone write down each name seems to be an inefficient, tedious, and arduous task. But since numbers are so impersonal, we tend to forget that behind each number stands a human being, a G-dly creation of body and soul, a precious "only child" in G-d's eyes. G-d's count, as instructed to Moshe, therefore is different. "Take a headcount of the Children of Israel by keeping a count of their names" (1:2) does not allow the individual's identity to get lost in the total number.

Torah gave us the status of uniqueness, each one of us as a distinct soul, each of us being a vital part of *Am Yisrael*. That status was bestowed upon us only after we brought guarantors that Torah would be the guiding light for generations to come. The "deal" was confirmed after we declared our children as guarantors for the eternity of Torah and fulfillment of *mitzvot*. The gift of Torah was not offered to one specific generation; it was intended to remain the guiding light of every future generation. Imagine having to guarantee that our children, even those yet unborn, will be the guarantors for the future.

Making a commitment is difficult enough for oneself; committing for the children is something that cannot be assured. That's almost impossible, one would say – the children will decide for themselves. But by charging us with the responsibility to teach our children, G-d showed us how this is possible. Interestingly, the word for 'guarantor' in Hebrew – *arev* – shares the root word for sweetness. Our job, as parents, grandparents, and leaders, is to make the Torah sweet for our children, beginning at a young age, giving them an education whereby they see

The Rebbe viewed every child, as he viewed every individual, as a precious jewel with innate capabilities to grow, develop, and become a voice for our disheartened and disillusioned people. Indeed, many children years later became emissaries (*shluchim*), making the Rebbe's mission their mission. Learning from the Rebbe's example in touching every soul and elevating every spirit, they carry on his holy work with warmth and love, igniting the inner spark.

The Rebbe's complete selflessness and devotion to tending to his flock is mirrored by the *shluchim* who remained in their posts until the last moment during the ravaging war in Ukraine to help their communities with food, clothing, and avenues of escape. We pray for the safety of those *shluchim* and the communities who still remain.

We at Chabad of the Berkshires are privileged to be part of the Rebbe's team. We are constantly seeking ways to inspire our community through educational classes and diverse programs, and by being the hand that reaches out with kindness and support for our community and every visitor who comes our way.

The past few years have not been easy. We have been locked down and locked up, trying to pick ourselves up and move on with some semblance of "normal" life. Is this possible? Based on the following story, I believe it is. In the late 1980s, the Rebbe began distributing dollars to thousands who lined up to receive a dollar from his holy hand to give to *tzedakah*, along with his blessing. A young woman was one of the recipients, and as she made her exit, concentrating on the crisp dollar in her hand and the Rebbe's blessing for success, she tripped down the few steps in front of the building. Being a bit perturbed that this occurred right after receiving her dollar, she decided to return to the line once again, tell the Rebbe that she fell down, and request another dollar. But upon facing the Rebbe a second time around, the Rebbe told her: "I did not give you the dollar so that you should not fall; I gave you the dollar to enable you to pick yourself up!" A profound lesson in life!

Yes, we may go through some difficult days that pull us down and, no doubt, affect us emotionally, materially, and spiritually, but we

are given the assurance that better days are within our grasp. Let's step up and unite in this endeavor through Torah study, *mitzvot*, and positive action to make it a reality. It takes the oneness of a people and the oneness of purpose to elicit the blessings for the imminent redemption that Jews the world over so urgently need!

Wishing you a healthy and enjoyable summer!

Rabbi Levi Volovik is the co-director of Chabad of the Berkshires in Pittsfield.

The Rebbe viewed every child, as he viewed every individual, as a precious jewel with innate capabilities to grow, develop, and become a voice

the beauty and joy inherent in learning Torah and fulfilling *mitzvot*, awakening within them the passion to learn, to do, and to create a wholesome, harmonious environment of law and order as mandated by a Higher Authority. As partners with G-d we accepted



Rabbi Levi Volovik at age 17 receiving a dollar from the Lubavitcher Rebbe on March 1, 1992. The next night, the Rebbe suffered a debilitating stroke. The dollar received by Rabbi Volovik was among the final dollar bills that the Rebbe handed out.

this responsibility.

World Jewry recently celebrated the 120th birthday of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson. The Rebbe personified boundless, unconditional love for every Jew, young and old. This love was reciprocated by the multitudes from every sector and affiliation who recognized his majestic presence. From the time the Rebbe assumed leadership, he transformed the American scene with the depth of his Torah knowledge and teachings, his loving, caring, and compassionate relationships with all who approached him, and with his active *mitzvah* campaigns that extended to every part of the globe.

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Letters to the Editor

All Back In-Person This Summer: Delicious and Nutritious Meals, Companionship, and Programs



Federation's Cindy Bell-Deane and Ken Conlow

To the Federation and the Jewish Community:
The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is providing a service for seniors in the Berkshires that is appreciated by them, perhaps little noted elsewhere. Cindy Bell-Deane, gourmet kosher chef, is cooking up delicious and nutritious meals for us every week. At a time of COVID-19's unwelcome isolation, Cindy's great

lunches are a welcome lift to our lives!

Many of the lunches are home-cooked old-time favorites, such as roast chicken, meatloaf, or fresh fish. Others are new creations, such as the black bean enchilada casserole with yellow rice and Mexican corn that we recently enjoyed. Last summer, we had some extraordinary salad platters, including a Greek salad platter that was filled with an array of food discoveries. Each meal comes with a dessert, usually fruit, sometimes home baked goodies such as chocolate chip cookies and brownies!

Once upon a time, not so very long ago, we enjoyed Cindy's great lunches at Knesset Israel, in the company of some extraordinarily knowledgeable and community conscious seniors. Those gatherings were the highlight of my social life each week. Twice each week the lunches were topped off by an enlightening program arranged by Nancy Maurice Rogers. I would be highly challenged to come up with enough presenters for three weeks of programs. Nancy did this week after week, year after year. Quite a feat!

Sadly, the Knesset-Israel lunch gatherings were gone for over two years due to COVID-19. Instead, the meals are delivered to us by a small team of volunteers. In my case, right to my apartment door in Lenox. Some seniors must have a warm conversation with the volunteers. I am satisfied with simply saying: thank you for delivering my lunch. However, I can sense how happy the volunteers are to be performing this service, and the smile behind their face mask.

The good news, just in, is that the Connecting With Community programs are returning on Thursdays at Knesset Israel, beginning on June 16. The programs start at 10:45 a.m., with sit-in lunch following at noon. Plus: Knosh and Knowledge programs at Hevreh commence on June 24. This will be a great opportunity to see our too-long-lost friends once again!

Cindy Bell-Deane, ably assisted by Ken Conlow, keeps coming up with great lunches for us, with skilled and creative cooking. Just one among the remarkable array of services provided by the Jewish Federation here in the Berkshires and far beyond.

With appreciation,
Henry Kranz
Lenox

Your Exemplary Kind-Heartedness and Compassion Feeds Those Less Fortunate in Israel

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

Thank you so much for the very generous grant toward the operation of Meir Panim's Jerusalem Restaurant-Style Soup Kitchen. Your support this year as in the past, enables Meir Panim to maintain its food and social services to Jerusalem's neediest citizens.

The generous grant will make an enormous impact on our services by providing over 688

of the 2,250 life-saving meals served monthly at the Jerusalem Restaurant-Style Soup Kitchen. From this location, we also provide thousands of meals-on-wheels to Jerusalem's homebound, disabled, and elderly citizens, including Holocaust survivors.

Our Jerusalem branch continues to see the impact of COVID-19, despite the high vaccination rates and declining unemployment rate. Unfortunately, the pandemic has devastated people's livelihoods, with the poverty rate doubling since March 2020. We expect it will take years for our community to recover.

During the pandemic when Meir Panim's Jerusalem Restaurant-Style Soup Kitchen was shuttered, 545 packaged meals were prepared in-house daily to be available for meal-on-wheels and takeout. Two hundred meals-on-wheels were delivered to not only the elderly, disabled and homebound individuals, but also those who are newly unemployed or on furlough. The coronavirus pandemic has had a deleterious effect on the middle class, and many have now fallen into poverty due to the lack of income this past year.

Our mission remains to serve as many people in need for as long as it takes. We are currently serving around 450 meals each day, more than twice the amount before the pandemic. We have also continued to expand our meals-on-wheels operations to accommodate those who are unable or afraid to visit the branch in person.

In addition to providing hot meals to those who need them most, our restaurant and meals-on-wheels volunteers form close relationships with our clients, inquiring into their welfare and overall state of health, and also referring them to additional services as needed. For many, the friendly faces of our volunteers are their only social interaction of the day.

Many thanks again to the leadership of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. Your community's kind-heartedness and compassion for those less fortunate in Israel is exemplary.

With your help, those Israeli citizens who are struggling to survive will be fed and cared for and have the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty. Please know how much we appreciate your partnership with us over the years.

With deep gratitude,
Rena Ben-Ezra
Director of Special Projects/American Friends of Meir Panim
www.meirpanim.org/partners



The Pesach Seder this year at Meir Panim in Jerusalem



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This flexible, twenty-hour-a-week position offers an opportunity to use your talents to benefit a greater good and work with caring individuals who share a commitment to helping those in need and strengthening Jewish community.

For full job description visit
jewishberkshires.org/news-announcements/development

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Your Federation Presents

MAJOR DONORS,

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ADL, one of this Federation's key partners in fighting bias and antisemitism in the Berkshires, particularly in providing training to students and educators in our middle and high schools.

Providing the entertainment will be Paul Green & The Two Worlds Trio, members of the clarinetist's lively jazz/klezmer fusion combo that has released two well-regarded CDs.

"It's going to be an amazing experience for all of us to be together in celebration at long last," says Federation's president, Elisa Schindler Frankel. "I am looking forward to personally recognizing these pillars of our Jewish community and thanking them for their leadership gifts to our campaign."

She adds: "Our Major Donors are an inspiration to me and to others. They lead by example and work tirelessly to enhance Federation's ability to make impactful community investments here in the Berkshires, in Israel, and around the world where we find Jews in need."

This event is open to donors who have contributed a minimum gift of \$1,000 to Federation's 2022 annual campaign. For more information, call us at (413) 442-4360.

Federation has adjusted the event format this year to include schmoozing and breakfast hors d'oeuvres outside on the covered porch followed by a theater-style program indoors. There will be no assigned seating. Proof of vaccination is required and the most up-to-date masking protocol will be shared closer to the event.

Our Co-Chairs – Rob Bildner and Elisa Spungen Bildner

Sometimes the bottom line is an apt place to start a story.

Says Elisa Spungen Bildner: "The bottom line is that those of us who spend time in the Berkshires and who care about what happens to this particular Jewish community in Western Massachusetts have to devote our time and our money to make it the best it can be. And by the way, it's a great community. I'm only sorry I only walked around the edges of it for as long as I did over the decades that we've had homes in this area."

Elisa and husband Rob are two of those remarkably accomplished and dedicated people that the Berkshires and its Jewish community are fortunate to attract. Both are graduates of Yale University and remain active as leaders in alumni affairs. Both received degrees from Ivy League law schools, and Elisa has worked as a journalist and journalism professor and has taught law, as well. Rob earned a masters' degree in Jewish Studies from the Jewish Theological Seminary and is an accomplished photographer who studied at the Santa Fe Photographic Workshop. Together, the couple worked as food industry entrepreneurs and in 2020 co-authored the award-winning *The Berkshire Farm Table Cookbook* (featuring Rob's photos) with chef Brian Alberg.

Elisa says that researching and writing the cookbook, which pays tribute to the Berkshires' family-run farms and farm table chefs, "solidified our attachment to the community." And it was only natural (inevitable?) that the Bildners would focus eventually their attention on the local Jewish Federation, given their record of involvement and leadership in high-profile national Jewish philanthropies. Together, Elisa and Rob established the Foundation for Jewish Camp in 1998, its mission "to build a strong Jewish future through transformative summers." Rob was a founding director of Repair the World, a national initiative to engage young Jewish adults in community service, and serves on the boards of several non-profit Jewish organizations. Elisa is former president of the Jewish News wire service JTA, past chair of the Jewish Funders Network, board member of the Jewish Book Council, and current chair of Honeycomb (formerly Jewish Teens Funders Network), which supports the work of Jewish teen giving circles nationwide. In 2013, President Barack Obama appointed her to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

And our Federation is not only lucky enough to have the Bildners as our Major Donor Celebration co-chairs, but to have Elisa serving on our board of directors, as well.

"I think we just made a transition in our understanding of what is happening in the Berkshires and its Jewish community," says Rob, "and the necessity of supporting the many very good initiatives that are going on now. As long-time supporters of Jewish camp, we may have started off being aware of the support for young people in the Berkshires through camperships, which in our experience is an entry into Jewish community and often the start of a lifelong commitment and engagement for those young people and their families. But then, as we became much more familiar with all the good work the Federation is doing in so many other areas, we became more and more impressed by what it accomplishes."

"This Federation is, in effect, sui generis," says Elisa. "There is a real contrast

between this Federation and federations that others who may live elsewhere, as well, may be more familiar with. In those places, there might be a range of Jewish infrastructure like family services and a JCC to serve the community. In the Berkshires, it's important to support the Federation because this is where you find the Jews who need help, where you find programming that can educate, where you can bring people into the Jewish community and make them feel a part of it."

The Bildners also appreciate the activism within the larger Berkshire community that this Federation brings to bear when Jewish interests and safety are threatened. Says Rob: "This Federation has had boots on the ground on these issues and has been very up front in challenging instances of antisemitism where they have occurred in the Berkshires. It has done, I think, a noteworthy job with that. I want to underscore this Federation's commitment by the way it brought in a national authority (the JDL and its A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE anti-bias training) on the issue of antisemitism and how to combat it. This is an issue that we personally have been more and more engaged with through our political involvements nationally. The expressions of antisemitism both on the right and the left and globally have been a great concern to us."

