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FREE

One light for justice: celebrating Hanukkah, Diwali, and Sigd

By Eva Kubacki and Drew Coel, Ann Arbor JCC

For the second year in a row, come join the Jewish and Hindu communities of Southeast Michigan to celebrate Hanukkah, Diwali, and this year, Sigd! The event will take place at the Ann Arbor JCC on Thursday, December 4, from 5:30 pm–8:30 pm. This multicultural celebration will feature participatory Indian classical and Israeli folk dances as well as performances, hands-on activities for kids, henna, books for sale, and a joint menorah and diya lighting ceremony.



The event will also feature a community member speaking about Sigd, an Ethiopian Jewish holiday that celebrates the revelation of God to Moses and occurs 50 days after Yom Kippur. It is celebrated with fasting, prayer, and feasting! There will be a plethora of tasty food from both communities.

The event is sponsored by the family of Samantha Woll (z"l), whose dedication to bringing diverse people and communities together was demonstrated in multiple ways

— particularly through her love of the many Hanukkah-Diwali celebrations arranged by the American Jewish Committee/Jewish Community Relations Committee of Detroit. This year's Ann Arbor Hanukkah-Diwali event is also co-sponsored by the Hindu Community Relations Council of Michigan, MI India, the JCRC of the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor, and the Jewish People of Color Network of Greater Ann Arbor. We

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The Klezmatics' 40th anniversary album and tour

The New York Sessions is the boldest album The Klezmatics have created in over a decade. Marking their 40th anniversary, it is a vibrant tribute to New York City's cultural mosaic and to the band's enduring mission: reimagining klezmer as a force for joy, resistance, and radical collaboration.

As candles are lit across the country, The Klezmatics return with their beloved Happy Joyous Hanuk-

kah Tour, honoring both Jewish tradition and bold musical reinvention. The result is a Hanukkah concert like no other: a celebration of light in dark times, where ancient stories meet new melodies and community is built through dance, laughter, and shared song.

Set for release in 2026, the album features newly composed songs, multilingual resistance anthems, and stunning musical partnerships with artists from across

the globe. It's a celebration of survival, solidarity, and sound.

Their Ann Arbor stop is the second on their 20-city tour.

Place: The Ark, 316 S Main Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Time: 8 p.m.

Ticket Price: \$40–\$52

Tickets: <https://www.klezmatics.com/tour-1> ■



Creating strong beginnings

By Orit Aviran

Five children, 35 accumulative years of tuition, that must be a world record or something!" says Dr. Henry Appelman as he walks through the recently refurbished halls of the Hebrew Day School. Appelman, who will celebrate his 90th birthday this December, is not joking — he is the proud father of not one, not two, but five Hebrew Day School alumni.

What started as a convenient solution for the then four-and-a-half-year-old Avery Appelman, too young to attend a public school program, became a family



journey spanning five decades. "At that point, the day school was being started," Appelman recalls. "Not by us — we weren't involved in that. But suddenly there was a school capable of taking our kid." Avery enrolled at the then brand-new Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor. Then his brother Brett. When Henry married Harlene, three more children followed: Gabi, Avi, and Naomi, making it a party of five Appelman-Adiv students at the Hebrew Day School.

"I didn't expect to be so involved," Henry reflects. "But Harlene changed that."

Harlene Winnick Appelman z"l (who passed away in 2022) was a nationally and internationally recognized pioneer in Jewish education, recipient of the inaugural Covenant Award in 1991. She

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From the editor



The unexpected

November's election day was calm in Washtenaw, with voters approving increased funding for Career and Technical education and no surprise candidates. However, readers may have felt buffeted by other election news. The election of Zohran Mamdani, a young Muslim socialist, to mayor of New York City was greeted with sharply differing reactions across Washtenaw, from hopeful excitement to intense anxiety, and everything in between.

What most caught my attention was that those I talked to who were joyous about Mamdani's win were very often unaware of fears that were being widely shared among others in the Jewish community. And vice versa, those who were

alarmed could not imagine what was going on with the Mamdani crowd. This newspaper hopes to encourage dialog and understanding. Your views, wherever they land, are important to the success of this mission. It's hard for a monthly to keep up with the news cycle, but thoughtful opinion are always welcome. Most important, I hope you will be prompted to talk to others,

On election night, I was busy preparing for my book launch, reflecting on the many political changes I've seen since the 1980s. It's been a long journey. I felt fortunate to be steadied preparing this December's issue of the WJN, by reading a review of *The Melting Point* (see page 24), and an interview with the author of *Isabela's Way* (see page 8), and news of the children's book, *Jason Belongs* (see page 11). By hearing the Klezmatics are coming to town and that Yiddish meetups are growing. By anticipating the candles of Hanukah and Diwali. By seeing the shining faces of Hebrew Day School students and (slightly) older, still shining face of one of the HDS founders, Henry Appelman. And by the words of Esther Terry (see page 6), "We find safety and security in unexpected places," and we go forth "trusting God to help us along the way." ■

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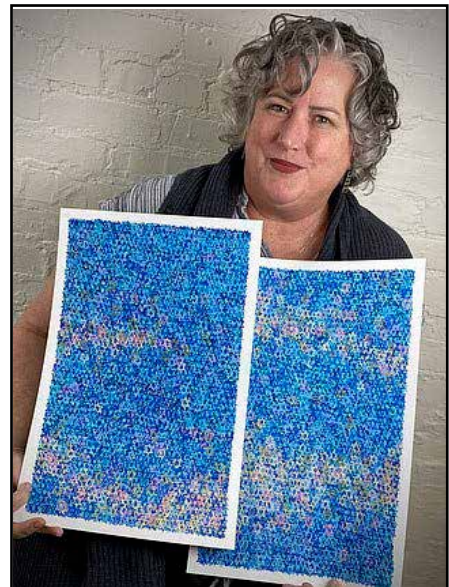
The Stars of David Project and 3D wood artwork at the JCC's Amster Gallery

By Drew Coel, Marketing and Program Associate, Ann Arbor JCC

The Amster Gallery welcomes in another winter season with two special exhibits, the reception taking place on Thursday, December 11, from 6–7:30 p.m. Enjoy light refreshments while exploring the work of two very talented artists.

Artist Jen Lewis's The Stars of David Project, a beautiful and powerful tribute to the 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust, is now up for viewing in the JCC's Amster Gallery. This traveling exhibit comes to Ann Arbor all the way from Chattanooga, Tennessee, where Lewis currently resides. "The Stars of David Project is taking a moment to remember the lives lost, those stories that we know, and those that have been lost," Lewis says.

The process for creating this collection of artwork is lengthy and incredibly delicate. Lewis carefully draws each star with a paint pen, remembering that each of them is a life taken during the Holocaust. One 11 x 17 sheet of Bristol board contains 20,000 Magen Davids, and Lewis says



the Mourner's Kaddish before beginning a new sheet. "The sheer amount of stars on a sheet causes them to overlap and cover one another, and the bottom layer of the stars represents the souls lost without a trace or a written record," Lewis states. Each sheet of Bristol board contains one or two yellow and gold stars, representing the stories that have been preserved over time, making it clear that we will only ever know a fraction of the experiences of Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The Stars of David Project contains 300 total sheets for a total 6 million stars,



and this exhibit has been and will be featured in many other locations across the country.

Also featured this winter in the JCC's Newman Lounge is the stunning 3D woodwork of Metro Detroit artist Sara Young. A small sample of Sara's work was featured in the Amster Gallery's previous exhibit, a group show, and now she's back at the JCC with a large collection! The current exhibit features pieces of animals, nature, Judaism, and even a 3D map of the Great Lakes.

Young has more than 20 years of primarily self-taught experience in etching and engraving. She can take any photo she's given and laser engrave it onto wood, glass, mirror, or slate. "I worked strictly in glass for years, designing and cutting my own templates for increasingly detailed pieces with the use of a sand blaster," Young says. "The first maker space in Detroit opened in 2012 which gave me access to a C02 laser. I was able to use almost any media to engrave on and cut out." All of the 3D woodwork pieces in this exhibit are between 3–12 layers of laser cut, and then stained and painted on birch, maple, cherry, or walnut wood.

At the exhibit on December 11, Lewis will be joining us over Zoom and Young will be here at the JCC to talk and answer questions. Pieces will be up and available for viewing until January 7, 2026. Young's pieces and copies of her book, *My Life in 3D: Volume 1*, which features a large collection of her work, will be available for purchase. ■



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Community

AARC welcomes new executive director

By Emily Eisbruch

The Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC) is delighted to welcome Elizabeth Brindley as its part-time Executive Director. Elizabeth started this new role in October. Her responsibilities include managing the congregation's administrative functions, publicity and outreach, event coordination, and more.

Elizabeth is a Michigan native, originally from the Saginaw / Bay City Area. In addition to her role with the AARC, she also works in the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation & Corrections as a librarian in a men's maximum-security prison.

Elizabeth earned a bachelor's degree in



Elizabeth Brindley

Public & Nonprofit Administration from Eastern Michigan University and a master's degree in Library & Information Science from Louisiana State University. She holds several other certifications, including cosmetology and massage licenses in Michigan, is certified in Mental Health First Aid, and worked as a roller-skating instructor in her early twenties.

"I centered a lot of my college studies around the decolonization of repositories and on libraries as tools to create strong, healthy communities, and I've found that I'm passionate about building communities that are safe, inclusive, and joyful for everyone," says Elizabeth.

With humor, she notes that in her personal life, she's basically the stereotypical librarian: she has six cats, wears almost exclusively handmade cardigans, and reads anything she can get her hands on.

"My favorite fiction genres are fantasy and sci-fi, but if I'm honest I mostly read nonfiction, particularly on social issues. I also really love history and spiritual thought. I have a lot of hobbies: I cross-stitch, paint miniatures for tabletop games like Dungeons & Dragons, and write a whole lot of different stuff. My main project right now is a combination of a self-care manual for corrections staff and research into alternative justice models that are more humane and compassionate to the people in prisons,

both those there by force and those there for money."

"We are absolutely delighted to have Elizabeth stepping into this newly expanded role," says AARC Board Chair Dave Nelson. "As our community grows, so does our need for dedicated professional staff, who are the life support system for a spiritually energetic community. We look forward to seeing Elizabeth and the community thrive together."

