Power of the collective: A source of strength, resolve and renewal

by Eileen Freed and Randy Milgrom

The new Jewish year of 5781 has begun. Now comes Sukkot — a time to celebrate and experience the fragility of life, as represented by the Sukkah. Who would have anticipated, in the fall and winter of 5780, how imminently fragile we are — with global COVID-19 pandemic would bring such tremendous instability and uncertainty, immediately changing the way we work, teach our children, care for one another, and maintain our Jewish traditions.

Schools and businesses, closed. Millions of jobs, gone. Cherished lives, lost.

Yet we’ve also seen remarkable resilience and leadership. Essential workers — those who care for the sick, keep us safe, and ensure we have food on our tables — have inspired us with their courage and dedication.

Jewish congregations and organizations, both large and small, have deftly shifted programing and operations to remote platforms. Using Zoom, we’ve gathered to console mourners, provide crisis counseling, engage in innovative Jewish programming from around the world, and connect with family and friends in new ways.

Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) leaders quickly assembled the national networks representing the core organizations of Jewish life, as well as leading philanthropists — and swung into action. Here in Washtenaw County, with JFNA’s guidance, the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor (JF- GAA) convened our local Jewish communal organizations and provided information and resources to successfully apply for Paycheck Protection Program loans that helped them stay solvent while continuing to pay dedicated employees even as they were forced to halt or adjust programming.

As our 2020 Annual Community Campaign was winding down, our new COVID Emergency Fund was ramping up. From its reserves, the Jewish Federation seeded the fund with $75,000 — which generous community donors more than matched with $83,000 of their own — to support local organizations, congregations, and individuals facing pandemic-related financial crises. Foundations across the country have collectively raised $175 million in emergency funds to address the needs of their communities.

On the other side of the world, our partners at the Jewish Agency for Israel have made loans to devastated Jewish communities in Europe and South America, and the JDC has supported the struggling nonprofit sector in Israel as well as the needy in other countries. Our own 2020 Annual Community Campaign allocated funds to our partners in Israel — such as Hand in Hand Schools and Youth Futures — to help them continue to provide essential services in new ways as they likewise have adjusted to the realities of physical distancing.

As long as this crisis persists, the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor — along with all of our local partners — will continue to work together as a community to ensure that the needs of our residents are addressed.

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From the Editor

I am still feeling the shock wave from the recent Rosh Hashanah death of Justice Stephen Breyer was reciting the mourners’ kaddish during virtual livestreaming services with Central Synagogue in New York City. I got the call from U.S. Marshalls about the Justice’s death. Soon, the entire Jewish world, and then the rest of the world would know. I am struck that because of the holiday and because so many of us were using electronic communication to be together, nearly the entire Jewish community experienced the sadness of the Justice’s death together. Then thought of her optimism, her view of humankind’s ability to move forward, one step at a time, also washed over us, together. All on the eve of a new, and fateful, year. Do yourself a favor: the minute you’re done reading this, watch the five-minute video on YouTube “Ruth Bader Ginsburg Tribute/Hallelujah, Central Synagogue–Rosh Hashanah 5781.”

Shake local continued from page 1

Sponorsive to the natural world around us, and that is remarkably true in our global environment that we all share. How could this concept extend to other Jewish rituals and celebrations? How might it apply to other consumer choices that we make in our day-to-day lives?

As we transition out of this High Holiday season, a season like no other, let us not forget the core intention of this heightened period of our communal calendar—teshuvah. Return, renewal, and repentance. This year, 5781, let us deepen our continued investment in the natural world, the one in our own backyards. Let us deepen our continued investment in ourselves and in each other. And let us commit to making this be a year of environmental teshuvah, as we create the legacy by which future generations will remember us.

Rabbi Nate DeGroot is Associate Director, Spiritual & Program Director, Hazon Detroit

Letter to the Editor

Dear Washtenaw Jewish News,

I fear that recent news reports on the court case involving picketers outside an Ann Arbor synagogue tend to accept at face value the picketers’ self-image as benign human rights advocates.

In fact, as public records show, the leaders and many of the followers are hard-core antisemites and neo-Nazi sympathizers. I have compiled the following information, readily available from public sources, as part of my University of Michigan research on American hate groups.

* Standing outside the synagogue, Henry Herskovitz, the picketers’ leader, stated his motivation in these exact words, which on his website he acknowledged, uttering, “I hate Jews. Whatever happened to them in World War II they brought on themselves. They deserved edged, uttering, “I hate Jews. Whatever words, which on his website he acknowledged, stated his motivation in these exact words.

This year, 5781, let us deepen our continued investment in the natural world, the one in our own backyards. Let us deepen our continued investment in ourselves and in each other. And let us commit to making this be a year of environmental teshuvah, as we create the legacy by which future generations will remember us.

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* The late Ernst Zundel, a Holocaust denier and co-author of the book The Hitler We Loved and Why, was Germany’s leading neo-Nazi and was imprisoned in Germany for inciting race hatred and denying the Holocaust. Not only did Her- skovitz campaign tirelessly for Zundel’s release from prison, but Herskovitz flew to Germany to meet Zundel in Mannheim prison, shake Zundel’s hand, and express warm admiration. When Jewish families came to the Farmington Hills Holocaust Museum for a memorial service to honor their relatives who had been murdered by the Nazis, Herskovitz greeted them holding a sign demanding Zundel’s release from prison.

* The Southern Poverty Law Center, a leading civil rights organization, listed Deir Yassin Remembers, the group that initiated the picket, on its National Register of Hate Groups, Why? Because, the SPLC explained, the group sympathizes with Nazi Germany.

* Larry Brayboy is a local political activist who Herskovitz identified in a letter to the Washtenaw Jewish News as a “close friend” of the picketers. The picketers chose Brayboy to represent their views in a public debate in which he promised to prove that the Holocaust never happened and that Jews caused 9/11. Brayboy has sent endless emails to public figures attacking “Jew n*sses” and “Jew Pr*ss” and explaining that it is “way past time to exterminate the 9/11 [h<x>ideous <e>x>ecut<e>ive] Jews of Israel.”

* Paul Eisen, a Director of Deir Yassin Remembers, appeared on the radio program of David Duke, America’s leading neo-Nazi. Said Eisen to Duke on the air, “I never heard you, David, say anything that I didn’t think was true.”

This is only the tip of the iceberg of the picketers’ pervasive and incorrigibly antisemitic activities. Their leaders have seized upon the Mideast issue not because they know anything about Middle Eastern history, but because they think the issue will attract new supporters while camouflaging their true motives. As a major community organ, I hope that you will provide a full and accurate account of their ideology that has now resulted in a federal court case.

That Ann Arbor has done absolutely nothing to help the synagogue during an ordeal now in its 17th year, that community leaders have remained silent in the face of endless hate group provocation, is, in my opinion, a frightening reproduction of 1930s cowardice, a mark of shame, a scarlet letter, that Ann Arbor will have great difficulty removing.

Victor Lieberman, Raemi Wallenberg Distinguished University Professor of History, University of Michigan
I moved from Boston to Ann Arbor in the fall of 1994; not long afterward, Timothy McVeigh blew up the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people. When McVeigh’s involvement with something called the Michigan Militia came to light, I wondered whether I had been crazy to leave the relative safety of the East Coast for a state in which right-wing extremists apparently were running around the woods with assault weapons, training for a day when Black people, Jews, homosexuals, and East and West Coast liberals would try to take away their guns and lock them in concentration camps.

As a parent, I was frightened for my Jewish son. But as a writer, I was fascinated by the way Michigan seemed to provide a home not only for all the lefties I had met in Ann Arbor and Detroit, but so many ultra-conservative Christian fundamentalists. How could citizens with such radically conflicting views coexist to form one government?

Then I met a couple who had migrated from northern California to a small, idyllic town in Southeast Michigan, only to find that the minister of the local church was preaching virulently antisemitic sermons. When the husband, who was Jewish, complained to the local newspaper, the couple found themselves ostracized and their children harassed at school. Soon, their house burned down. The fire marshal found evidence of arson, and my friends became convinced their neighbors had burned them out, while the fire marshal decided my friends had burned down their own house to collect the insurance, which, he implied, was what Jewish people did.

Hearing this couple’s story, I knew I had a book, and I spent the next few years finding out everything I could learn about right-wing terror groups. I was wary of trying to infiltrate the local unit of the militia, but I found I didn’t really need to: the militias were holding meetings at local restaurants, writing newsletters on public websites, training in the nearby woods, and holding their annual Tax Blast in a public park a few miles from Ann Arbor. (The group even provided kosher hot dogs for any Jew who might be interested in joining their cause.)

I finished the novel. But when my agent sent the manuscript around New York, the editors, who didn’t see any white supremacists in their neighborhoods, decided I must be making up the characters I was describing. Not until 2008, when Barack Obama’s presidency incited right-wing extremists to new spasms of hate and vitriol, did Breakfast and Entering find a publisher.

It became my fellow Michiganders’ turn to express disbelief. Clearly, I had arrived from the East Coast with a narrowed view of all Midwesterners as racist, Jew-hating right-wingers, and I had jumped to conclusions about government intercession — in two. And I hope I am not being similarly optimistic in believing that we no longer will ignore the ugliness this rift finally has exposed and that we will take some very real and effective steps to cure the infection and heal the wound.

Eileen Pollack’s most recent novel is The Professor of Immortality; she is the former director of the Helen Zell MFA Program in Creative Writing at the University of Michigan.
Community

Sukkot Without a Sukkah

Rabbi Robyn Frish, originally for 18doors.com, reprinted with permission

Want to celebrate Sukkot without a sukkah this year? You’re not alone.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, some of us might have been able to visit or even celebrate Sukkot with a meal in a sukkah in regular circumstances, may not be able to this year. The central symbol of the holiday of Sukkot is the sukkah, a temporary structure that provides food for those in need. Even if they aren’t having volunteers pack food because of coronavirus, many food banks still need volunteers to deliver food. Or you could make a donation to a local or national organization that provides food for those in need.

The sukkah, a temporary structure that isn’t nearly as sturdy as our homes, also reminds us of how fortunate we are to have a place to live with a roof over our head. Unfortunately, not everyone is so lucky. Sukkot is a great time to explain this to your kids and to volunteer (again, options may be limited due to coronavirus) and/or to give money to a homeless shelter.

Make an edible sukkah. If you can’t visit the real thing, why not make a sukkah out of food? A gingerbread house-like activity is popular with kids and adults alike.

Harvest. Cook. Eat. In the Bible, Sukkot is one of three harvest festivals (along with Passover and Shavuot) and it was originally considered a thanksgiving for the fall harvest. If you grow your own fruits and vegetables, get picking and cooking, and if not you can go to a farmer’s market or farm and buy or pick produce. Then use the local harvest to make yourself delicious meals during the holiday. It’s one of some of our favorite recipes for inspiration.

One of the names of Sukkot is Zeman Simchatenu or “season of our joy,” so whatever you do to celebrate the holiday, make sure to have fun.

For the seven incoming JCLP students, the event was an exciting first chance to contribute to dynamic conversations and forge new relationships. “The community breakfast strengthens connection and community between members of the community that have emerged during the pandemic, and reflects on which aspects of the current situation might have staying power when the pandemic has passed.”

Mordoch commented. “I also must say that interactions with librarians along my way as a student and the support I received from them have had a very positive impact on my academic life. At some point, I realized I wanted to have a positive impact like that on students’ academic journeys.”

Since becoming the Judaica curator, Mordoch has worked to acquire helpful online resources such as the film platform JFLIX, Brill’s Encyclopedia of Jewish History and Culture Online, A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities, the Kotar Reference Library of Israeli publishers, and Jewish-German scholar Victor Klemperer’s diaries. Additionally, Mordoch has worked to add Jewish language dictionaries, Jewish cookbooks, and newspaper archives, and has expanded the libraries’ renowned Erwin M. Alteman Haggadah collection.

“The U-M Library is one of the world’s largest academic research libraries. Like other libraries, it is not just a repository of books, but also a physical and virtual space that allows different kinds of interactions, discoveries, and opportunities,” observed Mordoch. “One of my favorite things about working in our library is the opportunity to interact with faculty members, library colleagues, and the general public, and collaborate with them on different kinds of projects.”

Mordoch initially became interested in Sephardic studies because of his desire to research his own family history (one of his grandparents was born and raised in Salonika, Greece). This fall he will be teaching a Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) undergraduate course. “Ladino is the distinctive Jewish language of the Sephardic Jews, like Yiddish is to the Ashkenazi Jews,” explained Mordoch. “Besides familiarizing themselves with the language, history, and culture of the Sephardim, students will have the opportunity to learn what constitutes a Jewish language. They will also realize that the formation of any language is a much more fluid process than we usually conceive.”

Mordoch is the second incumbent of the Irving M. Heremlin Curator position, replacing Elliot Gertel, who retired in 2019 after 20 years at the University of Michigan.
Herb Amster on his tenth yahrzeit

Joanne B. Jarvi, special to the WIN

This October marks the 10-year anniversary of the death of a most gracious and altruistic leader in the Ann Arbor Jewish community and beyond: Herb Amster.

Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County were some of Herb's passions. He served on the JFS board and in other capacities for many years. He and a number of other community members were once involved in a JFS committee called the Cool New Things Committee. The Cool, New Things Committee would sit around a table dreaming of what JFS one day might become, realizing that in order to make these dreams a reality, JFS had to learn how to turn their wealth of expertise into real wealth for the organization.

In honor of Herb, and with the help of Norman Herbert, a distinguished advisory council, and generous donors and friends, JFS of Washtenaw County created the Amster Center. This center, which serves as the agency's social enterprise arm, was in part due to Herb's persistence and determination. The Amster Center recently celebrated its 10th anniversary.