As for their hopes for how this Jewish community will evolve, Elisa says that she wants there to be "greater portals for younger people in the community to pull them into a Jewish orbit – not only kids and teens, but people in their 20s and 30s." Honeycomb and Repair the World, she says, provide models of how a culture of giving and participation can be fostered among younger Jews. "It's important to offer as many possibilities to people in younger age groups in the community. We really have a huge responsibility to focus on bringing into our midst younger people and giving them opportunities to enjoy and love and learn about being Jewish – and to make the difference they want to make in the world. There are many programs that can be modeled to fit the Berkshires – but they cost money and that's another reason we need donors to support them."

It starts, she adds, by showing up. "If there's one message that I want to convey to our Major Donors and others is to tell everyone not to wait until you decide to retire in the community. Perhaps you're a second homeowner, or spend only a short time of the year here, or, like we had been, living in the community but not really noticing what was going on with the Federation. I urge everyone to take notice and to really invest oneself into making this a super Jewish community."

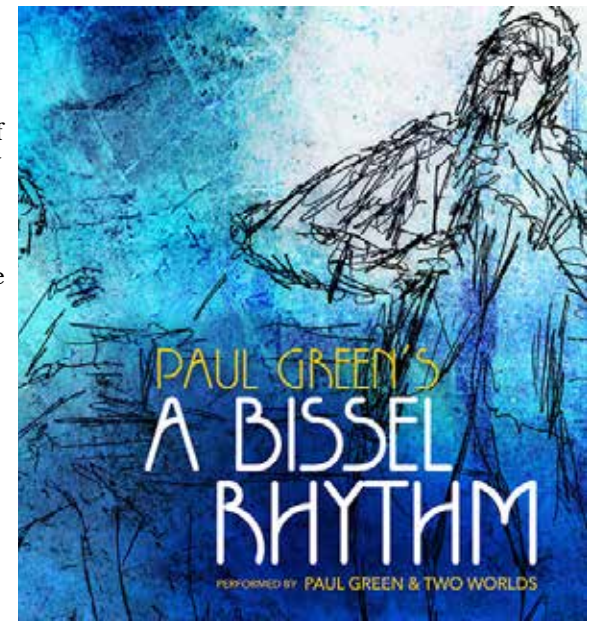
"This community is a small community. It needs every hand on deck. Jump on board and support the Federation and benefit from the Federation activities, events, and educational opportunities now rather than later."

About Our Guest Speaker

Frederic L. Bloch joined ADL in 2016 after four years at The New Jewish Home, a New York-based eldercare provider, where he was senior vice president. Prior to that, Mr. Bloch had a distinguished three-decade career on Wall Street, including 22 years with AllianceBernstein working in executive positions, leading teams across the US and in London.

About Paul Green & The Two Worlds Trio

Paul Green and his Jewish-Jazz fusion band, Two Worlds, released its second CD, *A Bissel Rhythm*, in 2019. A virtuoso clarinetist equally adept at classical, jazz, and klezmer, Green went beyond arranging existing tunes, as he did in his first album, *Music Coming Together*. Presently, he is composer as well as arranger as he continues to explore, in his own compositions, the relationships between jazz and klezmer music. The trio features local musicians who are members of Two Worlds.



Paul Green & The Two Worlds Trio will perform

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Your Federation Presents

ANNUAL MEETING,

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About Our Speakers

Roman Polonsky

Educated in the Former Soviet Union (FSU), Roman Polonsky emigrated to Israel in 1990. He headed the news operations at Vremya, the Israeli Russian-language weekly, worked as a political commentator for the Russian daily Vesti, and later as a political analyst for Israel's leading radio station, Kol Yisrael – the Voice of Israel. He also served as a host of a political show on Channel 9 (Israeli Russian language TV). Polonsky was a longtime media advisor and spokesman for Natan Sharansky during his political career, and translated Sharansky's two books – *The Case for Democracy* and *Defending Identity* – into Russian.

In 2009, Polonsky joined JAFI and served as a senior advisor to then-Agency chairman Sharansky. He was the head of The Agency's Unit for Russian-Speaking Jewry (RSJ) for many years before assuming his current position. In his current role, Roman is responsible for overseeing Aliyah from Eastern Europe and the FSU, as well as camps and other informal Jewish education programs,

Sunday schools, Hebrew studies, young leadership programs, and enrollment in Masa Israel Journey and Taglit-Birthright.

Alex Shklar

Alexandra (Alex) Shklar's determination to advocate on behalf of world Jewry is born of her own life experiences. She spent her early childhood in Russia and made *aliyah* to Israel at the age of eight. Today, she serves as JDC's Senior Director of Global Strategic Partnerships and is managing the Second Century Campaign, which will ensure JDC's ability to respond to global needs in the future.

Shklar joined JDC in 2009 and was responsible for engaging JDC's partners in its humanitarian work and community building activities around the world. She traveled frequently to the field and experienced JDC's life-changing efforts firsthand. In the course of one of her trips, she discovered that her own family members in Ukraine and Siberia had been and still are receiving life-sustaining assistance from JDC.

Prior to joining JDC, Shklar served as the Israel Program Director at the Jewish Community



Roman Polonsky

Federation of Louisville, Kentucky, where she was responsible for managing the community's partnership with the Western Galilee, and facilitating Israel-focused cultural and social programs.

Shklar is also a Wexner Field Fellow and the winner of the North American Fencing Cup in 2001 and a member of the gold-medal NCAA team in 2004.



Professor Steve Rubin

Current Events Seminar with Professor Steven Rubin

PITTSFIELD – This summer, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes back Professor Steven Rubin, whose popular current events seminar had, for years, been one of our most popular Connecting With Community programs.

The current events seminar gives participants an opportunity to examine and discuss topical and newsworthy

national and international issues. For each session, the moderator will suggest readings, introduce topics, and offer discussion questions. The seminar will be conducted in a collaborative and collegial manner, with all participants encouraged to voice their opinions.

Professor Rubin's upcoming seminars will begin at 10:45 a.m. on the following Thursdays:

- June 23
- July 14
- July 28

This free program will be presented *in person* as part of the Federation's Connecting with Community Series presented at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a \$3 suggested donation for adults over 60 years of age or \$7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 10 for the lunch menu.

Proof of vaccination and masking are required at indoor Federation events.

Steve Rubin, Ph.D. (moderator) is professor emeritus and former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Adelphi University, Garden City, NY. His op-eds and opinion essays have appeared in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Berkshire Eagle*, *Tampa Bay Times*, *The South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, *Palm Beach Post*, and *The Hartford Courant*, among others. He is the editor of several anthologies, including *Celebrating the Jewish Holidays: Poems, Stories, Essays* (Brandeis University Press), *Telling and Remembering: A Century of American Jewish Poets* (Beacon Press), and *Writing Our Lives: Autobiographies of American Jews* (Jewish Publication Society). He lives in Tyringham and can be reached at sjr@adelphi.edu.

For more on this program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.



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Join us under the trees for schmoozing followed by a brief business meeting, board elections, the Simkin-Schiller College Scholarship Award, and guest speakers in the open stables.



RESPONDING TO UKRAINE

We will be joined by representatives of the JDC and the Jewish Agency for Israel who will share how Federation support is assisting rescue efforts in Ukraine and surrounding countries.

Masking and proof of vaccination required.

Register at jewishberkshires.org

NOMINATED SLATE FOR 2022-2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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TERM ENDING 2024

(3 yr term)
Kathy Fraker
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*Newly Nominated 1st Term
[^]Newly Nominated 2nd Term

TERM ENDING 2025

(3 yr term)
Stuart Masters[^]
Michael Wasserman[^]
Jane Glaser*
Audrey Weiner*
Josh Cutler*
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In accordance with the Federation's bylaws, additional nominations may be considered when submitted by a petition signed by fifteen Berkshire Jewish Community members and received by the secretary at least ten days prior to the annual meeting.

Your Federation Presents

KNOSH & KNOWLEDGE,

continued from page 1



Andrew Porwancher

“New World Promises vs. Old World Prejudices” – Professor Andrew Porwancher talks about Alexander Hamilton

In May, Professor Porwancher spoke to the BJV about his book on one of the most influential and enigmatic Founding Fathers of the United States. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

So much has been written about Alexander Hamilton. What convinced you that there was something about his possible Jewishness that needed to be explored?

It's long been known that Hamilton had a mother named Rachel Levine and that Rachel enrolled him in a Jewish school on [Nevis,] the Caribbean island where he grew up. And I thought that these facts, which had been looked over by Hamilton scholars, would, for anyone else, be taken as creating a strong presumption of that person's Jewish identity. And so I was deeply skeptical about the inherited wisdom that Hamilton was a cradle-to-grave Christian and got a grant to go down to the Caribbean to begin testing my hypothesis. And this took me on a seven-year journey in archives on both sides of the Atlantic, culminating in the publication of this book.

You write that Rachel converted to Judaism to marry Hamilton's father Johann Levine, and that she stayed connected to the faith after the marriage did not work out.

His name appears under a variety of spellings, Levin, Lewin, Levine. A number of these spellings match how Jews of Levitic descent spelled their surnames at that time. Rachel is born into a French Huguenot family, so her family are Protestants who had left France under Catholic rule and found a home in the British Caribbean on Nevis. Rachel is unquestionably born a Gentile. My claim is that in all probability she converts to Judaism in order to marry Johann Levine. Hamilton's enrollment at a Jewish school at a time when, to the best of our knowledge, Jewish schools anywhere in the world, exclusively educated Jewish children, creates a very strong presumption of his Jewish identity, and therefore a strong presumption that she continued to identify with the Jewish faith into which she converted.

So for a man of his time, what would Jewish identity represent? I know there's the cultural aspect, but as you allude to in your book, there might be a religious outlook, as well – that his being a Jew is part of God's plan. How would he have carried his Jewish identity for the rest of his life?

This is the central question and one that eludes concrete answers. We know that Hamilton, in his American adulthood, identifies at least nominally as Christian, does not practice Judaism, nor does he divulge to anyone his Jewish past. It would have been problematic for a statesman seeking acceptance into the upper echelons of American civic life at that time to have a former identity as a Jew in his Caribbean youth. And yet Hamilton emerges as the foremost advocate of American Jewry among the founders. And so to the extent that we see the reverberation of a Jewish upbringing in Hamilton's adulthood, it is in his advocacy for American Jews at a time when antisemitism had real political cachet – as opposed to Hamilton attending shul three times a week in New York City.

Historians hold that the dichotomy in American political thought is between the Jeffersonian approach to government versus the Hamiltonian approach. In terms of Hamilton's political outlook – a more centralized government, a more top down style of governance – do you see any Jewish thinking that might have influenced that aspect of his political thinking?

There is no doubt to my mind that Hamilton espouses what is fundamentally a Jewish worldview. In a world that's primarily agrarian, Hamilton and his Jewish allies are drawn to the world of trade and finance. In a world that's predominantly rural, Hamilton and his Jewish compatriots concentrate in urban centers. In a world that could often be provincial, Hamilton, in Jewish fashion, is a cosmopolitan. And in a world where a Jeffersonian vision involves a decentralized ideal of state power, Hamilton and his Jewish supporters alike believe in a modern, vigorous central state. So in all of these respects, there is a harmony between the Jewish engagement with the world and Hamilton's own.

It's weird – I got an email just today from kind of a kook who was writing about Jefferson and Hamilton, and Hamilton's connection to the freemasons and the Rothschild family in starting the Bank of New York, and how it's all still a part of the elites' plan to rule the world. So Hamilton still inspires these wacky theories. As well as accusing him of being Jewish, his political enemies used to accuse him of having had African ancestry, correct?

You're correct. But there's no evidence in the historical record that would corroborate that theory.

In your book, you write that it's not just a biography of Hamilton. It's also a portrait of Jewish life in the colonies and the early years of the United States of America. What was their status?

The status of the Jew in any given society matters greatly because the presence of even a single Jew in a society forces upon that society the question of whether Jew and Gentile will stand upon an equality or whether Jew would be relegated, as was so often the case, to some kind of second-class citizenship. This perennial question takes on particular significance in a newly-conceived American Republic, which was dedicated in the name, if not quite yet, the reality, to equality. The question of whether Jews and Gentiles would be equal in this new Republic was a litmus test for what kind of nation America would be. So even though there were relatively few Jews, perhaps a tenth-of-a-percent in the country, the status of Jews assumed outsized significance in debates about rights in the early Republic because it spoke directly to America self-definition. It spoke directly to the question of whether America would fulfill or forget its founding creed of equality. What we find is our outspoken figures on both sides of this debate. There are prominent “gentiles” like Hamilton who are in favor of Jewish equality. There are those who often reach for the cudgel of antisemitism as a political weapon and try to relegate Jews to some sort of subordinate status in American civic life.

And there are Jews themselves who, in a way that we don't see in Europe, are speaking out in defense of their own rights. This is a Jewish community that fought and bled for the revolutionary cause and in the wake of the revolution, they challenged their Christian neighbors to make good on the American promise of equality.

Upcoming Knosh & Knowledge Programs

Friday, July 22, at 10:45 a.m.: Jeff Robbins, “Birds of a Feather: Anti-Semitism on the Far Right and the Far Left.”

Friday, August 19, at 10:45 a.m.: Mark Ludwig, “Our Will To Live: Art And Music In Terezín.”

Friday, September 16, at 10:45 a.m.: Rebecca Soffer on *The Modern Loss Handbook: An Interactive Guide to Moving Through Grief and Building Your Resilience*.

“Hate Crimes, History, and Banning Books”



Ruth Bass

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, June 30, at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes Ruth Bass, who will draw on her perspective as a longtime journalist, editor, and novelist to examine the timely issues linking the rise of hate crimes with the burning of books, and explore the role of social media in stoking dissent within our own culture.

This free program will be presented *in person* as part of the Federation's Connecting with Community Series presented at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a \$3 suggested donation for adults over 60 years of age or \$7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 10 for the lunch menu.

Proof of vaccination and masking are required at indoor Federation events.

About her presentation, “Hate Crimes, History, and Banning Books: We're Better Than This – But Are We?”, Ruth Bass writes:

Although the manifestation of hatred through the banning or destruction of literature is not new, digital media creates new opportunities and challenges for the free exchange of ideas. Have these new forms of communication made information more accessible or do they ultimately attempt to restrict the freedom to read? Is the impulse to cancel online really different from the impulse to burn books? And do both book burning and censoring electronic information ultimately lead to hate crimes?