AARC Events for December

The AARC is a caring, inclusive, and music-loving community of people who want to practice and study Judaism or simply be around people who share a commitment to Judaism's values. The AARC's spiritual leader, Rav Gavrielle Pescador, is known for her warmth, her collaborative spirit, and her incredible voice and harp playing. You are invited to visit <https://aarecon.org/> or email info@aarecon.org to learn more about the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation.

December 7

Clare Kinberg, author of *By the Waters of Paradise*, will join the AARC Book Group via Zoom for a discussion from 1–2 p.m. For a Zoom link for the discussion, write to Greg Saltzman gsaltzman@albion.edu.

December 13

Meditation led by Anita Rubin-Meuller, 10–10:20 a.m., followed by a hybrid Shabbat Service led by our Rabbi, Gabrielle Pescador, at the JCC and on Zoom. Zoom link will be sent out the week before the event. 10:30 a.m.–noon.

December 21

Rosh Chodesh Tevet morning service on Zoom. 10 a.m. ■



EMU Center for Jewish Studies marks anniversary

By Shayla Mosty



This year marks 13 years of Jewish academia at Eastern Michigan University. EMU's Center for Jewish Studies provides Jewish students, staff, and faculty with a space for their voices to be heard and for unique educational opportunities to be explored.

In addition to offering a Jewish Studies minor, advanced undergraduate research opportunities, and travel courses, the Center for Jewish Studies also strives to provide innovative and accessible programming for the EMU community as well as for the larger southeast Michigan community. Among the opportunities that the Center provides, the travel courses taking place in Israel, Poland, or New York are subsidized to help students afford and take part.

"I don't think anyone expected it to grow into what it has become, that it would have made as many inroads into the larger community beyond campus as it has," Robert Erlewine, EMU's Center for Jewish Studies Director and Professor of Religious Studies, Department of History & Philosophy, said.

The EMU Center for Jewish Studies actively engages with the EMU administration in an effort to better the campus climate and ensure student safety on campus.

"After October 7 [2023], this element increased significantly. As director of the Center, I found myself regularly meeting with the chief of campus police and our chief diversity officer," Erlewine said, "both of whom were amazingly supportive and concerned to ensure that we preserved a campus that was safe and civil for all of our students."

In addition to working with administration on campus safety, the Center held events geared towards unifying the Jewish community on and off campus. While the Center currently serves as a safe space for Jewish students, faculty, staff, and community members, it was a difficult process getting to this point.

"In the beginning, the CJS [Center for Jewish Studies] had to constantly demonstrate its relevance to the EMU administration. We had to show our ability to attract support both from students and the community," Martin "Marty" Shichtman, Professor Emeritus English and founding director of the Center for Jewish Studies, said.

The desire to create a Jewish studies department stemmed from a team-taught class, Culture and the Holocaust. Every semester, the class drew many students, both Jewish and not, who were interested in the Jewish academic field.

After engaging with a multitude of EMU professors, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, and receiving a program send-off from Senator Carl

Levin, "we were able to formulate a program that would correspond to Eastern's identity, a program that would invite both students and members of the community to explore Judaism, both the religion and the culture(s)," Shichtman said.

With the help of generous donors and sponsors, the Center for Jewish Studies hosts programming opportunities that educate students and community members on various Jewish themes. For instance, right before Halloween 2023, the Center for Jewish Studies had every seat filled at their event teaching about the Jewish monster, the Golem. The Center has also hosted well-known comedians to perform and had presentations on the Jewish history of comic books from both scholars and comic book authors. There have been musical acts, chefs, and pollsters talking about Jewish voting patterns, as well as scholars reflecting on theological issues, like the significance of climate change and AI for Jewish thought. The Center even brought Israeli playwright and TV writer Ori Urian to EMU theatre for an English language debut of his play *Connected*. Ori engaged in various groups in the community by doing a workshop for the Ann Arbor Hebrew Day School, running meetings with Israelis living in Ann Arbor, and meeting with community members to discuss the current state of theatre in Israel.

"We educate our students about the complexity and richness of Jewish history. We show them Jewish joy and vitality," Erlewine said.

The Center for Jewish Studies has grown substantially in the last four years. In September 2024, the Center hosted a dedication ceremony celebrating their new office location in the newly renovated first floor of Hallel Library. With this new office, Jewish students, faculty, and staff have a corner of the campus to call their own. Both EMU and surrounding community members came out to support the dedication, including EMU president James Smith, who talked about the importance of having the Center for Jewish Studies on EMU's campus. In addition, in March 2025, the Center for Jewish Studies partnered with Temple Beth Emeth in Ann Arbor hosting an Antisemitism Summit, where over 250 people were in attendance. In January 2025, the Center co-sponsored an event with SAJE (Seminars in Adult Jewish Education) at the JCC in West Bloomfield and plans on doing so again in 2026.

Whether you are in the Jewish academic field or simply looking for an opportunity to learn something new, the Center for Jewish Studies welcomes everyone.

"While there is intellectual heft to what we do, our presentations are not scholarly in focus. Our events are accessible and engaging to a broad audience," Erlewine said.

To stay up to date on all programming and opportunities offered by the Center for Jewish Studies, email jewish.studies@emich.edu to join the mailing list, and follow us on Facebook @ EMU Center for Jewish Studies and Instagram @cjsatemu. ■

Commemoration of October 7, two years on

By Amichay Findling, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

On October 16, the night after Simchat Torah, the greater Ann Arbor Jewish community gathered at the JCC to commemorate the horrific October 7 massacre. While two years in the past, that day in 2023 is still painfully present for many, and the commemoration aimed to offer a space for meaningful communal remembrance.

Then, just days before the event was to take place, a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas finally brought home all 20 surviving hostages.

Attendees at the October 16 program arrived with mixed emotions: joy and deep relief at the return of those held captive for 737 days, intertwined with unending grief for the lives stolen and the communities shattered during the initial attacks and over the course of the last two years. These emotions found a voice through speakers and artists, both visiting and local, throughout the ceremony.

The event's keynote speaker, Maya Izoucheev, is a Nova Festival survivor. Maya shared her story with attendees, describing the celebration and community that the Nova Festival embodied, her own anticipation and excitement leading up to that night, and then the unimaginable terror that followed. She spoke of friends lost, of impossible decisions made in seconds,

and of the ongoing journey of healing she continues to navigate.

One uplifting moment Maya described was connected



Maya Izoucheev shared her story with a full house at the Ann Arbor JCC on October 16.

to her childhood friend, Guy Gilboa-Dalal, who was kidnapped from Nova and held hostage for two years. Maya has been traveling the world telling her story for the last two years, and at each speaking engagement, she wears a shirt printed with Guy's photo, urging the world to bring him home. Just three days before the gathering in Ann Arbor, Guy was released. Maya stood before the crowd at the

JCC in a new shirt, finally able to celebrate freedom.

In addition to Maya's presentation, the ceremony featured remarks from local Jewish leaders. Rabbi Will Keller, Head of School at Hebrew Day School, opened by acknowledging the layers of emotion surrounding October 7 and the challenges of teaching children about it. Rabbi Josh Whinston of Temple Beth Emeth and Rav

Nadav Caine of Beth Israel Congregation reflected on Maya's experience and connected it to the shared ache felt by Klal Yisrael (the entire Jewish people) in Israel and across the Jewish world. Rav Nadav concluded with a translation of the familiar words of the Kaddish prayer:

He who makes peace in His high holy places,

may He bring peace upon us, upon all Israel —

and let us say: Amen.

Music was woven throughout the evening by Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador of the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation. Rabbi Pescador enhanced a program already rooted in hope and sorrow with songs for healing and for peace, performed by a group of eight volunteer musicians. Their voices carried both heartbreak and resilience.

To close the ceremony, Shternie Zwiebel of Chabad led a prayer for unity and reconciliation within Am Yisrael (the peoples of Israel). All those present concluded together in song with Israel's national anthem "Hatikva" and melodies of peace — lifting a shared hope into the room.

Beyond music, visual art played a meaningful role in the commemoration. Local artists contributed works displayed in the JCC's Amster Gallery,

curated by Marie Pattipati, the JCC's Director of Arts & Culture. Among the contributors was Orit Aviran, a gifted artist and musician who moved from Israel to Ann Arbor just over a year ago.

In the days following the large communal gathering, which filled nearly every seat in the JCC gym, Maya spent time in smaller settings. She joined NextGen A2 for Shabbat dinner, she visited Chabad for a talk after Shabbat morning services, and she sat down with the local Israeli community for a Hebrew "Chug Bayit" (open house). These intimate conversations fostered support, understanding, and even new friendships.

With the ceasefire still holding — though far from without challenges — many Jews continue to pray that the return of the hostages marks the beginning of a long-awaited chapter of calm and rebuilding.

May all soon gather to celebrate joy rather than grief.

May the words recited together at the communal commemoration become a reality:

Oseh Shalom Bimromav,

Hu Ya'aseh Shalom Aleinu,

Ve'al Kol Yisrael,

Ve'al Kol Yoshvei Tevel. ■

Federation program gives MI prosecutors a Holocaust education

By Shane Dennis, Ann Arbor Jewish Community Security Director

On October 7 and 8, the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor hosted "What You Do Matters: Lessons from the Holocaust" at the JCC of Greater Ann Arbor. The second training of its kind held in Ann Arbor, this program was designed specifically for county prosecutors from around the state.

The "What You Do Matters" program describes itself as "a powerful curriculum for today's law enforcement professionals. Using historical images and stories from the Holocaust, trained facilitators engage students in a dialogue about the role of law enforcement in today's communities and the importance of core values in ensuring the integrity and vibrancy of democracy" (wydminstitute.com).

The program was developed after a visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., in 2006, by law enforcement leaders of Yavapai County, Arizona. Those leaders recognized that the Holocaust is much more than a

chapter from a history book — it provides important insight into the consequences when a government shifts the mission of the police from protecting individuals to supporting the abuse of basic human rights. "What You Do Matters" examines policing within the legal and political framework of Nazi Germany, a journey that eventually turned those who should protect life and liberty into those who intimidated, humiliated, deported, and eventually murdered millions of innocent people.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor previously hosted a "What You Do Matters: Lessons from the Holocaust" training for local law enforcement in November 2024. From that previous training, Ann Arbor's Community Security Director Shane Dennis established a professional relationship with the National Director of the What You Do Matters Institute, Todd Larson. When the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan (PACC) decided to offer this training to all



county prosecutors in the state of Michigan, Todd reached out to Shane to coordinate and promote the training to local law enforcement.

