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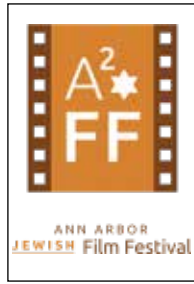
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JEWISH NEWS

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Volume XX Number 9

FREE

Jewish Federations work with growing movement for religious diversity in Israel

Stephanie Glass, special to the WJN

Since 2017, the Jewish Federations of North America has worked to advance religious freedom for Israeli Jews through the Israel Religious Expression Platform (iRep). This consortium of Federation communities supports Israeli organizations addressing religious civil rights in Israel. Greater Ann Arbor's Federation was one of the first twenty-six Federations to join iRep and we continue to support its efforts in such matters as creating options for civil marriage in Israel and promoting equality for all streams of Judaism.

In March, North American Jewish communities, including greater Ann Arbor, joined together to virtually celebrate and learn more about iRep's work at JFNA's Forward Focus Mission. This four-part series brought religious leaders, experts, activists, and everyday Israeli Jews into thousands of living rooms, as they shared stories and victories regarding Jewish diversity and expression in Israel.

Fighting for Freedom of Choice in Marriage

One of iRep's central initiatives upon forming was to increase access and support



Liat and Tome, Israeli couple who married outside the Rabbinate

for marriage choice in Israel, an issue impacting thousands of Israeli Jews. All Israeli Jews must go through the Israeli chief rabbinate, the supreme rabbinic authority in Israel, to

be legally married. The Rabbinate has the power to refuse to marry couples if they do not view one or both members as Jewish, a common issue for Jews from the Former So-

viet Union or those who converted outside the chief rabbinate, or if they are a same-sex couple. This results in countless numbers of Israeli Jews being unable to legally wed.

In the past five years, iRep and its grantees have worked to grow a niche movement to a majority-supported cause. Through public marketing campaigns highlighting Israeli Jewish couples who chose to marry outside the rabbinate and providing financial support to organizations offering alternative lifecycle services, iRep has created a groundswell of public support for marriage choice. Recent data shows nearly 70 percent of Israelis now voice support for legal options that do not involve the rabbinate and approximately 1 out of 5 couples are choosing alternative methods, such as marrying abroad or common law marriage. While there is further work to be done around advancing marriage choice, iRep's efforts have created a critical mass of support transforming marriage choice into a central issue of Israeli public discourse.

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Synagogues are not rushing to reopen, even as vaccines are making gatherings safer

Shira Hanau, originally for the JTA

Rabbi Craig Scheff knows he could safely hold indoor, in-person services at the upstate New York synagogue he leads.

In fact, the synagogue first experimented with an indoor service for up to 50 people last summer. Now it's now holding bar and bat mitzvah services on Shabbat mornings for a maximum of 10 households and up to 40 people in the sanctuary, which typically held 100-150 worshippers on Shabbat mornings pre-pandemic. Those services are then streamed for the rest of the congregation.

Yet Scheff isn't rushing to resume the wider range of indoor services that his synagogue, like virtually all others across America, abruptly put on hold one year ago, even as more of his congregants get the coronavirus vaccine. Instead, Scheff and his Conservative synagogue are sticking with the daily virtual prayer service, where people can say



Congregation Shearith Israel of Dallas.

PHOTO CAPTION COURTESY OF SHEARITH ISRAEL

the Mourner's Kaddish, and streaming Shabbat services. A socially distanced parking-lot Yizkor service is scheduled for the last day of Passover, but the synagogue's other services

for the holiday will remain virtual.

"We tried opening up to a very limited number of people, very socially distanced inside and the feeling was not a great one. It

didn't feel spiritually uplifting, it didn't feel participatory and many people chose not to come," Scheff said of the first foray into indoor services last summer. "At this point in time we've managed to achieve a certain amount of intimacy and participation with what we've been offering."

Scheff's community is like many others at this stage of the pandemic: While American Jews appear to be embracing the Centers for Disease Control's recent guidance that permits small Passover Seders for vaccinated adults and hugs between vaccinated grandparents and grandchildren, few appear to be hastening toward a return of the old way of worshipping together.

For some American Jews, namely the Orthodox, in-person services were only on hold for a matter of months, with most Orthodox synagogues resuming in-person activities by last summer, many with masks and

Continued on page 9

From the Editor

Shavuot, beginning the evening of May 16, feels early this year. For me, it marks the end of Spring and I'm not



Clare Kinberg

ready yet. I want this year's Spring to last a few more months. I want surety that we are over the hump of the pandemic and that we'll be able to incorporate new ways of doing things that are more mindful. I love the essay on page 9, about learning to pray outside. Look up the B'nai Jeshurun Outdoor Shabbat Tisch on April 23 for true inspiration. If you have made some pandemic inspired changes you plan to continue, WJN would love to hear about it! Have you wondered about the changing colors in Washtenaw Jewish News front pages? They do have a meaning, inspired by this color wheel of the Jewish year.

And, finally, remember that the WJN is supported entirely by display advertising. If you patronize any of our advertisers, please tell them you say their ad in the Washtenaw Jewish News. ■



Are you looking to connect with a warm, vibrant, and intellectually curious Jewish community?

In May, the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation is opening its virtual doors!

Join us
Wednesday, May 12 for
**What IS
Reconstructionist
Judaism?**

A Discussion with Rabbi Ora



Rabbi Ora
Nitkin-Kaner

Or come to one of our other services or programs:
Saturday, May 8, 10:00 am
Pray, What?

Saturday, May 8, 10:30 am
Shabbat Morning Services

Saturday, May 16, 8 pm
**Community Tikkun Leil
Shavuot**

Friday, May 28, 6:30 pm
Kabbalat Shabbat Services

Visit www.aarecon.org for the full calendar of online events, and sign up for our newsletter to receive Zoom links.

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Community

A special tour for WTBE of UMMA

Adapted from the WTBE newsletter

More than 60 Women of Temple Beth Emeth members gathered online in February to hear Grace VanderVliet, University of Michigan Museum of Art Curator for Museum Teaching and Learning, lead a tour that was provocative, engaging, and eye-opening. Designed to help the group learn about themselves and to provide “an insider’s view of the complexity



behind events, decisions and community programs” at UMMA, the event also addressed UMMA’s effort to shape its evolving role in these changing times: “How do we tell our story as an institution that collects objects? How can we be honest about the colonial basis on which we were founded?”

The tour addressed the all-white, 24-foot sculpture of a head outside the museum, a shredded portrait of James Madison, and a largely shuttered museum that’s as active as ever. Anyone who expected a conventional walk-through of a series of museum collections was in for a delightful surprise.

After opening remarks by Bobbi Heilveil and Yuni Aaron, VanderVliet challenged participants to reflect on why they had come to the presentation. (People? Commitment? Curiosity? Enrichment?) Next, she introduced the enigmatic sculpture “Behind the Walls” (artist: Jaume Plensa), a 24-foot-tall head with hands covering its eyes (currently on display outside UMMA). VanderVliet prodded the participants to explore what we thought it meant, and she shared the perspectives of the “person on the street.” She also shared the story of how the sculpture came to UMMA and the surprisingly complex details of its installation here.

Next was a look “within the walls,” focusing on the “Curriculum Collection,” a reinterpretation of existing museum collections in collaboration with UM art students. (While the museum is closed to the public, it is open in accordance with social distancing for research activities.) Called “Unsettling Histories – Legacies of Slavery and Colonialism,” the CC aims to use art as a way into learning. The approach “rejects the simple narratives of the collection’s past and forces examination of whose history is prioritized and why.”

Among the more arresting pieces in this collection was a portrait of James Madison (artist: Titus Kaphar) that had been “flayed” by the artist to expose the other (or maybe inner) James Madison, the enslaver of more than 300 people. With juxtapositions of “old” or “traditional” art with work by artists originally excluded, the effects of earlier choices become



strikingly clear.

VanderVliet then transitioned into an overview of some upcoming exhibitions, focused again on showcasing voices not always heard (African/African-American art and a queer reading of the collection). The thorny issue of repatriation — what to do with “problematic” pieces in the collection that were obtained by a process closer to plunder than acquisition — was also examined.

Tying together her theme of a museum telling a story, VanderVliet concluded with “Beyond the Walls,” a discussion of how UMMA is telling its story in the age of COVID. From podcasts to websites and videos — even a “Stump the Curator” TikTok game show! UMMA has in some cases actually reached a larger section of the community than when the events were held in person. The event concluded with a lively Q&A session.

The “tour” was made possible by the hard work of WTBE vice presidents for membership, Bobbi Heilveil and Cilla Tomas, UMMA docents, and WTBE members Greta Spier (who extended the invitation to Grace) and Yuni Aaron, and WTBE’s tireless president, Trina Fuller.

To receive a link to the hour long presentation, write to wtbe@templebethemeth.org ■

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AARC leaders take their service to D.C., temporarily

Emily Eisbruch, special to the WJN

Sam Bagenstos and Margo Schlanger recently had a major transition in their lives as they relocated, for the time being, from Ann Arbor to Washington, D.C. Sam is serving as general counsel for the Office and Management and Budget in the new Biden/Harris administration. Margo continues her work, remotely, as the Wade H. and Dore M. McCree Collegiate Professor of Law at the University of Michigan.

Leaders in the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist

neighborhood. I'm working at home, and am getting used to the sirens and city noises (today, I thought I'd set off a fire alarm cooking lunch, but it turns out it was a restaurant on the first floor of our building).

Emily: Sam, tell us about your work at the Office of Management and Budget.

Sam: My job involves working on basically every aspect of domestic policy. In any given day, I may review regulations from multiple agencies, help prepare executive orders for the

I am working in person, though most of my staff — and most of the staff of the Executive Branch — are working remotely.

Emily: How do you hope your work will improve government and society?

Sam: I hope that I can help move along efforts to get people relief from COVID-19 and the economic dislocations it has caused and to help set our economy on a more sustainable and just path. My job is really to help government work better, and to clear

working on several writing projects — but I'm doing a bit of remote teaching, just like I did in Ann Arbor. As folks are vaccinated and the world opens up, I expect it will make more of a difference that we're living in the middle of a big city, not a college town.

Emily: Margo, you've been a key advocate for immigrants in Michigan, and you wrote about this in your April 2019 *Washtenaw Jewish News* piece "The Mitzvot of Immigration Advocacy." Are you continuing your work on immigration? Has this changed with your move to Washington, D.C. or the new Biden/Harris administration?

Margo: I've been continuing to work on immigration issues here. I just published a short article about a new legal strategy to promote accountability for disability discrimination by private prisons holding immigration detainees. (See <https://lawreviewblog.uchicago.edu/2021/03/05/schlanger-detention/>.) The Biden/Harris administration is far less anti-immigrant than the Trump administration was, and I'm hopeful that this will lead to more humane and welcoming policies. Right now, that's all still settling out, and I'm doing some advocacy to push the administration along.

Emily: How are your kids adapting to their parents' new home base in D.C.?

Margo: Our kids are juniors in college, and as it happens, they are both out on the east coast. So we're actually quite a bit closer to them from here. So far, COVID has meant that they haven't been able to visit. But it looks like Harry will spend the summer with us; he's got research to do at the National Archives, and that means our D.C. apartment will be a perfect location for him for a few months.

Emily: How has your move impacted your Jewish community participation?

Margo & Sam: Not so much, actually. AARC's communal life is entirely remote right now. So we're still able to participate fully. Sam did have to withdraw as AARC treasurer, but Margo continues to do occasional projects for the AARC Board. As live gatherings restart, we may need to adjust; there's a Reconstructionist Havurah down the street, so perhaps we'll venture over there.

Emily: Thanks, we appreciate your sharing this exciting journey with us. ■



Sam Bagenstos

Congregation, Margo was AARC board chair in 2015 and 2016, and Sam served on the AARC board in 2020. Their kids Leila and Harry were b'nei mitzvah in 2013. I talked with Sam and Margo about their new adventures.

Emily: How is life in Washington, D.C.? What are you liking and are there any challenges?

Margo: We're having a great time here, although of course we miss our friends and life in Ann Arbor. This is my third and Sam's fourth stint in D.C. — we last lived here in 2010 and 2011. So it's both familiar and new. We have lots of friends here, and hope to see more of them as people are vaccinated and COVID-related restrictions ease. The biggest challenge has just been setting up a new home: after a temporary stay elsewhere, we're living in a lovely apartment in the middle of a very busy



Margo Schlanger

President's signature, advise on the drafting of legislation, and work with federal agencies to implement the President's agenda. I feel privileged and humbled to be able to do my part to address the key crises we face: COVID-19, the economy, racial injustice, and climate change.

Emily: Sam, what size of team do you work with? Do you work remotely or in person?

Sam: OMB has about 450 employees, about 90 percent of whom are career staff. The basic ethos of the place has been described by a famous political scientist as aiming at "neutral competence." The idea is that OMB is the place that makes sure that the rest of the Executive Branch is effective and assiduous in carrying out the President's program. So, every day, I work with folks from the White House and a variety of cabinet departments and agencies.

away bureaucratic obstacles to delivering for the people. Every day, I feel like I'm helping to make a little progress. One of the great parts of my job is that I get to work on all of the domestic policy issues confronting the government. But a huge chunk of my time has focused on responding to the COVID pandemic — making sure that vaccination and testing programs can be funded and work well, protecting workers and others against the virus, ensuring kids and teachers can safely go back to school, and so forth. It's been enormously rewarding to play a role in that.

Emily: What is your daily routine like compared to life in Ann Arbor?

Margo: Really, everything is kind of dominated by the pandemic, still. I've been working from home here, just like I did in Michigan. I'm mostly on a research leave, this semester,

AARC virtual open house in May

Are you looking to connect with a warm, vibrant, and intellectually curious Jewish community? In May, the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation is opening its virtual doors! AARC is holding all of its events online. For more information about services or events or to receive Zoom links, please e-mail aarcgillian@gmail.com. Visit the AARC website at aarecon.org.

Saturday, May 8

Second Saturday Shabbat

Ta'Shma "Pray What!?" 10 a. m.

Shabbat Services 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Meditation, prayer, discussion, community. Everyone is welcome! Zoom link will be sent out the week before the event.

Wednesday, May 12, 7:30 p.m.

What IS Reconstructionist Judaism?

A Discussion with Rabbi Ora.

Sunday, May 16, 12–1 p.m.

Creating Food Justice

Fourth in a series of presentations leading up to a Shmita year.

Speakers will be Damien Thompson, PhD, co-founder of Frontline Farming in Colorado and director of the Center for Food Justice and Healing Communities, and Paul Sherman, outreach manager, Mazon. Suggested donation \$18 per session. Registration required at www.ekar-farm.org/land-justice-sign-up.

Sunday, May 16, 8 p.m.

Community Tikkun Leil Shavuot

Area rabbis and leaders will be joining together for a Zoom Shavuot Tikkun on Sunday May 16 from 8 to 11 p.m. Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit will be the keynote to begin, and then there will be multiple concurrent learning oppor-

tunities in various Zoom rooms. Email office@bethisrael-aa.org for the required link. Learning leaders will be from Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation, Beth Israel Congregation, Hillel, Jewish Cultural Society, Pardes Hannah, Kehilat Israel (Lansing), and Temple Beth Emeth.

Sunday, May 23, 7–8:30 p.m.

AARC Book Group

We are reading *The Ten Year War, Obamacare and the Unfinished Crusade for Universal Coverage* by Jonathan Cohn. Jon will lead the discussion. Email gsaltzman@albion.edu for the link

Friday May 28, 6:30 p.m.

Fourth Friday Kabbalat Shabbat

Everyone welcome at this musical Shabbat service. Come connect with community, rest, recharge, and rejuvenate. ■



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AAOM says goodbye to Rabbi Anstandig, resumes in-person summer events

Logan Wall, special to the WJN

During Passover, the Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan kicked off its spring and summer programming with a return to in-person services. The community met in a member's yard to celebrate the holiday and see one another again after a cold winter apart. (All local and state health guidelines, such as masking and social distancing, were followed.)



ing, were followed.)

Even when the weather was less than spring-like, as on the morning of the first day of Passover, this only provided a dramatic backdrop to holiday davening. In moments that seemed “too-scripted-to-be-true,” the sun burst through clouds during the recitation of the sh'ma while a light drizzle blew through during Tefilat Tal, the annual prayer that asks for dew during the summer months.

Best of all, however, were the excited and cheerful voices of children as they saw one another again and played, ran, and sang throughout the tree-framed shul.

Still, the holiday was bittersweet: it marked the final time that Rabbi Jared Anstandig would lead the community in prayer. Rabbi Anstandig

and Sarit, both talented Jewish educators, will be departing Ann Arbor after three years to enrich the lives of Jewish families elsewhere.

“The AAOM is a very special community,” Rabbi Anstandig said. “Sarit and I are so grateful to have met so many wonderful people and forged many meaningful relationships.”

During his tenure, the AAOM was able to grow its membership, deepen its ties with students at the University of Michigan Hillel, and participate in the family-oriented programming he helped develop. The community thanks Sarit and Rabbi Anstandig for their leadership, learning, and especially for the guidance they provided during the most recent year.

In the coming spring and summer months, the AAOM plans to hold weekly Tot Shabbat and Shabbat morning services as well as a monthly Shabbat picnic lunch in safe and healthy settings. All members of the Ann Arbor Jewish community are welcome to join. Email president@annarborminyan.com for further information. ■

AAOM May events

The Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan has resumed in-person Shabbat morning services, held outdoors with social distancing and masks required. Contact president@annarborminyan.org more information and for Zoom links.

Shabbat Morning

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Tot Shabbat

Engaging, accessible, song and play driven! The AAOM's weekly Tot Shabbat services resume for the spring & summer at 11 a.m. in Burns Park.

BYO-Kiddush

Drop by Burns Park any time between 11:30 and 12:30 to schmooze with friends and neighbors. Feel free to bring your own grape juice, black-and-white cookies, or whitefish salad to create a true “kiddush” feel!

Monthly Shabbat Picnics

Pack a basket, grab a blanket, keep an eye out for Yogi, and join the AAOM on the second Saturday of each month for a Shabbat picnic in Burns Park.

Shavuot Events

Pre-Shavuot Learning

Join the AAOM on Zoom Havdalah and engaging presentations by U-M faculty and community members! Past topics for Shavuot learning have included “Torah & psychiatry,” “poetry & prayer,” and “when Talmud study turns deadly.” Thursday, May 13 at 8 p.m.

Shavuot Morning Services

Outdoors, socially-distanced, and masks required. Services will begin at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, May 17 and Tuesday, May 18. Tuesday includes a reading of Megillat Ruth and Yizkor service. (Weather permitting.)

Shavuot Picnic

The Ann Arbor Jewish community is invited to join the AAOM for a Shavuot picnic in Burns Park beginning at approximately 12:30 p.m. on Monday, May 17. Weather permitting. We look forward to seeing everyone from picnic blankets spaced at least six feet apart! ■

Detroit Jews for Justice honors organizers and activists at virtual gala

From DJJ press release

Detroit Jews for Justice hosts the second Myra Wolfgang Awards as a virtual gala on Tuesday, May 4, at 7:30 p.m. to honor local organizing partners. DJJ organizes metro Detroit Jewish communities to participate in movements for racial and economic justice. DJJ will host its second Myra Wolfgang Awards as a virtual gala and individuals can join the host committee or purchase tickets at detroitjewsforjustice.org/wolfgang2021.

This year the Myra Wolfgang Awards honors two individuals and a disability rights organization. Julie Hurwitz, a civil rights attorney, is recognized as a 2021 Myra Wolfgang Honoree for her work representing victims of the Flint, Michigan, water crisis and Detroit Black Lives Matter organization Detroit Will Breathe. Rudy Simons, a peace and human rights activist, is recognized for his lifelong impact to enable peace and human rights in Detroit and the world; and Detroit Disability Power, a disability rights organization, is recognized for their work during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure access to care, testing, and vaccines for the disability community in Detroit and across the state of Michigan.


The evening will include a cultural program with contributions from Detroit artists, including visual art by Olivia Guterson, a musical performance by pianist Ian Fink and a poetry reading by the TETRA Art Collective.

The event will be hosted by Zak Rosen, creator of podcasts the Best Advice Show and

Pregnant Pause.

A fundraising online auction with donations from local artists, craftsmen, and small businesses will open on Monday, April 26, and close at the end of the virtual event on the evening of Tuesday, May 4.

Organizing is slow and steady work. Events like the Myra Wolfgang Awards are bright moments within the hardworking DJJ community for joy, connection, and pride. The Myra Wolfgang Planning Committee (Roslyn Abt Schindler, Lora Frankel, Jane Miller, Syma Echeandia, Emiko Hayashi, Miriam Chesterman, and Blythe Kim) is excited to invite the metro Detroit Jewish Community to this virtual gala to celebrate and honor DJJ's amazing partners in organizing towards racial and economic justice in Detroit. ■



2021 MYRA WOLFGANG AWARDS

A VIRTUAL GALA

TUESDAY, MAY 4TH, 2021

7:30PM TO 8:30PM

This event is an opportunity to celebrate the community we've built together, honor some of our extraordinary community members, and raise money to continue our important work.