In November 2008, the Amster Center Corporate Fee for Service was announced. The fee was to be used to provide services to people, organizations, and corporations who can pay in order to provide those same services to others who cannot. The Amster Center has since become a recognizable name throughout Washtenaw County, and the Amster Center has been instrumental in the success of many Washtenaw County progressive nonprofit organizations, including (but not limited to) the University Musical Society, the Washtenaw Housing Alliance, Arbor Hospice, the NEW Center, and Corner Health Center.

On this anniversary, and every day, we at JFS honor Herb Amster's memory, his entrepreneurial spirit, and his dedication to helping those in need. Our community is stronger, smarter, and better off in so many ways because of him.

Michigan Jewish history journal wins state history award

Michigan Jewish History (MJH) announced its 2020 state history award winners on Tuesday. Among the honorees is Michigan Jewish History (MJH), which was honored in the Outstanding Printed Periodical category. MJH will be recognized along with the other winners at a virtual awards ceremony at 7 p.m. on October 2, as part of the HSM's annual scholarly journal, Michigan Jewish History, whose culminating event is the annual Michigan Jewish History (MJH) award competition.

Purpose and Process: This annual award is named for Rabbi Emanuel Applebaum, MJH's first editor, serving from 1960 to 1963. All entries are reviewed and judged by MJH editors, the MJH advisory committee, and external referees.

Submission: Please email a Word version of the complete manuscript to Tracy Weissman, MJH managing editor: tw Weissman@ MJH.org. Please write “Applebaum Award” in your email’s subject line.

Michigan Jewish History (MJH) is a peer-reviewed, scholarly, academic journal published annually by JHSM.
Habonim Dror alumnae show up for this year’s “Tavor Musicale”

Leah Berger, special to the WJN

Don’t you ask me/what I’m thinking/If I make you happy/I will keep on singing/for I sing when I can’t talk/and I dance when I can’t walk/and I’m going back to Splendor Bridge/gonna try to call it home. — Sam Flesher, Splendor Bridge, 1961.

These were the opening lines of the grand finale music video in an online fundraiser for Habonim Dror Camp Tavor, of Three Rivers, Michigan. Moderated by live emcees, the prerecorded skits and musical numbers highlighted seven decades of Tavor’s historical and cultural creativity in just under two hours. During the COVID-19 pandemic, with camp activities shifted to online programming and an inevitable decrease in funding looming, Tavor alum Michelle Azar took it upon herself to organize the concert. She knew it was important to have a meaningful denouement to the show.

“We all need to be moved, positively, especially during these times,” says Azar, whose background includes 10 years as the founder and producer of a theater company in Los Angeles. Written, arranged, and produced entirely by Tavor alumni, the closing video bears testimony to the rich talent emerging from the lush 62-acre property over the past 65 years. Spanning generations and landscapes, the performance features 14 Tavor participants from coast to coast.

“If a person knew nothing about camp and saw people in their sixties and twenties singing the same song with the same passion, that’s pretty remarkable,” says Marc Morgan, video producer/editor. “I’ve been wanderin’ 20 centuries or more/ but I know where I am going to/and what I’m going for/I am walking down that track/evening sun is at my back…”

A prolific bard with universal appeal, Flesher penned hundreds of songs until his passing in 2010. Splendor Bridge is one of those songs, like Blowing in the Wind, that the song’s melancholy feel of longing and yearning is even more poignant than the state of Israel are different now than in 1961. Campers explore their connection to Israel in thoughtful ways, but it is clear that Tavor is its own “splendor bridge.”

Since 1956, the unique combination of Jewish cultural experience, progressive Jewish values, and natural idealism of a camp modeled after Israeli kibbutz life keeps campers returning year after year. “Tavor made singing in a group a big part of my life,” says Dana Zuckerman. “Sitting next to others made me feel free to belt out songs with all I’ve got.”

Hebrew and English songs are taught daily, so that even if you are a new camper, you will know the traditional camp songs by the end of the summer.

“She is so fantastic.”

“Tavor made singing in a group a big part of my life,” says Dana Zuckerman. “Sitting next to others made me feel free to belt out songs with all I’ve got.”

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Music is the nexus around which the Tavor day spins. But the ruach — the spirit of the songs — proves just as important.

“Singing could be attached to social justice values, with labor, or antiwar songs,” says Ari Lutze-Jahriel, camp counselor 2017/2019. “As I came into my own political experience, Tavor had a lot to do with it.”

A part of a largely youth-led movement, Habonim Dror campers are empowered to express themselves. Music, dance, and creativity infuse an environment in which campers feel safe to speak up.

“How we celebrated Shabbat and Tisha b’Av was a different way of creating ritual and community that I did not have in the suburbs of Chicago growing up,” says Becky Gordon. “I visited two years ago, and we had impromptu discussions with the kids about gender identity — it was so fantastic.”

And I’m going back to Splendor Bridge/gonna try and call it home.

While the song’s title is a clear tribute to Kibbutz Gesher Haziv (Splendor Bridge in Hebrew), the understanding of kibbutz life and the complexities of the state of Israel are different now than in 1961. Campers explore their connection to Israel in thoughtful ways, but it is also clear that Tavor is its own “splendor bridge.”

With images from more than 50 years, the video pulls on the heartstrings of those who have come to call Tavor home.

“To this day and every time I go and visit, it is home,” says Morgan, emotion reverberating through his words.

The song’s melancholy feel of longing and yearning is even more poignant than ever. This year’s online campers hope to call Tavor home in the summers to come.

The video of Splendor Bridge with full Tavor Musicale can be found on the Camp Tavor website at www.camptavor.org. Fundraiser proceeds offset the summer’s lost revenue and fund the camp’s scholarship program, ensuring the future of Camp Tavor.

Camp Tavor welcomes kids entering second through 12th grade with programs from one week to a full summer. For more information or to make a donation, go to www.camptavor.org.
Michael Appel, special to the WJN

In both Israel and the United States, political headlines throughout the past summer vacillated between COVID-19, annexation, and then recognition between Israel and the UAE. It appears now that in both countries the governments’ responses to the pandemic will have the most salient political impact. But for a number of weeks in mid-summer, political positioning over Israel’s apparent plan to implement unilateral annexation of portions of the West Bank dominated the politics of Israel-US relations.

These issues were the immediate context for a media briefing organized by J Street on August 18 featuring a discussion between Representative Andy Levin (D-MI) and Jeremy Ben Ami, J Street’s President, about “The Democrats’ Evolving Israel Politics and Policies.” J Street emerged in 2008 using the catchphrase “pro-Israel, pro-peace” to describe itself and its supporters, and has often been contrasted with AIPAC in its willingness to advocate for positions in opposition to those of the Israeli government. Andy Levin was elected in 2018 to represent Michigan’s 9th Congressional District. Levin’s stated positions regarding Israel and Palestine are consistent with JStreet’s, which has endorsed him through JStreetPAC.

In his introduction, Ben Ami pointed to the increasing number of Democratic lawmakers who embrace JStreet’s vision for the United States to actively promote a two-state solution and to assure that United States financial aid to Israel is not used to further annexation. Ben Ami pointed to the near unanimity among Democratic candidates in support of these positions as “a changing of the guard over the last decade, and no one represents this better than Andy Levin.”

Levin opened his remarks by referring back to an interfaith trip he took as a graduate student no one represents this better than Andy Levin. “I’m not ready to talk about Palestinian political rights outside of a state. We need a Palestinian state; they need one, they have a right to one.”

A number of questions were asked of Levin and Ben Ami about the importance of Democrats calling for restrictions to United States aid to Israel, specifically that none be used to support or further annexation. “No country wants to have any part of its activities and actions actually scrutinized,” Ben Ami responded. “These kinds of restrictions are a common tool. The State of Israel is the sole recipient of assistance of this kind that doesn’t have any restrictions placed on them . . . and it’s really a proposal to bring American assistance to Israel in line with its own goals.”

One final question from Emily Tamkin of the New Statesman, and Akbar Ahmed, of HuffPost asked the speakers to discuss the realities of de-annexation. “I think it’s a proposal to bringing American assistance to Israel in line with its own goals. It’s about creating a Palestinian state that’s viable next to Israel.”

As if to highlight the final questions in the briefing, a J Street email appeal that went out the next day, August 19, quoted Likud MK and current Minister of Health Yuli Edelstein’s response to the delayed annexation vote: “Soon the day will come when we will officially apply for Peace, began protesting outside of the synagogue in 2003. The group has protested there every Saturday morning since then, timed to the congregations Shabbat services. The protesters have held signs with messages including “Jewish Power Corrupts” and “Resist Jewish Power.” Some supporters have exhibited sympathies with neo-Nazis and other antisemitic groups.

The December 2019 lawsuit was filed by Herskovitz and his fellow protesters later filed a motion for a district judge to reconsider their ruling against Ann Arbor syna-agogue congregants in a case involving anti-Israel synagogue protesters has been denied, the plaintiffs’ counsel said. Plaintiffs’ counsel, Marc Suselman, says an appeal has been filed. The Court will be issuing a briefing schedule in the near future. Briefs will not be due until sometime in November or December, 2020. After all briefs have been filed, the Court may schedule an oral argument, to take place sometime in January or February, 2021. A decision from the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals is not expected until late winter, or early spring, in 2021. U.S. District Judge Victoria Roberts dismissed the lawsuit brought by a congregate against the protesters on Aug. 19, on the grounds that the plaintiffs did not prove they suffered concrete injury as a result of the protests. In response, the plaintiff’s counsel filed a motion for reconsideration on Thursday, Aug. 27.

The motion stated that the court’s decision “contains several palpable defects, including errors of law and fact” including one believed defect described as a mischaracterization of the equitable relief being sought by the plaintiffs. “Plaintiffs … ask the Court to enjoin these Defendants from engaging in peaceful political speech in public areas. The Constitution simply does not tolerate such restraint,” the original court decision reads. “By using the plural, ‘public areas,’ the statement suggests that Plaintiffs were seeking to bar the Defendants from engaging in their anti-Israel and anti-Semitic speech in every possible public area,” the motion responded. “This is not true… Plaintiffs were only seeking reasonable time, place and manner restrictions on the Defendants use of their anti-Israel and anti-Semitic speech in proximity to their house of worship.”

Susselman is handling the case along with The Lawfare Project, a New York-based legal fund with a focus on Jewish and pre-Israel cases. “I expect [Judge Roberts] to deny [the motion], just judging from her reasoning and her attitude demonstrated in her order to dismiss the case,” Susselman predicted before the decision. “But she may be concerned about that, because I think we’ve made very strong arguments that her decision is contrary to so many precedents on so many levels that she’s clearly risking it being overturned, and no judge wants to be overturned.”

Ann Arbor resident Henry Herskovitz, leader and founder of a group called Witness for Peace, began protesting outside of the synagogue in 2003. The group has protested there every Saturday morning since then, timed to the congregations Shabbat services. The protesters have held signs with messages including “Jewish Power Corrupts” and “Resist Jewish Power.” Some supporters have exhibited sympathies with neo-Nazis and other antisemitic groups.

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Susselman is handling the case along with The Lawfare Project, a New York-based legal fund with a focus on Jewish and pre-Israel cases. “I expect [Judge Roberts] to deny [the motion], just judging from her reasoning and her attitude demonstrated in her order to dismiss the case,” Susselman predicted before the decision. “But she may be concerned about that, because I think we’ve made very strong arguments that her decision is contrary to so many precedents on so many levels that she’s clearly risking it being overturned, and no judge wants to be overturned.”

Ann Arbor resident Henry Herskovitz, leader and founder of a group called Witness for Peace, began protesting outside of the synagogue in 2003. The group has protested there every Saturday morning since then, timed to the congregations Shabbat services. The protesters have held signs with messages including “Jewish Power Corrupts” and “Resist Jewish Power.” Some supporters have exhibited sympathies with neo-Nazis and other antisemitic groups.

The December 2019 lawsuit was filed by Herskovitz and his fellow protesters later filed a motion for a district judge to reconsider their ruling against Ann Arbor synagogue congregants in a case involving anti-Israel synagogue protesters has been denied, the plaintiffs’ counsel said. Plaintiffs’ counsel, Marc Suselman, says an appeal has been filed. The Court will be issuing a briefing schedule in the near future. Briefs will not be due until sometime in November or December, 2020. After all briefs have been filed, the Court may schedule an oral argument, to take place sometime in January or February, 2021. A decision from the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals is not expected until late winter, or early spring, in 2021. U.S. District Judge Victoria Roberts dismissed the lawsuit brought by a congregate against the protesters on Aug. 19, on the grounds that the plaintiffs did not prove they suffered concrete injury as a result of the protests. In response, the plaintiff’s counsel filed a motion for reconsideration on Thursday, Aug. 27.

The motion stated that the court’s decision “contains several palpable defects, including errors of law and fact” including one believed defect described as a mischaracterization of the equitable relief being sought by the plaintiffs. “Plaintiffs … ask the Court to enjoin these Defendants from engaging in peaceful political speech in public areas. The Constitution simply does not tolerate such restraint,” the original court decision reads. “By using the plural, ‘public areas,’ the statement suggests that Plaintiffs were seeking to bar the Defendants from engaging in their anti-Israel and anti-Semitic speech in every possible public area,” the motion responded. “This is not true… Plaintiffs were only seeking reasonable
Looking for Rose: Muskogee, Oklahoma

Clare Kinberg, 10th installment in a series

It is a story about my aunt Rose and her husband Zebedee Arnwine. Before they met and before they moved together to a rural town in Southwest Michigan, they’d lived for more than 30 years in their separate communities — she in St. Louis, Missouri, with immigrant Jewish parents, and he in a family of Black farmers in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Though I never met Aunt Rose, I knew five of her siblings quite well, among them my father. Writing my aunt’s life is an inward-facing process: though a generation distant, her background is my own. I can hear her sisters’ voices, my father’s inflections. I listen for echoes with-in to imagine Aunt Rose.