Members of county prosecutor's offices from around the state, as well as local law enforcement, attended the training. Based on feedback from the attendees, it was very well

received, and the PACC plans to conduct future "What You Do Matters" trainings throughout the state with Shane's support.

To learn more about security initiatives in greater Ann Arbor, visit JewishAnnArbor.org/our-community/community-security, or contact Shane Dennis at shane@jewishannarbor.org. ■

Safety after the Tree of Life

By Esther J. Terry

A version of this article was delivered as a d'var Torah at the Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan on November 8, 2025/17 Cheshvan 5786.

Seven years ago, the 18th of Cheshvan fell on October 27 in the Gregorian calendar. The parashah that morning was Vayeira, which includes both the birth of Yitzchak and the banishment of Hagar and Ishmael. At the corner of Shady and Wilkins in Pittsburgh, three congregations were meeting for morning services: Tree of Life — Or L'Simcha, Dor Hadash, and New Light. I was not at the Tree of Life building that morning. I was at synagogue eight blocks away. We knew what was happening. We did not yet know if it was a single shooter, multiple shooters, a contained attack, or an attack preceding more to come.

By the time morning services concluded, we knew that people had been murdered although we did not yet know the exact count. When we stepped outside of shul into the streets of Squirrel Hill, the normally vibrant neighborhood was virtually silent. No cars were on the road, no people were walking on the sidewalks. There were only the sounds of light rain and a cold autumn breeze rustling the leaves. Everything felt precarious, uncertain. Nothing felt safe.

Ever since that day, every time I think about entering a Jewish space, I think about the distinction between security and safety. And in the midrash related to Hagar, I found a story of two expulsions — abrupt precarity and unexpected safety.

Bereshit Rabba explains that Hagar was an Egyptian princess. The pharaoh gave her to Sarai and Avram, because after witnessing the miracles performed by God, Pharaoh decided his daughter was better off in Avram's household as a servant. He wanted his daughter to come under the divine protection that shielded Avram and Sarai.

As we know in Lekh Lekha, Sarai and Avram did not conceive, so she gave Hagar to Avram as a wife. Hagar became pregnant. Sarai accused Hagar of acting above her station, of despising her as if she were better than Sarai. In midrash, Avram quoted both Deuteronomy and Exodus. He attempted to convince Sarai that treating Hagar harshly or forcing her out from the home into which she had been bound — first by her father giving her to them, and second by marriage to Avram — simply because she no longer found favor with them, would be unnecessarily cruel.

Based on either her status as an enslaved handmaiden or as a wife to Avram, Hagar should have been safe. She was not. Sarai prevented Hagar from being with Avram, hit Hagar in the face, and made her take buckets and towels to the bathhouse. Even more, Sarai cast the evil eye on Hagar and forced her to miscarry. Unsurprisingly, Hagar fled into the wilderness.

The miscarriage is why, the rabbis tell us, a messenger of the Lord comforted Hagar in the wilderness by saying she would conceive in the future. Midrash further explains that Hagar could easily interact with this messenger, and the three others they count in the parashah, because she was accustomed to communicating with angels in Avram's household. This observation of midrash reveals the silence of Avram and

the angels of the Lord: they did not shield Hagar from experiencing harm. No one with influence or authority chose to secure or guard Hagar's safety in Avram's household.

In the wilderness, Hagar did not only hear from the messengers of the Lord. She also called directly on God. This is the only moment that the rabbis acknowledge God speaking directly to a woman without going through a man. In contrast, when God spoke to Sarah about her laughter, this was an indirect conversation through Avraham. And even when Rivka communicated with God, the rabbis say that she went through Shem. This first expulsion establishes that even though Hagar was harmed and ultimately forced out of her home into the wilderness, she found protection and comfort from angels and from God. She trusted in the messages from God in the wilderness and agreed to return to the home of Avram and Sarai.

In Vayeira, we read that Hagar and Ishmael are cast out into the wilderness because Sarah saw Ishmael playing. Rashi summarizes the midrash: Ishmael's actions could relate to idolatry like the Golden Calf, to sexual misconduct like Potiphar's wife, to murder like the war games between the soldiers of David and Shaul, and to a heated argument between Ishmael and Yitzchak about who would inherit a greater portion. There were, in other words, many reasons why Sarah was justified in telling Avraham to expel Hagar and Ishmael.

Ramban, however, disagrees with most of these justifications. He points out that the other accusations against Ishmael and Hagar would mean that Avraham allowed idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder in his household. For Ramban, the only option is that Ishmael mocked everyone celebrating the weaning of Yitzchak



and boasted openly that he would inherit double. Ramban backs this up by pointing to Sarah's complaint, "the son of that slave shall not share in the inheritance with my son Yitzchak."

Other than Ramban, rabbinic commentary in Vayeira makes it rather easy to cast Hagar and Ishmael as the violent, idolatrous villains. The other commentators focus on the immediate context: the celebration of Yitzchak's weaning and the fraught interactions leading up to Hagar and Ishmael being expelled. Ramban

broadens his consideration to the world of Avraham's household.

By putting this second incident in conversation with the first, where Hagar is a woman who easily speaks with angels and with God, Ramban's commentary seems more plausible. Hagar, an Egyptian princess, an enslaved handmaiden, a wife grieving a miscarriage and conversing with angels, then calling upon God — she does not seem to be someone who would engage in idolatrous or violent practices. By the time we see her in Vayeira, she had not only been enslaved and a wife, she had become the mother to a son of Avraham. And once again she was not safe.

Neither Avraham nor anyone in his household, including angels, secured her safety. Once again in the wilderness, a messenger of the Lord reassured her, provided water for Ishmael, encouraged Hagar to



continue, and promised that Ishmael would become a great nation. In both incidents, Hagar trusted God and she found more safety in the wilderness.

I admit that I am disappointed and frustrated that Sarah was allowed to harm Hagar and cast her out. I want to expect better of Sarah, of Avraham, and of the angels. But in the end, as it turns out, the wilderness was unexpectedly a safer place for Hagar and for Ishmael. Leaving the security of Avraham's household, even filled as it was with heavenly visitors, turned out to be the safer choice.

After the Tree of Life shooting, I did not think to expect that the wider community of Squirrel Hill and of the entire city would mourn along with us. But they did. The Pittsburgh Steelers logo has three hypocycloids that look like four-pointed stars. The Steelers allowed the yellow hypocycloid to become a yellow Star of David and this version was accompanied by the slogan "Stronger than Hate." The Starbucks down the street from Tree of Life added window art with ahavah, chesed, and tikvah in Hebrew. And local businesses all over Squirrel Hill put up 8 by 11 sheets of paper, printed with a black background, "Our hearts cry for Shalom" with 11 candles pictured prominently. These things, more than the armed security that now guarded every synagogue's doors, ultimately restored my sense of safety.

I know that today we live in a different world. It's not 2018, it's not 5779, and

of course it's not Pittsburgh. Maybe, like Hagar, we are worried for the futures of our families and our children in a world that seems increasingly dangerous. Maybe we find ourselves deeply focused on security, advocating for stronger or more visible forms of strength, because we are afraid that the wilderness is a more precarious, more deadly place.

Yet when I see Hagar deciding to trust God even after being cast out of her home and her son's home, I have been thinking — sometimes when we are forced out of what we thought was safe we find out God has not abandoned us. We find safety and security in unexpected places, we strike out trusting God to help us along the way. We build bridges and create a wider community than we ever thought possible, a community where we can celebrate together, remember those we have lost, and invoke their memories for a blessing.

In honor of the 11 who were murdered because they were Jews and because they were at Shabbat services — who were collectively mourned as yinzers, Pittsburghers, Pennsylvanians, Americans, humans, and yes of course also as Jews, here are their names.

Idit Baltza bat Aba Menachem v'Chenka, Joyce Feinberg

Yosef ben Chayim, Richard Gottfried

Rayzel bat Avraham, Rose Mallinger

Yehudah ben Yechezqel v'Salmah, Jerry Rabinowitz

Sisal Chayim ben Eliezer, Cecil Rosenthal

Dovid ben Eliezer, David Rosenthal

Bayla Rahel bat Moshe, Bernice Simon

Zalman Shachna ben Menachem Mendel, Sylvan Simon

Daniel Avraham ben Baruch, Daniel Stein

Moshe Gadol ben Yosef, Melvin Wax

Yitzchak Chayim ben Menachem, Irving Younger

May we find the courage to trust God and to fight for a world where communities do not secure themselves against one another but where we build shared safety together. Shabbat Shalom. ■

Community

Sending money overseas: Where Ann Arbor's dollars go (part 3)

By Eileen Freed, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

In these troubled times, when there are many serious concerns about the actions of the current Israeli government, questions also arise around the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor's Israel/Overseas allocations from the Annual Community Campaign. Articles in the September and November issues of the WJN described the community's investments in the Jewish Agency (JAFI), World ORT, and American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

In addition to participating with Jewish



Ruca's Farm is a rehabilitative organic farm for former soldiers and first responders battling PTSD.

Federations across North America in collective funding of JAFI, JDC, and ORT, the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor provides direct funding to Israeli NGOs doing work that aligns with the local community's commitment to a strong shared civil society in Israel. Some of that support is for specific JAFI or JDC programs, as described in the previous articles. (Those articles can be found at WashtenawJewishNews.org or JewishAnnArbor.org/news.)

Israel/Overseas Allocations Priorities

The Israel/Overseas Allocations Committee, a subcommittee of the Jewish Federation's Allocations Committee, was established in the early 2000s to make decisions around "elective" support for organizations that were not supported by the collective funding of the traditional partners of the Federation system. Some projects funded during this early period included a projector for Neve Shalom/Wahat As-Salaam, a cooperative village founded by Jewish and Arab Israelis; vocational training for the Druze community, a project of the JDC; and SELAH, an organization that supports grandparents raising their orphaned grandchildren and which provides other immigrant support services.