This presentation will consider the question “we're better than this – but are we?” and what we can do about it.

For more on this program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.

Sunday Learning in the Berkshires: “Lament & Hope: The Book of Psalms & the Arts”

On Sunday, July 10 at 10 a.m., Hebrew College and the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires will be co-sponsoring “Lament & Hope: The Book of Psalms & the Arts,” a talk by Rabbi Or Rose, the founding Director of the Betty Ann Greenbaum Miller Center for Interreligious Learning & Leadership of Hebrew College. This event will be held at a private home in Stockbridge – for location and required RSVP, visit the Calendar of Events at jewishberkshires.org. A kosher-style brunch will be served.

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Your Federation Presents

CATA: Nurturing Inclusion Through the Arts

A talk by Margaret Keller, executive director of Community Access to the Arts

PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, July 7, at 10:45 a.m., join the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for a talk led by Margaret Keller, executive director of Community Access to the Arts (CATA), a non-profit that nurtures and celebrates the creativity of people with disabilities.

This free program will be presented *in person* as part of the Federation's Connecting with Community Series presented at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a \$3 suggested donation for adults over 60 years of age or \$7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 10 for the lunch menu.

Proof of vaccination and masking are required at indoor Federation events.

Throughout the year, CATA provides vibrant arts programs to more than 800 people across our community — children, teens, and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities, elders with Alzheimer's and dementia, and people with acquired or traumatic brain injuries. CATA artists explore new talents and share their unique points of view through a rich array of arts workshops — in painting, dance, theater, singing, drumming, juggling, yoga, creative writing, and more.

Public events, including CATA's annual performance, art exhibits, and poetry

readings, bring our whole community into the act and shine a light on the ability within disability. In this discussion, Margaret Keller will explore how the arts can foster inclusion and give us access to stories and perspectives we might not otherwise see.

Margaret Keller has been CATA's executive director since 2014. She previously served as a foundations relationship manager at Bard College at Simon's Rock, as a grants writer, and as the associate producer of the Chicago Humanities Festival. She received her MA and Ph.D. (ABD) in English from the University of Chicago, a certificate in non-profit management from Harvard Business School, and a BA from the University of Virginia.

For more on this program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.



Participants at a CATA musical program

Filmed in the Berkshires: A Conversation with Diane Pearlman



PITTSFIELD – On Thursday, July 21, at 10:45 a.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes Diane Pearlman, the executive director of the Berkshire Film and Media Arts Collaborative (www.berkshirefilm.org) and film producer. She'll share her perspective on "Filmed in the Berkshires."

This free program will be presented *in person* as part of the Federation's Connecting with Community Series presented at Knesset Israel (16 Colt Road in

Pittsfield) and will be followed by a kosher hot lunch. Lunch is a \$3 suggested donation for adults over 60 years of age or \$7 for all others. Reservations are required for lunch and can be made by calling (413) 442-2200 before 9 a.m. on the day of the program. See page 10 for the lunch menu.

Proof of vaccination and masking are required at indoor Federation events.

The Berkshires Film and Media Collaborative (BFMC) creates educational, workforce and production opportunities in the film and media industry as an economic initiative for the western Massachusetts region. Executive director of BFMC, Diane Pearlman, will discuss the Berkshires as a destination for film and media production and highlight films produced in the area. She will also discuss the building of a new international film and education center that's in the planning stages now.

Diane Pearlman is also an independent entertainment producer with 30 years of experience in media creation and production. Her specialty is digital film production, animation, and feature film visual effects. Among many other projects, she produced the award-winning short film, *A Tree A Rock A Cloud*, based on the short story by Carson McCullers, written and directed by Karen Allen, as well as the short film, *You Have A Voice* for the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus/Berkshire Section about young women, leadership and civic engagement. She is currently partnering with Great Barrington Public Theater to direct/produce a series of original short films about nature by local Berkshire playwrights.

For more on this program and other Federation events, visit our calendar of events at jewishberkshires.org.

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LOCAL NEWS



Friday Night Lights: KI Offers More Ways to Welcome Shabbat

PITTSFIELD – Event dates: June 17 and 24, July 8 and 15, 2022.

This summer Knesset Israel will continue to offer a few different approaches to Kabbalat Shabbat. With music, food, and outdoor services (weather permitting), there are more ways than ever to come together and enjoy the best time of the week.

Shirei Shabbat with Community Dinner: Friday, June 24, at 5:45 p.m.

Join the Knesset Israel Band for an upbeat musical service including many contemporary melodies. Register in advance for the community dinner following the service: knessetisrael.org/rsvp. Dinner is \$20 for adults, Free for those under 18.

Musical Minyan: Friday, July 8, at 5:45 p.m.

A small acoustic ensemble provides the backdrop for the Kabbalat Shabbat service at the KI community's Musical Minyan. At times meditative, at times spirited, this service embraces the beloved traditional, modern, and global melodies to welcome the Sabbath Bride.

Traditional Kabbalat Shabbat: Friday, June 17 and July 15, at 5:45 p.m.

A variety of lay *shlihei tzibbur* — sometimes one, sometimes two — lead the congregation in the traditional Kabbalat Shabbat service.

Congregation Beth Israel's Summer – Kabbalat Shabbat and a New Book Club

NORTH ADAMS – “Our beautiful backyard, meditative labyrinth, and sanctuary under the willow tree become the sites of many Congregation Beth Israel of the Berkshires programs as the weather warms up,” writes synagogue president Natalie Matus. “Be inspired by sweeping views of the foothills of Mount Greylock and the gorgeous New England weather.”

She adds that this Reform congregation is expanding its popular programs for young families.

Kabbalat Shabbat Services on Friday, June 17 and July 15 at 7 p.m., will be in-person and live-streamed via Zoom. Light candles and welcome Shabbat with prayer and song. Let go of the week, breathe in the “extra soul” that Shabbat brings, and let poetry and melody begin to replenish heart and soul.

RSVP at cbiberkshires.com/calendar-services. All are welcome.

Congregation Beth Israel is at 53 Lois Street, North Adams

CBI Book Club – Are you interested in having lively discussions of outstanding books of Jewish interest? If so, please join the inaugural meeting of the CBI Book Club on June 15 at 7:30 p.m. over Zoom. The Book Club will be led by Suzanne Levy Graver, CBI member and Emerita Professor of English Literature at Williams College. At this initial meeting, we will discuss Molly Anipol's “The Old World,” a wonderful short story dramatizing a search for identity and meaning that begins in a Brooklyn dry cleaning store and ends on a lonely honeymoon in Kyiv. Among the questions to ponder are “What is this story's effect?” and “How does the author achieve this?” Participants will also discuss future book selections and timing of meetings.

Please RSVP at cbiberkshires.com/event/cbi-book-group-first-meeting/ if you'd like to attend. The Zoom link will be sent to participants before the meeting.

Shabbat at Hevreh – Services and Creative Beit Midrash

GREAT BARRINGTON – In-person services resume at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, located at 270 State Road, with a virtual option for those wishing to join the services online.

Shabbat at Hevreh

Kabbalat Shabbat Services take place Fridays at 6 p.m. All are invited to join Hevreh's Kabbalat Shabbat Services. Led by Rabbi Jodie Gordon and Rabbi Neil Hirsch, the lively Reform service is welcoming and musical. Services often feature congregant reflections and guest musicians. Services are being held through the summer in a beautiful outdoor worship space under a tent.

For more information or to RSVP, visit hevreh.org/events

Shabbat Morning Experience takes place Saturdays at 10 a.m. Join Hevreh for a contemplative and engaging Shabbat morning experience. On weeks when the congregation is not celebrating with a b'nai mitzvah student, the Shabbat morning experience may include Torah study and/or a full Shabbat morning service. Recharge and say “Shabbat Shalom!” Throughout the summer, gather in Hevreh's outdoor worship space under a tent.

For more information or to RSVP, visit hevreh.org.

Creative Beit Midrash

On Saturdays at 8:30 a.m., release your spiritual and intellectual imagination in Hevreh's Creative Beit Midrash. Explore Jewish topics through your medium of choice – visual art, music, dance/movement, or the written word. Sessions are for sharing and processing individuals' creative products through nurturing, not critique.

Email info@hevreh.org to get the Zoom link.

Hevreh's Great Ideas Series: Topflight Scholars to Share Thoughts on Leadership and Jewish life

GREAT BARRINGTON – Great leadership requires great ideas. This summer, be inspired by visionary leaders in the fields of Jewish living, learning, and community building as part of Hevreh of Southern Berkshires' annual “Great Ideas Series.” This year's scholars will reflect on their experiences as leaders of major institutions and offer creative and exciting visions for the future. The series is sure to challenge and stimulate.



Maud Mandel

On Sunday, June 26, at 10:30 a.m., the featured speaker will be Dr. Maud Mandel, president of Williams College and a noted professor of History and Judaic Studies.

On Friday, July 1 at 6 p.m., Hevreh hosts Dr. Andrew Rehfeld, president of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

These in-person lectures are free and open to the community. Hevreh of Southern Berkshire is located at 270 State Road in Great Barrington.

The Way of Being a Human: A Close Reading with Martin Buber

GREAT BARRINGTON – On Wednesday, July 13 at 11:45 a.m., Rabbi Eric Gurvis begins a series of in-person classes titled “The Way of Being a Human: A Close Reading with Martin Buber.”

Writes Rabbi Gurvis: “One of Martin Buber's greatest gifts to Jewish learning was his profound book, *The Way of Man, According to the Teachings of Hasidism*. In just six chapters, and through the lens of Hasidic tales, Buber helps us focus on some of the most important questions we ask ourselves.”

The class will include a brief overview of early Hasidism and how the movement came into being.



Rabbi Eric Gurvis

Rabbi Eric Gurvis was ordained at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. He has served congregations in the US and is currently rabbi of Sha'arei Shalom in Ashland, MA. He has long been deeply involved in youth activities and Jewish camps, interfaith and social justice work, as well as Israel programming and education. He is a past-president of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis, a past chairperson of the Newton Interfaith Clergy Council, and has served on the board of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston. He is also a member of the faculty for the Hebrew College Open Circle Jewish Learning program, which provides adult learning opportunities in communities throughout the Greater Boston area.

Hevreh of Southern Berkshire is located at 270 State Road in Great Barrington. For more information and the dates of upcoming classes, visit hevreh.org.

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LOCAL NEWS

Shabbat Indoors and Outdoors with Temple Anshe Amunim

PITTSFIELD – This summer, Temple Anshe Amunim offers different opportunities to celebrate Shabbat.

Kabbalat Shabbat

Join Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch at 5:30 p.m. every Friday night for Shabbat services. All are welcome to join in person or via livestream. Please reach out to the Temple office for the link to the livestream.

Torah Study

At 9:30 a.m. every Saturday, Rabbi Hirsch leads a Torah study session. All are welcome to join in person or via zoom. Please reach out to the Temple office for the link to Zoom.

TAA Shabbat Hikes

On Saturday, June 25, join TAA for a Shabbat hike at Olivia's Overlook, a Berkshire Natural Resources Council preserve overlooking the Stockbridge Bowl. Participants will meet at the Temple at 10:45 a.m. Open to all levels. Pre-registration is required. To register, go to: tinyurl.com/JuneTAAShabbatHikes.

On Saturday, July 9, the hike will be at Kennedy Park in Lenox. To register, go to: tinyurl.com/JulyTAAShabbatHikes.

Temple Anshe Amunim is a Reform Jewish Congregation that promotes engaging and widespread participation in services, education, and cultural and social action programs. The Temple, located at 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield is an accessible building. For more information, contact the Temple Anshe Amunim office at (413) 442-5910, email templeoffice@ansheamunim.org or visit www.ansheamunim.org.

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Please remember the Jewish Community in your will.

Music Appreciation and Tanglewood with Temple Anshe Amunim

Celebrate the rich opportunities to enjoy music in the Berkshires this summer with Temple Anshe Amunim.

Leonard Bernstein's Opening Prayer

PITTSFIELD – Please join Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch on Wednesday, July 6, at 11:45 a.m., for an interactive lecture which will serve as a complement to the Tanglewood concert on July 8 featuring a piece by Leonard Bernstein, *Opening Prayer*, its text the Priestly Blessing that is part of the liturgy of traditional morning services. Please note that the registration for this event does not include a ticket to the July 8 concert. To register, go to: tinyurl.com/TAAJuly6Lecture.

Tanglewood Havdalah with TAA

LENOX – Please join Temple Anshe Amunim on Saturday, July 16 at 7 p.m. on the lawn at Tanglewood for a brief Havdalah service followed by a BSO concert at 8 p.m. Look for the blue and white balloons!

A ticket to the concert may be purchased at the gate or in advance online.

HRC Showcase Theater Presents: *How We Survived*

NEW LEBANON – Join Temple Anshe Amunim on Saturday, June 18, at 7:30 p.m. for a staged reading of *How We Survived*, by Pauline David-Sax, directed by TAA member Barbara Waldinger.

The play explores how we understand and remember our lives.

The location of the performance is at The Theater Barn, 654 Columbia Pike, New Lebanon, NY. Suggested donation is \$20. Reserve tickets here: www.tbarn.org.

Temple Anshe Amunim Kicks Off Its Summer With a BBQ

PITTSFIELD – Join Temple Anshe Amunim on Sunday, June 26, at 5 p.m. for its summer kick-off barbecue.

See old friends and meet new people!

There will be food, fun and games for everyone to enjoy.

All are welcome. Pre-registration is required. Donations in support of summer programming are welcome, as well. To register, go to: tinyurl.com/TAAJune26BBQ.

The Temple is located at 26 Broad Street in Pittsfield.



Shalom

Welcome to the Jewish Berkshires

Everyone is welcome to attend services and events at any of the organizations listed here.

Please call the organizations directly to confirm service times or to inquire about membership.