To write Mr. Arnwine’s life, I search directories, public legal documents and census records. These shards of his life have led me to buried scenes of Oklahoma history — American history. Though deep in the archives, this history that shaped the lives of my aunt and her husband also shapes my own 21st Century life. My 19-year-old daughter came into my bedroom two nights ago to tell me about a TikTok she’d just viewed of a white supremacist angrily ranting about an all-Black town somewhere in the South. “I want to go live there,” she said. She didn’t know I was writing, just then, about all-Black towns in Oklahoma three generations ago.

My aunt’s husband, Zebedee Arnwine, was born 100 years before my daughters, in 1902 in Cherokee County, East Texas. Soon after his birth, Zebedee’s parents moved their family 300 miles straight north to Indian Territory; to what would become, in 1907, the state of Oklahoma. Arnwine’s family moved to the area near Muskogee. Oklahoma was part of a large migration of Black farmers, a wave that came after the Exodusters of 1877, yet two decades before the Great Migration to the North. This relocation included thousands of families who organized all-Black towns in a part of the Indian Territory where some were advocating for an all-Black state. They were dreaming of a place where Black people could live free from ever present degradations and violence.

At the same time that some were imagining an all-Black state in the Indian Territory, the United States Federal Government adopted bureaucratic, legal mechanisms to allot Native American tribal lands to individuals who could be proven to be members of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee, Cherokee, or Seminole tribes. In 1887, the Dawes Act authorized the United States President to sub-divide communal tribal lands into individual allotments. Nine years later, in 1898, the Curtis Amendment to the Dawes Act abolished tribal governments and assigned the Dawes Commission the responsibility of determining each individual’s tribal membership. The racial and economic struggles in the Indian Territory during those years were unique, in part because the Black slaves of some of the tribes, freed by the Civil War, were also considered tribal members, and could be included in the allotments. Known as the “Creek Freedmen,” the people enslaved by members of the Creek tribe, and their descendants, had complicated relationships with African Americans arriving from other parts of the South.

In Acres of Aspiration: The All-Black Towns of Oklahoma, Hannibal B. Johnson explains, “Beyond the natural yearning for freedom, many Blacks held firm to a perceived economic truth: land ownership held the key to success. Moreover, they thought land ownership would lead inexorably to full citizenship. . . . In trickles, then in torrents, Blacks streamed first into Kansas, then increasingly into Oklahoma. This bold swim upstream by Black pioneers sparked controversy, then fear and resentment, among local whites. This deliberately mixed reception failed to stem the tide of migrants. The floodgates having parted, a cascade of newcomers spilled across the region. Oklahoma, some thought, would evolve into an all-Black state captained by a Black governor. All-Black towns and settlements in the windswelt Oklahoma plains captured the collective imagination of an entire people.”

Zebedee Arnwine was perhaps five years old when the Indian and Oklahoma Territories became the state of Oklahoma and adopted a Jim Crow constitution. The new state’s constitution defined “White race” as everyone except anyone who was of African descent and then went on to establish segregated schools and empowered the legislature to limit the voting rights of Blacks. The first bill to come before the new Oklahoma senate established into law the segregation of Blacks in public transportation and public facilities.

Zebedee was working as a farmer with his father when on April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson, declared the United States was sending troops to Europe to fight what would become World War I because “The world must be made safe for democracy.” About a year later, 16-year-old Zebedee, claiming he was 18, briefly married and registered for the draft. He was one of the several hundred thousand Black men who registered but were not called up. I have found no record of the dissolution this first early marriage.

Tamah, the woman who became Zebedee’s second wife, was born in 1901 to Rebecca Walk-er, an enrolled Creek Freedman. Still, Rebecca was required to go in person and with a witness before the Dawes Commission in Muskogee, Oklahoma, to enroll three-year-old Tamah into the tribe. A transcript of the Dawes commission’s interview before a panel of white men is preserved in the Oklahoma archives. Enrolling her young daughter in the tribe would make Tamah to be entitled to an allotment of land in the Muskogee area, in Indian Territory. There was oil and gas under that land.

When Tamah was a teenager her land was leased to an oil and gas company that sent her a monthly check. However, as was common at the time, a white “guardian” was established by the court. The Muskogee Cimiter, a local Black newspaper, found more than 3,000 similar guardianship cases, showing that $100 million had been stolen from Native American and Black families. In Tamah’s case, her appointed guardian was evidently greedy. According to Buck Franklin, another eyewitness to the Tulsa massacre, this guardian went to court and he spent a good deal of court time in an effort to become a permanent “guardian” by proving Tamah’s incompetence to manage her estate. These court proceedings, too, are preserved in the Oklahoma Historical Library. After three years of legal wrangling, Tamah, when she turned 18, won the right to manage her own affairs. Not long after, she married Zeb Arnwine, and in 1924 Tamah and Zebedee had a daughter they named Rebecca. It was during this marriage that the Black community of Greenwood, not an hour away from Muskogee, was attacked by a white mob, killing dozens if not hundreds, burning several square blocks, and leaving 10,000 Black people homeless.

Greenwood had been a prosperous Black city within the city of Tulsa with its own thriving economy, professionals, shops, and banks. Tulsa was considered the oil capital of the world, and Greenwood the Black Wall Street.

One eyewitness account of the coordinated destruction of Greenwood was recorded by the attorney Buck Colbert Franklin in his autobiography, edited by his son and grandson, the historians John Hope and John Whittington Franklin. On the evening of May 31, 1921, Buck Franklin got wind of impending violence, and because he knew so many of the city’s leaders, white and Black, he thought he could do something worthwhile: I tried to reach [the sheriff’s office] but was unsuccessful, and I learned that the [phone] wires were cut. At daylight [June 1, 1921] I went to my office still believing I could get to the sheriff’s office. But I saw I was too late. Hundreds of men with drawn guns were approaching from every direction. . . . I stood at the steps to my office, and I was immedi-ately arrested and taken to one of the many detention camps. Even then, airplanes were circling overhead, dropping explosives upon the buildings that had been looted, and big trucks were hauling all sorts of furniture and household goods away. In these camps I saw pregnant women, and one was so heavy that a doctor was called to deliver her baby. Soon I was back upon the streets, but the building where I had my office was a smoldering ruin, and all my lawbooks and office fixtures had been consumed by flames. I went to where my housing house had stood a few short hours before, but it was in ashes, with all my clothes and the money to be used in moving my family. As far as one could see, not a Negro dwelling house or place of business stood.

Buck Franklin describes the trigger to the Tulsa massacre as an accusation against a teenage son of a well-known and respected Greenwood businessman. “The boy was on his job [as a shoe-shiner and janitor] and, boarding a very crowded elevator, he accidentally stepped on the lady’s foot. She became enraged and slapped him, and a fresh, cub newspaper reporter, without any experience and no doubt anxious for a byline, gave out an erroneous report that a Negro had assaulted a white girl.”

This familiar yet false cross-racial accusation compounded generational trauma still felt in 2018 when Charles Blow, a New York Times opinion writer, interviewed 103-year-old Olivia J. Hooker, another eyewitness to the Tulsa massacre. Hooker’s father owned an upscale department store in 1921, and the family lived in a comfortable five room home. “White men broke into their house as Hooker and some of her siblings hid beneath an oak dining table, draped with a tablecloth. ‘They took a hatchet to my sisters’ piano. They poured oil all over my grandmother’s bed. They stuffed the dresser with ammunition,’ Hooker told me. . . . They broke the phonograph and the Enrico Caruso record her mother had received as a gift from a friend who had gone to study in Heidelberg, Germany.”

I can only imagine the effects of this racist violence on young Zebedee Arnwine. I have been witness, though, to my daughters’ emerging identities as young Black women, their self-love and their self-doubts, their righteous anger, their rising independence, their bold confrontations with risk, all of these developing amid looping replays of white police beating, strangling, and shooting Black men and women. My daughters share with me their feelings of anger and vulnerability; because I am white, I know I don’t fully feel what they are experiencing. Yet, when there was a shooting in a synagogue in Poway, California and when a rabbi houseguests were attacked with a machete in Monsey, New York, my daughters were the first to check in with me.

Racial segregation and racially based injustice impact my integrated family’s life every day. Growing up as a danger, violence imprinted in our cells, accompanies us, through the generations, on all our journeys.
Silver linings in the time of COVID-19
Ali Reingold, special to the WJN

Magnetic nametags affixed to lockers line the hallways where colorful billboards display smiling photographs of Hebrew Day School teachers. Meticulously placed desks with fresh folders, writing journals, math manipulatives, and art supplies occupy classroom spaces. Tool-kits for supplemental teachers, displaying signs explaining the HDS Mensch code of conduct and the proper method for washing hands.

And the sounds of laughing, happy, mask-wearing children fill the air.

On August 31, Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor opened for in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 school year, bringing with it all that families have come to expect from this school in a typical year — a deep commitment to providing excellent academic instruction in general studies, Judaic studies, and Hebrew; a warm and welcoming environment; a community; a family.

However, this year is, and the road to reopening was, anything but typical. It started with a task force. Led by Head of School Jennifer Rosenberg and composed of teachers and administrators, the HDS Safe Reopening Task Force began its journey in June. Meeting frequently throughout the summer, the group’s data-driven, safety-first approach left no stone unturned. Incorporating guidance from the state of Michigan and the CDC in consultation with myriad local experts in the fields of medicine, public health, and psychology, the educators became the students, expanding their vocabulary to include terms such as “risk mitigation” and “viral load.” They learned to ask new questions and to integrate their own expertise — the education of children — with their newly acquired knowledge. They learned that the task before them was daunting, the data and protocols at times overwhelming, and the territory uncharted.

And they learned that their passion for their profession, their dedication to the students and families who hoped to walk through the school’s doors in the fall, and their commitment to navigating this new path would help them overcome the challenges of their charge and emerge with a plan.

In July, a 12-page roadmap to reopening was sent to parents and staff. With that document’s release, HDS moved into a new phase — implementation. Teachers revised lesson plans to stay true to both the school’s educational philosophy and social distancing protocols. Indoor classrooms were completely redesigned while outdoor classrooms were created from scratch. Everything was rethought, and health and wellness became the theme for the year. Teachers were now tasked with not only teaching math and English and science and Hebrew and Judaic Studies, but also how to wear a mask properly, how to transition between activities safely with appropriate distance, and how to teach their students to take care of themselves and each other.

An already agile group of professionals, the teachers learned that their flexibility seemed to know no bounds.

But there were still questions. How would the students feel about the new protocols? Would they accept the new norms? Would they have the stamina to make it through a full day masked? Would they long for the days before COVID-19 and be distracted by the protocols now required?

The teachers learned one more important lesson:
The power of adaptability. The kids came back to school. Smiling with their eyes, these masked, joyful children followed the rules and learned to accept the new norms. They washed their hands and stayed at a safe distance. They learned math and English and science and Hebrew and Judaic Studies, and they returned, in person, to their home away from home — Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor.

For more information about HDS, please contact Ali Reingold, director of admissions, at admissions@hdsaa.org.
JYP welcomes new board with community celebration

Jessica Weil, special to the WJN

On August 30, Jewish Young Professionals of Ann Arbor hosted a celebration of all the achievements of the past year, honoring the 2020-2021 board, and previewing what’s to come.

This past year JYP had many accomplishments. JYP had over 130 young adults attend over 30 programs. Members of JYP have come from all over the country and world! Whether the partnerships involved religious leaders, social workers, or graduate students, the programs added significant value to members.

At the event, the incoming board was formally installed.

The 2020-2021 JYP Board of Directors are: Jodie Abramowitz, President; Reva Berman Pozoza, Campaign Chair; Julie Cohen, Programming Team Co-Chair; Sheira Cohen, Communications Chair; Rachel Dawson-Baglien, Programming Team Co-Chair; Liana Grey, Interest Groups Co-Chair; Rob Stern, Member at Large; Ervan Frenklak, Member at Large. Evan Frenklak, Member at Large; Liana Grey, Interest Groups Co-Chair; Rob Stern, Member at Large; Ervan Frenklak, Member at Large.

Following the installation, incoming President Jodie Abramowitz spoke to participants about her Jewish journey to her new position in JYP. Building on her experiences to look ahead to the coming year, she said, “I hope JYP can provide a place for our young adult community members to feel welcome and to thrive, whether it is an opportunity to meet new people and make new friends, an opportunity to learn or try something new, or empowering our community members to create the sorts of programs and community that they want to see. I look forward this coming year to promoting Jewish community and leadership that is both empowered and empowering.” Her knowledge and experience of leading young adults excited the audience about JYP this coming year.

The event concluded with a champagne toast, desserts and socializing. JYP is looking forward to the year ahead!

Interested in getting involved with JYP? Contact Jessica Weil at jessica@jewishannarbor.org. To learn more, like Jewish Young Professionals of Ann Arbor on Facebook and follow us on Instagram or visit us at jewishannarbor.org/jewish-young-professionals.

Continued from page 1, Power of the collective: A source of strength, resolve and renewal

with JFNA and all other Federations — stands ready to continue to address the needs of our community.

Supporting health and safety

Our local organizations and congregations continue to be thoughtful, creative, and diligent in determining when and how to safely open — or to offer programming in new and innovative ways. Jewish Community Center staff worked tirelessly to develop and implement COVID-19 safety guidelines, policies and procedures, and — with money from the COVID Emergency Fund — necessary infrastructure improvements. The JCC was thus able to open the Early Childhood Center and Camp Raanana, providing safe, supervised summer activities for children and respite for working families. Resources from the COVID Emergency Fund have also been used for technology and personal protective equipment, enabling Hebrew Day School to offer in-school instruction and our congregations to provide meaningful programming and support to congregants.