As elective funding became a more significant part of the overseas allocations from the Annual Community Campaign, the committee developed a set of funding priorities that have been reviewed over the years. Fostering Arab/Jewish understanding and cooperation

Assisting Israel minority and disadvantaged populations

Promoting religious pluralism and tolerance among Jewish groups in Israel

Aiding Jews in need in Israel and throughout the world

Supporting environmental efforts in Israel

As Ann Arbor's Partnership2Gether relationship with Moshav Nahalal and the Central Galilee region continued to develop, the committee prioritized supporting initiatives in the partnership region when they also align with other funding priorities.



Ann Arbor and Nahalal teens painted the UM rock during the P2G Student Exchange in fall of 2023.

Projects supported by the 2025 Annual Community Campaign

In 2025, 20% of the Annual Community Campaign was allocated to Israel/Overseas partners. Half of that was sent to the collective efforts of Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA). (See the September and November WJN for more on collective funding.) The remainder was allocated to specific projects recommended by the Israel/Overseas Allocations Committee and approved by the Allocations Committee and the Jewish Federation Board. Those projects include the following:

A New Way

A New Way (ANW) operates long-term educational programs throughout Israel. Based on a holistic, multi-community model, it enables Arabs and Jews to undergo educational processes together, establishing a robust and prosperous shared society in Israel. Operating in general public schools, where Jewish and Arab students do not typically learn together, all ANW programs are recognized and approved by Israel's Ministry of Education.

Brothers and Sisters for Israel

Brothers and Sisters for Israel is a national volunteer organization. Since October 7, the organization has actively and creatively supported evacuees, victims, and soldiers. The office in the Northern district supports combat troops, including reservists, on Israel's northern border with Lebanon; this support was especially crucial when the region was under constant Hezbollah missile attacks. One creative project in the summer of 2024 provided an ice cream truck for soldiers, evacuees, and families returning to their homes in the North. The truck was operated by volunteer drivers and organizers.

Ethiopian National Project

The Ethiopian National Project (ENP) works to reduce scholastic gaps and realize the full potential of Ethiopian-Israeli schoolchildren. The Federation allocation supports the program in Afula, which is adjacent to our partnership region.

Hand in Hand Schools

Hand in Hand builds inclusion and equality between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel through a growing network of bilingual, integrated schools and communities. The Jewish Federation of Great-

er Ann Arbor has funded Hand in Hand Schools since 2005. At that time, it was a small network of three private schools with no government funding or support. Today, Hand in Hand schools are part of the public school system, and there are over 2,000 students across campuses in six locations throughout Israel.

iREP – Israel Religious Expression Platform

The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor has long been committed to supporting projects that promote religious pluralism and equality for non-Haredi Jewish expression in Israel. In 2014, the Ann Arbor Federation joined the iREP task force, which was created by JFNA. iREP supports Israeli organizations promoting greater religious equality, in areas such as civil marriage, rights for Reform and Conservative Judaism, and a space for egalitarian prayer at the Kotel (Western Wall).

Krembo Wings Youth Movement

Krembo Wings is the only all-inclusive youth movement in Israel that provides a social network for children with and without disabilities. The movement operates 66 branches across Israel and welcomes over 6,000 young people with and without disabilities aged seven to 22 from all cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. Their overall goal is to instill in their members the values of diversity, equality, and tolerance, bridging the divides in Israeli society while also providing a crucial social service that helps children and families across the country. The Jewish Federation's allocation supports the Krembo Wings branch in our Partnership2Gether region, specifically in Nof Hagalil. This branch serves and brings together Israelis from all backgrounds including Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Lone Soldier Center

For the first time in 2025, the Jewish Federation has allocated funds to the Lone Soldier Center in Memory of Michael Levin (LSC). Founded in 2009, the LSC is dedicated to ensuring that soldiers without existing support systems in Israel never feel alone before, during, and after their military service. The LSC serves both immigrant and Israeli-born lone soldiers, including those from at-risk backgrounds. Through subsidized housing,



Hand in Hand Schools build inclusion and equality between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel through a growing network of bilingual, integrated schools and communities.

social programming, emotional and financial support, and advocacy, they empower lone soldiers to integrate into Israeli society

with confidence, stability, and a sense of belonging.

Partnership2Gether/Community-2Community Relationship with Moshav Nahalal

Partnership2Gether (P2G) is a global program of the Jewish Agency that pairs diaspora and Israeli communities to develop programs of mutual benefit. Ann Arbor partners with Moshav Nahalal as part of the Michigan-Central Galilee Partnership region anchored by the Detroit Jewish community, promoting meaningful personal connections between the two communities. Until the COVID pandemic, one of the most prominent programs of the partnership was the Student Exchange, where Ann Arbor teens spent 10 days with families in Nahalal, and then their Nahalal hosts would visit Ann Arbor. More than 100 teens participated in this program from its inception in 2009. Other partnership activities include integrating a Nahalal delegation with Ann Arbor's to the JCC Maccabi games for the past two years, and a twinning program between Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor and the Nahalal elementary school. The Ann Arbor-based P2G volunteer committee is working with their Israeli counterparts to re-evaluate and reinvigorate the program to engage even more sectors of the community.

Ruca's Farm

Ruca's Farm is a rehabilitative organic farm for former soldiers and first responders battling PTSD. Rooted in the values of personal agency, community, and the proven healing properties of agriculture, its mission is to provide a holistic response to PTSD by establishing and operating a safe and supportive rehabilitative agricultural farm where veterans suffering from PTSD can work, heal, and rediscover their sense of self in a supportive, trigger-free environment.

Conclusion

The volunteer leadership and professional team of the Jewish Federation are proud of the impact of this community's support of the organizations on the ground in Israel that aim to build a more positive, equitable shared civil society; address the needs of marginalized populations; promote pluralistic Jewish expression and equal rights; and foster mutually beneficial connections between Israelis and the Jewish community in Washtenaw County. While we cannot vote in Israeli elections, we can and do have a positive impact on Israeli society through these funds.

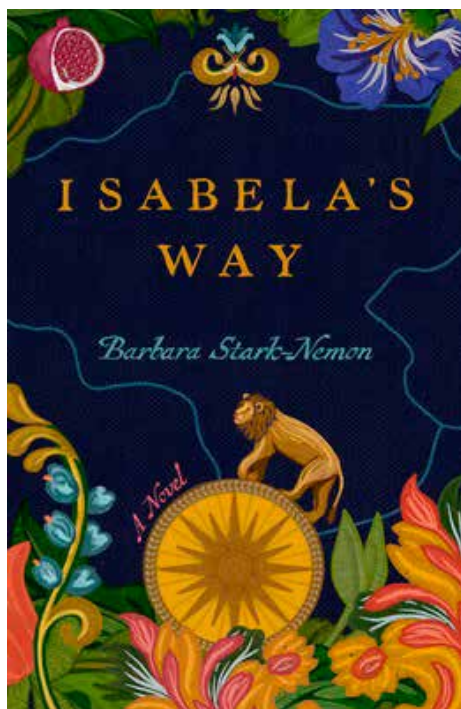
The Jewish Federation's team is available to answer any questions or concerns you have about programs and initiatives it funds in Israel and around the world. You can contact Federation's Israel and Overseas Programs Manager Amichay Findling (amichay@jewishannarbor.org) to continue the conversation.

Eileen Freed is the CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor. ■

Interview with *Isabella's Way* author Barbara Stark-Nemon

By Ari Smith

Barbara Stark-Nemon, author and longtime resident of Ann Arbor, recently released her third novel, *Isabella's Way*. It tells the story of a 14-year-old “New Catholic” embroideress who is pulled into a secret network using needlework to spirit conversos — Jews who became Catholics, either in truth or merely for safety — away from the Inquisition's grasp. After her book launch, Stark-Nemon sat down with the WJN to discuss her book, refugees, and fiber arts. *Isabella's Way* is available from She Writes Press.



Washtenaw Jewish News: *Isabella's Way* is a book about a 14-year-old Jewish refugee fleeing Portugal during the inquisition — can you tell me a little about how it feels to be releasing a book on this subject at a time when we are seeing such similar fears among refugees and immigrants in our own communities?

Barbara Stark-Nemon: That's a great question and it's something that has really worried me and it has changed the way I release the book in some ways. So, I come from a family of refugees, both my parents were refugees from Nazi Germany, and so I am a first generation American. Then I spent 15 years working with Jewish Family Services here in Washtenaw County, the primary local agency that welcomes refugees from everywhere in the world. This is part of my DNA and what I have chosen to do with my volunteer time, and now it has become part of my writing because this girl just jumped into my head on a bicycle ride from Portugal to Spain in 2011. When I started writing this book in 2017, I had no idea about the current shift in politics and in our society's view of refugees and where we stand as a country. The reasons I brought this book into the world have shifted dramatically, not just in terms of refugees, but also in terms of bringing out a book with Jewish content at this time have changed the whole context in which I launched the book this fall.

WJN: It's so interesting that it's a book about being hidden in so many ways. Being hidden from oppressors, hidden messages in embroidery, and even being hidden from yourself. Isabella doesn't even realize that she's Jewish, as she was not raised that way. And even when you are in the process of publicizing this book, there's still a little worry about concealment.

S-N: Exactly, that's exactly right. That whole circumstance you just described is metaphoric in so many ways of my family exposing themselves as Jews in their new context when they arrived in the United States. They didn't practice as Jews when they were in Berlin in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. And the whole concept of being hidden is one of my book club discussion

questions for the book. Isabella thought she was a good Catholic girl who didn't understand her background. Was her parents' choice an appropriate or fair thing to do? In Inquisition-era Portugal, what other choices did they have? The layers and layers of hidden identity and when to assert certain identities, that is really one of the most important themes of this book. Isabella came to me as someone who is on the verge of coming of age. In other words, what are we presented with? What do we take on? What do we assert that isn't part of our given identity, and how do we make that shift, what kind of acceptance is there? Self-acceptance, but what do you promote to the context around you, and how do you move forward in your life like that?

WJN: That moves beautifully into my next question, which is about the fact that Isabella is such a young protagonist in our eyes. She's barely more than a child, yet when we meet her at the beginning of the story, she's living on her own after her mother's death and she is a highly skilled professional in her own right. Both within the era in which she lives and with the trials and tribulations that she lives through, she's simultaneously a child and very adult. I wanted to know what made you choose this age and how it impacts her story.