FOR MORE INFO, TO BUY TICKETS AND JOIN OUR HOST COMMITTEE VISIT [DETROITJEWSFORJUSTICE.ORG/WOLFGANG2021](https://detroitjewsforjustice.org/wolfgang2021)

Pardes Hannah events in May

Pardes Hannah events take place on Zoom. All interested participants are welcome. Information, including Zoom links, on these or any of our ongoing services, rituals, circles, and teachings can be found on the Pardes Hannah website at <https://pardeshannah.org/> or call Renee Robbins at 734-904-5459.

Zohar: Study and Practice

Sunday, May 2, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.

Sefirat ha-Omer

Monday, May 3, 7:30–8 p.m.

Shabbat Chant Service

Saturday, May 8, 10:30 a.m.–12 p.m.

Sefirat ha-Omer

Monday, May 10, 7:30–8 p.m.

Rosh Chodesh Sivan Circle

Tuesday, May 11, 7–8:30 p.m.

Rosh Chodesh Sivan Online Minyan

Wednesday, May 12, 9–10:15 a.m.

Shavuot Chant Circle

Sunday, May 16, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Tikkun Leil Shavuot

Sunday, May 16, 9:30 p.m.–midnight

Shabbat Morning Service

Saturday, May 22, 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Love at the Center

Weekly on Thursday, 7:30–8 p.m.

Twenty-five Minute Mindfulness w/ Linda Greene, Jewish Spiritual Director (Co-sponsored with Temple Beth Emeth) Weekly on Tuesday, 8:30–9 a.m. ■

Community

Community online adventure for Israel's Independence Day

Jessica Weil, special to the WJN

In celebration of Israel's 73rd Independence Day, an estimated 100 people gathered via Zoom for "Choose Your Israel Adventure: An Erev Yom Haatzmaut Celebration," presented by the Jewish Com-

shops.

Amanda Fisher, local caterer and owner of Shuk, a new Israeli-inspired pop up take away restaurant, led Boureka Making. One first time boureka maker noted, "I am so glad I learned to make bourekas. I will be making them again in the future." Another noted, "I usually use phyllo to make bourekas, but the puff pastry was so easy! I'm not messing with the layering again!"

Yael Ross, an educator with Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor, led Design a Hamsa, which used materials on hand to make this symbol of protection commonly found in Middle Eastern homes. Metropolitan Detroit shaliach (Israeli emissary) Yiftah Leket led Street Hebrew. According to one participant, "the literal translations from the Hebrew coffee shop conversation video were hilarious." Sydney Fine, local University of Michigan graduate student and Jewish Young Professionals program team member, led the Israeli-inspired Campfire Sing-along. One participant put it simply, "Sydney was incredible!"

Clara Silver, Director of Operations and director of the Israel Center @ the J, partnered with the Federation's Jessica Weil to spearhead the planning. Silver said, "Israeli culture is best experienced hands-on through active connection to each other. Professional colleagues from many agencies were inspiring, creative thought partners. Together we created an online event where we really connected with each other despite the screens, and we really experienced something of Israel."

The event was free to participants due to a grant from the Israel Engagement Fund: A JCC Association Program Accelerator, made possible by the generosity of several committed donors, as well as support from Reinhart Realtors. The Israel Center @ the J is funded by a generous grant from the D. Dan and Betty Kahn Foundation, which is also underwriting the upcoming online program The Israel Experience: Don't Leave Home to Visit, which takes place May 9-16, 2021. Those interested in this participatory "trip" can find more information by visiting jccannarbor.org/event/isralexperience. ■



munity Center of Greater Ann Arbor's Israel Center @ the J and the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor in partnership with Beth Israel Congregation, Temple Beth Emeth, Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor, and the Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan. The event highlighted Israeli culture by hosting Israelis living in Ann Arbor and Southeast Michigan as workshop presenters.

The day before the event, participants were invited to pick up Israeli-inspired snack packs and supplies for the workshops. The packs included popular Israeli treats of Elite brand milk chocolate bars and Bissli brand snack bags, along with olives and pita crackers, and of course, hummus. Supplies included colored pencils for making hamsas and ingredients for making bourekas, the savory Israeli street snack of hand-sized filled pastry.

The community joined together briefly to transition from Yom Hazikaron, Israel's Memorial Day, as well as to learn about the impact the Ann Arbor Jewish community and Israel have on each other. Cantor Regina Hayut of Temple Beth Emeth led the community in singing Hatikvah, Israel's national anthem. She was then joined by her husband, Avishay, to perform Shir LaShalom as he accompanied on guitar. Participants then chose their own adventure to celebrate from among four different experiential work-

Director of Philanthropic Services

The Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo (JFGT) is seeking a Director of Philanthropic Services (DPS) to be part of its Endowment team. Reporting to the Director of the Toledo Jewish Community Foundation, a division of JFGT, the DPS will provide operational support to the Toledo Jewish Community Foundation in the key areas of board and committee staffing, stewardship of fund distributions, marketing of needs and opportunities, and planning and development of donor events. The successful candidate will be an innovative leader and a team player, with strong interpersonal skills and a desire to cultivate relationships at all levels. The DPS is a full-time, non-exempt employee of JFGT. For complete job description and application information, go to www.jewishtoledo.org/career-center.



Jewish Federation
OF GREATER TOLEDO



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LIFE & LEGACY is a partnership between the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, in collaboration with:



To create your Jewish legacy, contact

Margaret Schreiber, Greater Ann Arbor LIFE & LEGACY Coordinator
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Be remembered forever with a gift in your will, trust, retirement account, or life insurance policy.

TBE events May

All events and services are virtual. Go to the Temple Beth Emeth website for the Zoom links and more information.

Families with Young Children Tot Shabbat
Fridays
Tot Shabbat Services at 5:45 p.m.

Shira Service at 6:15 p.m.
All of your favorite songs led by TBE's tot team, Cantor Hayut and Rabbi Whinston. Contact cantorhayut@templebethemeth.org for more information.

Shabbat morning Torah study
Saturdays at 8:50 a.m.
Join us for this weekly discussion of the Torah portion led by Rabbi Whinston.

Saturday Shabbat service
Saturdays at 10 a.m.

Daily morning blessings
Daily at 9:15 a.m.
Join Rabbi Whinston each morning via Zoom for a short morning blessing.

Daily afternoon blessings
Mondays–Thursdays at 3 p.m.
Join Cantor Hayut each afternoon via Zoom for a short afternoon blessing.

WTBE Historical Novel Reading Group
Monday, May 10, at 12:30 p.m.
The WTBE Reading Group meets on the second Monday of each month, contact Molly Lindner at burnham@umich.edu.

Weekly Mahj - Offsite, see contact info on TBE website
Mondays at 1 pm
Tuesdays at 7:30 pm

WTBE Cooks Monday meals
Mondays, May 3 and May 17, at 3:30 p.m.

WTBE Fiber Arts
Mondays, May 3 and May 17, at 7:30 p.m.

WTBE Virtual Happy Hour
Join WTBE's virtual Happy Hour to catch up and schmooze.
Second and Fourth Thursdays, May 13 and 27, at 5:30 p.m.

Adult B'nai-mitzvah classes
Mondays at 6 p.m.
Join Cantor Regina Hayut for an hour for either an afternoon session or an evening session. To join the class, or for more information, contact Cantor Hayut.

Women's Torah study
Mondays, 7 p.m.
An in-depth study and lively discussion of the week's Torah portion led by Cantor Regina Hayut. The group will explore various passages from the portion, looking at several

translations and commentaries.

Twenty-five-minute mindfulness with Jewish spiritual director Linda Greene
Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m.

Zoom room opens at 8:15 a.m. for optional check-in. Blessing and intention setting 8:30–8:35 a.m. Meditate 8:35–9:00 a.m. Start your day centered and connected.

Talmud Tuesdays with Rabbi Alter
Tuesdays at 11 a.m. and 8 p.m.
Join Rabbi Alter to learn about the history of Rabbinical literature and some tremendous texts from Talmud!

Children's Programming
K–2 Whatchya Doin Wednesday
Wednesday, May 5, 12, 19, 26, at 2:30 p.m.
3–5 Whatchya Doin Wednesday
Wednesday, May 5, 12, 19, 26, at 3:30 p.m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner
Wednesdays at 5 p.m.
Join Claire Weiner for a 40-minute meditation session

Social Action Committee Congregational Read - The Color of Love
Wednesday, May 12, and May 26 at 7 p.m.
Register at: socialaction@templebethemeth.org
Details on TBE website

Dayenu Circle – Climate Action Committee Meeting
Wednesday, May 26 at 7 p.m.

Biblical Book Club with Cantor Hayut
Thursdays at 11 a.m.
Sundays at 3 p.m.
For more information or questions, please contact Cantor Hayut.

Back Door Food Pantry
Thursdays, 4–7 p.m.

Rosh Chodesh Circle – Sivan
Thursday, May 13 at 7 p.m.

TBE Brotherhood
Guys Night In
Thursday, May 20 at 7 p.m.

Weekly Lunch & Learn
Fridays at noon
Rabbi Whinston meets on Fridays for an informal discussion about religion. Sessions are open to the entire community. Feel free to bring your lunch.

Alden Solovy Event: Standing at Sinai
Sunday, May 2 at 1 p.m.
Event info on TBE website

Kol HaLev rehearsal and meeting
Sundays at 7 p.m.
For more information or questions, please contact Cantor Hayut. ■

Legacy donors to be honored May 25

Margaret Schreiber, special to the WJN

Greater Ann Arbor's 107 legacy donors are among the 18,000 who will be honored at the first Legacy Donor Appreciation Event sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation's LIFE & LEGACY® initiative. The event, to be held virtually on May 25 at 7:30 p.m., will celebrate each of the donors from LIFE & LEGACY's seventy-one partner communities who are securing the Jewish future through their legacy gift.

The evening will feature the stories of donors from across North America who have made legacy commitments, as well as greetings and reflections from Harold Grinspoon, Founder of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, and Winnie Sandler Grinspoon, the Foundation's president. Jonah Kaplan, an award-winning political and investigative reporter at WTVD, the ABC-owned station in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, will serve as the evening's host.

There is no charge for the 45-minute event. "Through LIFE & LEGACY, we are sustaining vibrant communities so future generations will be able to enjoy our rich Jewish culture and heritage," said Harold Grinspoon, the founder of HGF. "I am thrilled to have the opportunity to honor all those who have made a legacy commitment to date, and to encourage others to join us in this endeavor."

LIFE & LEGACY donors of Greater Ann Arbor have made commitments to 11 local

organizations including: Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan, Beth Israel Congregation, Chabad House of Ann Arbor, Eastern Michigan University Center for Jewish Studies, Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor, Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor, Jewish Cultural Society, Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, Temple Beth Emeth and the University of Michigan Hillel.

"We are excited to celebrate the 107 legacy donors here, along with the legacy donors from the other communities in the LIFE & LEGACY network, who have already committed to ensuring the long-term financial health of our valued organizations," said Eileen Freed, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor. "It is our hope that every member of the community will join us by making a legacy commitment to those organizations in our Jewish community they value."

If you have not yet had a chance to make your legacy commitment but would like to participate in the May 25 event, please contact the organizations named above or Margaret Schreiber, LIFE & LEGACY Coordinator at margaret@jewishannarbor.org.

Legacy donors who have yet to register for the event can do so by visiting <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2021LegacyDonorEvent>. ■

Jewish Federations work with growing movement for religious diversity in Israel

continued from page 1

Power of Grassroots Activism

Alongside the important fight for marriage choice, Forward Focus also highlighted Israeli Jewish activists who are invested in improving options related to kashrut (kosher) certification and public transportation. In 1983, the Israeli government passed a law making it illegal for a restaurant to call itself kosher unless it was certified by the chief rabbinate, creating a monopoly that led to corruption and frustration. In 2013, a group of rabbis responded to this dissatisfaction by providing certificates that circumvented the law by citing that the restaurant "followed Jewish law." This movement toward community-based kashrut changed the face of kosher food in Israel, eventually finding its way to the Israeli Supreme Court, where in 2018, the model was ruled legal. Food services are now able to receive certification through Tzohar, an organization providing Modern Orthodox lifecycle programs and services. "The certificate doesn't matter as much as the fact that there is a good trustworthy person behind it," shared Yaakov Ben Elul, a café owner employing Tzohar's certification services.

The power of grassroots activism is also reflected in the growing movement for public transportation on Shabbat. Forward Focus participants heard from the creator of Yambus, a service operating private buses on Shabbat. What started as a group of friends searching for a solution to help carless Israelis get to the beach on Saturday led to similar transportation movements happening in municipalities around Israel. In a county where many citizens are carless or unable to drive due to age or

ability, expanding transit on Shabbat offers individuals a way to visit family and friends, partake in leisure activities, and access necessary services. While public transit on Shabbat is still extremely limited, this movement experienced a major victory in early 2020 when Tel Aviv and its surrounding municipalities decided to operate free public transit on Shabbat, highlighting the powerful impact grassroots activism has in responding to public needs.

Advancing Religious Freedom for Our Future

At the beginning of the Forward Focus mission, Mark Wilf, board chair of JFNA, reflected that "our faith has always embraced a range of opinions. The midrash writes 'there are 70 faces of the Torah,' which tells us to seek out variety and beauty in our tradition." Wilf's statement illustrates why pluralism continues to be an important, necessary cause upheld by the Federation movement. By embracing the different ways our Jewish community, both locally and throughout the world, expresses its Judaism, we can help ensure a welcoming and vibrant Jewish community for current and future generations.

To learn more about iRep's work, please visit jewishfederations.org/about-jfna/israel-overseas/advancing-religious-freedom-in-israel. Explore Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor's impact in Israel by visiting www.jewishannarbor.org/about-us/community-impact/. ■

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Frankel Center Celebrates Class of 2021

Kelsey Robinette Keeves, special to the WJN

The Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies is celebrating the Class of 2021, consisting of nineteen minors, seven majors, and four graduate certificate students. These students graduated with a wide range of scholarly focuses in addition to Judaic studies, including political science, microbiology, neuroscience, economics, linguistics, and history of art. Several graduates will be continuing their education in, law, medicine, and business, while others have already secured employment.

Miriam Saperstein won the Outstanding Undergraduate Student Award, given to a graduating student who has achieved a grade point average of at least 3.8 in Judaic studies courses and been nominated by a faculty member for having made standout academic achievements. Saperstein commented, "Through Judaic studies I got to learn more about Jewish history, which has been incredibly influential on my art. I would take history classes and incorporate that into my ritual and writing."

Rachel Levy received the Outstanding Yiddish Student Award, which is awarded to a student whose classwork and commitment to Yiddish stands out. Levy graduated from U-M in 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in sociology of health and medicine and a minor in Judaic studies. She is currently in the Jewish Communal Leadership Program class of 2022.

This year's Marshall Weinberg prize, given annually to an outstanding graduate student who is engaged in writing a dissertation, was awarded to Pragma Kaul. Kaul's dissertation project, *Refugees in Empire: Jewish Refugees in British India (1921–1951)*, makes an original and significant contribution to Jewish studies and Holocaust studies. The Frankel Center committee was particularly impressed with the methodological and theoretical breadth of her research, as well as the transnational components of her scholarship.

Graduates with degrees in Judaic studies are moving on to an array of diverse career paths, benefiting from the education they received at the Frankel Center.

Vanessa Freedman graduated with a Bachelor of Science in neuroscience and a minor in Judaic studies and plans on attending medical school after graduation. "I loved the variety of options for classes to take in Judaic Studies," commented Freedman. "There is something for everyone, and I was able to focus on learning specific topics and classes that interested me the most."

Allison Bloomberg graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Judaic studies and psychology, as well as a minor in community action and social change. "The small class sizes allow for easy recognition, and various events also offer students the opportunities to learn with professors in a more intimate setting," noted Bloomberg. "The

center has friendly faces, a plethora of opportunities both on and off campus, and has been a backbone to my Michigan experience."

Rebecca Levy will be joining U.S. Bank as a product manager after graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in cognitive science and minor in Judaic studies. "Not only was I able to take interesting classes that I really enjoyed, but I also felt a sense of community," said Levy.

Economics major and Judaic studies minor Joshua Zack added, "The faculty and staff within the Judaic studies program at the University of Michigan are made up of high-caliber individuals with impressive backgrounds and widely recognized work. I always found the semester course lineups to be intriguing, filled with interesting courses ranging from Jewish history, philosophy, culture, and more. The Judaic studies program helped me as a Jew learn more about my history and culture. I am very thankful to have been a part of such an impressive program."

Honors student Jason Semaya graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Judaic studies, history, political science, and Middle East & North African studies. "One of my favorite things about the Judaic studies program is the variety of different courses available," said Semaya. "I have taken classes about Modern Hebrew, Israeli television and media, and Nazism among other courses. These have all given me a unique perspective on my own Jewish identity and they

have helped me develop a strong understanding of my heritage, and the history of my community."

To celebrate the graduates, the Frankel Center held a virtual event featuring faculty remarks from Director Jeff Veidlinger and Associate Director Shachar Pinsker congratulating the students and presenting the Judaic Studies Class of 2021 to their friends and family.

The 2021 graduates join a distinguished group of Frankel Center alumni. We wish them the best of luck!

Class of 2021

Graduate Certificate

Lauren Benjamin, Dory Fox, Yeshua Gabriel Buso Tolle, Sam Shuman

Major

Allison Bloomberg, Ariel Lowenstein, Marie Pattipati, Brian Price, Miriam Saperstein, Jason Semaya, Lauren Silva

Minor

Stephen Beer, Molly Copley, Vanessa Freedman, Samantha Herman, Rebecca Levy, Sophie Mittman, Alayna Nugent, Ayomide Okunade, Alexandra Popkov, Noah Rubinstein, Eliana Schreier, Nikki Shultz, Allison Siegel, Ilana Weinfeld, Hannah Wolfson, Ainslie Woodward, Ilana Young, Josh Zack, Matt Zeni ■

JCLP celebrates class of 2021 with virtual graduation

Paige Walker, special to the WJN

As per usual on the first Sunday in May, the University of Michigan Jewish Communal Leadership Program will host a graduation celebration in honor of the Class of 2021. Just like last year's event, it will be virtual and hosted on Zoom. While some restrictions have been lifted and conditions generally improved, U-M School of Social Work's commitment to public health and safety for the community means that all Winter 2021 Semester graduation events will be online.

While most, if not everything, has been online this year, the Jewish Communal Leadership Program has proved time and again to be creative in their approach to community building and maintaining the essence of their program even with the constraints of Zoom. At an alumni seminar in November, current students spoke with over 40 alums from across the country. Likewise, at the recent community conversation in March, over 105 individuals from over 20 different cities and two countries came together for robust conversation around faith communities in justice work. Even with the barriers and stress of online learning and interactions, JCLP continues to find ways to convene community in meaningful ways.

The graduation celebration will be like any other JCLP graduation, featuring remarks from representatives from the School of Social Work and Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. This year's keynote speaker is School of Social Work Field Faculty and Lecturer, as well as longtime mentor to and friend of JCLP, Su Crabb.

Crabb will be retiring at the end of the summer after her many years supporting students in their field placements (social

views JCLP admissions applications. She will be greatly missed across the School of Social Work, but especially within JCLP.



From left: JCLP Director Karla Goldman, Courtney Bushnell, Meredith Berlin, Rebecca Belkin, Simi Adler, Kayla Kapen, and Hilary Forrest.

work internship) as well as teaching. She has been an especially important person to JCLP as she supervises the JCLP students in their field experience, serves on the JCLP Advisory Committee, and re-

views JCLP admissions applications. She will be greatly missed across the School of Social Work, but especially within JCLP.

COVID-19 hit and the University drastically shut down, switching to an online format. These students not only felt the loss of finishing their first year of graduate school in person, but also the highly anticipated JCLP group trip to Israel and summer field placements (both national and international). They persevered and came together, adjusting to these changes amid chaos. They planned an incredible hybrid new student orientation, as continuing students do, and it set a tone that JCLP is both student-led and unstoppable through all barriers. The last major event was the annual community conversation and was absolutely spectacular. Both of these programs demonstrate their creativity, collaborative nature, and thoughtfulness. Not only did their efforts lead to wonderful events, but also allowed them to stand out as the leaders they are. As Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "The ultimate measure of a [person] is not where [they] stand in moments of comfort, but where [they] stand at times of challenge and controversy." To Simi Adler, Rebecca Belkin, Meredith Berlin, Courtney Bushnell, Hilary Forrest, and Kayla Kapen: thank you for sharing your remarkable gifts with us during these exceptionally challenging times.

Join the Jewish Communal Leadership on Sunday, May 2 at 10 a.m. to celebrate these remarkable individuals. Email Paige Walker at vpwalker@umich.edu for the link to RSVP. ■

This year, I learned the pain and beauty of praying outside

Esther Sperber, this essay originally appeared in the New York Jewish Week

Friday night. We are standing in a paved plaza beside Riverside Drive; the air is crisp, the fresh snow is sparkling like diamond dust in the setting sun. We are 6 feet apart and masked (I can't wait for this combined phrase to become obsolete). We join the hazzan, chanting the Friday evening prayer, welcoming the Sabbath as the sun disappears over the Hudson River. "Come my beloved towards your bride to welcome the Sabbath."