Learn more about our Jewish community and find great events on the community calendar at:

JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG

BERKSHIRE JEWISH CONGREGATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

Berkshire Minyan

Lay-led egalitarian minyan
held at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Rd., Great Barrington, MA
(413) 229-3618, berkshireminyan.org

Berkshire Hills Hadassah

P.O. Box 187, Pittsfield, MA
(413) 443-4386,
Berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com

B'nai B'rith Lodge, No. 326

Chabad of the Berkshires
450 South St., Pittsfield, MA
(413) 499-9899,
jewishberkshires.com

Congregation Ahavath Sholom

Reconstructionist
North St., Great Barrington, MA
(413) 528-4197, ahavathsholom.com

Congregation Beth Israel

Reform
53 Lois St., North Adams, MA
(413) 663-5830, cbiberkshires.com

Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

Reform
270 State Rd., Great Barrington, MA
(413) 528-6378, hevreh.org

Israel Philatelist Society

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Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

196 South St., Pittsfield, MA
(413) 442-4360, jewishberkshires.org

Jewish War Veterans

Commander Robert Waldheim
(413) 822-4546, sellit4@aol.com

Knesset Israel

Conservative
16 Colt Rd., Pittsfield, MA
(413) 445-4872, knessetisrael.org

Temple Anshe Amunim

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Connecting with Community

Nourish Your Body, Mind, and Soul!

Meals-on-Wheels & Meals to Go – Advance Reservation Required

Kosher lunch will be prepared on Mondays and Thursdays. Tuesday lunches resume in the autumn. *Meals to go will be ready by noon for pickup at the Kneset Israel kitchen door, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.* All meals-on-wheels will be delivered by Federation volunteers in the early afternoon.



Please call (413) 442-2200 no later than 9 a.m. to reserve your meal for pickup and to arrange delivery if

standing instructions are not in place. All are welcome to reserve meals for pick-up, although delivery may be limited in certain circumstances.

The menus listed below are planned, but may be modified depending on availability of ingredients. When making a reservation, please inform us if a person in your party has a food allergy. Adults 60 and over: \$3 suggested donation. Adults under 60: \$7 per person.

Volunteers are Vital! Volunteer drivers who can deliver meals-on-wheels are always appreciated. Please call Molly Meador at (413) 442-4360, ext. 14. The Federation's kosher hot lunch program is offered in collaboration with Elder Services of Berkshire County.

What's for Lunch?

Gluten-Free Main Entrée ** and Dairy-Free Main Entrée #

JUNE

Thursday, 16 Hot dogs and hamburgers**#, coleslaw, salad, vegetarian beans, rolls, and watermelon.

Monday, 20 Closed in observance of Juneteenth.

Thursday, 23 Salmon salad platters**#, coleslaw, Challah, and pudding.

Monday, 27 Ground beef dinner with summer vegetables**#, baby spinach salad, pumpernickel bread, and Mandarin oranges.

Thursday, 30 Chicken kebobs**#, rice pilaf, salad, Farmer's loaf, and grapes.

JULY

Monday, 4 Closed in observance of Independence Day.

Thursday, 7 Tuna salad and cottage cheese platters**, three bean salad, Challah, and cookies.

Monday, 11 Turkey piccata**#, salad, rice pilaf, broccoli, rye bread, and peaches.

Thursday, 14 Chef's salad platter**#, whole wheat bread, and parve chocolate chip cookies.

Monday, 18 Roasted chicken**#, mixed greens with pecans and cranberries, rice pilaf, mixed vegetables, Challah, and apricots.

Thursday, 21 Fresh fish**, borscht and potato, coleslaw, potato chips, zucchini medley, oat bread, and mixed berry shortcake.

Monday, 25 Summer unstuffed pepper casserole**#, brown rice, salad, baby carrots, multi-grain bread, and tropical fruit salad.

PLEASE NOTE: The Elder Services Senior Nutrition Program, under which the Federation operates its kosher lunch program, raised the suggested donation to \$3 a meal. **The suggested donation is completely voluntary.** Seniors who cannot pay a voluntary donation will continue to receive a meal, no questions asked. We appreciate your understanding.

Homebound or recovering from an illness or injury?

Let us help you arrange for a kosher lunch to be delivered through our Kosher Meals on Wheels Program. Call (413) 442-2200.



MAZEL TOV!

Bea Selig on her 99th birthday.

Ishaan Taantri who celebrated his bar mitzvah at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire on Saturday, May 7. Proud parents are **Avi-nash Taantri and Rachel Perlmutter**.

Alla Zernitskaya on her retirement after 29 years of teaching the orchestra programs at Herberg Middle School and Pittsfield High School.

Great-grandmother **Diana Geller** and great-uncle **Andy Geller** on the addition to the family of baby **Noah**, who is named after Nate Geller (z"l).

Matt Tannenbaum and director **A.B. Zax** on the success of their documentary about The Bookstore in Lenox, *Hello Bookstore*. More on the film to come in the next BJV.

Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts and all the members of our community who volunteer through Temple Anshe Amunim, Hevreh, and Kneset Israel on Afghan resettlement and other important projects – for their efforts, they received the Berkshire United Way's Robert K. Agar Jr. Volunteerism Award on May 18. See the related story on page 15.

Federation board member **Arlene Schiff** on being appointed to the board of trustees at Great Barrington-based Community Health Center (CHP).

BJV *bronfin* (whisky) correspondent **Alex Rosenblum** and wife, **Sabina**, on their 50th wedding anniversary.

Kneset Israel 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield

ONGOING MINYANS

Sunday	8:45 a.m. and 7 p.m.
Tuesday	7 p.m.
Thursday	7 p.m.
Friday	7 a.m. and 5:45 p.m.
Saturday	9:30 a.m.

and evenings approximately 30 minutes before sunset



SHABBAT CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

Candle Times	
Friday, June 17	8:14 p.m.
Friday, June 24	8:16 p.m.
Friday, July 1	8:15 p.m.
Friday, July 8	8:14 p.m.
Friday, July 15	8:10 p.m.

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Anita Diamant Talk a Super Tzedakah Week Success!

May 17 was an energizing evening for community members who came together at Shakespeare & Company in Lenox to hear bestselling author Anita Diamant in an inspiring and meaningful conversation with Federation vice president Elisa Spungen Bildner. Special thanks to Matt Tannenbaum of the Lenox Bookstore for offering a selection of Anita's books for sale and signing.



Volunteers Are Vital!

Federation's Dignity Drive delivered much needed products to the community

By Molly Meador / Coordinator of Volunteers and PJ Library

This is just a small portion of the donations we have received from our generous community members. As we know, menstrual and incontinence poverty is real, and these donations go a long way to helping those in need. Reflecting the Jewish values of Compassion (*Rachamim*) and Helping Others (*Lo Ta'amod*) and Charitable Giving (*Tzedakah*), these donations will be delivered to organizations across the Berkshires.

Thank you to all who contributed!





Jewish Federation
OF THE BERKSHIRES

THE **STRENGTH** OF A PEOPLE.
THE **POWER** OF COMMUNITY.

WHEN OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS US, WE ARE THERE

HELP US BE THERE! MAKE YOUR GIFT TODAY!

Your gift to the Jewish Federation's 2022 Campaign will help bring dignity and care to the vulnerable and elderly, build and strengthen the Jewish identity of our children and young adults, support vital community programs, and create meaningful Jewish life across the Berkshires and beyond.



JEWISH LIFE FOR YOUNG FAMILIES

You help young families in the Berkshires embrace Jewish values and traditions while building a supportive community with Jewish peers through family programming, PJ Library, and volunteer opportunities.



RESOURCES TO FIGHT ANTI-SEMITISM

You help young people stand up against hate through anti-bias education in our public schools. You also combat anti-Semitism and the BDS movement through community programming, national advocacy, and security resources.

DIGNITY & COMPASSION

You provide older adults and homebound individuals with nutritious meals and stimulating programming served up with a side of companionship and compassion through our *Connecting with Community* program and Kosher Meals on Wheels.



JEWISH EDUCATION & VALUES

You nurture a strong Jewish future by providing a high-quality, meaningful and affordable Jewish education for hundreds of children through critical grants to all of our local Jewish religious schools.



A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

You strengthen, sustain, and connect our community through hundreds of educational programs, holiday celebrations, and the *Berkshire Jewish Voice*, which bring people together and engage them in meaningful Jewish life.



A STRONG JEWISH IDENTITY

You help young people across the Berkshires and at UMASS Hillel build strong Jewish identities and become future leaders through scholarships for Jewish camp and Israel experiences, as well as leadership development and holiday meals on campus.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT & EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

You help individuals facing unexpected challenges and life transitions receive the support they need through the Federation's social worker. You also provide a safety net of emergency assistance due to COVID-19.



COMMUNITY RELATIONS & ADVOCACY

You help provide a proactive voice in our community, public schools, media, and government, addressing anti-Semitism, social justice, Israel, and other issues important to our community.



A SAFE PLACE TO CALL HOME

You help tens of thousands of new immigrants, who are fleeing anti-Semitism in Europe and fighting in the Ukraine, build better lives for themselves and their families in Israel through job training and support services that ease their transition.



CARING IN TIMES OF CRISIS

When crisis hits, in the Berkshires or around the world, you help mobilize local resources to respond with immediate relief and longer-term recovery. From support through COVID-19 to whatever the future holds, you help deliver an SOS response.

A CLOSE & CARING RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL

You help connect the Berkshire Jewish Community with Israel and you also help provide programs for at-risk students, shelter for abused women, and support services for disabled youth.



FOOD SECURITY, HEALTHCARE, & WINTER RELIEF

Winters are long and cold in the Ukraine, but you help the most vulnerable prepare with warm clothes, blankets, and heaters. You also bring food cards, home health aides, and medicine to those who need it most.



Donate or pledge online at jewishberkshires.org Thank you for making a difference!

Visual Evidence

Photographer Stephanie Blumenthal works in different styles – creating still life assemblages, reimagining natural forms, capturing the sculptural interplay of light and objects in interior spaces – but, she says, “the thread for me is that I’ve always been fascinated by taking things or elements out of their normal contextual setting and putting them in an unexpected environment.”

About the series of photographs in which the winter scene below right appears, she says: “If you walk through a forest and you see vines, you probably don’t even see how beautifully graceful they are and how sculptural they are. But if you take them out and put them behind a neutral background, you can see them a lot more clearly. And while I hate to beautify these things that are killing the trees, they strike me with their gestures and how beautiful they are.”

Blumenthal, who worked for years as a graphic designer of book covers, raised her family in Sheffield, has been a member of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, and has lived in the Berkshires permanently for 34 years. Her husband, Benno Friedman, worked as a prolific commercial photographer and is well known for his album covers for major music acts. Her elder son, Nick Friedman, is a co-founder of Theory Wellness, the first cannabis dispensary in Great Barrington. Younger son Theo is a chef and proprietor of Theory Kitchen, known for its pop-up dinners fusing food and art.

Blumenthal is one of the 50 Berkshire-based visual artists whose work appears in “Art of the Hills: Visual Evidence,” on view at Berkshire Museum through September 11. The still life “Touch One,” reproduced top right, will be on view. Check it out at the exhibit and also find out more on what our local artists are up to. The museum is at 39 South Street in Pittsfield – visit the website at www.berkshireremuseum.org.

For more of Blumenthal’s work, visit her website: sblumenthalphotography.com.



OBITUARIES

Eleanor Nager Wollins, 96, wife, mother, sister, aunt

LENOX – Eleanor Nager Wollins, 96, previously of Lexington and Newton, passed away on Sunday, May 1 at Mount Carmel Care Center, with her daughter by her side.

Eleanor was born on March 28, 1926, to Etta and Louis Nager in Malden, MA. She was predeceased by her parents; sisters Goldie (Abe), Beatrice (Henry), and Mildred (Mike); husband Ben; son, Scott. She is survived by her daughter Jill, as well as by her nieces and nephew.

On May 4, Eleanor was buried next to her husband and son in Sharon, MA. Please consider a donation to the Alzheimer’s Association or a charity of your choice.

Annette S. Feldblum, 79, bred and showed championship Maltese

DESERT HOT SPRINGS, CA – Annette S. Feldblum, 79, died Thursday, May 5 in the presence of family.

Born February 6, 1943, in Winsted, CT, and raised in Sandisfield, MA, the daughter of Morris and Rose (Blayer) Levine. She attended Searles High School in Great Barrington and then lived in North Dartmouth, Charlton, and Desert Hot Springs, CA for the last 20 years.

Annette bred and showed championship Maltese for over 25 years. She also enjoyed vacationing at her cottage at the Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick. She volunteered at Jewish Family Services in CA.

She leaves three daughters; Lisa R. Stochaj and her husband James of Dudley, Erica L. Feldblum of Webster, and Wendy S. Feldblum of Pike Road, AL; grandchildren, Benjamin J. Stochaj and his fiancée Katherine E. Powell of Somers, CT, and Alaina M. Stochaj of Nashville, TN; great-grandson, Easton James Stochaj; 4 nieces including Lenore Wadman whom she considered a 4th daughter; and her former husband, Stephen Feldblum of Naples, FL. She was preceded in death by a brother, William S. Levine, and a sister, Dolores Brill.

A graveside service was held on Monday, May 9 in Sandisfield Town Cemetery, Route 57, Sandisfield. Rabbi Neil Hirsch officiated. Donations in her name may be made to Maltese Rescue California, c/o Tami Karlsson, 20821 Broken Bit Drive, Covina, CA 91724.

Dr. Larry Smith touched the lives of thousands of students

PLANTATION, FL – Dr. Larry A. Smith passed away in his home on Tuesday, February 8, after a courageous battle with Parkinson’s Disease.

Larry was born in Montreal and was the son of the late Philip and Faye Smith (Tessler) and son-in-law of the late Lou and Mollie Bassior (Spier). As a professor of operations and decision sciences for 42 years, he touched the lives of thousands of students. He was a lifelong member of IBM – the International Brotherhood of Magicians – and shared magic tricks and jokes generously with his family, his friends, his students, and anyone interested in watching and listening. Members of his family were excited when offered membership in his self-created ‘Prestidigitator Club’. As an active person, he loved running, playing tennis and golf, and black diamond skiing.

He is held in the hearts of so many; beloved husband of 54 years to Jewel (Bassior) Smith; loving father to Heather Martin (Chris Prince) and Wendy Smith (Michael Posner); adoring Zadie to Ryan and Asher Martin, Yael, Jonah, and Ari Smith Posner; devoted brother to Ernie (Perry) and Marv z”l (Trudee); and loving uncle to nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews.