S-N: So I tell the story that I didn't choose Isabella. Isabella chose me — on that bicycle ride, she fell into my head and would not leave for years until I wrote her. I think it's important that in the early 1600s, which is when the book is set, a 14-year-old girl was marriageable and considered an adult. A younger adult, but an adult with the potential of marrying and bearing children. From our perspective today, a 14-year-old on her own doesn't make much sense, but in the days of the Inquisition and the plague in addition to all of the structures of that time and society, it forced many younger people to grow up very quickly and that's certainly a part of Isabella's story. She's very cherished and sheltered, and suddenly she's alone and having to run the family business and escape the only life and country she's ever known. It's a story that continues to repeat itself — it happened in World War I and World War II, young boys being sent to war to fight and children having to survive when their parents are taken away. Many of us today are very protected and privileged and allowed to grow up slowly, but even today we have 14-year-olds who are having to protect and manage their families with absent parents.

WJN: Something you mentioned at your book launch event was that there's always intolerance, but there's also always heroes, and that you're always searching for and interested in unexpected allies. I'm going to ask you a hard question — what's your conception of a hero?

S-N: I see a hero as someone who doesn't just rebel against the trauma and the horror that is thrown at us in life when we don't expect it, but who manages to recruit resilience, who can understand who authentic allies are, and can turn it around so that those circumstances don't ruin who they are as a person. Hard circumstance helps them to reset and figure out how to move forward. To me, that is a hero. If you can do that on behalf of others as well, that's an exponential hero. I've created many characters like that in *Isabella's Way* — they're not defeated. There are some who are defeated by the ruin around them, but most of the characters find a way with each other to turn it around. We can't control what comes at us, but we can control how we respond.

WJN: I'm also curious about how fiber arts are shown here. Embroidery is a well of deep cultural heritage and creativity and skill that is not traditionally given much attention, and I wanted to ask about how you centered this in your book.

S-N: Well, I do several fiber arts myself, though not embroidery. When Isabella came to me as an embroideress, I ended up embroidering the cover of my book just to get it into my hands and head. I also did a deep dive into the role of women embroiderers over centuries and how they used that skill to communicate. Mary Queen of Scots was one, who used embroidery in her clothes and gifts to transmit messages, but also more commonly enslaved Americans who would embroider maps of the Underground Railroad in their quilts. It's important to pay attention to who did this and what it means.

WJN: Embroidery is an important part of Judaism, too! The Torah has long passages about the embroidery on the robes of the priests, and we duplicate that today on our Torah covers. The way you managed to join all of these aspects together is wonderful.

S-N: Absolutely!

WJN: Any final thoughts you'd like to share?

S-N: Well, something that interests me about my own writing is that it's a second career. I had a whole career doing something I loved that I was pretty good at for a long time! Writing later in life is like a gift. It's not something that is a typical pathway and there are those who think “oh, I can't do that, it's too late.” It's never too late to embrace a creative effort that's fulfilling and affirming. ■



Barbara Stark-Nemon

Community

Discover your community: U-M's JCLP

By Morgan Hesse and Kristina Riemer

Being a student in the U-M School of Social Work's Jewish Communal Leadership Program (JCLP) means joining a network of people who are committed to lifelong learning and collective engagement for public benefit. In addition to receiving a Master's degree in Social Work from the nation's #1-ranked School of Social Work, JCLP students receive a certificate in Jewish Communal Leadership from the Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. Generous tuition support makes this unique dual-track opportunity more accessible.

While the JCLP supports academic growth and achievement, it is also a catalyst for personal development and authentic connection. First-year student Jacob Keer describes the program as "a soft place to land in [the potentially] overwhelming transition into graduate school," with other first-year students noting that the JCLP orientation helped them make close friendships — making the rest of orientation week less daunting. First-year students report feeling grateful for the holiday celebrations, exploratory carpools around Michigan, and spontaneous movie nights that have come from JCLP friendships. Personal relationships outside of the classroom allow students to challenge each other academically, pushing each other to see more complexity and to question their initial preconceptions.



JCLP students visiting the Isaac Agree Downtown Synagogue during their Fall 2025 orientation.

When it comes to student experience, a highlight of the program is the weekly seminar. Each semester, JCLP students are fortunate enough to host a wide variety of guest speakers, engaging in meaningful discussion about how to hold conversations across differences, what Jewish community outreach looks like in Michigan, and how to explore social justice as a Jewish value. Through these weekly conversations, JCLP students utilize their social work skills to foster a welcoming, safe space for members of the broader community to share

their lived experiences. Additionally, second-year JCLP students rotate as seminar presenters, sharing projects focused on understanding and leading American Jewish communities, providing them with opportunities to practice facilitation techniques and strengthen their leadership skills. The discussions around these presentations are highly nuanced and often high-energy as each student immediately buys into the presenter's interest and dedication to their project. Students frequently express that the

support they find in the seminar room is unmatched in their other classroom and community settings.

The JCLP finds inventive ways to connect with the larger Ann Arbor community throughout the year, too. During orientation, JCLP students met with an adventure therapist, visited several Jewish communal organizations in Detroit, and engaged in teambuilding exercises to begin understanding what it means to foster community. As the fall semester got underway, JCLP students hosted a Community Welcome Breakfast, facilitating conversations with community leaders and JCLP alumni to welcome the new cohort. Over the Sukkot holiday, students welcomed members of the community into their sukkah in the School of Social Work Courtyard, with more student-led programs underway.

If you are considering a Master's in Social Work and are interested in working alongside Jewish communities to address broad social concerns in a 21st-century context, feel free to contact jclp.info@umich.edu with application questions, to talk to current students, or to learn more about upcoming events. Application deadlines can be found at ssw.umich.edu, and earlier applicants tend to receive more generous tuition support. Prospective students should reach out to JCLP and community members are enthusiastically encouraged to share this opportunity with eligible applicants within their networks. ■

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Rabbis Corner



Rabbi Aharon Goldstein

“Abraham who loved Me.”

By Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, Chabad of Ann Arbor

In the Torah portion Vayeira (Genesis 18:1–22:24), G-d tells Abraham that he is going to destroy Sodom and Gomorra. Then it says, “... And Abraham was still standing before G-d. Abraham came forward and said, ‘Would You blot out the righteous along with the wicked?!’”

If Abraham was still standing before G-d, what does it mean that he came forward? Rashi explains that he didn’t come forward in a physical sense, but rather, he prepared himself emotionally to defend Sodom and Gomorra from annihilation. He prepared to argue sternly with Him, to appease Him, and to pray to Him.

First Abraham spoke sternly, saying, “Would you blot out the righteous along with the wicked?!” In appeasement he said, “It would be sacrilegious for You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the righteous along with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are alike! Shall the Judge of the whole world not judge fairly?!” Then in prayer he said, “Behold I have begun to speak to my L-rd, and I am dust and ashes.”

We are taught about Abraham that he manifested the attribute of kindness and love. G-d even referred to him as “Abraham who loved Me.” So it seems strange and out of character that Abraham opens his argument with stern words. “Would you blot out the righteous along with the wicked?!” Why doesn’t he begin with words of appeasement or prayer, and if that doesn’t work, try stern words? That would be more in character with the Abraham we know.

When the Torah speaks of Abraham’s kindness and love, it is referring to the way he served G-d, in line with his nature. However, in this situation lives were on the line, and the angel tasked with destroying Sodom and Gomorra was already on the way there. Abraham went against his nature and spoke sternly first, not making diplomatic calculations, because lives were in the balance.

The stories of our ancestors are lessons to us. Just as we inherit from Abraham the kindness and the love that he had, we must be ready to take action when it is called for, just as he did.

We learn from Abraham that when the well-being of another is on the line — whether spiritual or physical — it is not a time for calculations, it is a time for action. Throwing yourself into the task with strong and effective action, even if it means going against your nature, is what is required. To save a life, we go the extra mile.

May the merit of the kindness and love all of the Jewish people give be the mitzva (commandment) that tips the scale and sets in motion the coming of Moshiach. May he come soon. ■

December events at Beth Israel

Hanukkah Celebration and Latke Dinner

Wednesday, December 17, at 6 p.m.
Meet outside at 6 p.m. for a Hanukkah lighting, followed by a latke dinner a Hanukkah sing-along with musician Michael Krieger and more in the social hall! Dinner is free, but please sign up through the calendar on our website (bethisrael-aa.org).

Jewish Family Service Community Needs Drive

December 8–December 22
We’re helping JFS to collect essential supplies like soap, diapers, shampoo, toothbrushes, cleaning items, feminine products, and grocery or gas gift cards to bring comfort and dignity to hundreds of families served by Jewish Family Service of Ann Arbor. Please drop off supplies in the donation bin in our lobby and see our website for more information.

Advanced Intro to Judaism

Sunday, December 7, at 1 p.m.
This year, Rabbi Caine is opening his popular “Intro to Judaism” course to Jews and the Jew-curious alike. Whether you’re considering identifying with the Jewish people and wish to know more, or you have Jewish family and want to learn more, or perhaps you are already Jewish but either never went to “Hebrew School” or did but realize you only got the kid version! This biweekly course is for adults who are looking to learn anew or deepen their knowledge of the history, meanings, theologies, and practices of Judaism. What does it mean to read the Torah as an adult, develop a relationship with God and Jewish practices as an

adult, see the world through a Jewish lens?

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin via Zoom

Mondays at 4 p.m.
The class meets on Zoom on Monday afternoons from 4–5:15. We will read the text in the original Hebrew or Aramaic with an accompanying English translation and discuss the text in English. No familiarity with Hebrew or prior experience studying Talmud is required. This fall and winter, we will be studying from the third chapter of the tractate of Bava Metzia, which addresses issues of the obligations and responsibilities of people who are taking care of objects or animals belonging to another person. All are welcome!

Tot Shabbat

Saturday, December 13, at 11 a.m.
Join us for a playful morning of Jewish songs and stories. Challah and grape juice kiddush included. For kids age one through first grade and parents, but all are welcome.

Mini Minyan

Saturday, December 13, at 11 a.m.
Calling all 7–10-year-olds for Mini Minyan! Join us monthly for a Saturday morning service and kiddush.