Suddenly I'm choked up, no longer able to sing. My eyes fill with tears and emotions. I have sung these words almost every week of my life — that's about 2,500 times — but tonight these very familiar words feel new and deeply moving.

Perhaps it is the beauty of praying outside.

Kabbalat Shabbat, the prayer welcoming, or literally accepting, the Sabbath, is a relatively new prayer service. It was added in the 16th century by the Jewish mystical Kabbalists (note the repeating root) in the holy city of Tzfat in the Galilee. They got into the habit of leaving the city and walking out to the nearby hills and orchard. Out in nature, they sang and meditated about God's glory as manifest in the universe and in history.

This new service was an instant hit and has become part of the prayer book canon. But for most urban dwellers, it is a rare occasion, maybe on a high school weekend trip, Shabbaton or retreat, to practice it outdoors as the Kabbalists did.

Early in the pandemic, our congregation shifted to outdoor services. We thought this would work during the summer. None of us envisioned the weekly service continuing outside through the bitter New York winter. But it did.

Perhaps it was the link to the origin of Kabbalat Shabbat, the repetition of a practice

through good times and hard times, that moved me so much. We often forget to notice the magnificence of nature in the hyper-urban concrete and glass of Manhattan.



Park bench locked off with barrier tape during the corona virus lock down

PHOTO CAPTION: GETTY IMAGES

Prayer is a strange thing. We try to deeply connect with our pain and gratitude, speak to our hopes and regrets. We say these words to ourselves with a divine intention. Prayer is something that should be so personal and private, yet I find it most meaningful when done with a community.

I have come to see communal praying as a bit like therapy. In therapy we learn to hear our feelings, accept our pain and cherish our joys. But it is hard, if not impossible, to do this work alone. We need someone, the therapist, to help

us see ourselves better. Someone who can give us permission to feel sadness and encourage us to celebrate success.

Community can play a similar role. It legiti-

mizes and creates a place for deep emotions. Together, we dare to say that life is fleeting and that the universe is vast, and history has awful moments and humanity can be inspiring. We can hold these disturbing conflicting ideas because we are doing it together, and together we feel safe and accepted. This need for community is so fundamental that our numbers have grown even as the temperature dropped.

Praying on a public New York City sidewalk, I felt exposed and vulnerable at first. Some stared, others took photos on their phone or lingered, while their dog sniffed a shrub, to

watch us, or even joined us. Can we do this? I'm sure those who use this spot for yoga on Sunday morning have felt this discomfort too.

The reclaiming of public space has been one of the surprising joys of the pandemic: restaurants using the parking lane for seating and closed streets becoming plazas for bikes and pedestrians. I realize how many things we could do outdoors if our city were designed to facilitate these activities. I hope we move toward making outdoor life in our city more easily accessible to all of its inhabitants.

The pandemic has stripped our service to its bare basics. We worship without a space, without chairs, with dim light and no heat. I realized that this was all we really needed. A committed group, willing to stand in the snow and sing together.

The hazzan sings, "He removes day and brings night, God is his name" in synchrony with the darkening sky. It is getting harder to read the small print in my prayer book, but I know the words by heart.

The lump in my throat loosens and I breathe in the cold air.

Marc Cousins, the architectural theorist, said in one of his lectures that, although philosophers will not tell you this, the sign of truth is that upon hearing it one breaks into tears.

That night I was touched by truth.

Was it the pain and loss of the pandemic? The fragility of life? The support of togetherness? I'm not sure, but it was real, and it was worth bundling up for and seeking out on a freezing, snowy Friday evening. ■

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of JTA or its parent company, 70 Faces Media.

Synagogues are not rushing to reopen

Continued from page 1

social distancing required. But for most Reform and Conservative congregations, the one-year anniversary of the pandemic also marked an entire year without in-person services, which have remained virtual to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in synagogue sanctuaries.

Even as vaccinations increase and COVID cases plummet, many of those Reform and Conservative synagogues are electing to stay largely virtual for now.

At Beth David Reform Congregation in Gladwyne, Pennsylvania, some in-person activity has resumed — but only for children and their teachers. The synagogue prioritized resuming Hebrew school over services in part because it seemed safer, given the singing that takes place during services and data suggesting that children may spread the disease less readily than adults, according to Rabbi Beth Kalisch.

Kalisch said there was another reason, too: Virtual religious school was a significantly more challenging experience, but Zoom services had proven to be a meaningful way of connecting as a congregation.

"People have not been banging on our doors asking for us to reopen for Shabbat services," Kalisch said. "We've also discovered a whole other way of being together that we never would have constructed before."

At the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, a Reconstructionist congregation in

Manhattan, all services have been virtual this year except for bar and bat mitzvahs, which have been limited to 15 people. But where Rabbi Lauren Grabelle Herrmann had originally hoped the congregation could expect to return to in-person services sometime in the fall, the uptick in vaccination rates has her reevaluating that timeline and wondering if the congregation could come back together in person as soon as this summer.

"Biden's announcement might make us comfortable coming back sooner than we thought," she said of the president's address last week that all Americans would be eligible to receive the coronavirus vaccine by May 1.

Even synagogues that are taking steps back into their sanctuaries don't plan to end the virtual services their congregants have been attending for the last year.

At Congregation Shearith Israel in Dallas, the final day of Passover will mark the first day of the synagogue's reopening, nearly a month after Texas ended its mask mandate and all statewide pandemic restrictions. The synagogue will open for a Yizkor service for 50 congregants with masks and social distancing, and will also add in-person services for one evening service per week, Shabbat morning services and Friday evening services over the course of several weeks.

"It's going to be a gradual startup in terms of the arc that it's taking," Rabbi Ari Sunshine

said of the plan.

But the synagogue is going to keep up its daily prayer service online.

"Our engagement online for daily minyanim is considerably higher than it was when we were in person," Sunshine said, noting that the virtual option made it much easier to access a weekday minyan.

As a Conservative synagogue, Shearith Israel has been offering Zoom services on Shabbat and holidays only on an emergency basis, after the movement's Law Committee published a Jewish legal opinion last year allowing online services as a pandemic measure. But Sunshine said he expects that the virtual option won't disappear anytime soon, even on Shabbat, where he thinks more people want to return to in-person services.

"Especially in a time when people have been so lonely and confined, to be able to give them another way to connect on Shabbat with community is powerful," he said.

The same goes for Rabbi Sharon Brous, the rabbi of Ikar, a nondenominational synagogue in Los Angeles, and one of its founders. Though she hopes to resume in-person services in the near future as California expands its vaccination eligibility, Brous is sure Ikar will continue to offer some virtual services over the long term.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Brous hadn't thought the virtual Ikar offerings would

become an integral part of her work. In fact, in the first weeks of the lockdown last spring, the rabbi did not participate in the community's virtual Shabbat services because she does not use technology on Shabbat.

But within a few weeks of beginning virtual Shabbat services, Brous began joining by setting up the video call before the start of the Zoom service. And Ikar is among a number of synagogues to see growth with the launch of virtual services, with 210 households joining Ikar over the course of the last year, 40 of which joined during Yom Kippur alone.

The newcomers are an integral part of the community, Brous said, even as not all of them live near Los Angeles — or even in the United States.

"We will be maintaining the online presence regardless," she said.

Some critics of virtual services have raised concerns about whether congregants will return to synagogue buildings when it becomes safe. Brous has no such worries.

"There have been really beautiful advances made that have made people feel connected in a difficult time," she said. "But I am not at all worried that we're not going to find our way back to each other." ■

'Relieved but disappointed': How America's Jewish refugee aid agency is doing under Biden

Ben Sales, originally for the JTA

Three weeks after taking office, Joe Biden announced that he would quadruple the number of refugees allowed into the United States.

For HIAS, it seemed like an answered prayer, as the Jewish refugee aid agency had endured a rough four years under Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump.

HIAS, which once focused on resettling refugees, had confronted the first president since World War II who demonized refugees and then temporarily banned them from the United States. The gunman who killed 11 Jews at a Pittsburgh synagogue condemned HIAS by name shortly before the massacre.

So HIAS was excited for Biden, who spoke of America's duty to be a compassionate and welcoming country. Biden's promise on Feb. 12 to let in 62,500 refugees in 2021 seemed to be a fulfillment of that rhetoric. Trump had set the cap for fiscal year 2021 at 15,000.

And then nothing happened. Two months went by in which Biden did not actually raise the limit on refugees above 15,000, and would not say why, despite the prodding of HIAS and other refugee resettlers. More than 700 refugees who had received plane tickets based on Biden's February promise had to cancel their flights, according to HIAS.

In April, Biden made it official: He would not be raising the cap on refugees above the limit set by Trump, though he would let in refugees from a wider range of countries in Africa and the Middle East. Later in the day, following pushback from activists, the White House said it would raise the cap in a month, by May 15.

"We're relieved but disappointed," said HIAS CEO Mark Hetfield following Friday's initial announcement that the cap, also known as the refugee ceiling, would not be raised.

Following the second statement, Hetfield added, "There's no reason to delay raising the refugee ceiling. It's just a ceiling, it's not a floor. They should be focused on what's the goal and how are you going to reach it?"

The fight over the refugee cap encapsulates a dilemma confronting HIAS as the agency moves from Trump to Biden. On one hand, HIAS leaders are glad that the United States no longer has a president who opposes refugees, separates families at the border and fires up his base with anti-immigrant rhetoric.

On the other hand, they say that Trump did so much harm, and made immigration so heated an issue, that it will be a challenge just to bring the immigration and refugee systems back to where they were before Trump. Returning to a point in which the U.S. allows hundreds of thousands of refugees a year, and passing immigration reform through Congress, these leaders say, feels even more daunting.

"It's just a relief to have that administration in the rearview mirror," said Melanie Nezer, vice president for public affairs at HIAS. She dubbed the Trump era "the fire swamp."

But Nezer is cognizant as well of "the sheer amount of time, effort and creativity it's going to take for the new administration and those of us who work on these issues to unravel and fix it."

"The prior administration really decimated our infrastructure, our systems, our staffing," she said. "It's stunning to think about the damage that was done."

In a sense, the Trump administration thrust

HIAS into a new era in its history. Founded in 1881 as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the agency at first was a resource and aid to waves of newly arrived Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. Later it worked to resettle Holocaust survivors and Soviet Jewish refugees.

In the years after the Soviet Union's collapse, HIAS shortened its name to the acronym and pivoted to resettling non-Jewish refugees

where the refugees are and where they need us," Nezer said. "Resettlement is such a wonderful, humanitarian positive solution for people, but it's only a solution for a small number of refugees."

One advantage of the work abroad is that it can be far less dependent on the U.S. president. In Ecuador, for example, where HIAS has 420 employees and 17 offices, the group focuses

that's a welcoming environment because that's the whole theme of who we are. It's really hard."

HIAS was only one piece of Jewish activism on behalf of immigrants in the Trump era. Another group, Never Again Action, was founded in 2019 and quickly received national attention for demonstrating in front of ICE detention centers, blocking the entrances and being arrested. The tactics were the most explicit



Activists hold a banner during a pro-refugee demonstration organized by HIAS outside the U.S. Capitol, Sept. 14, 2017.

CAPTION: AARON P. BERNSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES

and mobilizing the American Jewish community around advocating for immigrants and refugees.

Days after taking office, Trump announced that he was banning all refugee entry, and while refugees never stopped coming, the numbers plummeted to a fraction of what they once were. HIAS resettled 3,844 refugees in Fiscal Year 2016, but only 1,171 two years later with Trump in office.

Trump's actions on immigration, beginning with the travel ban, spurred a flood of donations to HIAS. Since the start of Trump's term, the agency more than doubled its annual budget to \$90 million. But resettling refugees — how the organization had once spent the majority of donations — became unprecedentedly controversial and difficult.

With its windfall, HIAS sued the Trump administration over its travel ban, increased its advocacy work and shifted its weight outside the U.S. The organization opened offices in Mexico to help people who were camped on the other side of the border. Overall, it opened offices in five new countries, sending its total to 16 foreign offices. Rather than helping potential refugees reach the United States, HIAS assists them in accessing resources and obtain rights and legal status in their home nations. And the agency increased its fundraising work in Europe.

"We decided we needed to do the work

on refugees fleeing conflicts in Colombia and Venezuela.

Asked whether the 2020 election changed anything, Sabrina Lustgarten, who has managed the agency's work in Ecuador, said "We haven't seen any change with Trump and with Biden."

Perhaps the nadir of the Trump era for HIAS, as for the entire American Jewish community, came on Oct. 27, 2018, when a white supremacist wrote on social media that "HIAS likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I'm going in."

Soon after, he entered the Tree of Life*Or L'simcha synagogue in Pittsburgh and perpetrated the worst anti-Semitic attack in American history, killing 11 Jews as they prayed on Shabbat.

"It was a real wakeup call for us," Hetfield said, adding that before the Trump era and the shooting, he had thought resettling refugees was relatively uncontroversial.

Until the Trump administration, according to the Pew Research Center, the United States consistently let in more refugees than the rest of the world combined, no matter who was president.

"We were such an apple pie issue," he said. "We didn't have to worry about security, and now we realized we're just like every Jewish agency, yet we have to create an environment

expression of frustration in an American Jewish community that, divided as it might be on other issues, has historically championed the rights and plights of immigrants.

Stephen Lurie, one of the group's organizers, said the group hopes to stress that even if, from its perspective, the Biden administration is saying the right things about immigrants, it can be pushed to do more.

"One of the challenges that we're facing, or anyone that's doing advocacy on this front faces, is that people may believe that the administration is doing the best it can already, and that is demobilizing," Lurie said. "There actually is still a big gap between what they can do and what they are doing."

The April announcement drove that gap home to Hetfield. He still sees the Biden administration as an ally rather than an adversary. And he's happy that the changes Biden did make will allow resettlement agencies to meet the limit of 15,000 refugees this year.

But Biden's decision to delay raising the limit means that, just like in past years, Hetfield is looking to the future, hoping for better news.

"We don't know if they're clarifying or backpedaling or what," he said following the White House's second announcement. "They should just raise the damn ceiling and figure out how many refugees they can bring in under that ceiling, and what's the plan for doing it." ■

SAVE THE DATE

Jewish Federation of
Greater Ann Arbor's

2021 Annual Meeting

Wednesday,
June 9, 2021
7pm

*Celebrate a year of
resilience*



*Optional schmoozing in
Zoom breakout rooms
immediately following
the meeting*



9 MAY

HAPPY
Mothers Day

JFS
Jewish Family Services

JFS would like to wish all the mothers, grandmothers, daughters, aunts and nieces a wonderful Mother's Day 2021!

Consider giving a tribute gift in honor of a special person:
jfsannarbor.org/donate

Jewish Poland then, Jewish Poland now

By Shifra Epstein

I first visited Poland in 1988. On March 9 and 10 of that year, I traveled to Poland with a group of 95 American Hasidim on a 48-hour pilgrimage to visit several cemeteries in Poland where Hasidic rebbes and other distinguished rabbis are buried. The pilgrimage was organized by Reichberg Travel, a veteran Hasidic Travel Agency of Borough Park, Brooklyn, owned by R. Mendel Reichberg (1922–2011), a Bobover Hasid. I was the only non-Hasidic person on the tour, and only one among five women who participated in the event. Visiting Poland for the first time and traveling with Hasidim was an uplifting experience for me.

The highlight of the pilgrimage was the visit to the grave of R. Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717–1786) in the city of Lizhensk (Lezajsk in Polish), approximately 127 miles east of Krakow. The occasion of the celebration was R. Elimelech's yortsayt, "the annual celebration of the death."

Upon my return home, which was then Austin, Texas, I was able to convince Yaron Shemer, a fellow Israeli and a student at the Department of Film at the University of Texas, to produce a film on Jews in Poland. With some creativity, Yaron and I were able to raise a modest budget from the University of Texas which made it possible for us to fly to Poland for a second time in the summer of 1988 and make the film, "Pilgrimage of Remembrance: the Jews of Poland Today."

The award-winning film will be presented on May 30 during the program "Jewish Life in Poland: Then and Now." The full program, a partnership between Beth Israel Congregation, the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, and JCC Krakow, will also feature two distinguished guests from Poland, Rabbi Michael Schudrich, the Chief Rabbi of Poland and Jonathan Ornstein, the executive director of the JCC in Krakow. The program, open to all, will begin on Zoom at 10:30 a.m.

As I reviewed the film to prepare for this presentation, I was brought back to Poland in the late 1980s, its Jewish visitors and its Jewish community as it was emerging into one of the most vibrant Jewish communities in Europe today.

For the film, we followed several Jewish tourists for whom Poland has become a religious and familial destination. After the fall of Communism and the opening of Poland to western tourism more than thirty years ago, Poland has become the second most popular (after Israel) tourist destination for Jewish travelers. Hasidim were among the first to return to Poland after the fall of Communism and continue to visit every year since. Only COVID-19 prevented Hasidim from returning to Poland in 2020 and 2021.

The Hasidic pilgrimages to Poland have a special place in the film. We meet R. Mendel Reichberg, the owner of Reichberg Travel. Reichberg was a pioneer, in the 1970s, in organizing pilgrimages to Poland. In the film we see Reichberg arriving with a group of Hasidim at the Rema synagogue (named after Rabbi Moses Isserles, known as the Rema) in Krakow.

The film also follows the pilgrimage organized by an Israel travel agency, Akivah Weiss of Bnei-Braq, Israel. Akiva Lachish Tours spe-

cialized in tours to Poland for Orthodox Jews has been undergoing a revival in Poland.



Ankah and Shlomo Newman in Miodowa Cemetery in Krakow with their recently discovered niece, Sofia Radikova, still from "Pilgrimage of Remembrance."



Local Jewish men await Hasidim next to the Rema Synagogue, still from "Pilgrimage of Remembrance."

of all denominations and backgrounds. We follow this group to the former extermination camp in Majdanek near Lublin.

The more than hundred and twenty Jewish cemeteries in Poland are major destinations for many Israelis visiting Poland. In the cemeteries, Yaron and I met several Israelis searching for tombstones of their relatives. For instance, in the Moidowa cemetery in Krakow we met Shlomo Heiman and his wife and brother searching for tombstones of members of his family buried there.

In the Jewish cemetery of the city of Kazimierz Donly, 127 miles northeast of Krakow and once the home of a thriving Jewish community, we met another Israeli, though with a different mission. Zusya Efron (1911–2002) who was born in Poland and is the former director of Mishkan Museum of Art in Kibbutz Ein Harod, had been coming to Poland since the early 1970s in order to document synagogues and cemeteries.

During Yom Hazikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah/Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day' this year, while I was writing the final version of my presentation on the film to Beth Israel, the prayer El Male Rachamim, "God, full of mercy, dwelling on high," sung by the cantor, became for me a mini memorial service.

"Pilgrimage of Remembrance" provides a glimpse into the beginnings of Poland becoming, post-1989, a home to one of the fastest-growing Jewish communities in the world.

Jewish cultural, social, and religious life

Most of the country's Jews live in Warsaw, but smaller communities also exist in Kraków, Wrocław, Łódź, Katowice, Szczecin, Gdask and several other cities. Jewish cultural festivals, kosher restaurants, klezmer bands and Jewish schools have returned to the Poland of today.

Counting the number of Jews in Poland is a complicated issue. One reason is the phenomenon of the "New Jew," young Poles who discover their hidden Jewish roots. Institutions where people can explore their Jewish heritage are growing, further contributing to the Jewish population in Poland. According to the 2002 Polish census there were 1,055 Polish citizens who declared their nationality as Jewish. In the 2011 Polish census this had increased to 7,353. However, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and Jewish Agency for Israel estimate that there are between 25,000 and 100,000 Jews in Poland today.

I recently discovered that more than 1,200 Israelis of all walks of life and of different backgrounds are calling Poland home. They live

mostly in Warsaw and work as translators, tour guides, security personal, and in high-tech.

"Pilgrimage of Remembrance" also provides a glimpse into Polish Jewry thirty years ago before the revival. In the film, we meet several old-time members of the Jewish community of Poland. They survived the Holocaust and the pogroms which followed. Their numbers are dwindling. We meet Mrs. Chana Fogel, born in 1914, who fled to Russia during the war and came back to Krakow after the war. We meet her in the Rema Cemetery cleaning the tombstone of her husband. She is dedicated to the Hasidim who come on pilgrimage to Krakow, helping cook for them in the kitchen of the Rema Synagogue.

We meet Jewish shnorers, "beggars," members of the Krakow Jewish community who come to the cemetery when Hasidim arrive and beg for money and food.

The viewer is also introduced to several (then) young members of the Jewish community. They were mostly intellectuals who were concerned with the future of the Jewish community of Poland.

Take, for example, Konstanty Gebert, then a young journalist and intellectual, who lost his job as a psychologist in 1988. Gebert is married to a non-Jewish woman, though they are raising their children Jewish. At the time, he was quite pessimist about the future of the Jewish community of Poland which, he claimed, needs leadership and scholarship.

It is interesting that thirty-three years

later, Gebert, now a well-known reporter and columnist with the leading Polish daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*, has become one of the most prominent advocates in Poland and abroad for (re)building the Jewish community in Poland.