A private family-only graveside funeral was held on Friday, February 11. The family held a broader memorial service on Wednesday, February 23. Donations in Larry’s memory can be made to The Michael J. Fox Parkinson’s Foundation at <https://bit.ly/drlarryasmith>.

Major Donors Celebration

July 24, 2022
9:30-11:30 a.m.

Country Club of Pittsfield
639 South Street, Pittsfield, MA

Register at jewishberkshires.org/celebration



Guest Speaker
Frederic L. Bloch
Senior VP and Chief
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Special Performance
Paul Green and
Two Worlds Ensemble

Event Chairs: Elisa Spungen Bildner and Robert Bildner

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Liz and Alan Jaffe
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Nan and Allan Lipton
Ellen and Stuart Masters
Natalie and Roger Matus
Daryl Messinger and Jim Heeger
Helice and Steven Picheny
Penny and Claudio Pincus
Elaine and Bernard Roberts
Anne Schnesel
Zelda Schwebel
Hope and Gene Silverman
Diane Troderman and Harold Grinspoon
Judy and Mark Usow

Proof of vaccination required.

Masking protocols will be shared closer to the event.

For a safer experience, we have adjusted our format to include schmoozing and breakfast hors d’oeuvres on the covered porch followed by a theater style program indoors. There will be no assigned seating.

RSVP
by July 11

Minimum gift
of \$1,000 or more to the
2022 annual campaign



AFGHAN EVACUEE RESETTLEMENT

“The Epitome of the Jewish Value of Caring for the Stranger”

Local synagogues sustain our community's tradition of welcoming immigrants

GREAT BARRINGTON - Eid Al-Fitr, the Muslim holiday marking the end of Ramadan, is not generally a big day in a Jewish house of worship, but the celebration this past May 2 at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire was a happy exception. Approximately 75 people gathered for lunch to welcome Afghan families to our community, resettled in the Berkshires by Jewish Family Services of Western Massachusetts (JFSWM) and their local volunteer partners from Hevreh, Temple Anshe Amunim (TAA), and Knesset Israel (KI).

As members of our community have in the past – most notably 30 years ago after the fall of the former Soviet Union – today's Jewish Berkshire residents mobilized on behalf of refugees seeking safety and freedom from tumultuous political change. Together, the volunteers have formed a network of support to ease the dislocation felt by the two Afghan families and smooth their transition into life as Americans. “It's the epitome of the Jewish value of caring for the stranger,” says Avi Dresner of Hevreh.

Leading the effort for the Hevreh/TAA committee is Janice Kabel, who explains, “Jewish Family Services is a designated resettlement agency with the contract with the State Department to resettle refugees. They are responsible for managing those funds, making sure that these folks are housed appropriately and have sufficient food and clothing to get started, whatever that might mean. And they provide direct social service support through a case manager.” The community involvement with the Afghan families, says Kabel, is centered on the “nitty-gritty stuff” – obtaining donations of furniture and clothes, raising money, navigating schools and social services, and also orienting the families to how things get done in the United States, which may sometimes feel like they've “landed on a distant planet,” says Kabel.

The local volunteers, writes Jenny Gitlitz of KI in an email, “are part of a pilot program being run by JFSWM to determine if reliance on volunteers is as effective for refugee resettlement as the traditional model of having professional case-workers leading the effort. Volunteer teams are also set up to help the parents gain local employment so they can become self-sufficient. This is important because federal refugee benefits only last for six months.”

According to Larry Pellish of TAA, the synagogues' social action committees had explored the idea of refugee resettlement with JFSWM several years ago when it seemed possible that Syrian families might be relocated to the Berkshires. While that never came to pass, says Pellish, the committees remained in contact with JFSWM, and when “it became obvious that there was an urgent need to resettle Afghan refugees,” TAA and Hevreh together reached out and offered to combine their communal resources to work with one family with seven members – two parents, four children (ages 14, 12, 10, and 6), and the mother's brother, who is in his early 20s and who left California for the better opportunities present in the Berkshires. [We won't share their identities in order to ensure their privacy and safety.]

The first step was to form a committee and then to ensure that there were volunteers willing to contribute 10 hours a week over a period of months. Jane Pellish of TAA explains: “We needed to find volunteers to work in the five different areas that Jewish Family Service recommended: Education, health care, housing, employment, and community connections.” They also needed drivers to transport family members to myriad appointments around the county.

The head of KI's committee, Brenda Landes, says the family that the congregation is helping arrived later than other Berkshire Afghans, which provided some lessons learned. “We were listening to what was happening with the other

families, like how they were setting up the electricity and the gas and Spectrum so that they would have WiFi and transportation and all these different things. We heard how complicated it all was and how it depended so much on the bureaucracy. They needed to have SNAP benefits. They needed to have access to the money that the government was providing. They needed medical

appointments. They needed Mass Health cards. And they need Social Security cards - without one, you can't get Berkshire Gas.” Signing up for those benefits can bring its own challenges, as the process often involves following automated phone prompts – a potentially bewildering experience for these new arrivals.

Landes says that committee member Jenny Gitlitz took it on herself to compile a manual for what was needed in terms of housing and community connections for settling a refugee family in Berkshire County. The KI committee shared Gitlitz's work with other groups doing the same work in the Berkshires, which found the information collected very valuable. KI's family consists of a family of four, with another child expected this year. Both parents are college-educated. In addition to the support the family is receiving from the committee, January bat mitzvah Shadow Gordon's *tikkun olam* project was to work with the refugee resettlement fund.

Rebecca Honig of Hevreh, who took on the role of education point-person for the Hevreh/TAA family, works as a curriculum and content specialist for educational tech firms. She has developed material focused on reaching families with key developmental information for their young children, as well as instruction on how to take advantage of school resources and support learning at home

Honig describes one of the challenges she encountered. “A huge eye-opener for me was the day I went to register the children for school, which really meant sitting down with their parents, filling out form after form after form,” she remembers. “Given my background, I immediately leaped into telling the parents, ‘here are the kinds of things they're going to be learning in school.’ I just went right for it.

“And then the father said, ‘Well, what days of the week is school?’ I was making all of these assumptions about where we could kind of jump in, but there are so many differences. Like, in Afghanistan, school is not Monday through Friday. There are no things like afterschool programs or camps or half days. So you can imagine them looking at a school calendar for the first time and

AFGHAN RESETTLEMENT,
continued on page 16



The May 2 Eid Al-Fitr celebration at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

“One of the Lucky Ones”

In early May, the father of the Hevreh/TAA family spoke with the BJV about his family's experience fleeing Afghanistan during the chaotic withdrawal of US forces in the summer of 2021, their arrival in the United States, and their ongoing resettlement in the Berkshires. Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

I used to live in Herat, one of the provinces of Afghanistan, which is very beautiful province. I used to work with the United Nations there initially from 2002 to 2012. After that, I got a job with American companies. Last year, in May 2021, they announced all Americans would withdraw from Afghanistan on May 31 – our contract was finished. So that was just like pulling the rug out, actually. It was very tough for us because there was no job and we were thinking what would we do after Americans leave Afghanistan. And after two months, Americans just left. The Taliban came and captured Herat.

My job with the American company was going into the city purchasing whatever was needed for international people, like food and personal items. So everybody knew me – the shopkeepers, everybody. So when Taliban captured Herat, it was very tough for us. After a few days, we suddenly heard a sharp knocking at the gate of our house. When I opened the gate, I saw four people, Taliban with guns, in front of our house. They said, “You were working with American people” and told me to give them the car parked outside.

I told them the car did not belong to me, it belonged to the company I used to work for. They said, no, they wanted the car. They were very angry and said “We will not leave you like this, we will come back for more investigation. We want a call from you.” The Taliban were there for a half-hour or 40 minutes and my family was looking from the windows. For my children, I was very afraid because the Taliban are very, very brutal and cruel people.

He gave me an address – I must immediately get myself and my family to a gate at the airport. We got to the airport a half-hour before the bomb attack...”

They don't have any compassion. I didn't say anything because if you argue with these people, they just shoot you.

I decided to go to Kabul. We were watching the news every day, every day Americans evacuated people, but every day they lost people working with them. I talked to my brother, who worked in the same organization, and I said that this is not the time to live with this. So the next day I asked my family if we could go. Actually, I didn't have money. What do you say in English? The children used to have a small piggy bank. Yeah, I just broke one and removed the money, whatever, and got the bus fare to Kabul and went to my father-in-law's house there.

There were rumors [about evacuation] and people were going to the airport. Getting inside the airport was very difficult and there were maybe 100,000 people lying down on the road close to the airport. So four

days or five days after we arrived in Kabul, I found out about an evacuation form that the US had set up online for people who wanted to go to the airport. I filled out the form and wrote that I used to work with an American company. This is my experience. I am in danger. My life is in danger.

On the same day on which the explosion occurred in Afghanistan, a bomb attack at one of the gates at the airport [in August 26, 2021 that killed 13 US servicepeople and approximately 170 Afghan civilians], I received a call. The person asked who I was and if used to work with Americans. I said yes. He gave me an address – I must immediately get myself and my family to a gate at the airport. We got to the airport a half-hour before the bomb attack – luckily, we were in another gate. We went to that gate and the people there started asking me questions. I had some documents that showed that I used to work with different American companies.

When I talked to them, they said they realized according to my accent that I worked with American people. So we went to a base near the airport

“ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES”,
continued on page 21

AFGHAN EVACUEE RESETTLEMENT

AFGHAN RESETTLEMENT,

continued from page 15

thinking – what does any of this mean? Another thing that really leapt out at me in terms of their transition into school is so much information comes at you. As a refugee resettling, you've got information coming from all the different pathways. Educators love sending home communication. And some of it is essential, and some of it is not. But for them, it all felt essential."

Honig reports that the local schools "have done a good job of trying to provide opportunities that allow the kids to kind of shine despite the language barriers. So a really good example is their daughter's in high school, and she's a very good artist. So she was invited to join the mural club as a way to kind of begin socializing. And with the arts, you can kind of transcend those language barriers."

Another way Honig has transcended barriers is by connecting her own children with the Afghan youngsters. "The kids are amazing. They're active. They love to play. Within five minutes of meeting them, you know that one loves soccer and the girl is a beautiful artist. The littlest one loves trucks. One of the first things we did, during winter when they arrived, we went sledding – it was the best thing ever. They and my kids have found really creative ways to break down language barriers. They do crafts together. Play is universal."

Even with all the successes accruing, the resettlement of these Afghan immigrants to our region remains an ongoing challenge. Joel Karlin of TAA is a retired social worker who practiced in New York City and has retired to his native

Pittsfield – his experience with immigrant communities made him a good fit for the health component for the Hevreh/TAA team. He says that the magnitude of the resettlement project each family is in the midst really hit him early, when he was shuttling the father back and forth from Tyringham, where the family was temporarily sheltered, to Pittsfield in order to buy a cell phone. He saw how different these Afghan families were to the legal and even undocumented immigrants he worked with in the past. He says these Afghan families are humanitarian refugees who left their country abruptly and were moved around the world, not knowing or often choosing where they might end up. Their lives turned on a dime a space or resources became available to them, but the thing that really moved him was the way "the family really came with nothing, almost literally nothing. Everything we've coordinated is to give them a new starting point."

"Within some families, there are individuals who are having difficulty coping," says Jan Kabel, "who may have post-traumatic stress over the fact that not only did they leave Afghanistan with very little notice, but have left family behind. And they have been trying to help them out as best they can and trying to do their best for them, but are very distressed over what their remaining family members are facing in Afghanistan in terms of food shortage, medicine shortage, and now facing the obvious brutality of the Taliban. It's not unusual for me to be in our family's house and they're in communication with their family. And they're telling me, oh, they just took girls out of school. My cousins have just been taken out of school. The girls are no longer allowed to be in school. So what's going on? There

is immediate impact on them. And that adds a whole other layer of stress to the situation."

Rebecca Honig adds: "One of the first things the father said to me on our first ride from the airport is, 'We are the lucky ones. We got out. We're not worried about ourselves. We're worried about our family in Afghanistan.' The to-do list for someone resettling in this country is just incredible, right? But I think they really needed to know that they could do something for their family back home. I think it made it harder until we had some things in place to help out with that. I noticed there was a greater capacity to begin resettling once they were able to send a little bit of money home."



Henna body art drawn by one of the Afghan girls

"They really needed to know that they could do something for their family back home"

At the lively Eid celebration in May at Hevreh, the almost familial warmth shared by the Afghan evacuees and our local volunteers was palpable. It was also apparent in the way the different families interacted that they were building bonds among themselves. The women sat together at one table – generally less advanced as English speakers, they have developed a WhatsApp network through which they share their experiences and seek solutions from one another. Brenda Landes says that KI's family is friendly with another family that lives within walking distance – all the families for now are stuck having to negotiate Berkshire County's daunting distances without cars or reliable public transportation, so proximity is welcome. The men who arrived earliest have started to secure jobs – others await working papers and job training. The families are also making connections at Pittsfield's Al Khalil Islamic Center, and some have visited the Afghan market in the Albany area for familiar foods and products. Not only that, a new halal meat market and snack shop called Sol's Mediterranean has opened in Pittsfield. As Jan Kabel points out, "the way they live their lives, the food they buy, what they cook, how they raise their children is very much in the Afghan style right now."

But of course the trajectory that their children's lives are going to take will change everything going forward. Seeing the young ones – a cheerful and rambunctious group – playing together and knowing that, thanks to this community and Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts, they will have a chance to grow up in safety and as Americans was the happiest sight of all.



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BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

Traveling with Jewish Taste

Ms. Muffett Asks: Curds and Why?

By Carol Goodman Kaufman / Special to the BJV



When the subject of cottage cheese comes up (admittedly, it doesn't all that often), I think of my Aunt Ruth Katz who always seemed to be enjoying (I think) a plate of the white curds for lunch. Because it can be lower in calories than other types of cheese, the stuff was a mandatory part of the "dieter's plate" for much of the mid- to late-1900s, only to be supplanted in popularity by yogurt by the end of the century.