Theology Book Club — Online

Wednesdays at 7 p.m.
Beth Israel Congregation’s Theology Book Club welcomes you to join them to read together and discuss books

on Jewish thought and beliefs. The books are in English. Contact Paul Shifrin at (248) 514-7276 for more information.

In Person and Online Services

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

Minyan

Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in the M&M Chapel and online
Sundays–Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. online only

Friday Evening Services — in person and virtual

Kabbalat Shabbat Service at 6 p.m. on December 5 & 12, moves to 5 p.m. starting December 19 through March 2026

Shabbat Morning Services — in person and virtual

Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. ■

JCC One light continues from pg 1



are grateful for everyone’s ongoing support, making it possible for us to put on this event for another year.

In addition to the celebration, the event focuses on engaging in tzedakah — the Jewish value of charity or justice and the Hindu tradition of seva — selfless service and dedication to others. There will be a toy drive for the University of Michigan’s Mott Children’s Hospital, as well as a food drive for the Food Gatherers. Please bring only new toys and nonperishable items.

Attendance for this event is free of cost. Visit Jlive.app to register and learn more about this program. We can’t wait to celebrate with you! ■

The Network Jewish People of Color striding into the future

By Deborah M. Greene

Call to Meeting: Everyone who self-identifies as Jewish and as a Person of Color, parents, and guardians, are invited to The Network's all-members' meeting, Tuesday, December 9, 6:30–7:45 p.m. at JCC.

On the 17th of Cheshvan in this year, 5786, Network member Esther J. Terry shared d'var Torah at the Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan shabbat service. A fairly recent transplant from Pittsburgh, Terry is active in The Network. Her full d'var is reprinted elsewhere in this issue of WJN.

The Network is a local meeting ground for Latina Jews like Terry as well as Asian, African American, Beta Israel, Bene Israel, and Native American Jews who stand among Jews worldwide in remembrance of the tragedies that have befallen our people, including that of Cheshvan 18 seven years ago.

As the proportion of JOC grows in North America (from approximately 3% among Boomers to approximately 12–15% among Millennials), it is ever more important to weave these (mainly) young people into our community, to form welcoming spaces from which they can contribute to the continued vibrancy and viability of North American Jewry.

The Network Jewish People of Color is a valued resource for Ann Arbor area Jews of Color. An informal collective of individuals and families drawn together by shared identity, The Network provides community and camaraderie, education and advocacy, and representation and empowerment.

The Network's leadership has taken a number of steps to build a sturdy foundation for its future as a resource for Millennials and Gen Z JOC, and those who will follow.

Initially, The Network secured tax exempt status via fiscal sponsorship by Beloved Builders, Inc., a national Jewish communal organization that provides services to grassroots Jewish organizations around the country.

Tax-exempt status made it possible for The Network to successfully apply for institutional support funding from the Jewish Liberation Fund, the first financial building block of a stable future.

Shahanna McKinney-Baldon visits in January

The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor (Community Engagement Fund) and the

University of Michigan Frankel Center for Judaic Studies soon followed with grants in support of the January 24–25, 2026, multiple-event visit to Ann Arbor of JOC pioneer Shahanna McKinney-Baldon.

The entire community is invited to come to McKinney-Baldon's events.

Other upcoming events co-sponsored by The Network

The Network will co-sponsor the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor's Chanukah-Sigd-Diwali celebration on December 4 and the several JOC-relevant events in JCC's 2025–2026 book series, beginning November 20 with Clare Kinberg's Local Author appearance at JCC to discuss her new book, *By the Waters of Paradise*.

On December 8, The Network is co-sponsoring what promises to be a charming installment of JCC's 2025–2026 book series when McKinney-Baldon's brother Jason Schachter McKinney, will read his book *Jason Belongs* — his story of navigating identity as an African-heritage Jew whose life takes him from a day school in Wisconsin to concert halls around the world. An accomplished vocal performer, McKinney promises to complement the reading with a little of his musical artistry, as well.

On February 16, The Network and Eastern Michigan University's Jewish Studies Program will co-sponsor the visit to EMU of Samira K. Mehta, director of Jewish Studies at University of Colorado-Boulder. ■

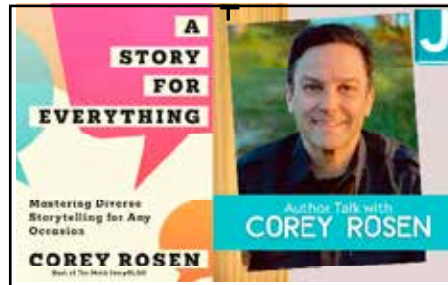


JCC book series

December Jewish Book Series events

By Drew Coel, Marketing and Program Associate, Ann Arbor JCC

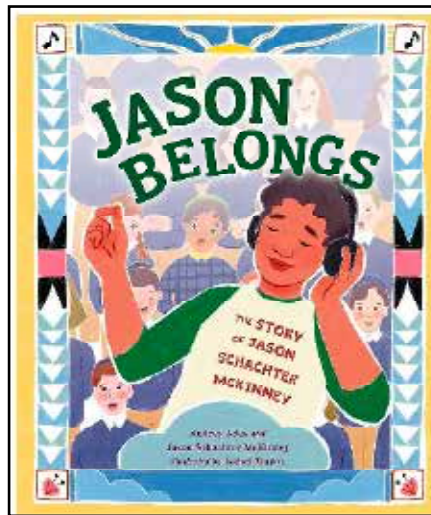
The Ann Arbor Jewish Book Series continues into the final month of the year with visits from three amazing authors. More details for each author's event and registration links can be found on Jlive app.



Corey Rosen, *A Story for Everything: Mastering Diverse Storytelling for Any Occasion*

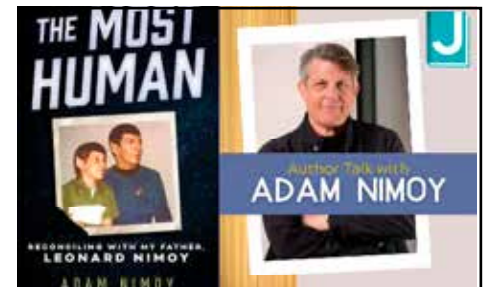
Monday, December 1, 6:30–7:30 p.m.

"*A Story for Everything* is a handbook to tell better stories in every aspect of your life, whether it's at home, work, school, writing fundraising application letters or grant proposals, writing eulogies or wedding toasts, and even writing job applications," Rosen says. "Everything can be improved a little bit by tapping into one's own life experiences, and anyone can benefit!" The presentation will be slightly interactive, and attendees will even get some take-home materials — a mini guide to better storytelling. Ann Arbor Jewish community member Jeff Pickell will moderate this author talk.



Jason Schachter McKinney, *Jason Belongs*
Monday, December 8, 5:30–7:30 p.m.

Jason Belongs tells the true story of navigating identity as an African-heritage Jew from a day school in Wisconsin to concert halls around the world. It is a powerful story about finding where you belong and using your gifts, in this case, singing and music, to bridge communities. The program includes a read-aloud, a pizza dinner (pizza available for purchase), and will end with an engaging sing-along. This children's program is brought to the community by the Ann Arbor JCC's Early Childhood Center and the Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor



Adam Nimoy, *The Most Human: Reconciling with my Father, Leonard Nimoy*
Thursday, December 18, 6:30–7:30 p.m.

From the Chicago Review Press website, chicagoreviewpress.com

While the tabloids and fan publications portrayed the Nimoy family as a "close family," to his son Adam, Leonard Nimoy was a total stranger. The actor was as inscrutable as the iconic half-Vulcan science officer he portrayed on *Star Trek*, even to those close to him.

Now, his son's poignant memoir explores their complicated relationship and how it informed his views on marriage, parenting, and later, sobriety. Despite their differences, both men ventured down parallel paths: marriages leading to divorce, battling addiction, and finding recovery. Most notably, both men struggled to take the ninth step in their AA journey: to make amends with each other. Discover how the son of Spock learned to navigate this tumultuous relationship, from Shabbat dinners to basement AA meetings, and how he was finally able to reconcile with his father — and with himself.

With questions about this year's book series, please contact the JCC at (734) 971-0990. ■



Jewish holidays with beeswax candles

By Michael S. Simon for Beth Israel Congregation

Have you wondered how you can create a more environmentally friendly Jewish holiday experience? Already inclusive in many of our holiday traditions are fresh, home-grown, or locally produced vegetables and fruits.



Also, consideration is now commonly focused on serving meals with ample vegetarian or vegan options, and at least considering treating meat or fish as a side dish.

We all know there should be no or little food waste, and what is left over can be used or composted later. What

about the atmosphere, and the air around your tables, air which you breathe in during the meal, and the air you breathe when you sit in your synagogue?

It is critically important for us to know that the petroleum-based paraffin candles that have been used by the Jewish community for generations also leave us with a legacy of toxins, including soot and black smoke, products of burning fossil-based fuel. Toxins, especially those that can be respiratory irritants, also have the potential to impact the health of ourselves, our families, and friends.

Beeswax candles are now available both for Shabbat and Holidays, including Chanukah candles, and are actually toxin-free. Shoresh is a company that supplies beeswax for Shabbat and Chanukah, as well as other honey products (Shoreshshuk.ca). Many other websites listed online using a search of “beeswax candles” have a variety of candle products available.

These candles reportedly burn brighter and longer than regular paraffin candles. Made by homegrown honey, Shoresh candles are an excellent way for us to light up our holiday and help the Jewish community become more sustainable for future generations. ■

New Year’s resolution: save energy. save money

By Annie Wolock

Caring for our planet starts at home. Local energy programs can help you live your Jewish values and make 2026 a little greener.

One of the most effective ways to help combat climate change is by making our homes more energy-efficient. This year, why not make that your New Year’s resolution?

A good first step is a home energy audit — and if you live in Ann Arbor or anywhere in Washtenaw County, there are several free or low-cost ways to get one:

Ann Arbor residents: The A2Zero program offers free home energy audits. Visit a2zerohea.org to learn more.

Washtenaw County offers free energy audits to income-qualified individuals. See washtenaw.org/773/Home-Weatherization-Program.

DTE customers: DTE Energy also offers rebates for home energy assessments (search for “DTE energy audits” for details).