Although we have not had many opportunities to gather, we know that non-COVID-related safety risks continue to grow as well. The Community Security Fund we initiated last year — with money from the COVID Emergency Fund, and funding from 32 other Federations. Our Jewish Young Professionals have continued to offer quality programming online and in small groups held in accordance with state guidelines. We are committed to utilizing all available resources to deepen our connections with one another and with the global Jewish community even as we remain physically distant.

Driving long-term planning

Community planning was a priority even before the onset of COVID-19. This crisis has brought into stark relief the necessity of developing a vision for our Jewish community — and for a strong, collaborative, and innovative future.

JFNA is utilizing scenario planning to help Federations — including ours — to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by an uncertain world. In the coming months we will be exploring this process to address near-and longer-term communal needs while we also begin an all-encompassing visioning and planning process to set the direction — as a community — for a vibrant, welcoming, caring, inclusive, secure, and sustainable Jewish community in Washtenaw County.

“COVID-19 is a new challenge,” wrote JFNA Board of Trustees Chair Mark Will and Eric Fingerhut in a July Jerusalem Post article, “and it continues to unfold in unexpected ways. But it is the values we have carried with us for generations that enable us to respond effectively: the power of collective action, the necessity of collaboration, and the responsibility to care for the entire community. That’s why we know that if we continue to act decisively, we can move from a season of pain to a season of rebuilding and renewal.”

As we sit in our sukkot — perhaps with fewer in-person guests than in the past — we encourage you to consider all that you value in our community, and how we might work together to meet our challenges and to strengthen and sustain our vital Jewish infrastructure for decades to come.

Chag Sameach, from both of us.

Randy Milgrom is the Board President, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor. Eileen Freed is the Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor.
The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor is pleased to announce that four local organizations, the Jewish Community Center, Hebrew Day School, Beth Israel Congregation, and Temple Beth Emeth have received grants of up to $15,000 to support their operations remotely. The funding is designed to provide flexibility and ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, it has raised $535,000 and provided over $80,000 to local organizations and individuals.

In June, Washtenaw County moved into Phase 4 of the Michigan Safe Start Plan, which allowed businesses, camps, and child care centers to reopen under specified new safety measures, including providing protective equipment (PPE) to employees, increased cleaning and adjustments to building layouts. In response to these and other requirements, Federation established an ongoing grant to help greater Ann Arbor’s Jewish institutions prepare for the unique needs brought forth by resuming aspects of in-person and virtual operations. These institutions are able to rely on funding to help with a variety of reopening needs, including purchasing of PPE, cleaning services, and technology for continuing operations remotely.

The Jewish Community Center applied its $15,000 in reopening funds to prepare the building for the opening of Camp Raanana and the Early Childhood Center (ECC), which included installing new exhaust fans, purchasing clear signage for inside and outside the building, and increasing cleaning services. Camp and the ECC successfully operated throughout the summer, allowing local families and kids the opportunity to reunite with friends, favorite teachers, and more. “Through this funding, Camp Raanana was able to ensure our campers had a safe space both within and outside the JCC building. With all that has happened these past few months, it was wonderful to be able to provide our campers with some normalcy and have another successful summer in the virtual setting to in person,” says Rabbi Mark S. Diamond, senior lecturer in Jewish Studies at Loyola Marymount University and professor of practical rabbinics at the Academy for Jewish Religion California, and Dr. Andrew C. Reed, assistant professor of church history at Brigham Young University, the book is the first joint project by Jewish and Latter-day Saint publishers.

Understanding Covenants and Communities comes out of the Jewish–Latter-day Saint Academic Dialogue Project, a pathbreaking interfaith encounter between these two religious communities. The book’s five conferences held semiannually since 2016, the volume addresses subjects of common interest to the Jewish and Latter-day Saint traditions and how the two faith communities can engage in a meaningful dialogue. It is long past time that the Jewish-Christian dialogue be widened to include a Latter-day Saint-Jewish encounter,” said Rabbi Hara Person, Chief Executive of the Jewish–Latter-day Saint Academic Dialogue, with Reed.

Reed teaches world religions and Latter-day Saint history at Brigham Young University. He studied Russian and European history at Arizona State University and holds master’s degrees from the University of Oxford and the Woolf Institute at the University of Cambridge. He is a fellow of the Religious Outreach Council at BYU.

"It has been an honor to collaborate with Brigham Young University on this project," says Rabbi Hara Person, Chief Executive of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. "Just as Understanding Covenants and Communities will inspire deeper interfaith conversation, we hope our partnership to produce this book will result in meaningful similarities that can bridge the gaps between our faiths."

"This is a historic endeavor between representatives of two remarkable traditions," said Scott C. Esplin, publications director of the BYU Religious Studies Center. "We are grateful to partner with the Central Conference of American Rabbis to further understanding and dialogue between our communities."

## Federation welcomes Rachel Wall

Rachel Wall, the current executive director of the Jewish Community Center, will be welcomed as the new executive director of the Federation. She will work closely with the Community Campaign, including support for the Annual thropic efforts. She will work closely with the communications and development manager.

Rachel Wall is a native of the Ann Arbor Jewish community since moving to town in 2012. She was previously the director of Federation’s Keshef Hebrew High School program, as well as the office manager at Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor. In addition to her Jewish communal work, Rachel has worked to support adults with developmental disabilities. Rachel holds a bachelor’s degree from Northwestern University and a Master’s of Social Work from the University of Michigan, with a certificate in Jewish communal leadership. A member of the Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan, Rachel lives in Ann Arbor with her husband Logan and their eight-month-old daughter Abigail.

Rachel Wall

“I’m excited to join the Federation team and spend my time building and strengthening the Ann Arbor Jewish community,” says Rachel. “There’s so much to love about Jewish Ann Arbor. It’s an honor to be part of an organization that makes so much of it possible.”

Rachel may be reached at rachel@jewish-federation.org or 734-773-3333.
MICHIGAN'S JEWISH COMMUNITY STANDS WITH JOE BIDEN & KAMALA HARRIS

Our endorsement is rooted in an abiding love for our country, the State of Michigan, and the values of our Jewish community: tzedek (justice), tikkan olam (repairing the world), and g'milut hasidim (acts of lovingkindness). Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are not only unrivaled, long-time friends of our Jewish community, but stalwart fighters of antisemitism and bigotry, strong defenders of Israel’s security, and committed to the pursuit of a just and peaceful resolution to conflict in the Middle East.

Against a demagogue who has debased the highest office in our land to amplify dangerous and hateful conspiracy theories used by violent men to attack Jews and deface synagogues across America — including right here in Michigan — Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are the only choice for Jewish voters in Michigan.

MICHIGAN JEWS for BIDEN HARRIS


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Community

TBE Events

All services, events and classes are virtual.

Please visit the TBE website for links and further information.

Prayer Services

Families with Young Children (FYC):

Tot Shabbat Service
Fridays, October 2,9,16,23,30, 7:30 p.m.
Tot Shabbat Services: 6:15 p.m. Shira Service
All of your favorite songs led by TBE's tot team, Cantor Hayut and Rabbi Whinston.

Shabbat Morning Torah Study
Saturdays, October 3,10,17,24,31, 8:30 a.m.
Saturday Shabbat Service Saturdays, October 3,10,17,24,31, 10:00 a.m.

Havdalah from the Whinston Home
Saturdays, October 3,10,17,24,31, 7:30 p.m.
Join Rabbi Whinston and his family for a short prayer marking the end of Shabbat.

Daily Morning Blessings
Daily, 9:15 a.m.
Join Rabbi Whinston each morning via Zoom for a short morning blessing.

Daily Afternoon Blessings
Mondays, Thursdays 3 p.m.
Join Cantor Hayut each afternoon via Zoom for a short afternoon blessing.

Classes and Events

Weekly Lunch & Learn Virtual
Fridays, October 2,9,16,23,30, 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.

Saturday Torah Study
Saturdays, October 3,10,17,24,31, 8:30 a.m.
Join us for this weekly discussion of the Torah portion led by Rabbi Whinston.

Women of TBE: Historical Novel Reading Group
Monday, October, 12, 12:30 p.m.
The WTBE Reading Group meets on the second Monday of each month, Contact Molly Lindner, burnham@umich.edu.

Adult B’nai Mitzvah Classes
Mondays, October 5,12,19,26, 6:00 p.m.
Join Cantor Regina Hayut for either an afternoon session or an evening session for one hour. To join the class, or for more information, contact Cantor Hayut, cantorhayut@templebethemeth.org.

Women’s Torah Study
Mondays, October 5,12,19,26 7:00 p.m.
An in-depth study and lively discussion of the week’s Torah portions led by Cantor Regina Hayut. The group will explore various passages from the portion looking at several translations and commentaries from a variety of scholars from Talmudic times to the modern day. No Hebrew knowledge necessary to participate in the discussion. For questions, contact Cantor Regina Hayut at cantorhayut@templebethemeth.org.

WTBE Fiber Arts
Mondays, October, 5,19, 7:00 p.m.

Talmud Tuesdays with Rabbi Alter
Tuesdays, October 6,13,20,27 11:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.
Join Rabbi Alter to learn about the history of Rabbinical literature and some tremendous texts from Talmud!

Adult Education with Rabbi Whinston
Wednesdays, October, 7,14,21,28, 1:00 p.m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner
Wednesdays, October, 7,14,21,28, 5:00 p.m.
Join Claire Weiner for a 40-minute meditation session.

Wednesday Evening Torah Study
Wednesdays, October, 7,14,21,28, 7:00 p.m.

Women of TBE presents Artemisia Vocal Trio

Diana Lawrence
Alexandra Olsavsky
Kaitlin Foley

SAT. OCT 24, 2020  7:30 p.m.  WATCH PARTY / Q & A

Tickets- $18 per person but additional donations welcomed

Purchase tickets online https://templebethemeth.org/women-of-tbe/

Join us in hearing these genre bending ethereal voices

WTBE FUNDRAISING EVENT
In Netflix’s ‘Away,’ Ato Essandoh is an African-British-Jewish astronaut. It’s not his first Jewish starring role.

Gabe Friedman, originally for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency

A
to Essandoh isn’t Jewish, or British, or even an African-British-Jewish astronaut on TV.

In Netflix’s new hit drama ‘Away,’ about an international crew of astronauts who set out on a critical near-future mission to Mars, Essandoh plays botanist Kowes Weißenberg-Annan, an orphan who is raised by a white Jewish mother and an African Jewish father in England after his parents are killed in his native Africa. Kowes prays in Hebrew when the going gets tough on the spacecraft — it happens often during the crew’s multi-year journey — and early on he notes that he brought aboard a Torah.

The “British part was the problem — I was like, now I have to learn a dialect! But I said, ‘OK, I have the Jewish thing down,” he said with a laugh on the phone from his home in Brooklyn.

He also had a head start on learning Jewish culture from his childhood in upstate New York, where he said he was surrounded by Jewish friends and brought up by parents who encouraged him to explore different histories and belief systems — ranging from Norse mythology to the New Testament to the fairy tale stories of West Africa.

The role of Kowes is just the latest in a widening career that kicked into high gear after a supporting part as Natalie Portman’s adopted brother in Zach Braff’s 2004 indie hit “Garden State.” Essandoh, now 48, spoke with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency about Black-Jewish representation on screen, his favorite Jewish prayer and his family’s obsession with bagels.

The interview was edited and condensed for clarity.

IT: This isn’t giving much away for viewers, but there is a virus plot in this show. I have to ask you — what would you say to Jewish audiences about the virus plot in this show?

Essandoh: Yes. At Netflix they practice witchcraft, so I think that’s what happened. [laughs]

When you saw this role, did you say to yourself: “Again with the Black-Jewish character?”

Where I grew up, when we moved from Schenectady to New Rochelle in like sixth grade, most of my friends were Jewish, so I got sort of a primer on a little bit of Hebrew, I got the Yiddish curses. I tasted bagels for the first time. I have a funny story about that. We’re African kids living up in Schenectady, and my dad would do business down in New York City sometimes. One time he brought back bagels. And we had never seen bagels, we were probably 7- and 8-year-olds. We were like, “What is that round bread with a whole in it?” And my dad is like, “Trust us, eat it.” We’re kids, so we said, “No, we don’t know what it is!” Then he pulled out cream cheese and he’s like, “You spread this stuff on it.” And he’s coming back to us like he’s discovered something from the new world — and of course he’s Ghanaian so he’s never seen a bagel before.

I will tell you, when we put those bagels in our mouths and ate them, we became the bagel family. To this day — since my parents have moved back to Ghana — if I dare go to Ghana

from New York without bringing New York bagels, I will not be allowed to stay in the house. My mom is trying to teach herself how to make bagels. This is 30 years of bagel expertise. We love bagels in our family.

And I think that was kind of a precursor, speaking of witchcraft, to my career as an actor, now playing twice a Jewish character, which I think is great.

So how prepared were you this time? What kind of new things did you have to learn for this specific character?

Chicago Med” prepped me for this. [For that role] I spoke (Chicago Rabbi Carries Funny) and what was nice about speaking to him was that in our culture, I guess write large, a nonwhite person who’s a Jewish person is a rarity to most of us. So it feels like somebody is just trying to make an interesting character for interesting character’s sake. When I spoke to the rabbi, he was like “Oh no, Black Jewish people and nonwhite-looking Jewish people are more than you think. They’re all over, even in Ghana.” And for an actor what that helps with is then I don’t feel like I’m sort of the stereotype that somebody slapped together; there’s a real person here. Part of acting is just allowing yourself to believe you’re that person.