So, what exactly is cottage cheese? Known by Little Miss Muffett as curds and whey, it's made by draining acid-laced milk curds from their whey and mixing with cream to produce its familiar creamy texture. Unlike other

cheeses, it is neither pressed nor aged. In fact, if you let it "age" in the fridge too long, it will grow a truly unappetizing green and fuzzy mold.

Both Middle Eastern and Greek tradition have given us similar stories of the origin of cheese. According to 3rd century BCE Mesopotamian legend, a desert traveler discovered it accidentally when he stopped on his journey to quench his thirst with a drink of milk. But when he opened his saddlebags made of sheep's stomach (the original canteen), what he found was curdled cheese. In a remarkably similar story from Homer's *Odyssey*, the cyclops Polyphemus opened the lambskin bags he carried to find what we would identify today as feta cheese.

The beauty of cottage cheese is that it can be prepared quickly and enjoyed immediately. No need for sheep saddlebags or desert wanderings. No temperature-controlled refrigeration. No rind. No growing mold. In fact, for centuries farmers throughout the Old World made fresh cheeses (probably in their own cottages) with naturally soured cow's milk. So, when in the mid-19th century immigrants came to America, they brought with them their knowledge of fresh cheesemaking. Thus cottage cheese became part of our culinary vocabulary. Today, you can purchase cottage cheese in plain and flavored varieties.

Cottage cheese is a huge part of our Israeli cousins' diet, so much so that it was the subject of the Great Cottage Cheese Boycott. Like so many protests, this one began with a governmental decision made in 2008. Because one particular dairy cooperative, Tnuva, controlled more than 70% of the market, Israeli law considered it to be a monopoly. Therefore, the Antitrust Authority had the power to regulate prices to prevent price gouging. However, working on the theory that deregulation would foster competition and thereby reduce prices, the then-finance minister, Avraham Hirschson, decided that the government should stop regulating the price of cottage cheese.

Unfortunately, just the opposite happened. Prices increased almost 50%. Hence, the boycott. Organizers urged people to stop buying cottage cheese. Within a short time, 100,000 users had signed a petition on Facebook. As the boycott gained momentum, it sparked a public debate on the high cost of living in Israel and led ultimately to a drop in price.

Back to the present. My thoughts about cottage cheese became an obsession with Passover this year. Huh? What does cottage cheese have to do with our major spring Festival of Liberation? Well, in search of kosher-for-Passover cottage cheese, I schlepped to seven different supermarkets in Massachusetts. I found not a single container. Not one.

While I've long been fascinated by the process of cheese making,

I know that the serious stuff is not a simpleton's game. Research for a piece on cheesemaking once brought me to a professional fromager's office. His shelves were filled with tomes on chemistry, microbiology, and food science, certainly not in my wheelhouse. But, luckily for us amateurs, some cheeses are super simple to prepare in our own kitchens. In fact, several years ago, to the initial delight but ultimate boredom of my family, I went on a goat cheese and labneh spree.

That's when it finally dawned on me: the only difference between goat cheese and cottage cheese is which animal's milk I'd be using. So, I decided to make my own. Why hadn't I thought of this earlier and saved myself a lot of time and gasoline?

The 2022 Great Cottage Cheese Experiment was a success. Because I didn't add cream, the result had a consistency more like feta than the supermarket variety of cottage cheese in the plastic tub, but it was wonderfully flavorful. Even my daughter-in-law Shira, who doesn't like cottage cheese, loved it.

Best of all, there are no preservatives involved in the homemade version. Then again, I had no worries about spoilage as the fam gobbled up the batch in two days. Even the little ones ate it.



"Little Miss Muffett" by Arthur Rackham, from the nursery rhyme of the same name, from the 1913 book *Mother Goose – The Old Nursery Rhymes*

DIY Cottage Cheese

Here is a very, very, very easy recipe for homemade cottage cheese:

Pour 1 gallon of whole milk into a pot and bring to 190 degrees.

Take the pot off the burner and pour in 3/4 cup of either lemon juice or white vinegar. Stir.

Let the pot sit for 30 minutes.

Line a colander with two layers of cheesecloth or a clean towel and set into a large bowl.

Pour the contents of the pot into the colander.

Squeeze out the whey.*

Mix in a few tablespoons of cream if you like (I didn't).

Stir in some salt to taste, chives or even crushed pineapple if you like yours sweet.

That's it, except to enjoy.

**Don't throw your whey away! Add it to smoothies and shakes to provide more vitamins, minerals, and proteins. Use it as cooking liquid for potatoes, rice, grits, pasta, and grains. Substitute whey in any baking recipe that calls for water or even milk, such as for bread, pancakes, waffles, or muffins.*



Lokshen mit kaese (noodles and cottage cheese – that's the translation and also the recipe, though adding a little butter or sour cream is good, as well). Arthur Schwartz, in *Jewish Home Cooking: Yiddish Recipes Revisited*, posits that it is a dish you cook "when you think there's nothing in the house to eat." This simple, yet supremely comforting, Ashkenazi take on mac 'n' cheese is seasoned with salt by Litvaks and with sugar in the Galitzianer preparation.

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BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

An American Tune

By Albert Stern

Since I was a very young child, I have felt deeply connected to the story of America. I was adopted as an infant into a Jewish family whose worldview was shaped by religious identity, the crucible of Eastern Europe, proud Zionism, and immigration to the United States and Israel. My way of looking at the world was molded by a proud and often chauvinistic Judaism, but not so much my way of looking at myself. As an adoptee, I knew I had an additional story, a separate story, one that was hidden from me. That story, I felt quite certain, had a long historical connection to America. This was never merely a hunch on my part – it was my absolute conviction.

Given the paucity of information to which adoptees of my sealed birth records era had access, we necessarily used fantasy to create stories for ourselves to complete our personal identities. As a child, the stories that captured my imagination were of the early European settlement of the New World and the lives of the Native Americans it displaced. I knew all about the migrations from Asia into the Western Hemisphere, and all about the cultures of the different tribes. If asked why I had all this interest in Native Americans, I would answer: "Because I am an Indian!" It was a strange thing for a Ashkenazi Jewish child growing up in Miami Beach circa 1970 to insist on, even for a misfit like myself.

When I was not long out of college, I noticed a copy of David Freeman Hawke's *Everyday Life in Early America* in a secondhand bookstore and felt like I needed to own it. It's a short, accessible, yet rich history of how people in the British colonies lived in the 1600s. Over the years, it was among the very few books that

accompanied me on my every move. I reread it countless times and took a certain

comfort in seeing it, like a talisman, on my bookshelf. Its subject matter more than interested me – I was convinced the book was telling me things I was supposed to know about my story.

Alas, that book didn't make it on my most recent move, after I separated from my soon to be ex-wife. The only volumes I took with me to my sparse bachelor digs were the Tanakh, a *siddur*, and David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. The latter is a magisterial work of history that chronicles the four waves of immigration that, along with the folkways brought by enslaved Africans to the colonies, shaped the character of what became

the United States of America. These were the three books I needed to accompany me in the process of starting a new life. The Tanakh is the fount of my faith and the *siddur* my connection to my Rock, my Redeemer. *Albion's Seed* explains where I came from and how those ancestors lived and thought.

Thanks to Ancestry.com, I discovered my origins about four years ago. I know all about my birth families and have

developed a close relationship with my birth father and half-sister. I know that through my paternal grandfather, I am technically a "Californio," a person of Mexican descent whose forebears lived in the Los Angeles area when it still belonged to Mexico – even though, because I am a Jew born and raised in Florida who has visited The Golden State less than ten times, I'm at best a "Califaunio."

My paternal grandfather, Joe Salas, Sr. – now *there* was an eminent Californio. He was the first Hispanic member of a US Olympic team and, fighting as a featherweight in the 1924 Paris Olympics, took home the silver medal. Sixty years later, this former prize fighter and Golden Glove amateur champion was honored at the 1984 Los Angeles games for his ethnic breakthrough.

And yes, I am an Indian – some of my genes are those of Native Americans from Southern California and the Baja Peninsula. But, for the most part, my genes came from the British Isles. I have ancestors who were in Colonial America by the mid-1600s, in Virginia on my birth mother's side and in Maryland on my birth father's side.

Through those early immigrants, I am a "Son of the American Revolution" on both lines. My maternal sixth-great-grandfather, Carter Croxton, was (according to an obituary in the *Tidewater Democrat*) "engaged in the battles of Cowpens, Guilford Courthouse, Camden, Gen. Gates' defeat, Yorktown, and the surrender of Cornwallis at

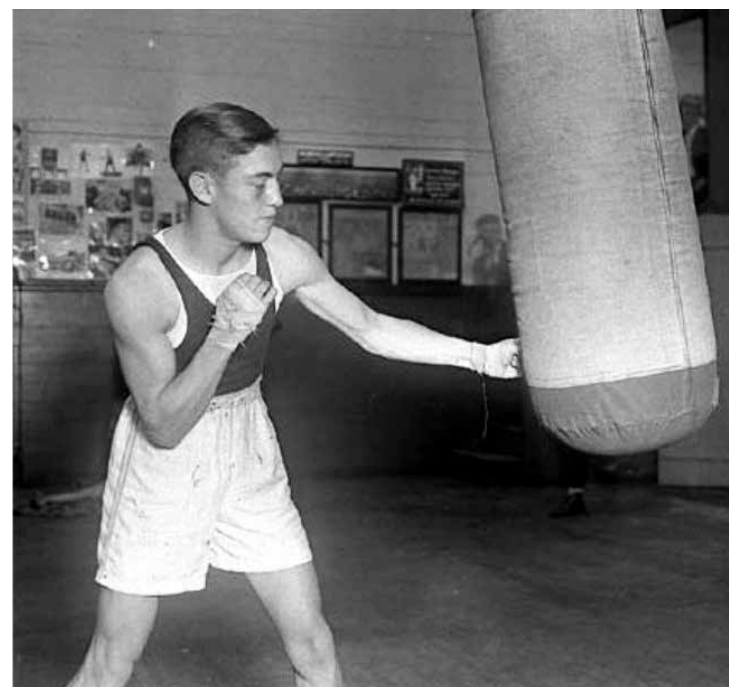
As an adoptee, I knew I had an additional story, a separate story, one that was hidden from me. That story, I felt quite certain, had a long historical connection to America.

Yorktown." He died aged 87 and was buried at the family home, Cherry Walk, in Essex County, Virginia, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

The patriot on my father's side was likely the last *halachically* "kosher" Jew in my family tree, my sixth-great-grandfather, David Levy, Sr. According to the family historian with whom I corresponded: "David Sr. was in Frederick, Maryland by 1766. [Wife] Barbara's family[, German/Swiss Jews who had converted to Christianity,] had been there for a while. I am virtually certain that David Levy Sr. was Jewish but that his wife and children were not. Some of my distant relatives have argued that David wasn't Jewish because he appears frequently in the records of the Evangelical (German) Reformed Church in Frederick, Maryland, but what they miss is that he only appears as the husband of his wife and the father of his children. He was never baptized, even though his wife and kids were. He was never confirmed, even though his wife and kids were. And he never sponsored a baptism [*i.e.*, served as a child's godfather], even though his wife and some of his kids did. So, I believe that he was Jewish and that he never converted to Christianity."

David Levy – the *pintele Yid* in my gene pool – joined the Colonial Army and was a sergeant. "I don't know if David Levy's first language was English, German, or Yiddish," the family historian wrote, "but he was competent enough with German to serve as the quartermaster for the German Regiment during the Revolution. He was at Valley Forge."

Other ancestors came here from England and Scotland, many of the families dispersed among the hills in the Piedmont and eastern Appalachia. Hebrews? Nope – Hee-Haw. In the 1800s, the Irish members of the family came to this country to escape the Great Potato Famine. By the turn of the last century, all these lines had made it out with the



Joe Salas, Sr. – 1924 Olympic silver medalist (boxing, featherweight), AAU champion, professional fighter

railroad to California where, in the autumn of 1961, I was conceived.

I don't know how you might feel about extra-sensory consciousness or a universe with deep meaningful underpinnings or the notion that spiritual progress is the central issue of existence or any other of that kind of oogah-boogah. As for me, I'm with Charles Bukowski, the poet who felt that "the more crap you believe in, the better off you are." I believe that Something Big is going on, something I get from my Jewish family – my Bubbie Ida, an uncannily gifted mystic, opened my eyes and mind to that. No matter what you might think of my fanciful childhood conviction about being connected to a long American story (plus my being an Indian), grant me this – I was totally right. And one more thing – I believe in America.

Thanks to my Bubbie, I've long been attuned to these weird vortices in which we sometimes find ourselves, when the universe parts the curtains to show us that Something Big is going on. Recently I found myself in a Hawaii vortex. Out of the blue, I received a text from my pal Steve Tosk, the longtime Pittsfield chiropractor who retired and is living the dream in The Aloha State. Later the same afternoon, I was at the library and felt compelled to pick up and read R. Kikuo Johnson's strangely moving graphic novel, *No One Else*, which is set in Maui and depicts the lives of working-class Hawaiians struggling to make it. That evening, I settled in to watch the PBS *American Masters* documentary *Waterman – Duke: Ambassador of Aloha*. It's about Duke Kahanamoku, the 5-time Olympic medalist as a swimmer, the first surfing god, and basically the exemplar of all things Hawaiian. I knew a bit about his amazing life and was eager to learn more.

I started watching and was quickly let down by the tone of documentary, which I suppose can be summed up by the way the show is blurbed by PBS: "Discover the inspiring story and considerable impact of five-time Olympic medalist Duke Kahanamoku. He shattered swimming records and globalized surfing while overcoming racism in a lifetime of personal challenges." It seemed as if, because Kahanamoku was a person of color, the documentarians had to establish their bona fides by positing the ways that the imperfections of the United States diminished Hawaii and its people.