Last year, I had an A2Zero audit done on my own home, and it was eye-opening. The report compared my home’s energy use to that of similar homes, identified areas for improvement, and estimated costs, savings, and my home’s carbon footprint, both before and after upgrades. It gave me a clear, personalized roadmap for saving energy and money.



The process of improving home efficiency and reducing emissions is called decarbonization. However, small, everyday choices matter too: wash clothes in cold water, take shorter showers, plan meals to minimize food waste, compost your scraps, eat more plant-based meals, and repair or reuse items before buying new.

As we start a new year, let’s commit to caring for our planet, one home, one action at a time. Tikkun olam, the concept of repairing the world, is a Jewish value that we can live out right here in Washtenaw County. And if you’re inspired to go a step further, consider becoming an A2Zero Ambassador, as I did, to help friends and neighbors take climate action together. Learn more at a2zero.org/ambassador. ■

Taking care of the Earth

By Rabbi Zoe McCoon



This October, our world lost Rabbi Arthur Waskow, an impactful leader, climate activist, and author. I first became familiar with his teachings nearly a decade ago while working at Hazon Detroit (now Adamah Detroit). During this fellowship, I got to explore Earth-based Judaism and how taking care of our Earth is a Jewish value.

My favorite of Rabbi Waskow’s writings is “Sh’ma: An Interpretation for the 21st Century” (2003). Traditionally, we say the Shema and V’ahavta in our daily prayers — affirming the one-ness of God, and describing how we can show love of God in our actions. These words and their basic meaning feel very familiar for many Jews. Yet, some of us may have found ourselves wondering, “What do these words have to do with me?”

In this piece, Waskow answered this question by emphasizing that the Sh’ma does not just affirm one God. It is a statement that all that exists is one and intertwined. We are all nourished by this same

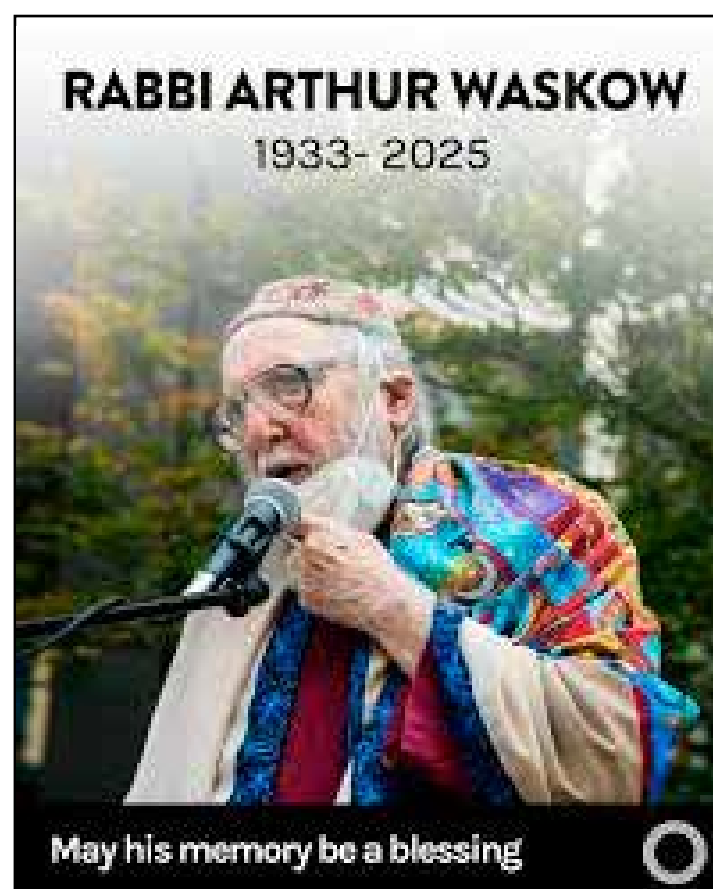
“breath of life.”

Referring to Deuteronomy 11:13–15, he wrote that when we listen to these teachings, “the rains will fall ... the rivers will run, the heavens will smile, the good earth will fruitfully feed you.” Yet, he continued, “chop the world into parts ... If you Do and you Make, and Produce without pausing; If you Do without Being — Then the rain will not fall — or will turn to sharp acid — The rivers won’t run — or flood homes and cities; ... the oil that you burn will scorch your whole planet and from the good earth that the Breath of Life gives you, you will vanish;” (Deuteronomy 11:16–17 reference)

As I read this, I wonder to myself, how am I contributing to harm in our world? Is my usage of AI contributing to the need for more data centers which use up immense amounts of energy and water? Do I excuse using items that are convenient, even when they are wasteful? Do I focus on division when my neighbors and I both need connection?

It is easy to point fingers at the bigger contributors to waste and harm. Yet, we must hold ourselves accountable too. We must remind ourselves that we are connected to all on this earth and let this inform our actions. May we honor Rabbi Arthur Waskow’s memory by continuing this holy work.

Rabbi McCoon grew up in Flint and attended University of Michigan. She lives in Berkeley, California, and is Community Educator at Shalom Bayit: Ending Domestic Violence in Jewish Homes. ■



Feature

48 hours in Damascus, Part 1 of 4

By David Horovitz, introduced by Rabbi Asher Lopatin

Like many of us, I had followed closely the news of the rapid fall of the brutal Assad regime in Syria in December 2024, defeating Assad's troops and his allies Hezbollah and Iran. Nevertheless, I was surprised to receive a call in February of 2025 from a Muslim Syrian friend and partner in Muslim Jewish relations in Michigan urging me to join a small group of Jews returning to Syria. With the approval of my dear wife, I joined two Syrian rabbis (father and son), and coaxed a friend, also involved in interfaith relations, to come along. What followed was an incredible experience that led to my own organizing a trip to Syria in September through the Syrian Foreign Ministry, bringing ten Jewish leaders, some of them from Israel, to Syria on a Goodwill Mission. The article you will read was written by one of them, David Horovitz, Editor and Founder of the Times of Israel.

In a different world, it might be a three-hour drive from my home to the hotel where I'll be sleeping tonight. Jerusalem to Damascus is less than 140 miles as the crow flies. But it's taken me three flights to get here — from Tel Aviv to Athens, then to Istanbul (there are no direct flights between Israel and Turkey anymore), and finally, now, from Istanbul to Damascus.

Day one: Arrival

As the plane nears Damascus International Airport — bombed three times by Israel in late 2023, amid cross-border skirmishes in the first weeks after the Hamas massacre — I try in vain to spy the runway in the flat, beige, sandy landscape.

There are just a handful of planes on the tarmac as we land — Air Dubai, Jazeera, another two from Turkish Airlines. I walk down the airstairs where two buses are waiting to take passengers to the terminal, past a small fleet of black BMWs, and get on the bus, but one of the members of our group calls me back. The BMWs, it turns out, are for the nine of us.



Our group of visitors to Damascus on arrival, September 15, 2025. From left: Jill Joshowitz, Marlene Schiffman, Lawrence Schiffman, Mendy Chitrik, Asher Lopatin, Carl Gershman, Steven Dishler, Adin Kleinfeldt, David Horovitz. (Asher Lopatin)

With handshakes and smiles, we're ushered into the convoy and whisked around to the back of the terminal. We are led into a wood-paneled VIP room, elegantly chandeliered, with a three-red-starred flag of the Syrian Arab Republic in one corner and a "Welcome to Syria" banner alongside it. Two comfortable chairs face into the room, with other chairs all around — the kind of seating arrangement where a leader hosts his honored guest, and their delegations pay rapt attention.

We are invited to sit and offered water and coffee, as two gentlemen collect our passports and disappear to process our entry, and Rasha Ghannam from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and her

elegantly suited colleague from the protocol department tell us that we are most welcome in Syria.

It is, as much of the coming 48 hours will prove to be, a deeply surreal experience to be an Israeli, accompanying a very obviously Jewish group, warmly greeted on arrival in the neighboring enemy state of Syria.

The only member of this group to be Israeli, living in Israel, and a journalist, I am here because Asher Lopatin, a modern Orthodox rabbi from Michigan, has put together a group for "a goodwill trip from the Jewish community, mostly the American Jewish community, to help build relations between Syria and American Jews, and other Jews, and to influence both the United States and Israel to come to a closer relationship with the new Syrian government and to help the Syrian people."



Rabbi Asher Lopatin holds what might be a shofar, or just a piece of wood, at the site of the destroyed Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue in Jobar, Syria, September 15, 2025. (David Horovitz / Times of Israel)

Among the participants is Lawrence Schiffman, professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University and director of the Global Institute for Advanced Research in Jewish Studies; Carl Gershman, the founding president of the National Endowment for Democracy and a former U.S. representative to the UN Security Council; and Mendy Chitrik, the Safed-born rabbi of Turkey's Ashkenazi community and the chairman of the Alliance of Rabbis in Islamic States. The trip is being coordinated from Syria by a Syrian-born American named Joe Jajati, the grandson of a former leader of Syria's Jewish community who has established the Syrian Mosaic Foundation, which aims "to unite Syrians and global supporters in celebrating our diversity and building a brighter future."

And most importantly, the visit has been formally approved by the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, now under the authority of Syria's President Ahmed al-Sharaa, a veteran jihadist who until December 2024 had a \$10 million U.S. bounty on his head for terrorism, and whose rebel forces ousted the regime of Bashar al-Assad on December 8, 2024.

I was delighted when Lopatin invited me to tag along, though I didn't absolutely share his

confidence that the Syrian leadership would agree to have the editor of *The Times of Israel*, as stated in the bio he submitted on my behalf, join the group, even entering on my British rather than my Israeli passport. But it turned out, as it often does with Lopatin, that his optimism was well-founded. Another member of our group had an Israeli visa in his U.S. passport; it spooked the Turkish Airlines official as we prepared to board for Damascus at Istanbul Airport, but the Syrian officials had no issues with it.

(I should stress that I am not the first Israeli journalist to enter Syria of late, and nor is this trip remotely an act of bravery. The immensely courageous war correspondent Ithai Enghel made his way to Syria as the Assad regime was collapsing, and found his way into military bases, a prison, and a hidden section of the Iranian Embassy, producing extraordinary footage for Channel 12's *Uvda* investigative program. And Jonathan Spyer, Jerusalem-based Israeli-British journalist and analyst, has reported from Syria on two trips since the Assad regime fell.)