We also discovered that in 1988, two important Jewish cultural institutions of the past were still in operation. The first is the bilingual Jewish-Polish newspaper *Folks-Sztyme*. The second is the Ester Rachel and Ida Kaminska State Yiddish Theater in Warsaw.

We traveled to the summer resort city of Shwoborow, 15 miles east of Warsaw, to observe the performance of the Yiddish theater. The performance was for an audience of one of the most prominent Jewish organizations in Poland, the Social-Cultural Association. The actors performing in Yiddish were not Yiddish speakers. They mostly learn their roles in Yiddish. Likewise, the majority among the audience didn't know Yiddish either.

In 1991, the *Folks-Sztyme* was closed for good. However, the Yiddish theater continues in other ways.

I hope this brief article and the program on May 30 will inspire more Michigan locals to travel to Poland to visit sites connected with the 1,000 year history of Jews in Poland. I am planning to return to Poland next year to participate in a 48-hour Hasidic pilgrimage, organized specifically for women, to the graves of Hasidic Rebbes and Rebezzen in Poland and Hungary. This pilgrimage, scheduled for March 24–25, 2022, is organized by Reichberg Travel and will be led by Rebbetzin Sara Meisels, the daughter of the late Bobover Rebbe, R. Shlomo Halberstam (1908–2000).

I invite Jewish women from Ann Arbor and from elsewhere in the United States to join me on the pilgrimage. I promise it is going to be an interesting and inspiring event. Men are, of course, also invited. However, they will join other Jewish men, Hasidim and not-Hasidim, and will travel on separate pilgrimages.

Visiting the grave of R. Elimelech on the occasion of his yortsayt on the 21 of Adar II (March 24, 2022) will be a good place and time for all of us, women of different denominations, to thank God for the invention of the COVID vaccine which helped us survive the pandemic.

At the end of the pilgrimage we can stay in Poland and further explore sites connected with the 1,000-year history of the Jews in Poland. In Warsaw we will visit the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews. I hope Professor Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the Chief Curator of the Core Exhibition and Advisor to the Director of the Polin Museum, will be in Poland at this time as well.

We can also visit the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and the newly expanded Auschwitz Jewish Center. And finally, you can also spend time in Warsaw, just shopping. In recent years Warsaw has become a shopping destination for many Israeli women of all walks of life. ■

Beth Israel Congregation May events

“Walking While Black: L.O.V.E. is the Answer” Film, Presentation, and Discussion Sunday, May 2, 4 p.m.

Interested in learning about your community, opening your heart to people in it, volunteering to be part of the solution in their lives and empowering others to do the same? Join us for a showing of “Walking While Black: L.O.V.E. is the Answer,” a film by A.J. Ali. The screening (90 minutes) will be followed by a presentation and discussion (90 minutes). Please register for this event on the Beth Israel website (www.bethisrael-aa.org). This program is brought to you, in partnership, by Beth Israel Congregation, Washtenaw County Sheriff’s Office, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, and the Jewish Community Relations Council.

Tot Shabbat with the Caine Family Friday, May 14, 5:30 p.m.

Join Rav Nadav, Lynne, Merav and Ziva for Kabbalat Tot Shabbat by Zoom! Bring in Shabbat with music, dancing, candle lighting, and kiddush. Invite your friends! If you are new to the program and have not received your special Tot Shabbat bag, contact Sam at szelinksi@bethisrael-aa.org.

Shabbat Biweekly Lunch and Learn: Contemporary Issues in Jewish Law with Rabbi Caine Saturday, May 15, 11:45 a.m.

From the kashrut of eating in restaurants to electric cars to Zoom on Shabbat, Rabbi Caine brings traditional Jewish legal codes and responsa to have us consider “Jewish Law” thoughtfully and to elucidate the issues of living Jewishly in our modern lives. Biweekly through May 15 following Saturday services. Register on the BIC website.

Collaborative Justice-Themed Shavuot Evening Tikkun Learning Sunday, May 16, 8 p.m.

Area rabbis and leaders will be joining together for a Zoom Shavuot Tikkun on Sunday May 16 from 8 to 11 p.m. Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit will be the keynote to begin, and then there will be multiple concurrent learning opportunities in various Zoom rooms. Email office@bethisrael-aa.org for the required passcode. Leaders from Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation, Beth Israel Congregation, Hillel, Jewish Cultural Society, Pardes Hannah, and Temple Beth Emeth.

Shavuot Morning Services Monday, May 17, 9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, May 18, 9:30 a.m. with Yizkor included

Join us for both Shavuot morning services with Yizkor included during services on May 18.

Living Room Lectures – Molli Spalter Presents “The Stories We Tell: Pulling Back the Veil on Judaism and Feminism” Sunday, May 23, 1 p.m.

Many contemporary Jewish practices are indebted to feminist interventions. Women’s inclusion in prayer service and ordination, for instance, would have been impossible without the strides made by 20th and 21st century feminist movements. While the feminist impact on the public aspect of Jewish law and practice are well known, feminism has influenced day-to-

day Jewish life in innumerable ways. This presentation will discuss two key feminist concepts: “the personal is political” and “consciousness raising,” to examine how contemporary American Judaism has been influenced by these ideas. Register on the Beth Israel website. Living Room Lectures is a partnership of Beth Israel Congregation and the JCC of Greater Ann Arbor.

Jewish Life in Poland: Then and Now Sunday, May 30, 10:30 a.m.

Join us for a brief film screening and conversation with the producer of “Pilgrimage of Remembrance: The Jews of Poland” (1991), Shifra Epstein, Executive Director of the Jewish Community Center in Krakow Jonathan Ornstein, and the Chief Rabbi of Poland Rabbi Michael Schundrich. Register on the Beth Israel website.

Theology Book Club - Online Wednesdays, 8 p.m.

Beth Israel Congregation’s Theology Book Club welcomes you to join them to read together and discuss books on Jewish thought and beliefs. The books are in English. Contact Paul Shifrin at (248) 514-7276 for more information.

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin Mondays at 3:30 p.m.

Rabbi Dobrusin will be facilitating a Talmud class online on Monday afternoons from 3:30–4:30. While we will read the Hebrew/Aramaic text, translations are available and all discussions will be in English. All are welcome to join regardless of the level of your familiarity with Hebrew.

Pirke Avot: Teachings of the Sages Thursdays at 5 p.m.

Rabbi Dobrusin will facilitate “Zoom” discussions on the classic Rabbinic text: Pirke Avot. While the title is usually translated as “Teachings of the Sages,” a more interesting translation is “Chapters of Fundamental Principles.” Pirke Avot consists of short rabbinic statements concerning ethics, faith, and interpersonal relationships. Reading Pirke Avot helps us focus on the values and principles which guide our lives. We will study the text in English referring occasionally to the Hebrew. The text can be found in the Shabbat morning Sim Shalom siddur. Check the online calendar for specific dates.

Online Services

Everyone is welcome to join Beth Israel for services, classes, and events, all virtually. Below is a list of the links to participate in services at Beth Israel. Beth Israel is now live streaming services on the Beth Israel YouTube channel (Beth Israel Congregation AA MI). All links will also be available on the Beth Israel homepage (www.bethisrael-aa.org). Please note that passwords are used. Contact the office to get the links at office@bethisrael-aa.org.

Evening Minyan Sunday at 5 p.m.

Monday–Thursday at 7:30 p.m.

Friday Evening Services Kabbalat Shabbat Service at 6 p.m.

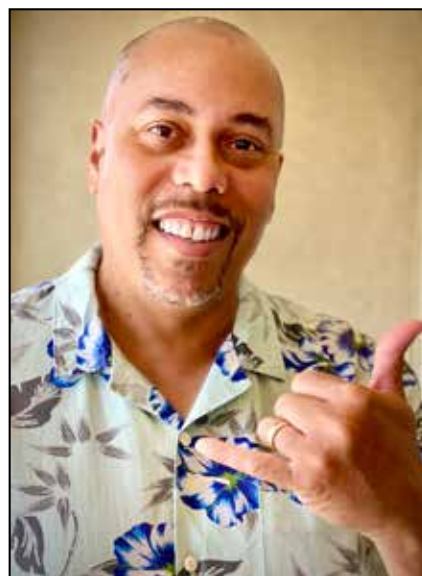
Shabbat Morning Services Saturday at 9:30 a.m. ■

BIC showing film “Walking While Black”

Amanda Glucklich, special to the WJN

Beth Israel Congregation is pleased to announce a collaboration with the Washtenaw County Sheriff’s Department on a screening for interested members of our community of the 2017 movie “Walking While Black: L.O.V.E. is the Answer,” on Sunday, May 2, at 4 p.m. After the 90-min-

ute documentary, these divisions are clear as is the way forward: we need to meet each other, talk to each other, establish the connections that overcome the divisions. Love may be the answer, but returning to the type of community policing we gave up would also be critical. Summary: Riveting and important.



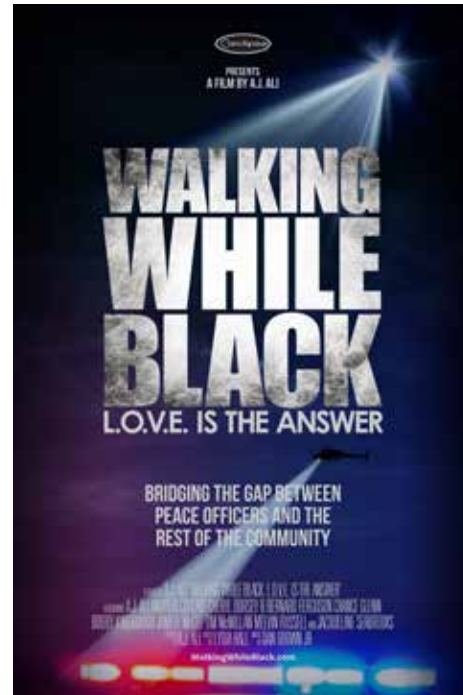
Filmmaker Mr. A.J. Ali

ute documentary, attendees are invited to stay for a presentation and discussion led by filmmaker Mr. A.J. Ali and human resources consultant/former law enforcement officer Mr. Nathaniel “Nat” Alston.

“Walking While Black” interviews police officers and community members in Baltimore, Benton Harbor, and Los Angeles among other locations to open up important issues in police/community relations.

Here is a review of the movie written in January by a BIC member:

We have been living in a “zero tolerance” environment for policing since the 1990s. This impactful documentary examines the divisions that have resulted. Seen through the eyes of both community members and



And while “love” is always important as we interact with our fellow community members, Mr. Ali’s “L.O.V.E.” stands for Learn, Open, Volunteer, and Empower — a critical approach to moving beyond rhetoric toward action. Understanding “L.O.V.E.” will be the focus of the 90-minute post-screening presentation and discussion.

There is no cost for attending the screening/presentation. We look forward to having you join us! For more information and to register, visit bethisrael-aa.org. ■

\$15 minimum wage for Washtenaw county government employees

Stephanie Glass, special to the WJN

Washtenaw County Board of Commissioner’s April 7 meeting was a short session focused on confirming appointments and passing a number of resolutions, including an approval to provide a \$15 an hour minimum wage for all regular, full-time Washtenaw County Government staff.

Chair Sue Shink (District 2) and Commissioner Morgan (District 8) will continue to serve on the Environmental Council through March 2022, aiding the Council in its work to address environmental and intergenerational injustice through policy recommendations to the county government. Notably, the Council hopes to achieve net-zero emissions from all County operations by 2030. The Board additionally approved the appointment of Linda Adams to the Community Action Board (CAB), an advisory group addressing matters related to the antecedents and consequences of poverty

as well as advocating on behalf of low-income citizens. CAB is comprised of private, public, and consumer representation, and Adams will be serving as a public representative through the end of the year.

The resolution to provide a \$15 minimum wage for all regular, full-time Washtenaw County Government staff passed unanimously and will go into effect on May 9. According to a press release from the County, this resolution will only “impact a small portion of the current workforce, as the vast majority of Washtenaw County government employees have been making over \$15 an hour for several years.” Chair Shink said that while the resolution is an “important first step,” \$15 an hour is not enough to help Washtenaw County families out of poverty. She shared that the Board would continue working to “disrupt generational poverty” and support residents. ■

Visiting art in person again, Olivia Guterson and Laura Earle

Art Review by Idelle Hammond-Sass

During Passover I had an opportunity to go to Detroit to view a temporary art installation at MOCAD (Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit) by Detroit artist Olivia Guterson. Her piece, "At Our Table," was one of the installations for REBOOT's

The exhibit, "Lumenality: Embodying Light," on display till the end of April, is a collaboration between artist/curator Laura Earle and Olivia Guterson. The impetus for the show was their dual desire to create an uplifting, joyous, and inspiring experience. As Guterson explained, she

Guterson's lacelike designs. As I passed through and under the lanterns, I felt a sense of wonder and delight. Continuing to the back of the gallery, a floating, fluttering rainbow of butterflies with golden inner wings threw shadows on the wall, moving into and out of focus, like lost souls. While beautiful and ethereal, this piece also invites contemplation, as artist Laura Earle explained that the migrations of animals and butterflies, as well as many lives lost to COVID, were very much on her mind this year while she was working.

Earle frequently uses computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) to realize her sculptural work, used here to cut Guterson's in-

the well-attended "Saturday Night Seder," the amazing Zoom seder offered last year featuring well-known entertainers.

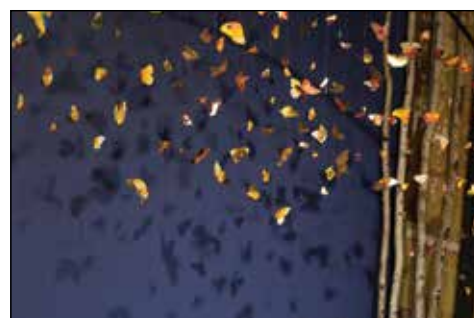
For this Passover, REBOOT was part of a national project that invited artists to create outdoor installations in cities around the country to explore the idea of "Dwelling in a time of Plagues." Olivia Guterson created an installation for Detroit, "At Our Table." Outside and visible from the parking lot at MOCAD, the installation was a riff on the theme of "Plastover" — a look at our dependency on single use plastic, and how we can "free ourselves from the plague of plastic waste," just as we get rid of hametz at Passover. At the entrance to the site, a container proclaimed "Let my Plastics Go Bitul Hametz: Nullify your plastics!" The plastic collected will be turned into eco-bricks by Hazon Detroit.

Guterson's multi-racial heritage informs her work, as well as growing up in New Mexico where she was influenced by the landscapes, textures, and patterns around her as a language that draws from both her Jewish and African American heritage. She works primarily in black and white, incorporating ancestral patterns and narratives, an unraveling and re-weaving of her experience.

As I looked closely at the Passover table Guterson had created, complete with seder plates,



Olivia Guterson working on "At Our Table."



Laura Earle's butterflies, "Lumenality."



Olivia Guterson, detail, "At Our Table."

"Plastover: An Exodus from Plastic Waste" initiative and was installed outside at MOCAD. Guterson's installation was also a part of the national "Dwelling in a Time of Plagues" commissions that were installed in cities around the country during both Sukkot and Passover.

As luck would have it, Guterson was also exhibiting at 22 North Gallery in Ypsilanti the night before I was to go. I was excited to venture out in search of art and an opportunity to meet artists, something I had not done for the past year (except on Zoom), and to see two exhibits by the same artist. And unlike online events, it was great to see people and objects in three dimensions with all the complexity of using my senses, to hear, see, and feel the space.

22 North is an exhibit space in Ypsilanti dedicated to encouraging emerging and established artists to create their most adventurous works.



Laura Earle and Olivia Guterson, "Lumenality: Embodying Light," at 22 North Gallery



Olivia Guterson, "At Our Table," installed at Detroit's MOCAD

wanted to create a space that would bring joy both to her young child as well as adults, where they could experience "hope and wonder." With the long and isolated winter, COVID, political uncertainties, actions and activism providing plenty of stress, this is a time for art to be healing and contemplative.

By embracing light, the many patterns and shadows bring the space to life. As you enter the gallery you pass through vertical branches and enter a circular labyrinth lit with pinpoints of light emanating from within. Although we were there a bit early, as dusk fell the lights twinkled and glowed gently, while in the center of the spiral were illuminated lanterns of various sizes and designs. Lanterns with openwork patterns, suspended from the ceiling, threw intriguing shadows. Two large circular paintings anchor the space on both sides of the gallery filled with Olivia

ter and Menorah designs. An active artist and curator, Earle and Ann Arbor artist Leslie Sobel are leading a group of artists to prepare a multimedia exhibition to open at 22 North in July titled "All We Can Save," based on a book of the same name. Earle's other projects have included an exhibit titled "Seeing White" which took on the long history of racism in the U.S. based on the podcast of the same name, and back in December, Guterson and Earle also collaborated on a REBOOT event for the third night of Chanukah, "The Light Within," which featured similar lantern forms in a large outdoor menorah illuminated by solar power. The purpose was to bring light and shine a light upon the families that have been impacted by COVID-19 and homelessness. Guterson's design motifs illuminated all from within.

REBOOT is a nonprofit arts and culture organization which has reimagined a number of Jewish themes and holidays, "reinforcing Jewish thought and traditions." They produced



Laura Earle and Olivia Guterson, "Lumenality: Embodying Light," at 22 North Gallery.

plastic tableware, and her lace-like meandering designs, two things caught my attention. She took the project to heart, noting she could not celebrate Passover as usual this year with her family. In order to cover the table, she had woven together hundreds of plastic bags to create a tablecloth almost 15 feet long, representing the many hours that she collected bags from the streets in her Detroit neighborhood. It was sobering, those woven bags, reminding me of the enormity of the waste we create. Each chair back (socially distanced) was marked for the four questions — How do we learn the story, re-imagining the outcome, so we can move past this consumer-driven waste?

Although the Plastover project is over, you can see the installations online at www.bycanvas.org (plaguedwelling.com) and read about it at www.nu-detroit.com/setting-our-table. 22 North Gallery has exhibits planned through the summer and fall. I hope you will feel like venturing out of your routine, to experience the joy and wonder of light and the magical worlds these artists have created. ■

Idelle Hammond-Sass is a Jewelry and Judaica artist in Ann Arbor, Michigan, www.idellehammond-sass.com.

Exploration of Jewish diversity in 5th grade at HDS

Lisa P. Bernstein, special to the WJN

“Three, two, one...play!” The boys hit play on the recordings at the same time. Masked and sitting six feet apart, they were listening to Passover melodies from different parts of the world, each on their own Chromebooks. They decided to synchronize as they listened to Yemenite, North African, Chasidic, and other renditions of Passover classics like Avadim Hayinu, V’hi SheAmda, and Dayeinu. They laughed and expressed amazement at the different melodies and Hebrew pronunciations they heard. The recordings from different traditions exemplify the overarching theme of Jewish diversity in the Judaic Studies curriculum in 5th grade at the Hebrew Day School.

While most students are familiar with the story of the Exodus and the wandering in the desert, Jewish history gets fuzzy for them after that. How did our people go from twelve tribes entering Canaan to being a Jewish people spread all over the world? Through the use of a couple lessons, which I fondly call “Jewish History on One Foot,” students get a quick overview of conquests and dispersions, highlights and lowlights of Jewish history. The students then move on to a variety of projects.

Students and their families love working on the Family History Project. Students compile a scrapbook album, complete with photos and copies of documents, which tell their own family stories. They find out why their parents chose their name and what older family members liked to do when they were in 5th grade, and

record stories about immigration from the “old country.” Students include recipes, documents, family traditions, and photos of heirlooms. Over the years, these have included wedding ketubot, conversion certificates, a unique hag-gadah, and a pair of eyeglasses. As students work



on the project over the span of several months, children, parents, and often grandparents contribute their photos and family stories — many times, stories the students are hearing for the first time.

Most American Jews trace their ancestry to Eastern Europe. We’re largely Ashkenazi Jews, and the family history albums usually depict these traditions and immigration stories. In order to explore other Jewish cultures, students also engage in the “Am Yisrael” project, in which

they are assigned to research and learn about a different Jewish ethnic group. Students learn about Jews from Morocco, Ethiopia, Yemen, Persia, Iraq, or India. They find out about how Jews arrived there, how they were treated by the non-Jewish majority, unique holiday and life cy-

course. We have only to look in our own community to see a great deal of diversity in Jewish identity. People identify Jewishly in many different ways — heritage, covenant and faith, ethics, ethnicity, and more. We end the year with the “I Am Jewish” project, focusing on Jewish identity. Students interview a parent about their Jewish identity, and are then matched with a community member who is willing to participate in an email interview. The group of community members whom students interview is, of course, diverse, composed of individuals who are secular and religious, traditional and non-traditional, young and old. The parents and community members answer questions such as how and why they make being Jewish a part of their lives, how they are connected to other Jews and the Jewish community, their beliefs, practices, experiences, and feelings about being Jewish.