It's an impulse I call "American Tune-ism," after the one Paul Simon song that I truly can't abide. "American Tune" is a morose anthem of defeat and disappointment with the United States, yet one that five decades after its release still resonates with a certain segment of the population. I've heard it sung at funerals; by people I know (together with their



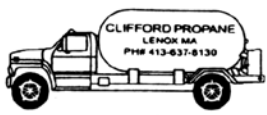
Sgt. David Levy, Sr. was the quartermaster for the Continental Army's German Regiment at Valley Forge

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BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES



Cherry Walk, ca. 1795, in Essex County, VA – built for Carter Croxton, his signature here taken from a Revolutionary War soldier's pension application filed in 1833

children) on maudlin Facebook videos; for Jimmy Carter the night before his inauguration; to open and close Ken Burns's documentary on the Statue of Liberty; and even at Fourth of July barbecues – and not only because it's easier to perform than "Loves Me Like a Rock." Fifty years on, its Nixon-era disillusionment has metastasized into a more thoroughgoing, more personal miserableness impervious to hope, progress, and joy. "American Tune-ism" prevents transcendent stories from being told with all their nuance and unruly contradictions – ones that don't fit a preordained narrative have to be contorted until they do.

I didn't want a narrative about Duke Kahanamoku – I wanted a story. And it wasn't the story of a victim – it was of a singular person who transcended the challenges he might have faced and changed American culture by making it more inclusive, more diverse, and more attractive to the world. Racism is a reality, and colonialism, as well – but neither would be in the second sentence of a blurb I would write about the astonishing life of Duke Kahanamoku.

So I turned off the television. I decided to call my birth father in California to check in on him – he's 88-years-old now. His son, John (adopted, not my half-brother), was a national champion and then professional longboard surfer, and so I mentioned my disappointment with the documentary about Duke Kahanamoku I'd just been watching.

My own American story has a lot of moving parts, but I'm sure yours does, too; and anyway, moving parts are what the larger American story is all about

"Oh, Duke," my birth father said. "He and my old man were really good friends."

Whaaat?

"Yeah. During the Olympics, Duke and his brothers hung out with your grandfather on the ship over to France and back. The brown skinned folks kind of stuck together, you know?" In the 1924 Paris Games, Duke Kahanamoku won the silver medal in the 100-meter freestyle and his brother, Samuel, the bronze, while Johnny Weissmuller took the gold.

"The other member of their group was William Duhart Hubbard. Ever hear of him? He was the first African American to win an individual gold medal. He won the long jump."

I hadn't heard of him.

"Yeah, my old man really didn't like Weissmuller. When they rode together on the train from the coast to Paris, for no reason Weissmuller knocked over a French fan riding alongside them on a bicycle as they pulled into a station in a small town. Hurt the guy pretty badly. Weissmuller just laughed. So, the old man didn't like him."

My grandfather knew Tarzan?

"My old man and Duke stayed friends for a long time. Duke spent time in Los Angeles making movies and used to stop by the house, hang out, and stay for dinner. It was before World War II,

so I must have been eight or nine."

Wait a minute...you knew...

Duke Kahanamoku...Waterman... the Ambassador of Aloha...that PBS is showing a documentary about *right this very minute?*

"Yeah. Really great guy. A larger-than-life kind of person, you know?"

This was a story, one that the universe must have wanted me to hear. I turned the television back on and narrated what was going on in the documentary until my birth father had enough and said goodnight. I watched the show until the end and, to its credit, it finally got around to relating the good story, what in the end is an overwhelmingly positive tale about America in the 20th century. It ended with Duke's funeral, at which tens of thousands of mourners filled Waikiki Beach, people packed together as tightly as New Year's revelers in Times Square. They were not there merely to mark the passing of a sports celebrity, but to honor a true American hero.

In 1925, Kahanamoku, on his surfboard, rescued eight people whose boat had capsized in high surf off the California coast.

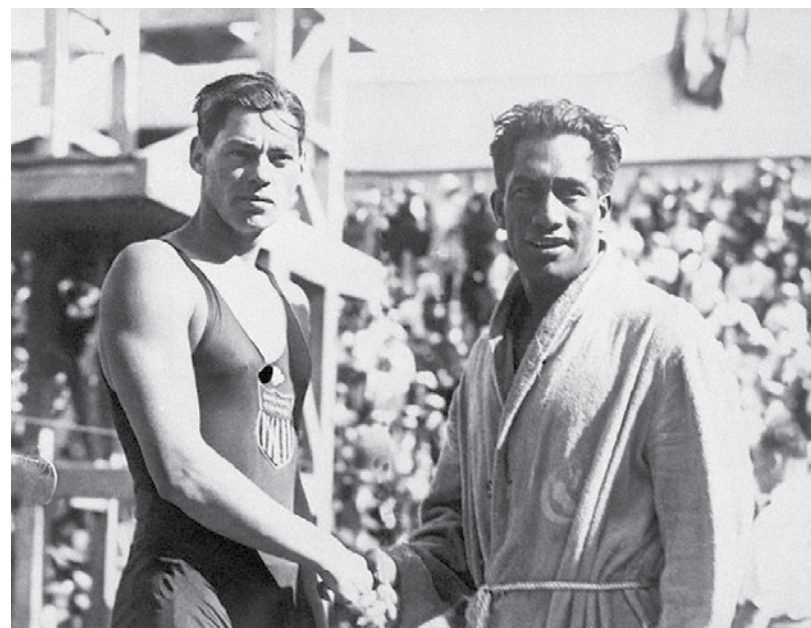
His exertions, according to witnesses, were all but superhuman and his disregard for his own safety complete. Thirty years later, the *This is Your Life* television program reunited Kahanamoku with three of the men he had saved for the first time since his remarkable act of valor. It is a remarkable scene – the men expressing their gratitude to Kahanamoku, who stands back stunned, seemingly abashed, and no doubt vividly flashing back to the day he saved their lives. The camera then zooms in as one of them offers his hand and says thank you to his rescuer. And Duke Kahanamoku, this amazingly heroic man, seems to be searching for the right way to respond to this person whose life he has saved. Finally, Duke Kahanamoku says what you say when someone thanks you for something. He says: "You're welcome."

You're welcome? You're welcome! Now that is America.

Duke Kahanamoku was a hero and an eminent American, and I wonder if we've lost our sense of how to tell a hero's story, how to tell an American story. I know my own American story has a lot of moving parts, but I'm sure yours does, too; and anyway, moving parts are what the larger American story is all about.

Back in 2016, I attended for the first time one of those quintessential Berkshire events – the reading of the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth of July at Shakespeare & Company. I was told it was always a rousing affair, with cheering crowds and flag waving. But to lead it off that year, the organizers invited a famous retired anchorman to share a few words. So this anchorman decided to use to his moment on the Fourth of July to speechify about how hypocritical the Declaration of Independence is, how the Declaration was written by elites to serve the interests of elites, how it was nasty to the Native Americans, how far short we've fallen in living up to its empty rhetoric, and on and on.

His words were enough to dissipate my patriotic mojo and, it seemed, that of the gathered. There was



Johnny Weissmuller shaking hands with Duke Kahanamoku at the 1924 Paris Olympic Games

little of the customary rah-rah I was led to expect. I ran into people I know as we headed glumly to the parking lot and they all agreed that the retired newsman ruined the occasion for everybody. "You felt almost embarrassed to cheer," said one.

On this Fourth of July, I hope no one feels too embarrassed to cheer. As the writer Ryan Fazio put it: "What separates America in human history is not its sins, but its virtues." If the mood hits you, you might even be stirred to sing an American tune – but please, not "American Tune."



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CULTURE & ARTS

“The Tail to His Kite”

A new play about Washington Post publisher Katherine Graham explores how she overcame her disastrous, abusive marriage

GREAT BARRINGTON – Robin Gerber’s new play *The Shot*, explores the aftermath of the turbulent marriage of former Washington Post publisher Katherine Graham and her husband, Philip, who preceded her at the helm of the capitol’s newspaper of record. Phil Graham, who elevated the newspaper to national political prominence, suffered from bipolar disorder and ultimately took his own life in the family’s vacation home, leaving Katherine to find his body. Katherine took over as publisher days after the suicide, and ultimately guided the paper to the apex of its influence with coverage of the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate scandal and built its parent company into a billion-dollar media empire.

The Shot is a solo show featuring actress Sharon Lawrence, and is being presented by The Great Barrington Public Theater from Thursday, June 16 through Sunday, June 19, at Bard College at Simon’s Rock.

Half Jewish through her father’s line, Katherine Graham was born into the fantastically wealthy and influential Meyer family, among the prominent Jewish families originally from the Alsace region of France. Her grandfather was the American president of Lazard Freres investment bank and her father, Eugene, was a successful investor and speculator, and later chairman of the Federal Reserve, who purchased the then-bankrupt Washington Post in 1933. Katherine’s non-Jewish mother, Agnes Elizabeth Ernst Meyer, was a philanthropist, activist, and illustrious patron of the arts, and used the paper to advance her pet causes.

In her 1997 Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir, *Personal History*, Graham recounts: “Remarkably, the fact that we were half-Jewish was never mentioned any more than money was discussed. I was totally – incredibly – unaware of anti-Semitism.” She writes that religion was not a big part of her family’s life and while her father’s Judaism was not a source of shame, neither was it a source of pride.

In 1940,

Katherine Meyer married Philip Graham, a Harvard-educated lawyer and scion of a prominent

family from Miami, Florida. Her father bequeathed him more shares in The Washington Post than he did to her, explaining that “no man should be in the position of working for his wife.” She became a self-proclaimed “doormat wife,” writing in her memoir that “as [Phil] emerged more on the journalistic and political scenes, I saw my role as the tail to his kite – and the more I felt overshadowed, the more it became a reality.” As Phil’s mental illness advanced, he became more and more abusive of his wife, and derided her with cruel anti-Semitic insults both behind closed doors and publicly.

Robin Gerber’s play, a fictionalized version of Graham’s experiences, opens with Graham receiving an award, and then reflecting on her marriage and her own resilience and success in the aftermath of Phil’s suicide. In May, the playwright – who is a historian and novelist who presents talks on women’s leadership issues (visit robingerber.com for more info) – spoke with the BJV about the play and how a video reading of *The Shot* was offered during the pandemic to theaters and domestic violence organizations to use as a fundraiser. Those events raised more than \$25,000 for the participating non-profits.

Katherine Graham was from a very wealthy family that was connected to a lot of other illustrious families – I don’t know if Steven Birmingham might have called them “Our Crowd” Jews since they were from France, not Germany, but they definitely had that level of social prominence. Tell me about what being half-Jewish might have meant to her.

Eugene Meyer built a financial empire and was also very socially conscious. He married a Lutheran woman whose family once had prominence but lost its money, and he bailed them out. He wasn’t very physically attractive and it was always kind of implied that Agnes married him for doing that. Agnes was quite a character, very cultured, and this features prominently in the play. She was a real intellectual, friends with Thomas Mann, Auguste Rodin, and Einstein. Agnes had this exceptionalism and she expected her children to be exceptional, too, although she didn’t have a whole lot of interest in mothering. We’re talking about parents who were very absent. The kids were very much raised by nannies and she had to make appointments to see her mother. I think she really did adore her father, though.

In one of the scenes, Katherine is very proud telling her mother she read *The Three Musketeers*. Then her mother says, “You read it in French, of course.” And when she says no, her mother says, “Kid, you continue to be such a dull child.” Her mother was quite taken by Phil, though. There’s a scene in play where she sort of says, “Just what are you doing with Katherine?” So, I think there she was set up to not think highly of herself the way sometimes women who are abused have been in childhood. So you describe yourself as a doormat wife. That she was also being abused and psychologically and physically is not really surprising.

You have a wonderful actress in Sharon Lawrence. How have you structured the play?

Katherine has just accepted an award. And in doing this, she says, ‘In truth, I don’t dwell on all these achievements. I really have been thinking more about what happened before, before I took over the paper.’ And then it becomes a memory play explaining about Phil and their life. And parts of that life were wonderful. You see her become this happy housewife having children. But then the dark side starts gradually emerging, as she describes it, a descent into a tunnel that seems to have no end.

Was Phil a true S.O.B., the wrong man for her to marry, or was he more a guy who had this terrible problem, bipolar disorder?

He was a highflier. He was editor of the law review at Harvard and clerked for [Supreme Court justice] Felix Frankfurter. He was brilliant. He was good looking. He had a kind of narcissism that we’ve seen in recent years in such an unfortunate way. He craved attention. He craved getting in with important people. He was a good friend of Jack Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy. But Katherine’s own brother told her at their engagement party that Phil had gotten dead drunk and passed out on the lawn. And her brother said to her she might want to rethink this. But the moment went by, and she got carried away with the planning for the wedding. So I think there were hints, but he seemed pretty spectacular to her as a catch.

Her dad felt good about giving Phil the paper. He was so smart. Unfortunately, Phil didn’t really get that a publisher doesn’t insert themselves into policy-making. He kind of wanted to do that, too. When she



took over the paper, it was not a very good paper.

Does this story have a more universal message about women’s leadership issues that you’ve written about and given workshops about?

Hitting a place of tragedy, of incredible difficulty, and rising out of it is a very universal theme. People absolutely wanted Katherine to sell the paper, or bring in someone to run it until her son was old enough. They circled like vultures to try and get that paper from her. And the idea that she could walk in the office three days after her husband’s suicide and say, ‘I’m going to run this,’ even though she was wholly unprepared, truly unprepared [is remarkable]. She kind of ghosted around for seven years, but ended up being a terrific, amazing publisher, one of the greatest publishers probably in our history. Her style of leadership was one I really believe in – she listened first. She spent her time going to every department, getting out of her office, and seeing what people were doing.

I don’t want to overshadow the issue of intimate partner violence and domestic violence, because that’s really what the play is about. And it’s not just her story. I interviewed many women who had been abused. There’s an epidemic of it in our country, probably around the world, too.

We gave a video reading of the play to domestic violence groups around the country so they could raise money during COVID. Women who have been survivors of abuse found it inspirational. We can do something to help women in this situation no matter their circumstances – even if they’re rich, even if they grew up with a powerful family. There’s a point in the play where Katherine asks the audience, ‘Why didn’t I leave?’ That is the question that we want answered. That answer is in some ways the hardest of the play for people to understand – how difficult it is for people to leave.

But it is possible. And in her case, she not only left, but had this great life.

The Shot, by Robin Gerber and directed by Michelle Joyner, runs from June 16 to June 19 at the Liebowitz Black Box Theater, Bard College at Simon’s Rock, Great Barrington. The play is being presented by The Great Barrington Public Theater. For more information, visit greatbarringtonpublictheater.org.