So that helped me with this character (in ‘Away’) because I was like “Yeah, OK, Black Jewish guy, no problem.”

But because I’m playing Hebrew in an English dialect was also sort of a mind-bending thing.

Any words or phrases that you struggled with?

I have to give props to the coaches that they got me out in Vancouver, who I believe is Israeli — he made it very easy. I think I can still do the ‘Traveler’s Prayer,’ let’s see. If someone slapped together: there’s a real person here. Part of acting is just allowing yourself to believe you’re that person.

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What did you learn about prayer, at least how I translate it, is that it’s about the journey. It’s most about “appreciate the journey, appreciate the opportunity of being able to go to a different place than you were before.” And hopefully you learn something, hopefully you do not die on the way, but learn and strengthen yourself through that travel, and that’s a lovely sort of way to look at life.

The conversation about Jews of color has really flourished and expanded in recent years. Have you followed that trend at all, and have any Jews of color reached out to you expressing appreciation or anything like that?

Yes, many Jews of color have reached out to me expressing appreciation. I’ve felt that it is happening, and that brings up a broad — that it is happening, and that brings up a broad- range of those parallels.

What is your response?

I think is great.

President Obama used the Passover Seder to draw parallels between the African and Jewish quests for freedom over the millennia. In ‘Away,’ there’s a scene in which Kowes’s adoptive father makes a similar kind of comparison as he explains to young Kowes why he adopted Judaism. Have these roles made you think more about the similarities between African and Jewish culture?

It’s funny, having all the Jewish friends I’ve had all throughout my life, I realize it was only last year — and I’m mad at all my Jewish friends at this point — when my agent invited me to a Seder. I had never been to one before, which is extraordinary for someone like me, and what I absolutely loved — is not a very religious person — but what I loved was the family sitting around, talking about this shared history, this shared story, and laughing and joking about un- see so-and-so and auntie da-da-da, and there’s this sort of ritual which forces or which encourages the family to bond. Which is the same thing with my family. When I go to Ghana, since our family’s now spread all over the world, my dad has this thing that he calls the “family state of the union.” We all go around in circles and shake each others’ hands and then we just sit there and talk about the year — “How did the year go for you? Oh, this is what happened, this is what I’m worried about, this is the thing that I’m looking forward to. I got this new television show, I can’t wait for you guys to see.” I feel like there are a lot of those parallels.

The thing my mom used to tell me all the time growing up, because I’ve always been a person who’s stuck between multiple cultures, “American and Ghanaian and Black and this and that — my mom said you know having that kind of diversity, see it this way, take the things that work from each culture and leave the other stuff behind, make your own culture, make your own language. You get to pick and choose because you have a diversity of choices, and that’s something I’ve tried to uphold through-out my life.

This character has a deep religious narra-

tive; it’s not just a token inclusion. Did playing it make you rethink your Jewish spirituality at all?

I thought about it, but I thought about it in the way that I have an admiration for people of faith. Faith is the belief in something with the absence of evidence, so you’re looking into the void and your faith tells you that there’s some- body or something there that will help you and will guide you and has a plan — as opposed to somebody like me, who looks into the void and goes, “All right, guys, I don’t know where we’re going either, let’s all hold hands and try to figure this out on the way.” And I think some- where in the middle is perhaps the reality of the universe.

So it didn’t necessarily change my point of view, but it has sort of helped me navigate the things that I think are true and have empa- thy for another person’s way of looking at the universe. Because who says I’m the one who’s right? I don’t know.

While we’re seeing greater diversity on screen, it’s a tricky time to play a character with traits that you as an actor don’t have. Do you ever think about people calling you out for being a non-Jewish actor playing Jewish charac-

ter? And what do you think about the whole debate?

Yeah, I think about it a lot with this role and my “Chicago Med” role, and a role I had just this past summer on Amazon’s “Tales From the Loop” where I played a gay man. And it’s really tricky because you can argue that I’m not Jew-

ish, but you can also argue that I’m not a bota-

nist nor am I an astronaut nor am I a British citizen nor am I a Ghanaian citizen.

So I don’t understand the problem in the bi-

nary situation. I understand if you’re doing “Raslin in the Sun” and you cast the family as white people. That is problematic because this play is about being Black. There’s a difference between something that is tied to the identity of the piece that you’re doing and an actor playing a role. And so I think it should be a much more nuanced conversation than it is, and I do think about that all the time, I do anticipate people saying, “If you’re not even Jewish, if you’re not even somebody who says you believe in God, why should you have the right to play a religious character, much less a Jewish character?” I don’t know how to answer that question.

I love to act and I love to tell stories, but I also want to have respect for the stories I’m tell-

ing. If it’s a situation where it’s going to ruin the show or people aren’t going to watch it, then I’ll step down — I mean not for this show, too late now. I guess — that’s something I have to take into consideration. Because I don’t want to of-

fend people. I wouldn’t want to offend everyone who’s a Jewish person who would look at that and go, “Oh, my god, what is he doing?” If I’ve done something wrong, I don’t want to be in the boat of maligning a whole entire group of peo-

ple. So it’s a really delicate situation. I hope I’ve brought some reality to it and I haven’t shined the wrong light on anything.

So what if someone comes to you, let’s say a few roles from now, with another Black-Jewish character. What’s your response?

I guess I have a pretty good job, that’s why you’re coming to me, I’m the Black-Jewish expert at this point. I’ll stick it on my resume — I’ll put the “Traveler’s Prayer” on my resume. ■
Ron’s Glass offers unique and custom-made gifts for a bar/bat mitzvah, a wedding, an anniversary, a birthday, or for that special someone to say, I Love You.

Ron Sussman • http://ronsglass.wordpress.com
The Religious School and Youth groups are teaming up to offer special, supplemental, and voluntary in-person opportunities for our kids.

For K-5 graders, children MUST be registered in TBE’s Religious and Hebrew School in order to participate.

- a supplemental religious school offering
- hosted by Nikki Feinberg, our Youth Director
- outside!
- in groups of no more than 10 kids

*Masks will be required at all times

Our community-wide virtual events will still happen!

For more information about TBE’s Religious and Hebrew School programming, contact Rabbi Daniel at rabbialter@templebethemeth.org
Arts Around Town: Art Talks with Wendy Evans

The following online series is presented by the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor.

How to Look at Art with the Eyes of an Artist
Thursday, October 15, 7 p.m.

Arthur Schopenhauer said, “Treat a work of art like a prince: let it speak to you first.” Georgia O’Keeffe wrote, “Nobody sees a flower, really — it is so small — we haven’t time, and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time.” In this richly illustrated presentation we’ll talk about how to get a work of art to speak to you and how to make friends with the art you see.

Musée de Louvre, Paris
Thursday, October 22, 7 p.m.

Last year the Louvre had 9.6 million visitors, making it the most visited museum in the world. Happily, we can Zoom to see its art up close without fighting the crowds. Many of the world’s most famous paintings and sculptures are here.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Women in Art
Thursday, October 29, 7 p.m.

Over the centuries, men making art have portrayed women for the delectation of male patrons. Artists tended to show women either as goddesses or evil temptresses. This illustrated presentation looks at how the male gaze has rendered the female and explores the changes when women have the chance to become artists and speak for themselves.

Wendy Evans is an art historian with advanced degrees from Oxford University and Wayne State University. A long-time volunteer at the Detroit Institute of Art, Wendy taught art history at WSU, University of Michigan-Dearborn, CCS, and the DIA. She loves to share her passion for art with groups around the metro area and beyond. For more information on Wendy, go to www.art-talks.org. For more information or to register, visit jccannarbor.org or contact Noemi Herzig, director of Jewish Cultural Arts and Education at noemiherzig@jccannarbor.org or 734-971-0990. These three free art talks are sponsored by Prudence Rosenthal.

Like a sukkah, life may feel fragile right now. Like a sukkah, we can fill it with joy.

Fill our communal sukkah with joy with a gift to the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor Annual Community Campaign.

www.jewishannarbor.org
Chocolate Wacky Cake, also known as Depression Cake

This cake was popular in the Depression because it was cheap to make. It was also very popular during World War II due to the rationing of sugar, eggs, butter, and milk. I think Amelia Bedelia learned how to bake with limited ingredients and a budget. If you still have your books from this series, I recommend you read a few as you eat the cake.

Ingredients:
1½ cups all purpose flour
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt
1 cup sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 tbs unsweetened cocoa powder
3 tbs unsweetened cocoa powder
1 cup water

Method:
Combine all dry ingredients in a bowl and then spread in an eight by eight ungreased baking pan. Form two small wells — one for the vinegar, one for the vanilla extract — on either end of the pan, and one larger well in the middle for the liquid. Pour 1 cup of water over it all and mix every well with a fork. Bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees or until a toothpick comes out clean. Let cool on a rack.

To celebrate our family birthdays. The first dessert is called Chocolate Wacky Cake or Depression Cake. I found the recipe online from the website, spicysouthernkitchen.com, but that’s not why she made it. As she told us, she was three when she read about Wacky Cake in an Amelia Bedelia book. We had dinner together (outside and socially distanced) and Sadie wanted to make this cake for dessert. You can keep the cake vegan by adding sprinkles or powdered sugar or add whipped cream. Later in the summer she tried a layered sorbet with different fruits and basil! Puree each fruit separately and add sugar if needed. Freeze. Serve in a fancy glass, with scoops of each fruit separated from each other. She added chopped up basil to the strawberry layer.

Maton is our oldest grandchild. He turned 16 at the end of August. As a young child he was a highly specialized (another way to say picky) eater, favoring noodles, bread, and more bread. His tastes expanded at summer camp into scrambled eggs, potatoes and, strangely, beet greens. But just as kids keep maturing, so did his taste buds. First, he tried his hand at vegetable soup. It included boiling water, adding cut up carrots, celery, onions, and whatever spices in the cabinet smelled good. He said, “It never turned out very good; but he learned that sautéing the vegetables first, and using butter, helped the flavor. Shortly thereafter, he took it to another level, dropping the butter, and thought, “Why spend so much time picking out the parts he liked? So he followed the recipe on the back of the eggroll wrappers and made his own version of the spring rolls. Sometimes he added the soy sauce or the teriyaki sauce. Further into quarantine, he decided to start baking. The first bread was a no knead bread, but he moved on to scones (from the You Suck At Cooking blog), challah with chocolate chips and sprinkles, marble cake, and babka from Yotam Ottolenghi’s book, Jerusalem. That recipe is two pages long and took him two days. Now he’s learning how to decorate cupcakes and cakes. He also learned to make salmon baked on cedar planks with Teriyaki sauce and slices of lemon. Who knows what the future brings?

Not Maton’s Soup, also known as Butternut and Apple Cider Soup

This will be tastier than his first tries. 

Ingredients:
1 cup butter, olive oil or vegetable oil
1 large yellow onion, chopped
4-6 apples, peeled and cubed
5-6 cups butternut squash, peeled and cubed
1 quart vegetable stock
2-3 cans full fat coconut milk
⅓ cup apple cider (boiled and reduced apple cider)
⅓-⅓ cup maple syrup or another sweetener
2-3 tbs lemon juice
Salt and pepper to taste

Method:
Melt the butter or oil in a saucepot over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until it is translucent. Add the apples and cook for a few minutes until they start to caramelize. Then add the vegetable stock, squash, and coconut milk. Bring to a boil and then simmer for about 20 minutes or until the squash and apple are tender enough to puree. Add the sweetener and salt and pepper. Remove a cup of the liquid before pureeing in a blender. Puree the soup in a blender. Pour the soup back into the saucepot and add any milk that may have been added to the blender. Season with additional salt and pepper to taste.

September 7, 2020
Kosher Cuisine

Kids in the kitchen

Lottie Saxman, special to the WJN

I’ve seen Facebook posts of amazing adventures in delicious cooking and baking. So many of you are experimenting with your own creations or being brave enough to try making things you never thought you would. Kids and congratulations to all of you.

In my house, we do this all the time. I haven’t made years in, as well as new recipes and, now, about a million different veggie burgers. Some of those recipes are in last month’s WJN. It turns out that teaching is a great addition for all those recipes as it helps bind the ingredients and adds flavor, so try that.

Adults aren’t the only ones trying out new kitchen skills. When “summer vacation” began — back in mid March — a lot of younger people learned new cooking skills, write to me about your own children or grandchildren who have learned new cooking skills, write to me about them and I will include the recipes in the next column. Email me at lonniesuuss@ast.com with the subject “another recipe.” Remember, a story about the chef/baker would be appreciated.

On Facebook I’ve seen incredible fancy meals put together by some older teens. Jessie S. made her family an amazing Indian feast with a number of dishes. Elijah M. made butter strudel and waffles from mixes (with supervision for the stove part). Nava and Ilan S. have special knives, sharp enough to cut up vegetables but made for little hands. They cut up cucumbers and put some dips out for them. Others, like A1 S., help make cookies by mixing and rolling the dough and putting them on the baking sheets.

Our niece, Sadie, just started remote middle school. She’s actually quite accomplished in the kitchen and has helped her parents cook or bake since she was very young. This summer she added to her skills by choosing desserts to make and I will include the recipes in the next column. Email me at lonniesuuss@ast.com with the subject “another recipe.” Remember, a story about the chef/baker would be appreciated.

One of the members of Artemisia Trio, Diana Lawrence, and Alexandra Olsavsky have joined their performance together and provided opportunity to perform in a supported environment, which Lawrence credits as an immense influence in her becoming a musician. Although she graduated from the University of Michigan School of Music, Theater & Dance in voice and piano performance, Lawrence has since added composition to her repertoire.