Finally, as a culminating project both to this “I Am Jewish” unit, to the fifth-grade year, and all their years at HDS, students write their own essays about what being Jewish means to them at this point in their lives. These essays are often very moving, and they demonstrate that even in our own class, the students themselves have a variety of ways in which they identify as Jewish. The essays also demonstrate that our students have a strong foundational Jewish identity as they prepare to venture into the more diverse landscape of middle school. They are ready to contribute to the beautiful diversity of the Jewish community and to the diversity of our broader Ann Arbor community. ■

Jewish diversity extends beyond ethnicity, of

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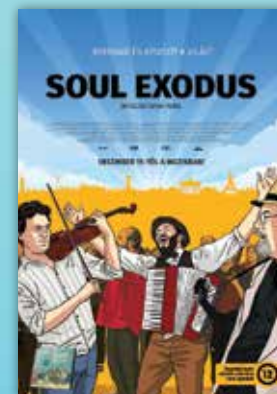
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SCHEDULE



**SATURDAY, 5/22, 11:00PM TO
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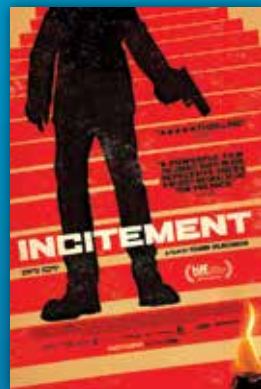
When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit
(2019, Drama/Family/History, German
w/ subtitles, 119 min)

**SATURDAY, 5/ 29, 11:00PM TO
FRIDAY, 6/4, 8:00PM**

*Ottolenghi and the Cakes
of Versailles* (2020, Documentary,
English, 75 min)

**TUESDAY, 6/1, 8:00PM TO
FRIDAY, 6/4, 8:00PM**

Documentary Short Films
(104 min)



**SATURDAY,
6/5, 11:00PM
TO TUESDAY, 6/8,
11:00PM**

Sublet (2021, Comedy/Drama/
Romance, English/Hebrew w/ subti-
tles, 89 min). **Warning: Intended for
mature audiences only (sexuality).**

**TUESDAY, 6/8, 8:00PM TO
FRIDAY, 6/11, 8:00PM**

Incitement (2020, Thriller, Hebrew
w/ subtitles, 123 min). **Warning:
Intended for mature audiences only
(violence).**

WEDNESDAY, 6/9 AT 8:00PM
Discussion about Incitement
with Professor Shachar Pinsker

**SATURDAY, 6/12, 11:00PM TO
TUESDAY, 6/15, 11:00PM**

My Name is Sara (2020, Biograp-
hy/Drama/History/War, English,
111 min)

TUESDAY, 6/15 AT 8:00PM
*Program about My Name
is Sara*

**TUESDAY, 6/15, 8:00PM TO
FRIDAY, 6/18, 8:00PM**

Ma'abarot (2019, Documentary,
Hebrew w/ subtitles, 84 min)

**SATURDAY, 6/19, 11:00PM
TO TUESDAY, 6/22, 11:00PM**
*Shared Legacies: The African-
American Jewish Civil Rights
Alliance* (2020, Documentary,
English, 95 min)

SUNDAY, 6/20 AT 1:00PM
Program about Ma'abarot
with film producer Arik Bernstein,
moderated by Levana Aronson

**TUESDAY, 6/22, 8:00PM TO
FRIDAY, 6/25, 8:00PM**

Winter Journey (2020, Biography/
Drama/History, English/some German,
87min)

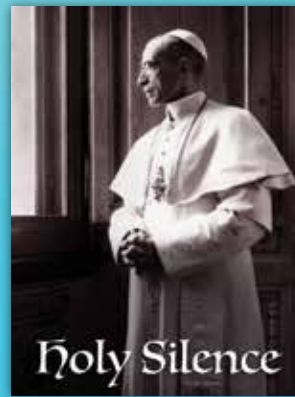
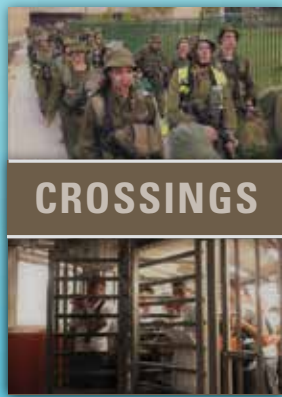
WEDNESDAY, 6/23 AT 8:00PM
*Discussion about Shared
Legacies* with director/writer,
Dr. Shari Rogers, and Heather
Booth, moderated by Dr. Karla
Goldman

**SATURDAY, 6/26, 11:00PM TO
TUESDAY, 6/29, 11:00PM**

*The Crossing** (2020, Family/War,
Norwegian w/ subtitles, 96min) ***Not to
be confused with the film Crossings.**

**TUESDAY, 7/6, 8:00PM TO
FRIDAY, 7/9, 8:00PM**

An Impossible Love (2018, Bi-
ography/Drama/Romance, French w/
subtitles, 135 min). **Warning: Intended
for mature audiences only (sexuality).**



**SATURDAY, 7/10, 11:00PM TO
TUESDAY, 7/13, 11:00PM**

Breaking Bread (2020, Documenta-
ry, English/Hebrew w/ subtitles, 85 min)

SUNDAY, 7/11 AT 8:00PM
Sponsor Night

**TUESDAY, 7/13, 8:00PM TO
FRIDAY, 7/16, 8:00PM**

Thou Shalt Not Hate (2020,
Drama, Italian w/ subtitles). **Warning:**
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**TUESDAY, 7/20, 8:00PM TO
FRIDAY, 7/23, 8:00PM**

Aulcie (2020, Documentary/Sports,
English/Hebrew w/ subtitles, 75 min)

**SATURDAY, 7/24, 11:00PM TO
TUESDAY, 7/27, 11:00PM**

The Sign Painter (2020, Drama,
Latvian/Russian/German/Yiddish w/
subtitles, 112 min)

**TUESDAY, 7/27, 8:00PM TO
FRIDAY, 7/30, 8:00PM**

Narrative Short Films (114 min)

**SATURDAY, 7/31, 11:00PM TO
TUESDAY, 8/3, 11:00PM**

They Ain't Ready For Me (2020,
Documentary, English, 89 min)

SUNDAY, 8/1, 8:00PM

*Program about Narrative
Short Films* with Julian Levinson

**TUESDAY, 8/3, 8:00PM TO
FRIDAY, 8/6, 8:00PM**

Holy Silence (2020, Documentary,
English w/ Italian subtitles, 72 min)

**SATURDAY, 8/7, 11:00PM TO
MONDAY, 8/9, 11:00PM**

Maverick Modigliani (2020, Doc-
umenatry, Italian w/ subtitles, 90 min)

**TUESDAY, 8/10, 8:00PM TO
FRIDAY, 8/13, 8:00PM**

Crossings (2020, Documentary,
Hebrew w/ subtitles, 88 min). ***This is
not to be confused with the film The
Crossing.**

**SATURDAY, 8/14, 11:00PM TO
TUESDAY, 8/17, 11:00PM**

Here We Are (2021, Drama,
Hebrew w/ subtitles, 94 min)

SUNDAY, 8/15, 1:00PM

Program about Crossings with
director Itzik Lerner

**SATURDAY, 8/21, 11:00PM TO
TUESDAY, 8/24, 11:00PM**

Soul Exodus (2016, Documentary,
English/Yiddish/Romanian w/ subti-
tles, 95min)

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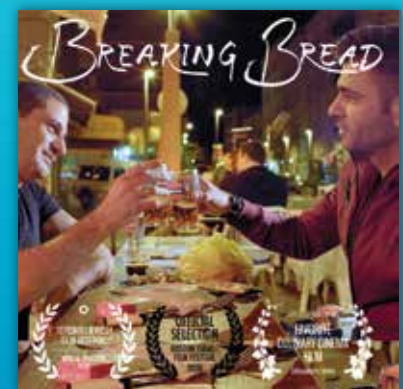
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One Jewish photographer's mission to preserve the legacy of the Rosenwald schools

Dave Schechter, originally for the JTA

To the end of his life, the civil rights hero and later congressman John Lewis remembered the half-mile walk from his family's farm in rural Pike County, Alabama, to the Dunn's Chapel School.

There was no school bus for Black children;

dren in the South, an estimated number of more than 663,000 students. Lewis was one. Others included writer Maya Angelou, civil rights activist Medgar Evers, and playwright and director George Wolfe. A study published by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago found that the educational gains by Rosenwald school students spurred many Black young adults to migrate north, and those who remained in the South had wage gains over their peers who did not attend the schools.

The Rosenwald schools closed several decades ago, a process accelerated by the landmark 1954 Supreme Court ruling that racially segregated, "separate but equal" schools were "inherently unequal" and violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.

Of the roughly 10% of the schoolhouses that remain, some have been repurposed as museums or community centers, while others have decayed with the passing years. A small number still operate as schools.

Atlanta-based photographer Andrew Feiler, a fifth-generation Georgian Jew, has spent several years

traveling throughout the South documenting what remains of the school sites. Now the images have been compiled in his book *A Better Life for Their Children: Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, and the 4,978 Schools that Changed America*, published this month by University of Georgia Press. Lewis authored the foreword not long before his death in July from pancreatic cancer at age 80.

The 136-page book, featuring 85 black-and-white images, is the product of 3 1/2 years of research — and 25,000 miles of driving. Feiler photographed 105 of the structures that once housed Rosenwald schools, along with some of the men and women whose lives were changed by the education they received in their classrooms.

"It simply became imperative that I share these stories as part of this endeavor, so each image or pair of images comes with a narrative written by me," the 59-year-old Feiler said. "This is a book of photography, but it is also a book of stories."

Rosenwald, who was born in 1862 and died in 1932, was part owner and president of Sears, Roebuck & Co., back when the Sears, Roebuck mail-order catalog was the Amazon of its day. As a member of Chicago Sinai Congregation, he was influenced by the social justice teachings of Rabbi Emil Hirsch, one of which held that "property entails duties."

For his part, Rosenwald believed that Jews

should uniquely sympathize with the plight of African-Americans.

"The horrors that are due to race prejudice come home to the Jew more forcefully than to others of the white race, on account of the centuries of persecution which they have suffered and still suffer," he said.

In 1912, a couple of years after reading Washington's autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, Rosenwald met its author, the founder of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (today called Tuskegee University). Together they set out to change the educational landscape of the region.

Rosenwald personally invested \$4.3 million — more than \$80 million in today's currency — to construct the schools. In varying ratios over the years, matching funds came from the Black community and white-controlled governments.

Rosenwald's philanthropic philosophy was "give while you live," believing that a foundation should expend its funds within a predetermined period. To that end, he stipulated that the Rosenwald Fund, created in 1917 to support the schools and his other philanthropic projects, should cease operations within 25 years of his death.

By the time the fund stopped operating in 1948, some \$70 million (equaling more than \$700 million today) had been spent benefiting schools, colleges and universities, Jewish charities and institutions serving the Black community. Recipients of Rosenwald-funded fellowships included singer Marian Anderson; poet Langston Hughes; authors James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison and W.E.B. Du Bois; diplomat Ralph Bunche; photographer Gordon Parks; and choreographer-dancer Katherine Dunham.

The fund also financed early litigation by the NAACP, the nation's oldest civil rights organization, that led to the historic Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka making integrated education the law of the land. The decision also began the close of the era of the Rosenwald schools.

Despite some recent efforts to tell the story of the Rosenwald schools, including the 2015 documentary "Rosenwald," it remains a lesser-known piece of American history. That's what attracted Feiler to the project.

Feiler spoke to Jeanne Cyriaque, a historian of African-American culture, and she detailed her efforts to preserve what remained of the Rosenwald schools.

As the African-American Programs coordinator for Georgia's Historic Preservation Division, Cyriaque sought out the oldest structures in Black communities in the state's 159 counties.

"In that quest I would ultimately become a preservationist of remaining [Rosenwald] schools and an advocate for documenting their powerful stories of African American achievement in education," she wrote in a contribution to Feiler's book.

Feiler said the story of the schools "shocked me."

"How could I [have] never heard of Rosenwald schools? The pillars of this story — Jewish, Southern, progressive, activist — these are the pillars of my life," he said. "That afternoon I sat at my desk in Atlanta and Googled 'Rosenwald schools.' I quickly found there were a few books on the topic, but there was no comprehensive photographic account. I set out to create exactly

that."

Feiler, a Savannah native, began taking photographs as a 10-year-old, wielding a Kodak Instamatic. His avocation has since become a vocation.

"Starting in mid-2008, I went through 4 1/2 very difficult years — the death of a business partner, near-death of my brother, health collapse of my father and over three years of real estate workouts during the Great Recession," he said. "Collectively these experiences caused me to ask what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I still manage our family real estate business, but I now do it part-time."

His first book, published in 2015, was *Without Regard to Sex, Race, or Color: The Past, Present, and Future of One Historically Black College* (University of Georgia Press), a tour of abandoned classrooms and facilities at Morris Brown College in Atlanta. The school, on the city's west side, emerged relatively recently from bankruptcy and is seeking reaccreditation.

Feiler's latest work was influenced artistically by the early history of the Rosenwald schools, specifically a pilot project built near Tuskegee.

"Washington sent Rosenwald photographs of the children and teachers proudly gathered in front of their new schools," Feiler said. "These deeply moved Rosenwald and contributed to his support for expanding the program. Making such photographs became common, and they are a prominent visual element of the program's history."

Feiler usually works in color, "but I found this history so compelling that I decided to pay homage to these historical images and shoot my Rosenwald schools work entirely in black and white and horizontal," he said.

Feiler hopes his book can add to the steps that have been taken to preserve Rosenwald's memory. In 2002, the National Trust for Historic Preservation declared the Rosenwald schools a National Treasure, placing them on its list of Most Endangered Places and providing assistance "to help save these icons of progressive architecture for community use."

On Jan. 13, the day that he was impeached by the House of Representatives, President Donald Trump signed the Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools Act of 2020, which directs the Department of the Interior to study the sites of the former schools for preservation. It's a first step toward creating a multistate national park that would include some of the surviving schoolhouses and a visitors center in Chicago. Backers say it would be the first national park site to honor a Jewish American.

The Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation has erected markers acknowledging the role played by the Jewish philanthropist at Tuskegee University in Alabama, and at the sites of Rosenwald schools in Warrenton and Rectortown, both in Virginia.

Rosenwald and Washington's shared vision changed the educational landscape of the South and expanded the horizons for generations of students. That certainly was the case at the Dunn's Chapel School, where the young John Lewis loved to read biographies and learned "that there were black people out there who had made their mark on the world," as he wrote in the foreword to *A Better Life for Their Children*.

The structure itself may have been basic in design and lacking amenities, but as Lewis remembered: "It was beautiful, and it was our school." ■



A portrait of Jewish philanthropist Julius Rosenwald at the Noble Hill School in Bartow County, Ga. one of his namesake "Rosenwald schools" for Black children in the segregated South. (Andrew Feiler)



A restored classroom at the Pine Grove School in Richland County, South Carolina, one of the "Rosenwald schools" funded by the Jewish philanthropist Julius Rosenwald to educate Black children in the segregated South. Caption (Andrew Feiler)



Photographer Andrew Feiler at the Carver School in Coffee County, Ga., working on his project documenting the sites of former Rosenwald schools.

Lewis' hike was short compared with the miles walked by many of his classmates. They were being educated in surroundings separate from whites, but hardly equal.

The school was a small, wooden, white-washed building with a large window. An interior wall partitioned the space into two rooms, heated by potbelly stoves, burning wood that students fetched from a nearby forest. Water was drawn and carried from a farmer's well up the road.

Dunn's Chapel was a "Rosenwald school," one of nearly 5,000 such schools built across 15 Southern states from 1912 to 1932. This effort was an outgrowth of a collaboration between Julius Rosenwald, the son of German Jewish immigrants and a leading philanthropist of his time, and Booker T. Washington, the renowned educator born into slavery in Virginia.

In the years they operated, Rosenwald schools educated one-third of rural Black chil-

Looking for Rose: The daily ferry to Benton Harbor

Clare Kinberg 17th installment in a series

My Aunt Rose and her husband Mr. Arnwine lived on Chicago's southside at the beginning of World War II, but by 1943, Mr. Arnwine already had a Michigan address on Paw Paw Street in Benton Harbor, directly across Lake Michigan from Chicago. I found his address on the deed of sale for 25 acres he and two other men from Chicago bought on a lake in Vandalia, Michigan. Little Paradise Lake was about an hour's drive southwest from Benton Harbor, almost to the Indiana border. I also found in the archives of the Cass County Recorder of Deeds that a few years later, in 1946, the land was divided among the three couples whose husbands had bought it.

If I could have interviewed Aunt Rose and Mr. Arnwine about their lives, my first question would have been, "how did you meet?" The next question I'll never be able to ask is, "why did you leave Chicago and move to Vandalia, Michigan?" I imagine they were looking for a place where an interracial Black and Jewish couple could breathe.

As World War II continued, Chicago's southside, already densely populated, became suffocatingly overcrowded. There were plenty of jobs, but for working class African American men, employment outside of the Black Belt started at the bottom — in the furnace room or equivalent — and discrimination kept Black workers from advancing. Before the Equal Rights Act of 1964, employers could legally segregate their employees, relegating Black women and men to the least secure, lowest-paid jobs. Black professionals in Chicago — doctors, lawyers, politicians, and business owners — were accumulating wealth, but still facing considerable confines. Travel and leisure activities such as sports and entertainment at clubs, theaters, and restaurants were limited by racism and segregation.

At the same time, opportunities were opening up across Lake Michigan in a region that, while predominantly segregated, also had pockets of determined anti-racist integrationists, farms owned by Black families, resorts for African Americans, and new manufacturing plants that hired all races. Benton Harbor's war boom went beyond Whirlpool, Superior Steel, and Remington Rand, with a growing entertainment economy at its beach resorts and hotels.

In her 2007 book *A Stronger Kinship: One Town's Extraordinary Story of Hope and Faith*, about the growth in the 1800s of the small town of Covert, Michigan, just a few miles north of Benton Harbor, Anna-Lisa Cox tells the story of a community committed to freedom and racial equity. Some of the founders of Covert were Black Civil War veterans from Vandalia, who walked the 30 miles to Covert to stake a new claim. Many of the early white pioneers came to Covert as members of a radical, abolitionist, Congregational church influenced by William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass. *Stronger Kinship* tells rare stories of white men loaning Black men needed money to start businesses, all very conscious that "race should not define a man's dreams or hamper his potential." These business transactions were taken with full knowledge that "It was not unheard of in nineteenth-century Midwest for successful Black businessmen to be shot as they stood

in their own front yard or to be run out of town for competing with white businesses."

The town's name, "Covert," has led me into a deep meditation on the Hebrew scriptures, much like the word "Exoduster" inspired in me a few years ago. When the Exodusters left the South in 1877 bound for



Kansas, it was their hope and faith in the God of Exodus that carried them.

Cox connects the naming of this small village of Covert in 1876 with the Hebrew word "mistor," which is often translated as a "covert," and sometimes as a "hidden refuge." Cox writes, "The word [covert] connotes concealment and shelter. This community was a symbol of all that white supremacists were arguing was impossible and overtly abhorred. ... These settlers of Covert were people of great faith and were almost certainly aware of this passage from the book of Isaiah: 'There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain' (4:6)." The connotations of covert continue further on in Isaiah, speaking of a "hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (32:2).

In the same Michigan region as Covert, other places of refuge were built. Two hours' drive northeast of Covert is the legendary Black lakeside resort town of Idlewild. When W.E.B. DuBois visited Idlewild in 1920, he was inspired to buy a plot there and wrote in his magazine *The Crisis*, "For sheer physical beauty — for sheen of water and golden air, for nobleness of tree and flower of shrub, for shining river and song of bird, and the low moving whisper of sun, moon, and star, it is the beautiful stretch I have seen ... and then to add to that fellowship ... all sons and grandchildren of Ethiopia, all with the wide leisure of rest and play — can you imagine a

more marvelous thing than Idlewild?"

Idlewild was a gathering place for African American elite society, but I imagine all African Americans had heard of it, its reputation something like "Beverly Hills" when I was growing up. A place name that can stand in for the rich and famous. But Idlewild, surrounded by woods and farms, was also largely hidden from white people's gaze.

In 1940, daily ferries traveled over Lake Michigan from Chicago to Benton Harbor, carrying vacationers, tourists, and seasonal workers. Benton Harbor boasted the "world's largest open air fruit market" and surrounding farms supplied produce direct from farmers to individuals, restaurants, and brokers in the whole region, including Chicago.

Perhaps on a frigid Chicago day, Rose or Mr. Arnwine saw the ad in the February 17, 1940 *Chicago Defender*, put there by Dr. C. A. Mott of South Bend, Indiana, for 40 acres of land near Paradise Lake, Michigan. It wasn't the lake of Idlewild, but a different small lake just north of Indiana, in Cass County.

Dr. Cassel A. Mott was a respected family doctor who like many African Americans in South Bend had ties to Cass County, Michigan, and to Chicago. Perhaps Rose made some inquiries, took the ferry over to Michigan, brainstormed how to come up with the money. Perhaps Rose and Mr. Arnwine talked up the possibilities with some friends. Across S Michigan Avenue from their kitchenette lived another couple, Leon and Ivie, and a few blocks away, another friend, Lionel and his wife. All of them would likely have heard of Idlewild, where the wealthiest and most influential of their neighbors vacationed.

In the 1940s, the official highway map issued by the Cass County Road Commission was titled "Cass County the playground of Southwestern Michigan." The map lists popular lake side fishing and boating resorts. Out of the dozens of named locations, Paradise Lake near Vandalia is notably the only place listed as "a tourist resort lake devoted to colored people."