She was set up to not think highly of herself the way sometimes women who are abused have been in childhood. So you describe yourself as a doormat wife.

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"ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES,"

continued from page 15

and waited with a lot of other Afghans and their families. The date was August 26. A lot of people were being evacuated by American forces there. For five or six hours we were there, sleeping and lying down on the airport floor. But then in the night, we flew from Kabul to Qatar in a big American transport airplane.

The family stayed in Qatar for a week and were then flown to Spain, where they were housed at a US Navy base for 33 days. On October 7, the family arrived at Philadelphia International Airport and were then transported to Fort Pickett, a Virginia Army National Guard installation near Blackstone, Virginia.

We heard a lot of stories from our friends who came out early from the camp. They would tell us how in some of the states they were in, there was no help from volunteers or from the company that took responsibility and sponsored them. In that time, I was also very despaired and very sad – if I go somewhere, I didn't know if I would be helped or not. The day after we arrived in the camp, we went to the IRC [*International Rescue Committee*] office and they asked if we had any relatives or friends or whoever in the United States. If we had their address, they would take us to that place. I have two cousins, one of them in California, one of them in Washington State. I gave them their address and, after one month, I asked the IRC to check my case. We were told then that there was no place for Afghan people in those places.

Then I told them, "Wherever you want to take me, take me. I have no problem. I can a little bit speak English." So that was the reason they put me in Massachusetts. I was thinking a lot. I heard the story from other friends from the other states and they told me people were not helping. But some of my friends, they say yeah, in Massachusetts we got a lot of help from volunteers and from [Jewish Family Services].

On January 5, we came out from there through to Massachusetts through Bradley Airport. There I saw Jan Kabel, Mr. Kabel, and the others – Rebecca [Honig] and a case worker there waiting. They introduced themselves for me and I introduced myself. There were three cars. So we get inside the car with Rebecca, we came to Lee. It was foggy weather. We woke up and saw there's a lot of snow on the ground.

The family stayed in Lee and then in Tyringham, and spent months at a home in Pittsfield, the city in which they intend to stay once their resettlement is finalized

I have a lot of opportunities here. The people are very good and it's calm and relaxed. They're helping us, the Jewish Family Service, all the time. Whatever we need, they provide us and we are very grateful from them. We are the luckiest people because now we saved our lives and we are very grateful also to the American forces and army. We had a very bad situation in Afghanistan, because as I see the news and every day or every other day, they are killing people with experience with the Americans or other organization. They are disappearing.

We are thinking about our family, sure – about my brother, our sister, and my parents.

I can speak English, and in Afghanistan, two of my kids were going to courses for one year to learn English, but they could not learn – they could grab some words but they could not pronounce them properly. But now in three months, they're going to school and they've improved, especially the two youngest ones. Whenever they come back from school, if I pronounce some of the words they know, they tell me "Dad, *this* is the correct pronunciation."

There has been a lot of change. But they had a bad experience. At the Eid luncheon, the two youngest ones were asked if they remember the day the Taliban came to our house. They said, "I will never forget that moment. I was very scared of that because of their hair. I was scared from the gun." Everybody scared from that. Yeah.

They changed a lot. They are very happy. And they always telling me that why didn't you come before to America. It's a very good place. You should have come, like, five or six years before. I said it's very difficult to come and said I was planning to come, but the chance was not there. So they are very excited to be here now.

CULTURE & ARTS

YIDSTOCK: The Festival of New Yiddish Music Returns, in Person, to the Yiddish Book Center

AMHERST — The Yiddish Book Center is proud to present the 10th anniversary of YIDSTOCK: The Festival of New Yiddish Music, Thursday, July 7, to Sunday, July 10, at the Center. The Klezmatics, Eleanor Reissa, Socalled, and Paul Shapiro's Ribs & Brisket Revue will all be performing, in person, at the Center, which is located on the Hampshire College campus.

This year's festival, curated by Seth Rogovoy, celebrates some greatest hits of the first decade of YIDSTOCK, featuring return appearances by many audience favorites, as well as new faces and new and reconfigured ensembles. Workshops, talks, films, and conversations with artists round out the schedule of events. Tickets are now on sale and can be purchased online at yiddishbookcenter.org/yidstock, where a full schedule of workshops and performance is available.

"We are beyond excited to be bringing YIDSTOCK back live to the stage at the Yiddish Book Center," said Lisa Newman, director of public programs and publishing at the Center. "It's been two years since we have been able to host our annual four-day festival in person. This year's 10th anniversary festival promises to be one for the books!"

"We are looking forward to being together once again," said Seth Rogovoy, who serves as artistic director for the festival. "We all have so much catching up to do, including audiences and performers, and we look forward to the magic and surprises that can only happen at a live event."

Performance Highlights

Making his YIDSTOCK debut, Cantor Yaakov "Yanky" Lemmer will kick off the festival July 7 at 8 p.m. With an ensemble led by Frank London of the Klezmatics, Lemmer brings fresh interpretations to traditional liturgical prayers and Hasidic nigunim, as well as to some more obscure Yiddish songs.

Clarinetist Michael Winograd brings his band, The Honorable Mentshn, to YIDSTOCK for the very first time on July 8 at 2 p.m., celebrating the launch of their newest album, *Early Bird Special*. Packed with the energy, passion, and drive that listeners have come to expect from the Honorable Mentshn, *Early Bird Special* delivers the schmaltz-drenched, hard-hitting klezmer that your soul craves and gets you up and dancing.

Also on July 8, Eleanor Reissa returns with a new sound and a new ensemble led by her frequent collaborator, trumpeter Frank London of the Klezmatics, as she continues to reinvent the art of storytelling through Yiddish cabaret.



July 7-10, 2022

Live at the
Yiddish Book Center

On July 9 at 8 p.m., Paul Shapiro's Ribs & Brisket Revue returns to perform its "Music of Mrs. Maisel" program. Shapiro and company celebrate the unique era when Jewish music was merging into the American mainstream, blending jazz, Yiddish swing, R&B, klezmer, and humor

On July 10 at 7:30 p.m., The Klezmatics will once again bring down the curtain on YIDSTOCK.

Visit YiddishBookCenter.org to learn more. The Yiddish Book Center is at 1021 West Street, Amherst, MA.

Also On View: "Visiting Exhibit: Roots, Resilience and Renewal – A Portrait of Polish Jews, 1975-2016"

In 1975, the young photographer Chuck Fishman traveled to Poland to photograph what he has described "was then a dwindling remnant of a once-vibrant Jewish community on the brink of extinction." Returning several times between 1975 and 1983, Fishman's images provide rare glimpses into Jewish life during a period when Jews in the West had little or no access to their Polish forebears in the post-Holocaust era. Believing his photographs would bear witness to the final days of Jews in Poland, he could not have envisioned, thirty years later, the astonishing rebirth of a people that had inhabited its lands for 1,000 years. His return to Poland in 2013 chronicles a spiritual and cultural "return to identity" that Fishman says "would have been unthinkable before." His latest work speaks "to themes of resilience and renewal, exploring and elucidating the myriad faces and facets of recovery and re-generation."

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



Thank you to these individuals who through their gift to the Legacy Circle will ensure that the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires thrives long into the future. May your name be a Blessing, and may the example you set inspire others to create their own Jewish Legacy.

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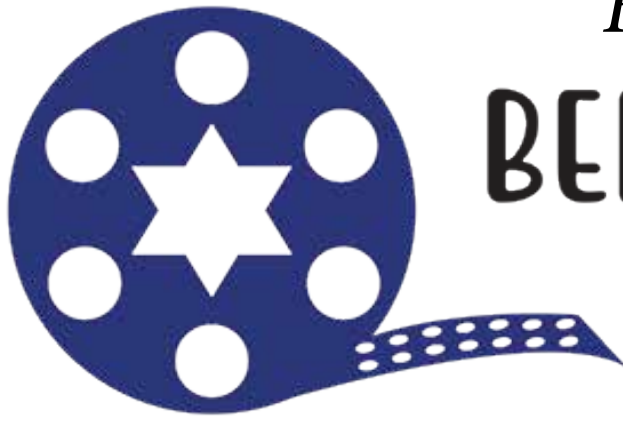
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CULTURE & ARTS

Celebrating 36 Years of the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival

Virtual screenings and film talkbacks over six weeks this summer



Cinema Sabaya

This year, the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival marks its 36th season.

Over the years, the BJFF has shown hundreds of films to thousands of people. The BJFF continues as a virtual festival this year, showing films online on Monday nights.

The six weeks of programming showcases 11 feature films – plus five shorts that will be screened on August 8.

Information about tickets, season passes, and Zoom talkbacks are on the festival website: berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org.

July 11

4 p.m. *Song Searcher* – Documentary

Traveling throughout Ukraine, Moyshe Beregovsky, a musician and scholar, recorded and studied the traditional music of Ukrainian Jewry during the most dramatic years of Soviet history. Beginning in the 1920s, he succeeded in saving the musical heritage of the centuries-old Yiddish civilization.

8 p.m. *Rose* – Drama

At age seventy-eight, Rose, an Orthodox Jewish woman, redefines herself as an independent woman after losing her devoted and loving husband, upsetting the balance of her family.

Festival Favorites

Pam Wax says *Let It Be Morning* is “nuanced, poignant, disturbing, redemptive. Essential for those of us who care about Israel to see – and to discuss. I don’t think seeing it is enough.” Pam also found the short film, *The Inspection*, “relevant and timely considering the ‘Maus’ banning, cancel culture, trigger warnings, parental consent issues around education. I wish I had a history teacher like the one portrayed in the film.”



Mel Brooks in *The Automat*

Jan Zimble says *The Automat* “taps into many aspects of what America ‘used to be.’ Watching the film was like being in a time-tripping experience. Now all that survives of the *Automat* are the wonderful stories your grandfather told you, or the hazy memories of being taken to the palace-type restaurant with your parents. Maybe you are lucky enough to remember your own adventure of putting a nickel in the slot and getting a really good cup of coffee.”

July 18

4 p.m. *The Adventures of Saul Bellow* – Documentary

The documentary traces Saul Bellow’s rise to eminence and examines his many identities: reluctant public intellectual, ‘serial husband,’ father, Chicagoan, Jew, and American. Interviews with the novelist’s family and friends shed light on Bellow’s personality and the way he turned life into art.

8 p.m. *The Automat* – Documentary

Once upon a nickel, before fast food, one American restaurant empire was unstoppable. Experience the untold story of the *Automat* in a documentary starring Mel Brooks, Elliott Gould, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Colin Powell, and other notables.

July 25

4 p.m. *Ronnie’s* – Documentary

Explore the life of saxophonist Ronnie Scott, from a poor Jewish kid in the East End of London to the owner of *Ronnie’s*, his world-famous jazz club. Features Oscar Peterson, Dizzy Gillespie, Buddy Rich, Sarah Vaughan, Miles Davis, Jimi Hendrix, Ella Fitzgerald, Van Morrison, Chet Baker, Nina Simone, Sonny Rollins, and others.

8 p.m. *More Than I Deserve* – Drama

Newly arrived in Israel, a single immigrant mother and son from Ukraine are deeply affected by their relationship with a religious neighbor in this finely textured coming-of-age drama. Nominated for seven Israeli Academy Awards, the film reflects emotional depth in its nuanced portrayal of the plight of immigrants to Israel.

August 1

4 p.m. *The Lost Film of Nuremberg* – Documentary

Film director John Ford, head of the OSS Field Photographic Branch, assigned brothers Budd and Stuart Schulberg the mission of tracking down and assembling archival footage and photographs of the crimes of the Nazi regime to be used as evidence against the 24 leading Nazis scheduled to stand trial in Nuremberg. The film takes an inside look at this mission and asks questions about collective memory and the process of writing history.

8 p.m. *Here We Are* – Drama

Aharon has devoted his life to raising his autistic son Uri. They live together in a gentle routine away from the real world. But now, as a young adult, it’s time for Uri to live in a specialized home. While on their way there, Aharon decides to run away with his son, believing that Uri is not ready for this separation. Or is it, in fact, his father who is not ready?

August 8

4 p.m. – 5 Short Films

Becoming Nakuset – As a small child, Nakuset was taken from her home in Thompson, Manitoba, and adopted into a Jewish family in Montreal. The film tells the story of how Nakuset reclaimed her Indigenous identity with help from her Bubbe and became a powerful advocate for her people.

Pops – Before his death, a Jewish father requests that when he dies, his ashes be sent to space. After his death, his grown children disagree about whether to follow their father’s wishes. Should he

be given a traditional Jewish burial or be sent to space?

In the Image of God – Rabbi Levi was born intersexual, and like his grandmother and great-grandmother who were also born intersexual, the female gender was imposed on him. The director states that “Levi’s story challenges not only our certainties about gender but also the way the political debate is framed: tradition versus progressivism, religion versus individual freedom, old generations versus the new ones.”



Pops

The Inspection – A short narrative film that explores how one courageous educator stands fast when challenged about her teaching of the Holocaust

Petit Rat – A Jewish girl’s dream of becoming a ballerina is destroyed by the Nazi invasion of Paris. Decades later, she and her two daughters confront the impact as they dance together for the very first time, towards reconciliation and forgiveness.

8 p.m. *Let It Be Morning* – Narrative

Israel’s official Oscar submission for Best International Feature Film is based on the novel by Palestinian writer Sayed Kashua and tells the story of a Palestinian man who returns to his village, only to find himself physically and emotionally trapped by a military blockade.

August 15

4 p.m. *Cinema Sabaya* – Documentary

In this heartfelt ode to the unifying power of art, nine women register for a video workshop hoping to learn basic filmmaking techniques. As the strangers, both Arab and Jewish, share the raw footage they shoot each week with their classmates, they are confronted not only by the vast differences in their circumstances but also by striking points of connection.

8 p.m. *The Last Chapter of A.B. Yehoshua* – Documentary

A.B. Yehoshua is one of the most widely read authors in Israel, whose works are deeply rooted in Jewish culture and the Israeli way of life. The New York Times has called him the Israeli Faulkner. Although dealing with serious illness, widowhood, and loneliness, the writer affectionately known as ‘Boolie’ chooses love and embarks on his final journey.