Artemisia Trio commissions and performs newly composed works by living female composers. Artemisia is a name of a great ancient female warrior, an Italian painter, and a Greek goddess of hunt. The trio does outreach to community and youth ensembles, drawing from the strength of its namesake in its message to the community, infusing female empowerment through cultural literacy. Cosponsored by WTBE Music Fund and assisted by Cantor Regina Lamb-Hayut, the trio will also provide virtual workshops to Kol Halev, the TBE choir.

WTBE invites the community to view this unique performance at 7:30 p.m. on October 24. Purchase your tickets at https://templebethemeth.org/women-of-the for $18/person. The concert watching information will be emailed once the ticket is purchased. There will be a live Q&A following the concert. The recorded concert will remain online for one week following the concert so it can be viewed multiple times for those who purchase the tickets. Contact: WTBE@templebethemeth.org.

The repertoire of vocal styles reaches near and far, from Appalachian folk tunes to Tutsian highlander cries, Cuban dance music, and music from the island of Corsica, to name a few.

One of the members of Artemisia Trio, Diana Lawrence, who grew up in Ann Arbor, may be familiar to some through her annual performance at the Ann Arbor Summer Festival. Lawrence comes from a very musical family. Her parents, Ted and Wendy Lawrence, sing with Kol Halev’s TBE choir. She and her brother, Cantor Rick Lawrence, have joined their parents, lending their beautiful voices as a quartet to TBE’s High Holiday services. Lawrence grew up singing in Temple Beth Emeth under Cantor Annie Rose (now emerita) who through youth choirs, encouraged young people to make music together and provided opportunity to perform in a supported environment, which Lawrence credits as an immense influence in her becoming a musician. Although she graduated from the University of Michigan School of Music, Theater & Dance in voice and piano performance, Lawrence has since added composition to her repertoire.

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Cider Soup

This will be tastier than his first tries.

Ingredients:
⅓ cup butter, olive oil or vegetable oil
1 large yellow onion, chopped
4-6 apples, peeled and cubed
5-6 cups butternut squash, peeled and cubed
1 quart vegetable stock
2-3 cans full fat coconut milk
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October 2020

Artemisia Vocal Trio’s concert watch party

Yuni Aaron, special to the WJN

On Saturday, October 24, Women of Temple Beth Emeth will host Artemisia Vocal Trio Watch Party. Highlighting from Chicago where their performance has been praised for “sincerity, wit and mind-blowing techniques,” the trio will surely dazzle with their unique sound and superb programming.

Artemisia Vocal Trio members Kaetlin Folley, Diana Lawrence, and Alexandra Olsavsky formed the trio in 2014. Artemisia has a soft spot for American vernacular music (pop, jazz, folk, and soul) but doesn’t stop there. The repertoire of vocal styles reaches near and far, from Appalachian folk tunes to Tutsian highlander cries, Cuban dance music, and music from the island of Corsica, to name a few.

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Leading Jewish social justice organization launches racial justice guide

Avodah, the leading organization developing the next generation of social justice leaders driven by Jewish values, launched a new Racial Justice Guide in September, as Jewish organizations reexamine their role in Jewish culture in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement.

The guide is a resource for Jewish organizations and individuals to plan and implement formal and informal changes and to engage with the persistence of violent anti-Jewish sentiments and complicated relationship with government, public opinion has mostly been favorable among Jews for centuries.

The guide was informed by the work of the racial justice task force Avodah formed in 2016 to help evaluate its own racial justice work, both internally and externally. The task force was composed of Avodah staff, alumni, and Board and Advisory Council members. After reviewing data from Avodah and the broader Jewish community, as well as interviews with staff, alumni of color, and other Jewish leaders of color, the task force, with the help of a consultant, identified a set of recommendations broken out into short-term steps that were easier to implement than longer-term changes that would take more time.

After five years of self-reflection, Avodah is ready to share with the community what it has learned about racial justice, action, and equity in a way that reflects the political and pandemic-driven realities faced by Jewish organizations.

The guide begins with how to create a more just world, informed by our Jewish values. Jewish organizations have an opportunity and obligation to step up and address racial justice, especially within our organizations,” says Cheryl Cook, CEO of Avodah. “The Jewish community is stronger when there is space for everyone to thrive.”

While the guide was created after years of deep, inward-looking analysis, Cook notes that it will continue to evolve. “We understand that becoming an antiracist and fully inclusive Jewish organization takes time and resources. At Avodah, we’re continuing to do this work day by day and ask ourselves: ‘What new information do we need in order to offer this guide to the Jewish community as a step toward creating a more just and inclusive Jewish community?’

The Racial Justice Guide breaks down organizations’ antiracist work into three phases: Auditing, Education and Training, and Implementing Changes. Organizations are encouraged to start with an audit in order to build a baseline understanding of their diversity. In the Education and Training section, Avodah details the technical steps that organizations can incorporate into their culture and operations for a long-term inclusion plan.

The Racial Justice Guide is available for organizations to download and use for free. Avodah intentionally made the guide open-ended, since the work of racial justice is continually evolving and a work in progress. Avodah will continue to update the guide on an ongoing basis.

For assistance or questions about the guide, organizations can contact Amanda Lindner alindner@avodah.net. Founded in 1998, Avodah develops lifelong social justice leaders whose work is informed by Jewish values and who inspire the Jewish community to work toward a more just and equitable world. To learn more about Avodah visit www.avodah.net and follow on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Jackie Robinson and me

By Martin Stolzenberg

Since the killing of George Floyd, Blacks Lives Matter is constant in the news. Floyd’s death sparked protests all over the country, even the world, and it seems to me that public opinion has mostly been favorable to the cause. The protests that enveloped over 2,500 U.S. towns and cities are different from the protests of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Photos and newscasts of those marches, protests, and rallies 60 years ago almost always showed Black faces. The current movement has energized everyone, particularly white people.

But there are naysayers, those who rightly condemn the violence and looting but wrongfully blame BLM for orchestrating them. The critics do not hear that these acts took place at night, long after the BLM protests had ended. It has been shown that any theft was the work of organized criminals who took advantage of the situation and used sophisticated techniques to loot targeted stores and escape. I am one of the many who have not joined the protests, but are sympathetic to the cause. So, I wonder, what does a retired 84-year-old white Jew from the streets of Brooklyn, living in retirement in lovely Ann Arbor, have in common with these protesting people?

I'm thinking back to my childhood, and this brings me to thoughts of Jackie Robinson. I was growing up in Bensonhurst, a blue-collar neighborhood with plenty of schoolyards and baseball fields. There were mostly Jews and Italians there. I knew no people of color and had a profound impact on me. He made me realize how all people of color had to deal with unfair disadvantages, with two strikes against them — talking back to them as an equal and an army man, and facing arrest for that. The driver ordered Robinson to the back of the bus. Jackie refused to go. He knew that the army, in 1944, forbade segregation on its bases, and that included this bus. The driver threatened to make trouble when they arrived at the final stop.

At the central bus depot, the argument grew more heated, and Jackie was arrested, charged with being disrespectful to the officer investigating the situation and other military personnel involved in the case. It turned out that the arresting personnel couldn’t abide that he was talking back to them as an equal and an army officer. Ultimately, he was acquitted.

This incident was a good 11 years before Rosa Parks and the famous Montgomery Alabama bus ride. Jackie Robinson risked being dishonorably discharged and sent to jail because he wouldn’t allow himself to be bullied in a small town in segregated Texas. It’s no wonder that he could stand up to all the bigotry he was exposed to when breaking the color barrier in baseball. And this all happened before the world knew who Jackie Robinson was.

I think about Jackie Robinson and the current protests. What would he think of them? This Brooklyn boy knows Jackie Robinson, who pointed toward equality and fairness for many, including me as an 11-year-old, would have heartily approved.
Who is the man behind PJ Library and LIFE & LEGACY® Programs?

Emily Benedek, Originally for Tablet Magazine at tabletmag.com, reprinted with permission. Introduction by Margaret Schreiber, LIFE & LEGACY coordinator in Ann Arbor:

My daughter Julia was born in 2005, the same year that Harold Grinspoon rolled out the PJ Library program. When Julia enrolled in a Jewish preschool two years later, it was such a thrill for her to receive books in the mail from PJ Library. My entire family loved reading these stories together! Julia is now 15 years old, and we have since moved to Ann Arbor. During that time, Harold Grinspoon developed another amazing program, called LIFE & LEGACY. Ann Arbor applied and was accepted into the LIFE & LEGACY program as part of the eighth cohort, and I was thrilled to begin my job as LIFE & LEGACY coordinator this past January. Tammy Dollin, our LIFE & LEGACY consultant from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation (HGF), conducted a crucial training for 54 team members from 11 participating organizations on September 1 via Zoom. It was a very informative evening, and the program has now officially kicked-off! Team participant Barb Banet from the Jewish Cultural Society read the following article on Harold Grinspoon in Tablet says, “This was such an interesting article! I really enjoyed reading it and learning about the challenges Harold Grinspoon faced. It makes participating in one of his Foundation programs even more meaningful.” I hope you find this piece as informative and enjoyable as both Barb and I did!

Harold Grinspoon, who might just be the most important Jewish philanthropist you’ve never heard of, is a wealthy businessman who failed at many early ventures, a Jew who doesn’t regularly attend shul, and a dyslexic who runs the world’s largest Jewish book program.

“I chuckle about it all the time,” he told Tablet recently in an email. “I was the kid who struggled with reading and spelling, but I have always loved stories. When I thought about the power of stories and conversation to pass on the richness of Jewish life, and I discovered that there were beautiful Jewish children’s books on the market, I saw an idea worth moving forward. If you are entrepreneurial, you find ways to reach your goals.”

The signature initiative of Grinspoon’s Agawam, Massachusetts-based foundation, PJ Library, sends more than 650,000 children’s books every month in seven languages to families in 27 countries who are raising Jewish children — from Venezuela to Ukraine to Australia and South Africa. Many of the families may have only one Jewish parent. They may live in towns where there are no other Jews. While some families are fully engaged in Jewish life, a good number report that PJ Library is their only Jewish resource.

Eric Robbins, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, said: “PJ Library is one of the most innovative and thoughtful ideas that the Jewish world has seen. Think of it: A gift from the Jewish community is arriving every month in my mailbox — with my child’s name on it, a book that is adding to a growing Jewish library in my home. And no one is asking me for money for it. It’s revolutionary. Also, it’s nonjudgmental. You say you’re Jewish? Fine, that’s good enough for us.”

In North America, books go to children from birth through age eight. At nine years old, children can join PJ Our Way, where they choose from a selection of chapter books, graphic novels, fiction, biographies, and non-fiction until they are bar or bat mitzvah age.

Most of the books come from commercial publishers and aren’t necessarily explicitly Jewish. PJ Library adds material on the flaps to draw out Jewish themes and to direct families to additional resources and activities. PJ Library also has its own imprint, which has produced 22 titles to date, with 10 more planned for the coming year. Providing these books constitutes outreach of the most subtle and profound kind: the occasion for a parent to read and speak intimately with her child during the few moments of calm before sleep and dreams, to spark the child’s imagination with the spoken word, and to encourage the child to ask questions — the quintessence of Judaism.

In distributing the same stories to all Jewish children, no matter where they live, in hopes of establishing common bonds, the program buttresses Grinspoon’s abiding hope: “That we can hold different perspectives and viewpoints, and we can engage with our Judaism differently, but yet remember that we are one people.”

Born in 1929, Harold Grinspoon grew up in Auburndale, a village of Newton, Massachusetts. He received lessons in antisemitism wherever he turned — from the schoolyard bullies who called him a “Christ killer” and “jew boy,” to the Boy Scout leader on whose door hung a sign reading: “No dogs...
or Jews.” His daughter-in-law Winnie Sandler Grinspoon said, “He wasn’t from a religious family, but he knew life would be easier if he wasn’t a Jew — whatever that was.

Being Jewish wasn’t his only problem. “I was a dysfunctional child,” he recalled in his laconic Boston accent in the video. “My poor mom. I couldn’t care less. I never could spell. So she took me to spelling lessons, speech lessons, posture lessons. I still can’t spell. And I had psychological problems.” He had the distinction of being the only Jewish student in the vocational track at Newton High School.

“It all started because I was born a lefty,” he explained. “And in those days, as a Jewish kid, for some reason, you couldn’t be a lefty. So my mother made me a righty. This led to frustration, anger, learning problems, and psychological issues. Pediatricians today discourage changing the natural handedness of children; research has also shown it can lead to learning and behavioral problems, and also permanent brain changes. His self-professed inferiority complex was exacerbated by the fact his older brother Lester — who died last month at age 92 — was “a genius” who became a psychia-

trist after attending Harvard Medical School.

The only way Harold felt he could distin-
guish himself was by making money, a talent that manifested itself when as a boy he suc-
cessfully sold vegetables and eggs for his fa-
tharold asked Winnie to.

ask Winnie to buy him $500 worth of similar volumes. “I didn’t know where to find them, other Jewish books? Where do you get them?”

At a conference many years ago, Harold learned of the PJ Library program 20 to 30 years ago, “the Jewish day school because they would have wealth. “Jews have long left bequests to hospitals, universi-
ties, and charities, in part because they have been aggressively courted. But Jewish insti-
tutions haven’t been as well organized. Now, Grinspoon’s LIFE & LEGACY offers training, support, and monetary incentives to motivate Jewish organizations to secure “after-lifetime commitments.” LIFE & LEGACY has 63 part-
nership with the creation of a common

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With the education

It took five years before we

appeared to one another and to work together toward a shared future. Look at PJ Library — the basic claim is that every household with a

As a Protest

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October 2020

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.

Thursday 1

Walking Club: WTBE. 9 a.m.
Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayut leads discussion. 11 a.m.
Jewish Meditation: TBE. Zoom. 1 p.m.
Ptir Avot with Rabbi Dobrusin: BIC. 5 p.m.
Put together a Lulav: Chabad. 6:30 p.m.
Talmud–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad. 8 p.m.