Three Black Chicago doctors, including the nationally known, trailblazing dermatologist Dr. Theodore K Lawless, invested in land on Paradise Lake and built a small hotel. Historians of the region have taken oral histories from Vandalia locals that report Dr. Lawless and the others were hoping to replicate the success of Idlewild, perhaps on a smaller scale. Within three years of Dr. Mott's ad in the *Defender*, Aunt Rose and Mr. Arnwine and two other couples together bought land on that same lake in Michigan.

Imagining this move, from Chicago to Paradise Lake in Vandalia via Benton Harbor

brings me so close to Aunt Rose I can almost inhabit her.

When I was in my early twenties, I made my first of three moves to rural areas where I lived amidst farmland, with enough space to grow large gardens. The first time in my early twenties, I moved to a lovely 140 acre communally-owned piece of land in southern Missouri shared with a constantly changing collective of lesbians. On the farm, my ecological values, my nature-based spirituality, my desires for simplicity and self-sufficiency could all be explored.

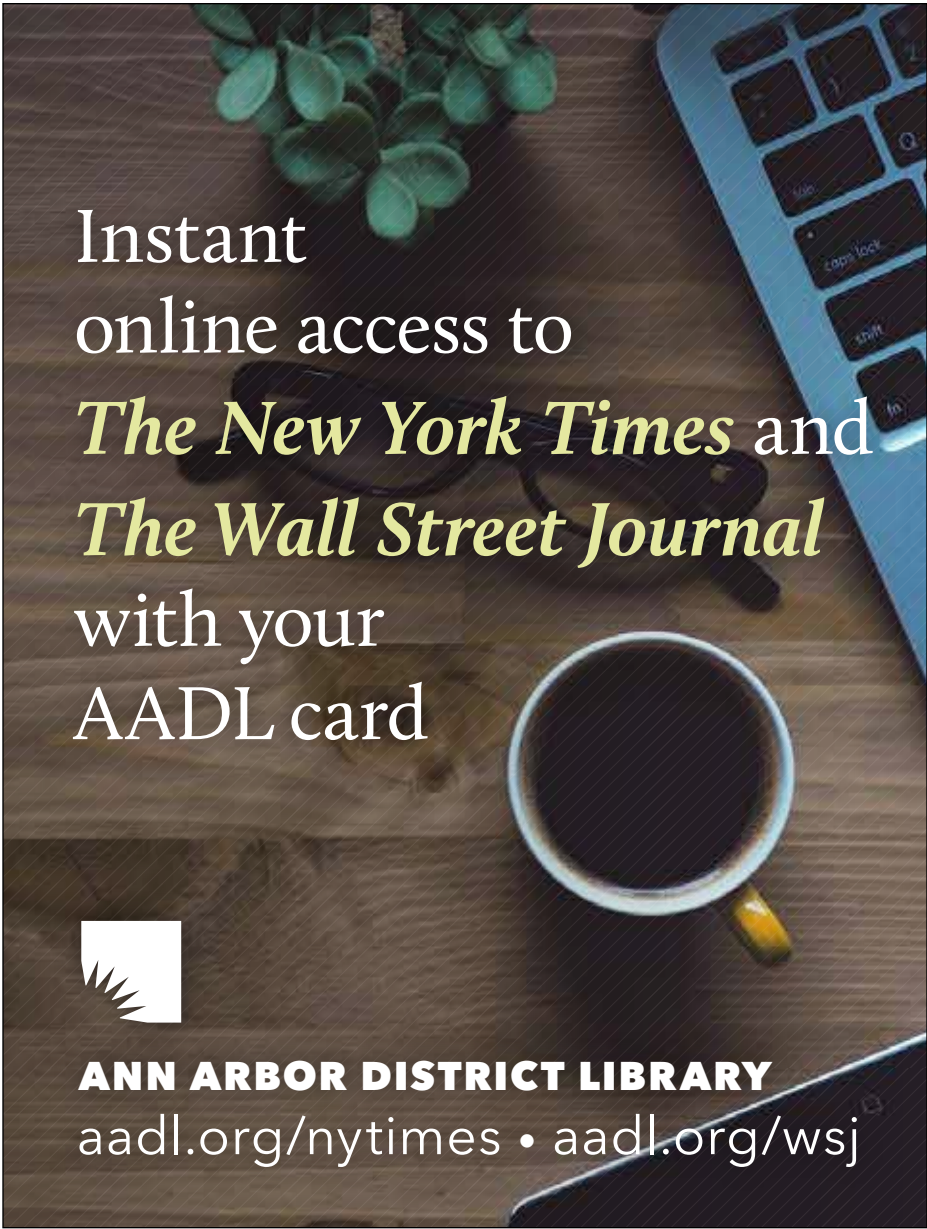
I loved these challenges, but they were far from fulfilling. I also thrived on interacting with people of different races and ethnic backgrounds in the city. The culture of white rural America was not for me, even if I loved waking to the sounds of chickens and goats rather than traffic. My childhood in the all-white suburbs of St. Louis was more than enough segregation for my lifetime. Learning what it takes to chip away at racial injustice felt as necessary to me as fresh air.

The posse of lesbian-feminist radicals I ran with were anomalies in city and country, in white and Black communities. But as I, and then Patti and I, searched around for the right place to live, our choices always seemed limited to urban/racially complex vs rural/white. We discussed this frustrating choice so often, and moved around so many times, that the conundrum was permanent background noise to my life.


When Patti and I got the call in 1998 that our daughter had been born and needed an adoptive family, we were living on an idyllic few acres outside of Eugene, Oregon. We had abundant plum and apple trees and a half acre garden that we'd fenced against the deer and our large capricious dogs. We heated the small home with a wood stove and drank and watered the growing vegetables with an elaborate system fed from the well in a corner of the garden. In our five years there, we'd painted the house inside and out, built a pottery studio for Patti, put in all new electrical wiring, and fed ourselves almost entirely from our own garden. Yet as parents of a Black child, we knew we would be moving. We needed to live somewhere a Black child could be in Black community, ideally a rural area or a small town.

When I discovered that the aunt whom I'd never met lived most of her life in what was then the most racially mixed rural county in the entire Midwest, I was awestruck. She had found what I had been looking for, and now I had found her.

The farm and lakeside community that Rose and Mr. Arnwine made their home was a sparsely populated, rural corner of Michigan with a history that has fascinated me, and others, but which has eluded a true telling. Their covert remained concealed. They raised chickens and sold eggs among Black farmers who'd come to Michigan before the Civil War. I can't ask them how or why they chose Vandalia, Michigan, but perhaps in 1943 it appeared as a possible haven, a refuge, from segregation and anti-Black racism where an interracial couple might breathe. ■



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Savit responds to criticism of new policies regarding sex work.

by Eli Savit

I write in response to Lori Lichtman's letter to the editor criticizing the Washtenaw County Prosecutor's policy regarding sex work, and urging our office to adopt the so-called "Equality Model" (otherwise known as the "Nordic Model") in which buyers of sex face prosecution, but sellers do not.

Two preliminary points. *First*, our office has not (and could not) "decriminalize" anything. The laws relating to prostitution in the State of Michigan remain on the books. So, too, do parallel city and township ordinances within Washtenaw County that prohibit both the buying and selling of sex (and, as under state law, are punishable as misdemeanors). Violations of those misdemeanors, it bears emphasis, can still be prosecuted by city and township attorneys, without any involvement by our office.

Our policy is simply an exercise in prosecutorial discretion, geared towards ensuring that we are focusing on crimes such as trafficking, sexual assault, physical assault, and the victimization of children. It is my belief that we can much more effectively go after these serious offenses if we have the trust of those who are involved in commercial sex — and encourage victims to report crimes without fear of state-level prosecution.

Second, to be absolutely clear, the entirety of the policy is about the safety and well-being of sex workers. We are committed to going after traffickers, those who commit sexual assaults, and those who commit physical assaults. Our policy expressly provides that we will continue to prosecute pimps and brothel-owners. And it also provides that we will bring charges against those who seek to purchase sex from minors or trafficked persons.

Indeed, we have *expanded* the situations in which we will seek serious criminal charges against buyers. To my knowledge, for example, we are the only prosecutor's office in the entire

state that has said that we will bring sexual assault charges against buyers who refuse to wear a condom despite a sex worker's expressed wishes, or against buyers who refuse to pay a sex worker.

But we need the trust of sex workers if such crimes are to be reported and prosecuted. How best to facilitate that? Many people (including Dr. Lichtman) appear to agree that we should not charge sex workers. The question is what to do with buyers. And though the Nordic/Equality Model — in which buyers are targeted for criminal charges, but sex workers are not — may sound good in theory, the real-world results indicate that model has caused significant harm.

Research indicates that when only buyers are criminalized, it makes buyers more likely to disguise their identities and to rush negotiation. It also makes transactions more likely to be consummated in remote and unsafe locations. As the American Civil Liberties Union has concluded, all of this can "increase the risk of disagreement and violent or aggressive escalation by the client during or after the fact."

Furthermore, in practice, an "end demand" model makes sex workers far less likely to report serious crimes to law enforcement. That is because they fear future surveillance and harassment by police (even if only to "arrest buyers"), as well as consequences such as deportation or eviction.

There are many troubling examples which validate these concerns. After France adopted the "end demand" model, for example, 10 sex workers were killed in the span of six months. Similarly, after Ireland adopted an "end demand" model, violent attacks against sex workers increased by 92%.

And deaths and violence are just the tip of the iceberg. A 2018 report by Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World) concluded that

the introduction of the Nordic/Equality Model in France "has had a detrimental effect on sex workers' safety, health, and overall living conditions." The same report concluded that "the law has pushed sex workers to operate under more risky conditions with dangerous implications for their health." Observed effects included a "worrying decrease in condom use," "increased difficulties continuing treatment for those who are HIV positive," and an increase in "cases of violence, of all kinds," including "insults in the street, physical violence, sexual violence, theft, and armed robbery." Sex workers in France reported that even in the face of this increased violence, they "would never report that violence to the police."

What is more, public health officials from around the world have concluded that *full* decriminalization is key to preventing the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. That is because if sex workers do not fear going to the police to report assaults, they are more likely to be able to insist on condom use.

Indeed, a series of research papers in *The Lancet* — the world's leading independent medical journal — concluded that decriminalization of sex work would have "the greatest effect," worldwide, on reducing new HIV infections in the next decade. Other leading public-health organizations have reached similar conclusions, including the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

And again: this has been borne out by real-world data. Though Dr. Lichtman refers to Rhode Island's decriminalization of indoor sex work as a "failed experiment," many of the outcomes were in fact quite positive. Specifically: after Rhode Island decriminalized indoor sex work, gonorrhea rates in women fell by a staggering 40%. Sexual assaults, moreover, fell by more than 30%. And in Baltimore, the State's Attorney permanently adopted a policy of not

charging consensual sex work after a year's worth of data from a "trial run" showed a significant decrease in violent crime.

All of this is why *every* sex workers' rights organization from across the globe has called for policies that resemble ours. So, too, have the ACLU, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Freedom Network USA (the nation's leading coalition of anti-trafficking organizations working to protect the rights of trafficking survivors). And these calls are also echoed by many leading feminist organizations. Indeed, Survivor's Agenda — a coalition of groups working to end sexual assault including Me Too, Time's Up, the YWCA, and the National Women's Law Center — has called for full decriminalization.

To be clear, we are laser-focused on combating trafficking, sexual assault, and physical assault. And the argument that policies like ours increase trafficking simply is not borne out by data. Dr. Lichtman's letter suggests that Nevada has seen increased trafficking rates as a result of sex-work legalization. But in fact, over 90% of sex trafficking in Nevada takes place in Reno and Las Vegas — *jurisdictions in which sex work is entirely illegal*. Very little occurs in the few rural Nevada counties that have legalized sex work.

We recognize that sex work is a complicated and nuanced subject, and there are good-faith disagreements from those on all sides of the issue. I trust that many proponents of the Nordic/Equality Model approach this issue from a place of compassion. At the end of the day, however, our office is committed to looking at the data and research, and implementing policies that have the best chance of reducing harm. We also have had multiple conversations with sex workers themselves — who will of course be most affected by our policies.

Their voices, their lives, and their safety matter. ■

Ann Arbor developing unarmed public safety response program

Molly Kleinman, special to the WJN

On Monday, April 5, the Ann Arbor City Council unanimously approved a resolution that is the first step toward developing an unarmed public safety response program including having non-police professionals respond to certain 911 calls. The resolution instructs city administrator Tom Crawford to collaborate with Washtenaw County, the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office, and relevant community agencies, and to consult with the city's Independent Community Police Oversight Commission, and to include the program in the 2022 city budget.

Police officers are often asked to respond to calls better suited to subject matter experts with training and expertise in areas such as conflict resolution, mental health, and human services. Since 2015, 22 percent of people killed by police nationwide suffer from mental illness, often occurring during calls where the deployment of armed police officers was not necessary. Being killed by police is the sixth leading cause of death for young Black men.

Paul Fleming, a University of Michigan public health professor, was among the public speakers who called into the

meeting in support of the unarmed responder resolution. "Current policing



Aura Rosser

practices have spillover effects on the entire community, particularly communities of color, making people who live in areas that are aggressively policed more likely to suffer mental health issues and physical health ailments," he said. "Simply put, the current system of policing throughout the U.S. and including in our own area harms

people's health and we need to envision alternatives that do not include firearms, surveillance, and harassment, and take a more humane approach to public safety."

Using talking points developed by the Washtenaw Housing Alliance and Avalon housing, Bend the Arc Jewish Action: Greater Ann Arbor sent an action alert urging its members to contact the City Council in favor of the resolution. "Creating this program would be an important step in reducing police violence and improving safety for everyone in our community ... Public safety is about more than just policing; when residents experience crime or disorder, they should have tools beyond the police at their disposal."

Liberate Don't Incarcerate, a local group advocating for a community-based vision of public safety grounded in human dignity and liberation, expressed concern that the resolution was created without adequate input from residents, and that it embedded the police and sheriff's departments in the program. While they support the creation of an unarmed responder program, it "must be de-linked from policing and police departments," and they

asked that the resolution be tabled until there could be "meaningful participation designed with and by community-led groups."

The City Council unanimously passed the resolution. Now the process of planning an unarmed responder program begins, but a separate decision will be required to fund and create it. Council Member Linh Song, Ward 2, a co-sponsor of the resolution who also represents City Council on the police oversight commission, said "We are committed to a robust public engagement process as we create this program, and will take special care to include the communities most affected by policing and criminalization."

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action Greater Ann Arbor is committed to sharing information about the planning process, ensuring that impacted communities are included and centered, and engaging with the Jewish community to advance safety and equity for all members of the community, especially for Black, Latinx, Asian, and other communities of color. ■

How Duolingo created a Yiddish course with a secular scholar and Hasidic Jews from Brooklyn

Gabe Friedman, originally for the JTA

When Meena Viswanath signed on more than two years ago to help Duolingo, the world's largest language learning app, create its first Yiddish course, she knew it wouldn't be easy.

But Viswanath, the daughter and granddaughter of famed Yiddish scholars who speaks Yiddish at home with her children, assumed most of the difficulties would be technical. She wasn't prepared for the challenge of blending the academic Yiddish she knows with the everyday dialect spoken by her Hasidic colleagues on the project.

The result of those negotiations will be visible when the course goes live on April 6, tapping into the groundswell of interest in the language spoken by at least 500,000 Jews around the world and studied by others.

"We used mostly the spelling and grammar that's a little bit more formalized among the secular Yiddishists," Viswanath said. "But then when we recorded the audio, we used the pronunciation that is used in the vernacular among students, specifically in Borough Park in Brooklyn and so forth."

Launched in 2012 to help Spanish-speaking immigrants access English education, Duolingo now offers 40 languages on a free app that condenses language learning into what many, its founder included, have compared to a game. Users accumulate points and climb leaderboards of fellow "players" for finishing lessons and practicing every day. Its cast of cartoonish characters, including its mascot owl aptly named Duo, adds to the fun atmosphere.

The company is taking the dopamine boost to a new level for promoting the Yiddish course: Those who start on its launch date can get a free bagel courtesy of Duolingo at a few participating shops across the country, including Katz's Deli in New York and Manny's Cafeteria in Chicago — as long as the users place their orders in Yiddish.

The new course comes amid an explosion of interest in Yiddish instruction during the pandemic. The Workers Circle classes last summer had 305 students from 20 countries

and 32 states, a 65% jump from the previous year. Meanwhile, YIVO's Uriel Weinreich Summer Program saw attendance increase by 60%



Duolingo is giving users who order in Yiddish a free bagel on the course launch date. CAPTION: DUOLINGO

to 120 people — and then five times as many students enrolled for the winter program compared to the previous year.

"It was a chance of a lifetime for people who didn't have to come to New York and spend money on renting a place, which can cost more than the registration for the program, or who couldn't come for the whole summer," Dovid Braun, the YIVO program's academic director, told The New York Jewish Week in August.

The Duolingo program is different from those classes in ways that go beyond gamification. First, it's geared toward introducing users to contemporary spoken Yiddish rather than the historical form taught at YIVO or The Workers Circle classes. Second, it's probably less likely to result in anything approaching fluency: Duolingo has been criticized for being fun but not offering functional language instruction.

Viswanath was the only representative on the Duolingo creator team of the more secular, academic realm of Yiddish learning. While she admits that using a Duolingo course is not equivalent to taking a college-level or immersive summer language class — and the first version of the course will take users only to an approximate "intermediate" level (Duolingo often adds content to its courses over time with the help of user feedback) — she does think it will have a big impact on the general public's

interest in and recognition of the language.

"Just the amount of exposure that it is going to bring for the Yiddish language, and increase that pipeline of people who then might do the course and then say, 'Hey, this is interesting. Let me look up further opportunities.' And then could take them further," she said. "You could be from anywhere and Duolingo could lead you to this Yiddish world where you could become fluent in it."

As an example of someone who took on Yiddish later in life, Viswanath cited her father, a native of India who learned the language and married Gitl Schaechter-Viswanath, editor of the "Comprehensive English-Yiddish Dictionary" and a daughter of Mordkhe Schaechter, the progenitor of a dynasty of Yiddishists. Meena Viswanath, who is involved in other Yiddish education programming but is a civil engineer by day, grew up speaking Yiddish and Tamil, and is now raising her children with Yiddish in her home. (Her brother Arun is also noted in the Yiddish world — he published the first translation into Yiddish of a Harry Potter book last year.)

"So many people, especially Americans, are aware of Yiddish. But their awareness is often limited to stereotypes, or a few phrases here and there that they heard their grandparents or neighbors say," Viswanath said. "And I really hope that those people will open the course and start doing it and realize, 'Hey, Yiddish is a real language, it's got grammar, it has a vocabulary.' You can't just say anything in a funny way, in a funny accent, and say it's Yiddish. You can talk about day-to-day things and Yiddish is not just for the punchline."

Among the tricky decisions Viswanath and her collaborators faced was how to balance various dialects. In one small example, "The word that the secular Yiddish world uses for cup, like a drinking cup, is what Hasidim use as a cup to wash your hands, to pour water on your hands," Viswanath said, referring to the Orthodox custom of *netilat yadayim*, a ritual

hand washing performed every morning and before meals with bread. "And the word they use for cup is the word we use for glass."

Among dilemma for the Duolingo team: how to design a flag for the course. Most of the app's other offered languages simply use the flag of the country where each language originated — the French flag for the French course, for instance. Yiddish, a combination of German, Hebrew, Aramaic and even bits of other Slavic and Romance languages, presented a more complicated situation.

After much deliberation, the team agreed on a white aleph with a "komets" diacritic underneath — that gives the Hebrew letter pronunciation roughly an "ooh" or other sound, depending on the dialect — on a dark blue background. Viswanath said the symbol represents the foundation of the Yiddish alphabet, and also brings to mind the classic Yiddish song "Oyfn Pripetshik," about a rabbi teaching students the aleph-bet, which has featured in "Schindler's List" and other soundtracks. Part of its chorus goes: "Repeat and repeat yet again/'Komets-alef: o!'"

The white-and-blue color scheme was coincidental, Viswanath said, and not meant to evoke the Israeli flag's colors. Yiddish is not spoken or as much of a subject of fascination in Israel as it is in the United States, mostly because many of the state's founders and other early Zionists — David Ben-Gurion included — pushed to make Hebrew the country's language. They saw Yiddish as "old-fashioned" and a symbol of the scattered Diaspora — in opposition to their vision of a unified nation of Jews, many of whom spoke other languages in their native lands.

Viswanath said the team also was keenly aware of not aiming to position Yiddish as the universal language of the Jewish people (Duolingo has a Hebrew course). Instead, she hopes the broadly shared language course can help bridge the divide between secular society and the haredi Orthodox world.

"I hope there's going to be some increased understanding between the two," she said. ■

To be a Jewish dyke in the 21st century

Sinister Wisdom 119 reviewed by Molly Kraus-Steinmetz

What does it mean to be a Jewish dyke, a Jewish lesbian, a queer Jewish woman, right now?

It's not a question any one person can answer. Who would be the authority on such a subject, and who would claim to speak for such a notoriously argumentative crowd? But dozens give their answers and counter-questions in this volume 119 of the *Sinister Wisdom* lesbian literary and art journal, and I've felt privileged to read it and write this review. Privileged, and somewhat terrified, because despite being a young Jewish lesbian myself, many of the contributors to this volume are luminaries. Among such company, it's easy to wonder if you are enough.

Who among us ever feels Jewish enough, though? No matter how many parshot I've chanted or seders I've planned or Jewish co-ops I've lived in, I'll probably always cringe when strangers on Facebook call me self-hating for criticizing Israel's inhumane treatment of Palestinians, and wilt under the potentially-judgmental eyes of the Orthodox Jews who live in the neighborhood

just west of mine. Growing up in the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation, I remember a group discussion at the JCC where one Jew after another confessed the guilt they felt as assimilated Jews for not knowing enough, not observing enough, not being enough. Finally, one wry congregant remarked that experiencing those particular guilts and anxieties was one of the most Jewish experiences there was.

It's hard to describe a varied body of artistic works about being a Jewish lesbian, just as it's hard to describe "the experience" of being a Jewish lesbian — though the contributors to this volume describe their own experiences in rich, joyous, and heart-aching detail.

Some highlights of the volume for me included:

- An imagined moment of intimacy between anarchist speaker Emma Goldman and labor organizer Rose Schneiderman (Kate Raphael)
- A scene of a butch mikvah attendant and her married lover in a 1905 shtetl, imagining a future of abundance (Terry Baum)

- A cataloging of the physical sensations Kelsey Jannerson is submerged in as she converts to Judaism
- Thoughtful words by Amy Horowitz on how she works to be in coalition with dedicated feminist activists whose circles or coalitions also include anti-Semites
- A eulogy for the proud, socialist, accepting, inhabitant-less Israel that Jyl Lynn Felman had once believed in
- A sudden, wrenching moment of Bonnie Morris realizing the anti-Semitism of her girlfriend's volleyball team
- The powerful line "I want to kiss mezuzahs and I want to kiss girls" in Abbie Goldman's lists on how she's reconnecting to Judaism
- A plea from an anthropomorphized tub of sour cream (Judy Freespirit)
- Yael Mishali's struggle as a Mizrahi lesbian in an Ashkenazi-dominated Israeli culture that pushes her to assimilate and disavow her cultural heritage
- Tovah Gidseg's poem about finding her place for prayer as a dyke in her gender-partitioned synagogue

- Karen Bender and Lisa Edward's narrative and reflections on being the country's first out lesbian rabbis
- And of course, our own Clare Kinberg's exploration into the mostly-erased history of her aunt who married a Black man, and the parallels to her own journey to find a city in which to raise her African-American children.

It's a powerful volume. Reading it, I experienced both the tender familiarity of recognizing my own experiences, and the awe of learning from those who came before me or elsewhere. My list of favorites, biased as it is towards written rather than visual art, only scratches the surface of the vast collection of stories of queer Jewish women, across continents and generation, across race and ethnicity and gender presentation, across class and profession. I still don't know what it means to be a Jewish dyke in the 21st century, but I am honored to be figuring it out alongside this community. ■

Shavuot, or What a difference a year makes

Lonnie Sussman, special to the WJN

One year ago, we had just begun realizing the seriousness of our modern-day plague, but still thought we would be through the crisis soon. Remember when we were thinking about summer vacations, camps, picnics, and trips to the beaches? We experienced our first Passover “Zeders,” you know, the family on a screen, and how happy we were to even see them. It’s been a

to be another way to mark the days according to the season. Since each of these holidays coincided with harvest times, traditional foods reflect the seasonal harvest. Shavuot is the time of the wheat harvest as well as the birth of sheep and goats, and the traditional foods reflect the dairy products made from their milk. There are spiritual and metaphorical reasons for the use of dairy products for Shavuot as well.



somber year. Spring and the promise of a safer year is solidly here. At least we hope that the vaccination programs, as chaotic and quixotic as they are, have allowed a significant percentage of us to be vaccinated. I hope so.

The Jewish calendar is marvelous and meaningful. I look into the sky to watch the phases of the moon and the movement of the constellations throughout the year. The holidays that are crowded into the fall spread out for the rest of the year and slow down to one a month. This month we have the major holiday of Shavuot. It is one of the three festivals specified in the Torah as a pilgrimage holiday and the time of the Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai.

The Israelite festival practices were to go to Jerusalem to celebrate at the Temple and offer sacrifices, but for 2,000 years the tradition has been to use prayers and other rituals to mark the days of these holidays. Special foods came

A few years ago, I wrote a story about making my mother-in-law’s (z.l.) recipe for Pickled Trout and it was written up in the *Ypsilanti Press* (also, its memory is a blessing) as “They Keep a Kosher Home.” If you like your fish pickled, go for it. It was tasty, but I never made it again. I’m not completely sure why not but it may have to do with my growing interest in Jewish traditions beyond Ashkenazi. A year ago, I wrote about The Bread of the Seven Heavens, a Sephardi tradition that I’d never heard of. It was delicious and I will make it again this year. Of course, many of us inherited the traditions of dairy kugels and cheesecakes from our Ashkenazi roots and no one can deny how yummy they are. You all have your favorite recipe for those dishes, but I’d like to think outside the box and look toward foods reflecting Sephardi traditions as well as early spring.

Strawberry Soup

The Kosher Palette, by Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy

Serves 4

Let’s start our Shavuot meal with a cold seasonal fruit soup. Simply blend all the ingredients except the yogurt in a blender or food processor until they are smooth, then stir in the yogurt.

- 1 pint strawberries, stems removed
- 1 ripe peach (okay, not in season but you could use frozen chunks of peaches)
- 1½ cups pineapple juice
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 5 to 6 tbs sugar
- 4 oz. vanilla or plain yogurt (that’s half an 8 oz. container)

Syrian Cheese Pies

The Book of Jewish Food, by Claudia Roden

Makes about 40

Basic Dough

- ½ cup sunflower or canola oil
- 4 oz. unsalted butter
- ½ cup water
- ½ tsp salt
- About 3 ⅔ cups flour
- 1 egg yolk mixed with about 1 tsp. water to glaze the top of the pies

Heat the oil and butter in a pan over low heat until the butter melts. Place in a large bowl and add the water and salt and beat well. Slowly add the flour until the dough becomes soft, a little greasy, and holds together in a ball. You can start with a fork to add in the flour but eventually you will use your hands. You want the dough to just hold together, don’t overwork it. Cover with a towel or plastic wrap and leave at room temperature for about 20 minutes. Take walnut sized lumps of the dough and roll them into a little ball. Then press and squash them with your palms and pull into about a 4-inch round.

Filling: mix all the ingredients together except the egg yolk that will be used for glazing. Put a heaping teaspoon of filling in the middle of the rounds and fold over to make a half moon shape. Be sure to pinch the edges firmly. Place on oiled trays or use parchment paper to cover the trays. Brush the tops with the egg yolk mixture. Sprinkle sesame seeds on top, if desired, and bake at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes. They can be served hot or at room temperature and they also freeze well.

Cheese Filling

- 1-pound grated cheese or a mixture of feta and cottage cheese, well drained.
- You could use Gruyere, Parmesan, Gouda, or any combination you like.
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- Pepper to taste

Spinach Filling

Also makes about 40. Mix all ingredients and use about 1 heaping teaspoon per pie.

- 1 pound frozen chopped spinach, thawed and pressed to get the water out
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- ½ pound feta cheese, mashed
- 4 tbs Parmesan
- Salt to taste (not much as the cheese is salty)
- Pepper to taste

Italian style Tuna filling

Makes about 18 little pies. Mash all the ingredients together and proceed with filling the pie rounds, again, about 1 heaping teaspoon, folding over the edges and pinching them closed then finishing with the egg wash to make the pie shiny.

- 14 oz. canned tuna in water, well drained
- About 16 black olives, pitted and chopped
- 2 tbs capers
- Juice of ½ a lemon (1 to 2 tbs.)
- 2 tbs olive oil.

Barley Salad with Vegetables

Shavuot also marks the end of the barley harvest in Israel. This recipe made 4 servings. I didn’t measure the vegetables. I used a combination of these vegetables because I had them in the refrigerator. Add the veggies you like and decide whether to roast them or sauté them. I had some leftover roasted Brussels sprouts and cauliflower so I added that to the mix of mushroom, green onion, and red peppers that I sautéed in a little olive oil and added some butter to the pan as well.

- 1 cup of pearled barley cooked for about 25 minutes in about 6–8 cups of salted water
- Mushrooms — I used about 8 oz. of the small portabellas
- Onions or green onions — I used about 4 green onions
- 1 red pepper
- Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, carrots or a combination. Roast in a little olive oil and salt.

Chop the vegetables and sauté them in a mixture of olive oil and butter. Serve on a platter or wide bowl with the grain on the bottom and the vegetables on top. ■

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Calendar

May 2021

The Calendar has been updated to reflect events that are happening only online. Always check websites or call for updates before planning to attend anything listed here. For prayer services, check congregation websites.

Saturday 1

1 Day 34 of the Omer Havdallah 9:21 p.m.

Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion led by Rabbi Whinston 8:50-9:50 a.m.

Sunday 2

JCLP Graduation. Email Paige Walker at vpwalker@umich.edu for the link to RSVP. 10 a.m.

Zohar: Study and Practice: Pardes hannah. 11 a.m.

Alden Solovy Event: Standing at Sinai: TBE. 1 p.m.

Intro to Judaism with Rabbi Caine. BIC 1 p.m.

“Walking While Black: L.O.V.E. is the Answer” Film: BIC 4 p.m.

Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidim and discover the beauty and depth of Judaism. 11 a.m.

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayut leads discussion. 3 p.m.

Monday 3

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin. BIC. 3:30p.m.

WTBE Cooks. 3:30 p.m.

Adult B’nai Mitzvah Class: TBE. 6 p.m.

Women’s Torah Study: TBE. For questions, contact Cantor Regina Hayut at cantorhayut@templebethemeth.org. 7p.m.

WTBE Fiber Arts. 7:30 p.m.

Counting the Omer. Pardes Hannah. 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday 4

Twenty-five minute Mindfulness with Jewish Spiritual Director Linda Greene: TBE and Pardes Hannah. 8:30 a.m.

Talmud Tuesdays w/ Rabbi Alter: TBE. 11a.m. and 8 p.m.

Detroit Jews for Justice Myra WolfgangAwards: Virtual fundraising gala. 7:30 p.m.

Tea and Torah on Tuesday–for Women: Chabad. 8 p.m.

Wednesday 5

Book Launch & Conversation: *The Arab and*

Jewish Questions: Geographies of Engagement in Palestine and Beyond: Frankel Center. Editors Leila Farsakh and Bashir Bashir in conversation with contributor Moshe Behar and Nadia Fadil. Noon

Yidish tish (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group): Zoom. About 45 minutes each of conversation and reading. Free and open to all those interested in Yiddish language, literature, and culture, no matter what level of proficiency. For more information, to get the link, and to make certain that we are meeting on a specific day, please e-mail Elliot H. Gertel at egertel@umich.edu at least one day before scheduled meeting day every Wednesday (except major Jewish holidays). 2 p.m

Meditation with Claire Weiner: TBE. 5 p.m.

Theology Book Club: BIC. Online 8 p.m.

Thursday 6

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayut leads discussion. 11 a.m.

Pirke Avot with Rabbi Dobrusin: BIC. 5 p.m.

Talmud–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad. 8 p.m.

The Power of Women Who Fight Gun Violence featuring Gabby Giffords, Hadassah Chicago-North Shore Register by May 4, , There is a \$36 event fee. 11:30 am CT/12:30 pm ET

Friday 7

Candle Lighting 8:23 p.m. Behar-Bechukotai

Lunch and Learn: TBE. Zoom. Rabbi Whinston

meets on Fridays for an informal discussion about religion. Noon–1 p.m.

JCS First Friday Shabbat. Includes secular Jewish readings, singing, candle lighting, challah and wine rituals, and a Yahrtzeit observance to remember loved ones. Children are welcome. 6:30-7:30p.m. Registration required: jewishculturalsociety.org. For more information: 734-975-9872 or info@jewishculturalsociety.org. 6:30 p.m.

Saturday 8

Havdallah 9:29 p.m.

Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion led by Rabbi Whinston 8:50-9:50 a.m.

TaShma Come and Learn: AARC. Half hour before second Saturday Shabbat service. 10 a.m.

Sunday 9

Israel Experience Virtual Tour Begins: JCC. Weeklong Israel Adventure ends May 16. 8 a.m.

Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidim and discover the beauty and depth of Judaism. 11 a.m.

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayut leads discussion. 3 p.m.

Monday 10

Historical Novel Reading Group: WTBE. Contact Molly Lindner, burnham@umich.edu. 12:30 p.m.

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin. BIC. 3:30p.m.

Adult B’nai Mitzvah Class: TBE. 6 p.m.

Women’s Torah Study: TBE. For questions, contact Cantor Regina Hayut at cantorhayut@templebethemeth.org. 7 p.m.

Counting the Omer. Pardes Hannah. 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday 11

Twenty-five minute Mindfulness with Jewish Spiritual Director Linda Greene: TBE and Pardes Hannah. 8:30 a.m.

Rosh Hodesh Sivan Circle: Pardes Hannah. 7 p.m.

Talmud Tuesdays w/ Rabbi Alter: TBE. 11a.m. and 8 p.m.

Tea and Torah on Tuesday–for Women: Chabad. 8 p.m.

Wednesday 12

Rosh Chodesh Sivan

Rosh Hodesh Minyan: Pades Hannah. 9 a.m.

Yidish tish Conversation & Reading Group: Every Wednesday, see above. 2 p.m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner: TBE. 5 p.m.

The Color of Love book discussion: TBE Social Action Committee read. 7 p.m.

What IS Reconstructionist Judaism?: AARC. 7:30 p.m.

Theology Book Club: BIC. Online 8 p.m.

Thursday 13

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayut leads discussion. 11 a.m.

Pirke Avot with Rabbi Dobrusin: BIC. 5 p.m.

Virtual Happy Hour: WTBE . 5:30 p.m.

Rosh Chodesh Sivan Circle: TBE. 7:30

Talmud–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad. 8 p.m..

Friday 14

Candle Lighting 8:31 p.m. Bamidbar

Lunch and Learn: TBE. Zoom. Rabbi Whinston meets on Fridays for an informal discussion about religion. Noon–1 p.m.

Tot Shabbat with the Caine Family: BIC. 5:30 p.m.

Saturday 15

Havdallah 9:38 p.m.

Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion led by Rabbi Whinston 8:50-9:50 a.m.

Shabbat Biweekly Lunch N’ Learn: Contemporary Issues in Jewish Law with Rabbi Caine BIC. 11:45 a.m.

Sunday 16

Omer Day 49, Erev Shavuot, 8:33 p.m.

Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidim and discover the beauty and depth of Judaism. 11 a.m.

Shavuot Chant Circle. Pardes Hannah. 11 a.m.

Creating Food Justice, Shmita series: AARC. Register at ekarfarm.org, \$18 fee Noon.

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayut leads discussion. 3 p.m.

Collaborative Justice-Themed Shavuot Evening Tikkun Learning: BIC, AARC, Hillel, JCS, Pardes Hannah, TBE. Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit will be the keynote to begin, and then there will be multiple concurrent learning opportunities in various Zoom rooms. Email office@bethisrael-aa.org for the required link. 8 p.m.

Shavuos Celebration: Chabad afternoon and evening services, followed by festive meal and all night learning 8:30 p.m.

Monday 17

Shavuot (Check your congregations website for service times)

Shavuos: Chabad All children are invited to come and hear the Ten Commandments, Ice Cream party for the children, and then followed by our annual festive dairy meal for everyone. Begins 9:45.

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin. BIC. 3:30p.m.

WTBE Cooks. 3:30 p.m.

Adult B’nai Mitzvah Class: TBE. 6 p.m.

Women’s Torah Study: TBE. For questions, contact Cantor Regina Hayut at cantorhayut@templebethemeth.org. 7 p.m.

WTBE Fiber Arts. 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday 18

Twenty-five minute Mindfulness with Jewish Spiritual Director Linda Greene: TBE and Pardes Hannah. 8:30 a.m.

Talmud Tuesdays w/ Rabbi Alter: TBE. 11a.m. and 8 p.m.

Wednesday 19

Yidish tish Conversation & Reading Group: Every Wednesday, see above. 2 p. m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner: TBE. 5 p.m.

Theology Book Club: BIC. Online 8 p.m.

Thursday 20

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayut leads discussion. 11 a.m.

Pirke Avot with Rabbi Dobrusin: BIC. 5 p.m.

Guys Night In: TBE Brotherhood. 7 p.m.

Talmud–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad. 8 p.m..

Friday 21

Candle Lighting 8:37 p.m. Naso

Lunch and Learn: TBE. Zoom. Rabbi Whinston meets on Fridays for an informal discussion about religion. Noon–1 p.m.

Saturday 22 Havdallah 9:46 p.m.

Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion led by Rabbi Whinston 8:50-9:50 a.m.

Sunday 23

Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidim and discover the beauty and depth of Judaism. 11 a.m.

Living Room Lectures – Molli Spalter Presents The Stories We Tell: Pulling Back the Veil on Judaism and Feminism: BIC. 1 p.m.

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayut leads discussion. 3 p.m.

Book Group: AARC. *The Ten Year War, Obamacare and the Unfinished Crusade for Universal Coverage* by Jonathan Cohn. Jon will lead the discussion. Email gsaltzman@albion.edu for the link. 7 p.m.

Monday 24

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin. BIC. 3:30p.m.

Adult B’nai Mitzvah Class: TBE. 6 p.m.

Women’s Torah Study: TBE. For questions, contact Cantor Regina Hayut at cantorhayut@templebethemeth.org. 7 p.m.

Tuesday 25

Twenty-five minute Mindfulness with Jewish

Spiritual Director Linda Greene: TBE and Pardes Hannah. 8:30 a.m.

Talmud Tuesdays w/ Rabbi Alter: TBE. 11a.m. and 8 p.m.

Tea and Torah on Tuesday–for Women: Chabad. 8 p.m.

Wednesday 26

Yidish tish Conversation & Reading Group: Every Wednesday, see above. 2 p. m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner: TBE. 5 p.m.

The Color of Love book discussion: TBE Social Action Committee read. 7 p.m.

Dayenu Circle – Climate Action Committee Meeting: TBE. 7 p.m.

Theology Book Club: BIC. Online 8 p.m.

Thursday 27

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayut leads discussion. 11 a.m.

Pirke Avot with Rabbi Dobrusin: BIC. 5 p.m.

Virtual Happy Hour: WTBE . 5:30 p.m.

Talmud–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad. 8 p.m..

Friday 28

Candle Lighting 8:44 p.m. Behaalotecha

Lunch and Learn: TBE. Zoom. Rabbi Whinston meets on Fridays for an informal discussion about religion. Noon–1 p.m.

Fourth Friday Kabbalat Shabbat, Open House. AARC. 6:30 p.m.

Saturday 29

Havdallah 9:54 p.m.

Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion led by Rabbi Whinston 8:50-9:50 a.m.

Sunday 30

Jewish Life in Poland: Then and Now: BIC. 10:30 a.m.

Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidim and discover the beauty and depth of Judaism. 11 a.m.

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayut leads discussion. 3 p.m.

Monday 31

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin. BIC. 3:30p.m.

Adult B’nai Mitzvah Class: TBE. 6 p.m.

Women’s Torah Study: TBE. For questions, contact Cantor Regina Hayut at cantorhayut@templebethemeth.org. 7 p.m.

Phone numbers, websites and addresses of organizations frequently listed in the calendar:

Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan (AAOM): 1429 Hill Street, 248-408-3269, annarborminyan.org

Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734.445.1910, aarecon.org

Beth Israel Congregation (BIC): 2000 Washtenaw Ave, 734-665-9897, bethisrael-aa.org

Chabad House: 715 Hill Street, 734-995-3276, jewmich.com

Frankel Center: 202 S. Thayer St., isa.umich.edu/judaic/

Jewish Community Center (JCC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 745-971-0990, jccannarbor.org

Jewish Cultural Society (JCS): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-975-9872, jewishculturalsociety.org

Jewish Family Services (JFS): 2245 South State Street, 734-769-0209, jfsannarbor.org

Jewish Federation: 2939 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-677-0100, jewishannarbor.org

Pardes Hannah: 2010 Washtenaw Ave, 734-761-5324, pardeshannah.org

Temple Beth Emeth (TBE): 2309 Packard Road, 734-665-4744, templebethemeth.org

UM Hillel: 1429 Hill Street 734-769-0500, michiganhillel.org



TheRide and WAVE have partnered with the Washtenaw County Health Department to provide free transportation to their vaccine sites.



TheRide service to the Eastern Michigan University Vaccine Site.

Vaccine Schedule:

Wednesday–Saturday
10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

FlexRide and A-Ride service available.

Visit TheRide.org or
call 734-996-0400 for details.

WAVE service to the Pierce Lake Elementary School Vaccine Site.

Vaccine Schedule:

Tuesdays
8:00 a.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Door-to-door service available.