Friday 2

Erev Sukkot, Candle Lighting 6:41 p.m.
Lunch and Learn: TBE. Rabbi Whinston meets on Fridays for an informal discussion about religion. Noon–1 p.m.
Shemini Atzeret dancing with Torah: Chabad. After services.

Saturday 10

Havdallah 7:39 p.m.
Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion led by Rabbi Whinston 8:50–9:30 a.m.
Musical Simchat Torah: BIC. 7 p.m.

Sunday 11

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

Monday 12

Historical Novel Reading Group: WTBE. Geraldine Brooks, Caleb’s Crossing. Contact Molly Lindner: babs@umich.edu. 12:30 p.m.
Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin: BIC. 3:30 p.m.
Adult Ifni Mitzvah Class: TBE. 6 p.m.
Fiber Arts: WTBE. 7 p.m.
Women’s Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. For questions, contact Cantor Regina Hayut at cantorhayut@templebethemeth.org. 7 p.m.

Tuesday 13

Talmuds Tuesdays w/ Rabbi Alter: TBE. 11 a.m. and 8 p.m.
Spirituality Book Club with Cantor Annie Rose: TBE. Here All Along: Finding Meaning, Spirituality, and a Deeper Connection to Life in Judaism by Sarah Hurwitz. 7:30 p.m.
Tea and Torah on Tuesday—for Women: Chabad. 8 p.m. See first Tuesday of month.

Wednesday 14

Together and Apart: The Future of Jewish Peoplehood: TBE. Adult Education with Rabbi Whinston 1 p.m.
Meditation with Claire Weinert: TBE. 5 p.m.
Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion 7 p.m.
Theology Book Club: BIC. Online. 8 p.m.

Thursday 15

Meditation with Linda Greene: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion 7 p.m.
Theology Book Club: BIC. Online. 8 p.m.

Friday 16

Candle Lighting 6:30 p.m.
Bereishit Launch and Learn: TBE. Zoom. Rabbi Whinston meets on Fridays for an informal discussion about religion. Noon–1 p.m.

Saturday 17

Havdallah 7:28 p.m.
Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion led by Rabbi Whinston 8:50–9:50 a.m.

Sunday 18

Rosh Hodesh Cheshvan
Rosh Hodesh Virtual Minyan: Pardes Hannah.
Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Dive into the basic text of Chassidim and discover the beauty and depth of Judaism. 11 a.m. noon.
Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayut leads discussion. 3 p.m.
Rosh Hodesh Women’s Circle: Pardes Hannah. 7 p.m.

Monday 19

Rosh Hodesh Cheshvan
Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin: BIC. 3:30 p.m.
Adult Ifni Mitzvah Class: TBE. 6 p.m.
Women’s Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. For questions, contact Cantor Regina Hayut at cantorhayut@templebethemeth.org. 7 p.m.

Tuesday 20

Talmuds Tuesdays w/ Rabbi Alter: TBE. 11 a.m. and 8 p.m.
Translating the Sacred Word: Frankel Center. With Aviya Kushner, author and Language Columnist at The Forward. Go to to.umich.edu/judaic for more information. 2 p.m.
Tea and Torah on Tuesday—for Women: Chabad. 8 p.m.

Wednesday 21

Together and Apart: The Future of Jewish Peoplehood: TBE. Adult Education with Rabbi Whinston 1 p.m.
Meditation with Claire Weinert: TBE. 5 p.m.
Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion 7 p.m.
Theology Book Club: BIC. Online. 8 p.m.

Thursday 22

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayut leads discussion. 11 a.m.
Meditation with Linda Greene: TBE. Zoom. 1 p.m.
Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion 7 p.m.

Friday 23

Candle Lighting 6:19 p.m.
Noach
Lunch and Learn: TBE. Rabbi Whinston meets on Fridays for an informal discussion about religion. Noon–1 p.m.

Saturday 24

Havdallah 7:18 p.m.
Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion led by Rabbi Whinston 8:50–9:50 a.m.
Artemisia Vocal Trio Concert: WTBE. 7:30 p.m.

Sunday 25

Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Dive into the basic text of Chassidim and discover the beauty and depth of Judaism. 11 a.m. noon.
Jewish philanthropist Susan Sandler is donating $200 million to fight racism
Josefin Dokstien, originally for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency

Susan Sandler, a progressive Jewish philanthropist, said she is donating $200 million to racial justice causes in this country.

Sandler said Monday that she was establishing the Susan Sandler Fund to support a number of organizations, led by people of color, that are fighting racism in the South and Southwest, The New York Times reported.

“I have come to believe that, rather than trying to use persuasive papers and reports to attempt to change the minds of those who are making decisions, the more effective way to transform societal priorities and public policies is to change the climate and environment in which decisions are made,” she wrote in a Medium post announcing the fund. “Specifically, to make the faces of the people who are making decisions, the more effective way to transform societal priorities and public policies is to change the minds of those who are making decisions.”

Sandler said she was inspired to think about her legacy after being diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumor four years ago, with a median survival rate of 18 months. She is the daughter of Marion and Herbert Sandler, who founded and served as co-CEOs of Golden West Financial Corp., which was the second-largest savings and loan association in the country.

“In 1994, long before the recent awakening in corporate America about diversity and inclusion, my parents diversified the board of their company, taking a rapid and decisive series of actions that created a governing body where women and people of color comprised the majority of its members,” Sandler wrote on Medium.

The Sandlers went on to found the Sandler Foundation, which has given some $1 billion to progressive causes, health, human rights, investigative journalism and more, according to its website. The couple also supported the San Francisco-based Jewish Community Endowment Fund, according to The Jewish News of Northern California.

The title is usually translated as “Teachings of the Sages,” a more interesting translation is “Chapters of Fundamental Principles.” Pirkei Avot consists of short rabbinic statements concerning ethics, faith, and interpersonal relationships. Reading Pirkei Avot helps us focus on the values and principles that guide our lives. We will study the text in English, referring occasionally to the Hebrew.

Join Beth Israel Congregation’s Theology Book Club 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

Monday 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: Pirkei Avot.
Tishrei Exposed
Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, special to the WJN

On Friday night October 2, we start the holiday of Sukkot. To have an appreciation of what Sukkot is all about, let’s look at the month of Tishrei (the first month of the Jewish calendar). We see that Tishrei is divided into two parts. The first part of the month is Rosh Ha-shanah, the beginning of the new year. Then we have Yom Kippur 10 days later. These two holidays comprise roughly the first half of the month of Tishrei. The main way we serve Hashem during this time is through awe.

We ask for forgiveness for our past misdeeds and make resolutions for improvements in the future. This happens through teshuva (repentance), in which we subjugate ourselves to God. This is all done in the first half of the month of Tishrei.

The second half of the month is the opposite; the emphasis is on happiness. The Torah tells us that during the time of Sukkot it has to be v’sama’achah, b’chagecha. We should rejoice in our holidays and only be happy. This includes the happiness of when they drew the water in Jerusalem and poured it on the holy altar, culminating in the happiness of Simchas Torah at the end of the month of Tishrei. So we notice the symmetry of the month, the first half serving God with awe, and the second half with joy. The truth is whatever we have done during Rosh Hashanah and into Yom Kippur in awe is re-vealed in the holiday of Sukkot in the form of happiness. More specifically, we see Rosh Hashanah and the 10 days of Teshuva and Yom Kippur reflect in Sukkot. How does that work?

Let’s look at Rosh Hashanah first. The main mitzvah of Rosh Hashanah is the sounding of the shofar. How many “toots” do we have to sound? It has to be 100. The hundred is broken down into 60 tekhiah, the plain sound; 20 safarim, the broken sound; and 20 teruah toots. This fits right into Sukkot. Why? When you have a Sukkah, what is the main part of it? It is the covering called sechach. In Judaism the letters of the aleph bet also have numerical values. So if we take the numerical value of the word for the covering, sechach, it adds up to 100 — the required number of shofar sounds! Not only are the shofar “toots” related to the Sukkot roof covering numerically, but also symbolically — as we shall see. That’s for Rosh Ha-shanah — let’s now look at Yom Kippur.

On Yom Kippur the main service in the Holy Temple was the High Priest going into the Holy of Holies and burning the incense. The teachings of Chassidus explain that the smoke of the incense went up to the ceiling of the inner chamber and covered it. Because of this, the Jewish people merited the clouds of glory surrounding and protecting them while they were in the desert. This is really what Sukkot is all about. In the sukkah, we look up and the sechach is supposed to remind us of the way God sheltered and protected us in the desert when we left Egypt. So here we see a direct connection of Yom Kippur, burning the incense, creating the cloud in the Holy of Holies that represented God’s protection. Symmetrically, we have the 10 days of teshuva, 10 days of repentance that start with two days of Rosh Hashanah and end with one day of Yom Kippur.

So between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we have seven days — a complete week. The week repeats twice, the first in the way of teshuva — that’s called 10 days of teshuva, of Repentance — with seven days of repentance separate from Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Then on Sukkot, we have a second week, with seven days of happiness during the holiday. So, just as between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we have a complete week of doing teshuva, this time we have a complete week of being happy. That is the complete week of Sukkot.

Another thing about these days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is that we are supposed to spend a complete week to correct the past year. Sunday of that week corrects all previous Sundays of that year, etc. During the holiday of Sukkot, we have the seven days of happiness, which are supposed to give us and supply the year with happiness that every day of the year is represented in this week of happiness. So if we are happy in these seven days, then we’ll be happy throughout the year on every day, as a result of this complete week of happiness. Meaning that the Sunday of Sukkot will give happiness to all Sundays, etc.

So this is the connection of the holiday of the first half of Tishrei, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, to Sukkot; that whatever is done in the High Holy days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is reflected in Sukkot, but in the form of Simcha — we add as joy that happens during the holiday of Sukkot. Being happy on those seven days will help throughout the year so we should be able to serve God with joy. This joy that we have during Sukkot should not only be a spiritual joy, but should also be a physical joy. It should permeate all the way down to physical enjoyment. That’s why, according to Jewish law, on the holiday of Sukkot we have to express happiness in physical things. As the Rabbis say, true happiness comes from eating meat and drinking wine — or whatever physical form makes you happy. When we have this happiness in the holiday of Sukkot, then this happiness goes to our life throughout the entire year, in which we should be fully happy — God willing, Amen!

Unity on Sukkot
Rabbi Jared Anstandig, special to the WJN

On Sukkot, which begins on the evening of October 2, we say that we shake the lulav, but that is not quite precise. After all, what we oftentimes call the lulav is not just a lulav (a palm frond) but a bundle also containing hadas (myrtle) and arava (willow). And, of course, we cannot forget the etrog (citron) that is also held along with this lulav bundle. Part of the mitzva of lulav as we know it today is that we take all four of these species, the three-part lulav bundle and the etrog, and we shake them all together.

This wasn’t always the case. Rabbi Yosef Karo (15th century, Israel) in his work Beit Yo-sef (Orach Chaim 551:11) notes that this concept of shaking all four together is relatively recent in origin. In fact, it is found nowhere in the Torah and nowhere in the Talmud or its commentaries. Rabbi Karo dates the earliest recording of this practice to the 13th century, quoting the following story told by Rabbi Me-nachem Recanti (13th century, Italy):

On the first night of Sukkot, I hosted a certain German guest named Rabbi Yitzchak. In a dream that night, I saw this guest writing the four-letter name of God, known as the Tetragrammaton. But, when he wrote the four letters, he spaced the final letter far apart from the preceding letters. When I asked him why, he responded that such was the practice in his hometown. I immediately erased and rewrote the name with the final letter closer to the rest. When I awoke, I was confused by the meaning of the dream until the next morning when I saw this very same guest shaking the lulav but holding the etrog far apart from the other three species. At this point I understood that just as God’s name must be written with all letters together, so too all the species must be shaken together.

Indeed, as the result of Rabbi Recanti’s dream, Rabbi Karo rules that we ought to combine all four species together to fulfill the mitzva of shaking the lulav.

What do we make of this dream? Is there a deeper significance to the comparison of an incomplete lulav bundle to an incomplete name of God? The Midrash (Bemidbar 30:12) suggests that the four species represent various types of Jews: The etrog, with a taste and smell, represents those who have studied Torah and have performed many good deeds. The lulav has a taste but no smell, reflecting those who have Torah, but no good deeds. The hadas, having a smell but no taste, represents those who have good deeds, but no Torah study. And finally, the arava, lacking both taste and smell, reflects those who have neither Torah study nor good deeds. When we take all four plants together, it is equivalent to bringing these four types of Jews together. This Midrash can illuminate the meaning of Recanti’s dream. When we, as a people, are separated and unwilling to work together, God, as it were, is incomplete. But, when we do come together, from the etrogim to the aravot among us, that brings unity to our people, and completion to God. May this new year of 5781 be a year of togetherness and unity for us all.

Wishing everyone health and safety in the new year
Ron & Lonnie Sussman
Obituary

The dean of America's intellectual pro-Israel defenders has died

By Moshe Phillips

Edward Alexander, the Jewish scholar and author who passed away August 22 at age 84, was called “Seattle’s Jeremiah” by his hometown newspaper. An Israeli public- location once hailed him as “Jewry’s premier polemicist.” For more than half a century, Alexander fought for Israel and the Jewish people in the trenches of the battlefield of ideas.

Alexander grew up in the heavily Jewish Brownsville section of Brooklyn. The “most vivid and satisfying memory” of his childhood occurred in May 1948, when he was 11 years old. It involved Brooklyn Dodgers star Jackie Robinson, who he and his boyhood pals regarded as “the greatest man in the world, and David Ben-Gurion who was “a close second to Robinson in our esteem.”