Visit RideTheWaveBus.org or
call 734-475-9494 for details.

Scheduled vaccine appointment required to ride. To schedule your appointment,
visit washtenaw.org/covid19vaccine

The service is at no cost to the rider.
Service and fares paid for by CARES Act funding. Service subject to change.

Two aspects of Torah: Understanding and beyond understanding

Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, special to the WJN

We will find ourselves celebrating the holiday of Shavuot this month, on Sunday beginning in the evening of May 16 and continuing for two days until the evening of Tuesday, May 18. Shavuot marks the day upon which God gave the Torah to the entire Jewish nation, at Mt. Sinai, over 3,300 years ago.



Rabbi Aharon Goldstein

The Ten Commandments appear in the Torah twice. Once in Exodus when the Jewish people left Egypt. The second mention is in Deuteronomy in the portion of Va'eschanan. What's the difference between these two times that the Torah tells us about the Ten Commandments? The first time, in Exodus during the portion of Yisro, the Torah speaks about the Jewish people standing in front of Mt. Sinai and the Ten Commandments being given over to them by God Himself. As the verse says, God spoke all these words — the Ten Commandments. However, in Deuteronomy, God is not speaking directly to the Jewish people. Rather, Moses is repeating God's words to the Jewish people and recalling the event of going out of Egypt and receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai. Since the Torah is very precise in every word

and letter, for sure when it repeats the Ten Commandments a second time there must be a special lesson that we can learn because of the repetition of the Ten Commandments, as they are one of the foundations of Torah and actually include the entire Torah. So the fact that it's repeated twice indicates to us that there is a profound lesson to be learned here.

So the question arises; why is it repeated twice? It's because in the Ten Commandments there are two aspects of Torah. One is the essence of the Torah — how it stands for itself and how it's filled with God's wisdom and will. This aspect existed even before creation. The second Torah aspect is how it comes down into this physical world to work within the rules of nature so that people in this physical world will be able to understand Torah with their intellect.

When we speak about when God spoke to the Jewish people, that expresses the essence of Torah, which is, as we said before, the wisdom and will of God. When we speak about the second time, the second aspect of Torah, through Moses our teacher, it shows the level of Torah that clothes itself in the finite limitations of this physical world in order that a human intellect will be able to understand it.

This is something that is very important for us to be aware of. When a person sits down and studies Torah, they must have these two attitudes towards the Torah regarding the two aspects previously mentioned.

On the one hand, they must always remember that the Torah is something, in its very essence, beyond human understanding

and one must nullify their sense of self and stand with awe in the presence of Torah, as the Rabbis tell us, just like at Sinai when the Jewish people received the Torah, they stood with awe and were frightened to be in the awesome presence of God. The Rabbis tell us that even today when we study the Torah it has to be with all of the awe, realizing that this is something that is beyond us and we're lucky for any understanding that we are able to glean.

On the other hand, when a person sits down to study Torah, they have to realize that God has lowered the Torah into this world, specifically to this world, in order that a person should be able to use their physical understanding and intellect to understand the Torah.

It's not enough to say that the Torah is beyond understanding so there's not much I can do with it. On the contrary, one should try to understand it to the best of their ability — to the extent that they should be able to internalize the Torah and have it become a part of them — to the extent that the Torah is called on in their name. In other words, when someone has the ability to come up with a new idea or insight based on the principles of the Torah it's something they created and are credited with. That's the second level of Torah.

Who is the one that gives us the ability to understand Torah and to bring it down to our level?

These two aspects of Torah, how Torah is beyond understanding as well as coming down to our understanding, illustrate the difference between the first time the Torah

speaks about God speaking to the Jewish people at Mt. Sinai, where the Jewish people are given the ability and recognition to see how Torah is beyond our understanding, and we still stand with awe in front of it. The second time, in Deuteronomy, Torah is given through Moses. This is the role of Moses — to bring Torah down to our level so that we should be able to understand it with our limited physical comprehension.

This wasn't only happening at the time Moses was relating the Torah to the Jewish people in the desert. This idea is for every generation in every place and in every time — that God gives us new insight and inspiration into the Torah that makes the Torah valid and pertinent for all times — including ours today. We can see in the blessing when we read the Torah, we say "nosain hatorah" — God is giving the Torah — not only that God gave the Torah once in the past but that it is being given in the present tense for all time.

Now, also, we get to receive this level of Torah that is beyond our understanding and at the same time we also have a teacher like Moses. In every generation there is a teacher who takes the words of God that are beyond our understanding and brings them down to a level of human understanding — as a soul is in a body and using a physical intellect to understand the Torah. This will come to its highest level when Moshiach comes. God will then reveal new knowledge and insight which will come down here to us and this world will get to see the greatness of the Torah. ■

Choosing a Judaism of joy

Rabbi Ora Nitkin-Kaner, special to the WJN

On May 16, Jews around the world will celebrate Shavuot, the holiday that commemorates our receiving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

Why did I write "our," rather than "their"? Because tradition teaches (Shevuot 39a) that when the Torah was given, every Jew was standing at Sinai, including the souls of all Jews (and converts to Judaism) who would ever be born.

The idea that every soul was present at Sinai means that each one of us has a natural connection to God, Torah, and every other Jew that ever lived. This is a powerful birthright. But it might also be felt as a burden.

A burden in what way? Well, I've had countless conversations with Jews across the denominational spectrum who insist that they're "not a good Jew," meaning not knowledgeable enough, or not committed enough, or not connected enough. Weighted down with overblown expectations of what it looks like to be "a good Jew" and shame for not meeting those expectations, it's no surprise that for many, Judaism can feel like an albatross.

And ours isn't the first generation to feel this way. According to one midrash (Shabbat 88a), during revelation, God held a mountain over the Israelites' heads and threatened: "Either accept the Torah or this shall be your burial place!" From the very beginning, we have some interpreting our religion as coer-



cive and burdensome. But that's not the only way.

In Reconstructionist Judaism, we understand that wrestling with God and our received tradition is part and parcel of being Jewish. It can be generative and joyful, especially when done in the company of fellow seekers. Reconstructionist Judaism also teaches that the past has a vote but not a veto. As

the living embodiment of Judaism, we get to discern which aspects of Judaism support our moral vision for ourselves and for the world. We get to choose what kind of relationship to have to commandments, culture, history, and communities.

This perspective is also rooted in our tradition. Even as one midrash imagines God holding the mountain over our heads as a threat,

another describes the mountain as a magnificent chuppah for the wedding between Israel and God (Mechilta Bachodesh 3).

This is the story I prefer: That being Jewish is a choice we make to be in relationship. It's a choice that we get to affirm daily, weekly, monthly. It's a choice that makes room for joy. And we are encouraged to come to the relationship with the fullness of who we are and who we are striving to become.

May is Open House Month at the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation. We welcome all visitors to

our Zoom Shabbat services and programs, including our Wednesday May 12 program, "What IS Reconstructionist Judaism: A Discussion with Rabbi Ora," at 7:30 p.m. To register, email aarcgillian@gmail.com; learn more at www.aarecon.org. ■

A recap of JCLP's community conversation

Kayla Kapen, special to the WJN

On March 18, the University of Michigan's Jewish Communal Leadership Program hosted their annual community conversation, this year titled "Building Bridges in a Divided World: The role of interfaith collaboration in justice work." The event reached both a local and national audience. Five leaders working in the interfaith space in cities around the country joined this panel. They discussed the need to build relationships across communities and the unique opportunities and challenges that come with showing up for one another in meaningful ways.

The panelists included: Aziza Hasan, co-founder of New Ground: A Muslim Jewish Partnership for Change in Los Angeles, California; Reverend Amanda Henderson, the Dean of Religion, Politics & Culture at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado; Pastor Aramis Hinds, Executive Director at Bethel Community Transformation Center and lead Pastor of the Breakers Covenant Church in Detroit; Rabbi Andrea London, Senior Rabbi at Temple Beth Emet in Evanston, Illinois, and former chair of the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs with a focus on Jewish-Muslim Community Building Initiative; and Rabbi Samuel Spector, current rabbi at Congregation Kol Ami, the largest synagogue in Salt Lake City, Utah. Each panelist shared the ways in which the unprecedented events of

2020 reinforced the great value of interfaith relationships in the face of hardship.

The students of JCLP began the discussion

took on during the pandemic, understanding that they were uniquely positioned to address needs that were both revealed and exacerbated by the pandemic.

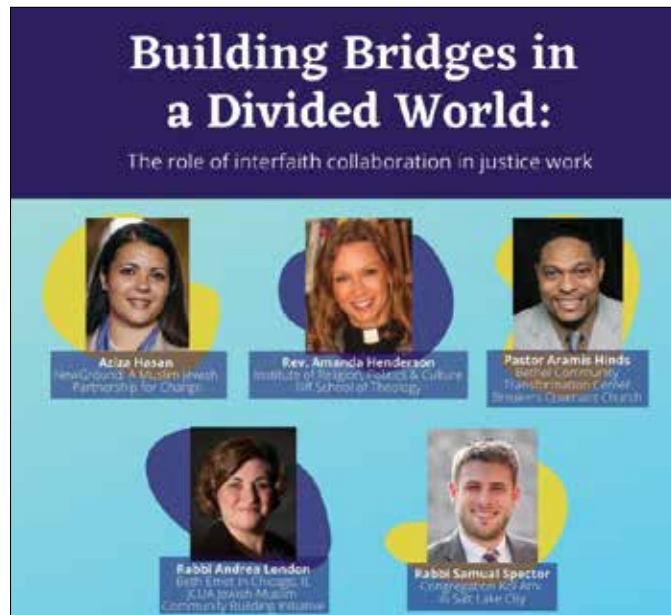
In response to a question regarding collaboration among organizations to spread awareness about local issues, Rabbi Spector of Salt Lake City spoke about forming a coalition of religious organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The coalition was given the opportunity to speak with Senator Mitt Romney and express their specific concerns for the communities. Senator Romney's response to this was, "I would love to come to your communities and have virtual town halls."

Reverend Henderson from Colorado spoke about an instance when she was the Executive Director at the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado. The organization Denver Homeless Out Loud called on her to help lift the voices of the organization and people who were

living on the streets. This request transformed into Alternative Solutions Advocacy Project, bringing together several organizations to help combat homelessness in the area. "It wound up being able to push the city to allow for the city's first tiny home village for people experiencing homelessness. It was a big push and a lot of work," says Reverend Henderson.

After the panel discussion, guests were invited ask questions to the panel and then to participate in smaller breakout sessions led by the panelists as well as a share out after the breakout rooms. Students from JCLP want to thank the panelists and community partners for all their work to help put together this event together. Those who were not able to attend the event in real time can view the recording on the JCLP website, <https://ssw.umich.edu/events/list/2021/03/18/62537-building-bridges-in-a-divided-world-the-role-of-interfaith-collaboration-in-justice-work>.

Kayla Kapen, Simi Adler, Rebecca Belkin, Meredith Berlin, Courtney Bushnell, and Hilary Forrest all recently graduated from the Jewish Communal Leadership Program at the University of Michigan. ■



noting that after a tumultuous year with tragedy and struggle for many, the message of unity has become more significant. They wanted to highlight the importance of intercommunity dialogue and showcase the role that faith leaders

Obituaries

Aaron Zelig Cutler, known as Zel, was born in 1924 in Detroit, Michigan. His parents, Sam and Ida Cutler, were part of a group of Yiddish speakers and readers of Yiddish, as well as the Zionist movement. When Zel was in his teens he joined the newly formed group of Habonim, a Zionist youth movement, which became a core element of his future life. He helped build the Habonim summer camp then called Camp Kinneret in Chelsea, Michigan. In the 1950s this camp moved to a larger site in Three Rivers, Michigan.



The name changed to Camp Tavor, the Midwest camp of the national Habonim movement. The adult movement of Habonim was called the Labor Zionist Alliance and Zel and Simi were members of Branch 11. Today that group is called Ameinu and many of the children of the members continue in their footsteps. The children and many of the grandchildren of the members still call Camp Tavor their summer home.

Another life-long interest came from Habonim's emphasis on aliyah, moving to Israel, to help build the new state. He became interested in agriculture and got a job on a farm, also in Chelsea. He worked there for

a year until he was drafted into the United States Army and sent to Europe in September 1944. His unit was sent into the Battle of the Bulge where he was wounded by a shell. He always credited the wound to actually saving his life because the next day's action led to the deaths of nearly everyone else in his unit. Following his recovery, he returned to action that then included guarding a prisoner of war camp.

After he was honorably discharged with a Purple Heart, he visited with his parents and then went to Creamridge, New Jersey to see his sister, Basha. Creamridge was the site of Hechalutz Farm, the commune where members of North America Habonim went to prepare themselves to live on kibbutzim in Israel. He met Simi Bernstein, and they married later that year. The marriage lasted 73 years until the death of Simi in 2019. Aliyah was delayed while he used the GI Bill to attend Michigan State University and earned a BS in animal husbandry and a Master's Degree in chemistry. Their children, Elana and Daniel, were born and Zel needed to find work to support the family. At first, he worked on the line at the Plymouth Auto Plant as it was hard for him to find work in agriculture. He finally found work as a chemist with a company providing products for the automobile industry. He became a specialist in zinc plating and travelled around the Midwest helping providers with that process. His dream of aliyah was not realized but his sister, Basha, and her family eventually did move to Israel.

Zel leaves a wonderful legacy of a life filled with devotion to his family, friends, Judaism, Israel and hard work. We picture him in his vegetable gardens, biking, ice fishing,

cross country skiing and doing the Canadian Air Force exercises that were part of his devotion to health and fitness. He will also be remembered for the heirloom tomato seeds from his garden which the family has named AZC tomatoes and are now grown in gardens across the country.

He is honored and missed by his children, Elana (Ron) Sussman, Daniel (Chris) Cutler, grandchildren: Mira (Doron Yitzachi) Sussman, Ari (Jaimie) Sussman, Eitan (Joanna) Sussman, Naomi (Grant Barton) nee Cutler, Barton and Sadie Cutler, great-grandchildren: Matan, Ishai, Judah Sussman-Yitzchaki, Sam, Anna and Lucy Sussman, Nava and Ilan Sussman and Nora and Phoebe Barton. He is also survived by his nephew, Dani Shalev and niece, Naomi Sharon.

Janet Tuft Garvin, one of the founding members of the Jewish Cultural Society, died on April 9, 2021. Born on September 22, 1931, Janet grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She did her undergraduate work at Penn State and Temple University and then earned a Master's degree in Social Work at the University of Illinois in Chicago. It was there that she met Charles Garvin. They were married in 1957,



64 years ago. The Garvins moved to Ann Arbor in 1965, when Charles accepted a position at the University of Michigan School of Social Work.

Already parents of three children in 1965, the Garvins looked for a secular, humanistic Jewish community in which to raise their children, David, Amy and Tony. They wanted their children to learn about the traditions, history, culture and values of the Jewish people so they would be proud of who they are. It turned out that several of the Garvins' colleagues had similar concerns, so in 1965 they and their friends created the Jewish Cultural School. As the years passed, the Garvins helped the school that began 56 years ago expand. It became the Jewish Cultural Society, with events and activities for members of all ages. The Garvins have been actively involved in all aspects of JCS throughout those decades.

Janet held a number of social work positions beginning with the Jewish Community Center in Chicago and later at the Hillel Foundation in Ann Arbor. She then took a job at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Allen Park, and later at the Michigan Department of Social Services in the Adult Protective Services Department in Washtenaw County. Her last job before she had a stroke in 2000 was with Foote Hospital in Jackson.

Janet loved to travel and she and Charles took many trips around the globe. To celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary, they took a special cruise, and were joined by their children as well as by many members of their children's families. At a virtual memorial service on April 16, friends and family from all over the country shared their memories of Janet. Her interest in and fondness for other people was mentioned again and again by the participants. Everyone felt very cared for by Janet, right up until the end. ■

George Segal, vanguard of 1960s wave of young Jewish actors, dies at 87

Ron Kampeas, originally for the JTAG

George Segal, whose career as an actor ranged from shattering Jewish stereotypes in his youth to cheerfully indulging them in his dotage, has died at 87.

The fact that early in his career Segal had to field questions about why he didn't change his name or fix his nose was a testament to how unusual it was at the time for a Jewish actor who could play a plausible tough guy and romantic lead to present as Jewish.

"I didn't change my name because I don't think George Segal is an unwieldy name," Segal told The New York Times in 1971. "It's a Jewish name, but not unwieldy. Nor do I think my nose is unwieldy. I think a nose job is unwieldy. I can always spot 'em. Having a nose job says more about a person than not having one. You always wonder what that person would be like without a nose job."

Segal's meld of defiance and self-deprecation helped pave the way for actors like Elliott Gould, Dustin Hoffman and Richard Benjamin. The days of Jewish actors and actresses like John Garfield and Lauren Bacall changing their names in order to present as desirable were over.

Segal brought sex and athleticism to his 1966 role as a naive academic caught in a trap by a destructive couple in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" Segal played opposite Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton in the

film, which earned him his only Academy Award nomination.

His roles were soon Jewish as well, in



Actors Wendi McLendon-Covey and George Segal attend an event celebrating the 100th episode of "The Goldbergs" in Culver City, Calif., Oct. 4, 2017.

CAPTION: RICH POLK/GETTY IMAGES FOR SONY PICTURES TELEVISION

films like "Bye Bye Braverman" in 1968 and "Blume in Love" in 1973. In 1970, he shattered Jewish stereotypes in "The Owl and the Pussycat," where he starred opposite Barbra Streisand.

His most emblematically Jewish role from that time was not obviously Jewish: He played the eponymous hero in the 1966 spy thriller

"The Quiller Memorandum," tracking down a ring of postwar Nazis. Harold Pinter, the Jewish playwright who wrote the screenplay, reshaped the laconic British spy in Elleston Trevor's novel into an American furious at Europe for allowing the Nazis to flourish and for never truly crushing them.

"Nobody wears a brown shirt now, no banners, you see," Quiller's British handler, played by Alec Guinness, tells him. "Consequently, they're difficult to recognize, they look like everybody else."

Quiller is ultimately betrayed (spoiler alert) by his young German girlfriend. He is captured by the Nazis and resists their torture to escape. He meets with his handler and they have a Pinter-esque exchange that alludes to the

postwar anomaly of being Jewish in a continent that has made Jews disappear.

"Met a man called Oktober," Quiller says of his encounter with the head Nazi. "At the end of our conversation, he ordered them to kill me." The handler rejoins: "And did they?"

Segal continued to play romantic leads, notably teaming up with Glenda Jackson in

"A Touch of Class" in 1973. He filmed the crime caper classic, "The Hot Rock," opposite Robert Redford, in 1972, and joined with Elliott Gould in 1974 in "California Split," considered one of the best gambling films ever.

His career went into a downward spiral in the early 1980s, fueled by what he said was self-destructive behavior, including drugs. His rehabilitation included touring with a band he led with his banjo, the Beverly Hills Unlisted Jazz Band. In an appearance with the band in Israel in 1982, he was welcomed as a hero.

Segal played minor roles and then re-emerged in 1996 in a role as Ben Stiller's father in "Flirting with Disaster." That character would define the rest of his career: the neurotic, self-effacing Jewish dad. It was a role he replicated in the television sitcoms "Just Shoot Me!" (albeit as an ostensible Italian) and "The Goldbergs," from 2013 until now.

Segal was born in 1934 in New York. He is survived by two daughters, Polly and Elizabeth, from his first marriage to Marion Sobel, and his third wife, Sonia Schultz Greenbaum, a high school girlfriend with whom he reunited after the death of his second wife, Linda Rogoff. Sonia said Segal died of complications following bypass surgery. ■

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Simchas and Sorrows

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends condolences to:

The Family of Sander David Levin, father of Barry (Stephanie) Levin, grandfather of Sarah, and Samuel. February 26.
Dan Cutler and Lonnie Sussman on the death of their father, Zelig Cutler, also grandfather of Mira Sussman, March 25.
The family of Irwin Sherwood Alpern, father of Bernard B.J. (Pyper) Alpern, grandfather of Sam, Margaret, Charlotte Alpern, and Hannah King. March 26.
Gloria Gurt on the death of her sister, Jeanne Wagenfeld, also aunt of Dennie Carbeck, March 27.
Marina Seeman on the death of her husband, Robert Seeman, April 8.
The family of Janet Garvin, who died on April 9.
Debbie Schwartz on the death of her mother, Harriet Schwartz, April 10.
The family of John Swerdlow on the death of John's brother Paul S. Swerdlow, April 11.
Valerie Rosenberg on the death of her husband, Victor Rosenberg, April 11
Dorine Kroll on the death of her husband Seymour Kroll, April 14.

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends mazal tovs to:

Nancy & Sam Silver on the birth of their twin grandsons, Isaac Noah Rubin and Ryan Ari Rubin, sons of Emily Silver & Joshua Rubin.
Oliver Morgan on his Bar Mitzvah, March 13
Mindy Collis on her Bat Mitzvah, March 20
Joshua Behringer on his Bar Mitzvah, March 27
Debbie and Bob Merion on the birth of their granddaughter, Aviva Zazie Merion Corrado, born Friday March 26.

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