“These two heroic figures came together for me almost magically when I heard Rob- inson adducing a Mockingbird to celebrate Is- rael’s independence,” Alexander recalled.

“I consider myself lucky,” he wrote, “never to have been disillusioned about what my parents taught me: that both men sym- bolized the belated righting of ancient his- torical wrongs, that Robinson was indeed a uniquely courageous figure and that the birth of Israel just a few years after the destruction of European Jewry was one of the greatest affirmations of life ever made by a martyred people . . .”

After earning his bachelor’s degree in English literature at the University of Washington, Alexander completed his master’s and Ph.D. at the Uni- versity of Minnesota. That was where he met his future wife, Leah. She, too, was a scholar of English literature, and her senior thesis on Henry James was published as a book. Leah passed away in 2017.

In 1960 the young couple settled in Se- attle, where Alexander became professor of English at the University of Washington and, later, the first chairman of the school’s Jewish Studies program.

Alexander’s academic career began in conventional fashion, with him teaching a full load of courses and authoring books that were well regarded in his field although they did not attract the attention of the wider public.

He wrote volumes about such noted 18th and 19th century literary figures as Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill as well as more recent giants, including Lionel Trilling and Irving Howe.

But the United Nation’s 1975 resolution that Zionism was racism and the rise of the Soviet Jewry protest movement in the 1970s inspired the Alexanders to devote headfirst into the world of Jewish controversy. In 1976, Edward and Leah traveled to the Soviet Union to assist refuseniks. They were detained by the KGB for 24 hours and then summarily expelled.

A photo of the Alexanders looking weary but unbowed, taken shortly after their expul- sion from the Soviet Union, appears in the Washtenaw Jewish News. It would not be the last the Jewish world would hear from Edward Alexander.

Jeremiah in the pit

In late 1976, the Jewish Transcript, a Seattle weekly newspaper, inaugurated an unusual column called “From the Pit,” by an author using the pseudonymous byline “Jeremiah.” Three young professors at the University of Washington took turns ghost- writing the weekly installments: Alexander, historian Robert Loewenberg, and religious studies professor Deborah Lipstadt.

An introductory note appended to the first From the Pit column explained the sig- nificance of the name: “Jeremiah, who proph- esied in the period immediately prior to the destruction of the First Temple . . . sought to impress upon the Jews that their neigh- bors wished to destroy them,” the editors explained. “His countrymen refused to act to stave off this danger. They chose, instead, to silence Jeremiah by flinging him into a pit.”

Alexander, Lipstadt, and Loewenberg took upon themselves the task of trying to awaken their readers regarding the threats facing Jews on campus, in the community, and beyond.

Their hard-hitting columns made for espe- cially fascinating reading today, because they show how little has changed. Topics included anti-Zionism on the University of Washing- ton campus, hostility toward Israel from the political left, and attempts to enforce racial categories in Seattle’s public schools.

Some readers appreciated Jeremiah’s frankness. Others reacted more like the Jews in the days of the original Jeremiah and put pressure on the editors to cancel the column.

Eventually, an installment that was going to strongly criticize the Vatican’s hostility to- ward Israel unnerved the editors so much that they discontinued From the Pit.

For a time, Alexander, Lipstadt, and Lowenberg continued to write columns, but they discontinued From the Pit.

All hell broke loose

Michael Lerner, editor of the left-wing magazine Tikkun, accused Alexander of “ver- bal violence” because Alexander uncovered a series of extreme statements that Lerner made in articles and interviews. Among other things, Lerner wrote, “The Jewish community is racist, in- ternaly corrupt, and an apostle for the worst aspects of American capitalism and imperial- ism,” and “The synagogue as currently estab- lished will have to be smashed.”

In response to Alexander’s article, Lerner said that he was sorry he had made those state- ments, but they were part of his “adolescent rebellion,” although he was 27 at the time. Le- rner announced he would sue any newspaper that published Alexander’s article. The Jewish Voice and Opinion of New York published it anyway, Lerner did not sue.

Lerner’s anger at Alexander did not quick- ly subside. Three years later, Lerner and Al- exander were invited to participate in a panel discussion in New York City about the Israeli- Arab conflict. Lerner said he would not par- ticipate if Alexander was included. Alexander was bumped.

During the Q&A, the chairman of the event invited Alexander, who was in the audi- ence, to offer a brief comment. Alexander later described what ensued:

“Even before I reached the floor micro- phone, Lerner began bellowing into his mi- crophone that he would not stand for this, that it violated the ‘rules of the discussion.’ . . . Ev- ery time I tried, Lerner would raise his voice to interrupt. When I said that ‘it’s clear Mr. Lerner hasn’t forgotten the tactics he learned from the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley,’ all hell broke loose . . . Bedlam continued for 15 to 20 minutes.”

When the next questioner criti- cized Lerner, he “rose in a rage and stormed out of the hall.”

A new battle

A star in the field of English literature studies, Alexander was repeatedly invited to serve as a visiting professor at Hebrew University. He and Leah lived in Jerusalem for a number of years, and their home became the center of a group of influential Zionist intellectuals.

Alexander was particularly close to Shmuel Katz, the former member of the Irgun High Command and biographer of Revisionist Zi- onist leader Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky. Although Alexander’s literary scholar- ship continued over the years, an increasingly large portion of his time was devoted to what he termed “the Jewish Wars.”

His books included The Jewish Idea and Its Enemies (1988), With Friends Like These: The Jewish Critics of Israel (1993), The Jew- ish Wars: Reflections on One of the Bellig- erents (1996), and Jews Against Themselves (2015). Earlier this year, he stood for election as candidate to be a delegate to the World Zi- onist Congress with Herut Zionists, the slate associated with the activist Zionist ideology of Jabotinsky. It was the first time he was a Zionist Congress candidate.

Moishe Phillips is national director of Herut North America’s U.S. division; Herut is an international movement for Zionist pride, education and is dedicated to the ideals of pre- World War II Zionist leader Ze’ev Jabotinsky. Herut's website is www.herutna.org.
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across
1. Former Concorde fleet
5. Brother of Nadav
10. Some kosher symbols
13. Main character in “Groundhog Day”
14. 2022 World Cup host
15. HMO alternative
16. Shop follower
17. What those in the circled letters would bring to the 35-Across, once
19. “Lang Syne” preceeder
20. Queens stadium name
21. City across the continent from NY, NY
22. One of the Allman Brothers
24. Cats, south of the border
25. “I ___ I saw Elba”
27. Yam follower
29. Bulls, rams and bucks
30. Unisex Israeli name
31. Red or White
32. Common suffix on chemical elements
33. YU email ender
35. Destination for those in the circled letters the 36-Across, once
36. Torah
38. Biblical name suffix
39. Guitar star Paul
42. Ending for ranch or Canyon
43. “Johnny ___” (children’s book set during the American Revolution)
45. Slimy crawlers
48. 1961 British movie monster ala “Godzilla”
49. Disney lion queen
50. Head the pack
54. “If I Were King of the Forest” singer Bert
55. “Say it ___ so, Joe”
56. One who would party hearty on Sukkot at the 35-Across
58. ___ypus (Aussie animal)
59. They might be growing
60. D.C.-based radio network
61. A Netanyahu
62. Fishbein of “Kosher by Design”

Down
1. Mine roof support
2. Jewish measurement or class
3. “Mila 18” or “The Hope”, e.g.
4. Hit with a heavy hammer
5. A ___ building that stands where 35-Across once did
6. “Old MacDonald” sounds
7. Chickenpox symptom
8. Animal with one kosher sign
9. ___ L’Tzedek
10. Morphone and codine, for two
11. Scanned bar
12. “___ child could do it”
13. Prop in some football games
14. Tools for cheese
15. Cause of a limp
16. “Old MacDonald” refrain
17. (score without shooting at basketball)
18. David or Asia, e.g.
19. Bulls, rams and bucks
20. Unisex Israeli name
21. Yam follower
22. Boating race
23. Original “SNL” cast member Newman
24. Early bedtime, perhaps
25. Annoying bunkmates
26. “___ Flanders” (Defoe novel)
27. Alternatives to claps
28. “___ Flanders” (Defoe novel)
29. Injured bone nerve
30. They’re needed for blowing shofar
31. Uncle of Asher
32. Ben Canaan and Onassis
33. They might be growing
34. YU email ender
35. Professor Emeritus, once did
36. Torah
37. Head the pack
38. Biblical name suffix
39. Guitar star Paul
42. Ending for ranch or Canyon
43. “Johnny ___” (children’s book set during the American Revolution)
45. Slimy crawlers
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Games we played
Excerpts from Letters to My Grandchildren: Childhood Stories, by Marianne Adler Aaron
Behold, I have lived with an entire book written within me.
Your very teaching is within the utmost parts of my being. (Psalm 40)

“Dear Grandchildren!” That is how every chapter of this book originally started when Marianne Adler Aaron set off to record stories of her youth through email letters to her six grandchildren. Below is letter five, “Games we played,” in honor of the joys of Sukkot.

Dear Grandchildren,
I’ve tried very hard to think of the games that we played, but I remember very few. The only board game I can think of was Mensch, Ärger Dich Nicht! which literally means “Man, don’t get mad!” but it is called Sorry here in America. I loved riding my bicycle, but I once had a terrible accident making a U-turn on the street trying to keep up with the boys (my brother, his friends, and Karl Pintel, San- dros’ dad, who lived downstairs). There were three floors in our building, with two apart- ments on each floor plus rooms on a fourth floor (for maid’s quarters where our Anna lived).

Weather permitting, we spent time outside playing ball and hide and seek, and we also went to the Louisenpark, which was just around the corner. We weren’t allowed to go there alone, though, so we had to wait until Anna or my mother took us. I liked to take my scooter and Anna would buy us ice cream from a vendor at the park. We also had a porch off the kitchen facing a small backyard that had a huge tree, and we would play out there.

In the house, our favorite pretend games were related to going to Temple services. We had a bay window with long curtains in our living room. We would open and close the curt- tains, making believe that we were opening and closing the Torah Ark. Then we would make Halohot around the room (that is, we acted as if we were carrying the Torah around). The other game we enjoyed playing was Choir. I would “sing” and Sam would conduct. One day my mother came running into the room because she heard me screaming at the top of my lungs, “What are you doing to her?” she demanded of Sam. “I’m Mr. S.investor (the choir conduc- tor) and she’s supposed to be the choir and I’m telling her to sing louder!” That’s when Sam started his conducting career and I’m singing in choirs.

Every Chanukah, my father set up our train set that went through much of the living room. We loved playing with that, but I don’t remem- ber it being up at other times of the year. They didn’t have too many children’s story books in those days, but we did have many of the very same fairy tales you know today. I never got tired of hearing Snow White or Hansel and Gretel. Besides reading these stories to us, my father was an incredible storyteller. He would either make up stories or tell us biblical leg- ends. We would ask for our favorites over and over again.

I only remember going to the movies once. There was a sign on the movie theater that said, “Jews are not welcome,” so you took a chance going in. One day my father took me to see Shirley Temple, who was a big star in Holly- wood although she was my age. After we came to the United States, when my father found out that he got the job in Worcester, he treated me to another movie, and we went to see Shirley Temple in Bluebird of Happiness. I was so sur- prised that she spoke English, too! (In Ger- many they had dubbed in the dialogue and I guess I didn’t notice.)

As long as I can remember, I loved to draw and would spend all my spare time drawing pictures. My favorite thing was drawing girls and dressing them up. I never cared too much for dolls, although I once got a beauty for tak- ing my cool liver oil without fussing. I wish that I had kept it, because it would be worth a lot of money now. I guess I was around six when I started piano lessons, but I never enjoyed it as much as I liked singing. I would also play the piano at our old home, and I loved listening to the adult and children’s choirs singing.

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Simchas and Sorrows

Mazel Tov

Rachel Goldstein and Aarow Willis on the birth of their daughter, Yael Ruth, sister of Lila.

Susan Pollans and Alan Levy on the birth of their granddaughter, Willa Thalia Mickelson, daughter of Alissa and Dan Mickelson.

Eileen and Ed Nadler on the birth of their grandson, Jonah Lev, son of Rachel & Reuven Katz and brother of Rosie Katz.

Michelle Silver, daughter of Dorit Adler and Terry Silver, and Stephen Levine, son of Leslie and Ken Levine on their wedding.

Haran and Nikki Rashes and Laurie Lichter on the engagement of their daughter, Ilana Rashes, to Jeremy Levy. Ilana is also the granddaughter of Paul and Carolyn Lichter.

Bat Mitzvah of Sula Steiger – Saturday, August 1st

Bar Mitzvah of Alita Cunningham – Saturday, August 22nd

Bar Mitzvah of Zane Swardlow – Saturday, August 29th

Condolences

Audrey and Nora Weiss on the death of their mother, Mary Jane Northrop, also wife (estranged) of Fred Weiss, July 20.

The family of Marilyn Greenspan, sister of Gene Silverman, sister-in-law of Alida Silverman, died Tuesday, August 4th.

The family of Raymond Failer, Father of Sari Mills (Aaron), grandfather of Eleanor and Ruth, died Monday, August 10th.

Nancy Goldstein on the death of her mother, Ann Gehr, August 13.

Jonathan Greenberg on the death of his father, Daniel Greenberg, August 15.

The family of Michele Elyachar, aunt of Rabbi Josh Whinston (Sarah), died Saturday, August 22nd.

The family of Ruth Harris, grandmother of Lisa Harris, great-grandmother of Lila Harris, died Monday, August 24th.

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Ashley Park
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Justin Showell
Bobby Conte Thornton
Ryan Vasquez
As seen in:
NRC’s The Village
The Lion King
Mean Girls
Fun Home
Dear Evan Hansen, West Side Story
Frozen
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