"How is it," I ask Ghannam, in these first few minutes inside an enemy land I never expected to see, "that we are here" — an overtly Jewish group including Orthodox rabbis and scholars — "and that I am here."

She makes it sound entirely matter of fact: Lopatin, who first visited Syria in early 2025, "submitted a request for a friendship visit. We looked at the goals. Syria is open to different religions and cultures. So we said yes."

I hadn't known what to expect at all from the trip, in terms of how nervous we'd feel, how wary to be. I'd switched out my iPhone screensaver pic that shows some of my children in IDF uniform. I'd taken shekel banknotes out of my wallet.

I've been in Jordan and Egypt, peace partners, and felt hostility in interactions with officialdom. (As I edit these very words, two Israelis have just been killed on the Jordan border.) Jordan routinely confiscates tefillin from Jews crossing in and out. We were entering an enemy state, and Lopatin had suggested we bring tefillin and siddurim, assuring us this would be fine. And here he is in the VIP arrival room, kippa on head, and so far it is.



Outside the site of the destroyed Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue in Jobar, Syria. (David Horovitz / Times of Israel)

To Jobar, the war zone

We leave the airport in a convoy of turquoise blue SUVs, arranged by the redoubtable Jajati, with an escort of at least four security vehicles.

The signs on the initially empty two-lane road out of the airport, largely barren territory at either side, point to crazy destinations for an Israeli: "Lebanon" (straight ahead); "Iraq" (turn right).

We pass what looks like a refugee camp as we near Damascus, the traffic builds, and the sides of the road are populated with people selling mattresses, old furniture, plastic kitchen utensils, and large numbers of new children's bikes.

Now we enter a war zone. This is Jobar, our first destination, a former rebel stronghold that our driver tells us was bombed and shelled by Assad for 11 years: Street after street after street is filled with the gray skeletons of buildings, broken teeth gaping up from endless mounds of rubble. "This is cleaned up," the driver says as the convoy moves deeper into the remains, by which he means that enough roads have been cleared for cars to get through.

Our two days in Syria's capital will be spent in a dizzying se-

Continues on pg 21

Happy Hanukkah WISHING PEACE AND LIGHT

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\$1.7 million Demonstrated needs of our communal organizations -
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\$25,000 Keep vibrant ShinShinim in Ann Arbor after a wildly
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Community

Mitch Albom headlined Main Event

On November 10, more than 400 members of the greater Ann Arbor Jewish community gathered at Washtenaw Community College for the Jewish Federation's Main Event. This year's event featured author and philanthropist Mitch Albom, whose compelling talk focused on his newest novel, *Twice*, his philanthropic work, and living a life of meaning and connection.

In addition to Albom's presentation, Prue and Ami (z"l) Rosenthal were honored with the fourth annual Pillar Award for years of exemplary service to the community in the areas of Federation's foundational pillars: Philanthropy, Engagement, and Convening.

A reception with food, drink, live music, a raffle, and book signing with

Mitch Albom left attendees feeling a strong sense of connection and community.

The event raised over \$160,000 in support of the 2026 Annual Community Campaign. The Jewish Federation has set an audacious \$2 million goal for 2026, aiming to bringing in 25% more than last year to support a flourishing Jewish community locally, in Israel, and around the world. With the funds from the Main Event, the Campaign is about 45% of the way to meeting this goal.

To learn more about the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor and the Annual Community Campaign, visit JewishAnnArbor.org.



The volunteer Planning Committee for this year's Main Event (L-R): Diana Ingberg, David Lauer, Carrie Bank, Robyn Schmier, Heidi Kahana, and Federation Communications and Development Director Rachel Wall.



Attendees, including community members Rena and Jeff Basch, found many reasons to smile and connect during Mitch Albom's keynote presentation.



Mitch Albom presenting at the Main Event.



Many local and state-level public officials joined the Main Event, pictured here with Federation's organizational and community relations leadership.



Dina Shtull (L) presented the fourth annual Pillar Award to Prue Rosenthal on behalf of the Federation.

Kosher Cuisine

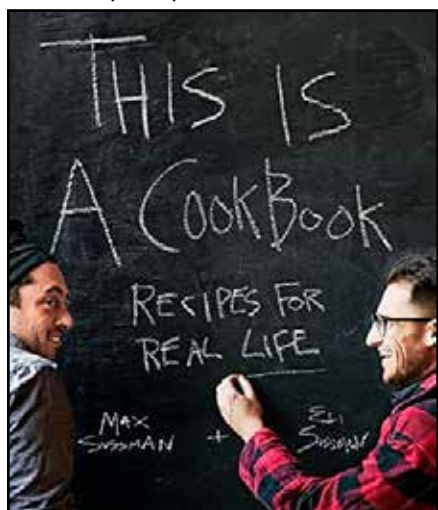
Oil in every pan: Happy Chanukah!

By Lonnie Sussman

December can be a really crowded month of activities, shopping, and endless advertisements for that other December holiday. It's nice to see daylight early in the day and a little depressing to see darkness in late afternoon, but it's also nice to have Chanukah in the middle of the month and enjoy a traditional latke party with relatives and friends. For Chanukah, I prepare latkes and typically serve a dairy meal. Decades ago, the meal included tuna noodle casserole and salad, because I didn't know a lot of dairy recipes that would easily feed a large group. Potato latkes are commonly eaten, but there are other Jewish traditions, like the Sephardi one, so I've included two Sephardi recipes as well as the Ashkenazi tradition, along with some interesting toppings and other side or main dishes.

A hack for deep frying

A couple of months ago this showed up as an ad when I opened my computer. The site is called The Takeout and is by Laura Christine Allan. This seems a bit weird but I'm willing to try it. Add a whole carrot, unpeeled, to the oil in the frying pan. According to anons on the internet, the carrot acts like a magnet for small bits that might burn as you fry, and it keeps the oil a consistent temperature. You can reuse the oil but compost the carrot when you are done frying. Let me know if you try it.



Basic Latke Recipe

Yields 20–30 latkes. You do the math if you need less or more quantities. I'm not sure where this recipe came from but it's a standard way to make the latkes. Don't forget you can use sweet potatoes instead or swap out the onions for leeks, or add other vegetables like spinach, or change the spices to your liking.

- 5 large potatoes (best are Russets)
- 2 onions, coarsely chopped
- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2–4 tbs all-purpose flour or matzoh meal
- 1–2 tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper
- Canola oil for frying

Peel and cube the potatoes and place in a bowl of cold water until ready to prepare the latkes. Drain them and add the potatoes and the coarsely chopped onions in a food processor. Pulse until smooth and then

drain the mixture immediately and put into a large bowl. You could, of course, do this the old-fashioned way with a potato grater and grate the potatoes and onions by hand so your eyes can tear up. Stir in the eggs and add the flour or matzoh meal. Add slowly until the mixture holds together. Stir in the salt and pepper. You could also add in some chopped green onions for color and a bit more zing. Use a deep skillet or pot and add 1 to 2 inches of oil for deep frying. You can roast the latkes in a high temperature oven, but you miss some of the flavor of deep frying, and it's not like we eat like this every day. Drop several heaping tablespoons of potato mixture into the hot oil and flatten slightly. Fry for several minutes on each side until they are golden brown. Remove and drain on paper towels. Typically, people eat the latkes with sour cream or applesauce or even ketchup (think French fries), but try the green shakshuka recipe below.

Creamy Green Shakshuka with Crispy Latkes

Sababa by Adeena Sussman

Serves 4–6

- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 large onion, finely diced
- 3 large garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 pound (about 16 cups) roughly chopped stemmed mixed green leaves such as kale, spinach, or Swiss chard. You will need to start with 1½ pounds of mixed greens.
- ¼ cup vegetable broth
- 1 cup mixed fresh herbs like parsley, basil, and/or cilantro, finely chopped
- 1 tsp chopped fresh thyme, za'atar, or oregano
- 1 tbs finely chopped jalapenos (optional)
- 1 tsp kosher salt and ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp (a pinch) of nutmeg, but you can always add more if you like
- ½ cup half-and-half (or even ¾ cup if you want the greens to be creamier)
- 8 large eggs

Start with adding the olive oil to a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onions and stir for about 9 or 10 minutes or until the onions turn slightly golden. Add the garlic and cook for another minute. Then, raise the heat to medium-high and start adding the greens into the skillet in batches, stirring as they wilt and release most of their liquid. The greens should be wilted but not over cooked. Add the vegetable broth and cook until mostly absorbed. Add in the mixed herbs, and spices. Reduce the heat and add in the half-and-half and simmer until the mixture thickens slightly. You can turn off the heat and cover the skillet while you make the latkes. When you are almost ready to eat, raise the heat again to medium and use a spoon to hollow out 8 small wells for the eggs, then crack them into the wells. Cook for about 3 minutes and start the broiler. Transfer the skillet to the oven and broil for another 2–3 minutes. You want the whites to be opaque, while the yolks are still runny. Serve them over the latkes.

Lox Sauce for the Latkes

This is a Cookbook by Max and Eli Sussman

For 4–6 people

Just mix 1 cup sour cream and 3 oz lox, diced, together.

Chanukah Fritters/Frittelle di Chanuka

Classic Italian Jewish Cooking by Edda Servi Machlin

Makes about 3 dozen fritters

This is an ancient Italian Chanukah fritter.

- 3 cups unbleached flour
- 2 envelopes of dry yeast
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp anise seeds
- 1 cup dark seedless raisins
- 1 cup warm water
- 2 tbs olive oil for the dough, but more for frying
- 1½ cups honey

Combine the flour with the yeast, salt, anise seeds, and raisins in a mixing bowl. Gradually add the warm water and 2 tbs olive oil, mixing until the dough is formed. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and knead for about 5 minutes or until the dough is smooth and elastic. Shape into a ball, place on a floured cutting board, and cover with a clean kitchen towel. Let rise in a warm place for 1 hour or until the dough doubles in size. When it has risen, use your palms to flatten the dough down to about ½ inch thickness. With a sharp, oiled blade of a long knife, cut the dough into 36 diamond shapes. Let rest, uncovered, for another 15 to 20 minutes. Heat enough oil in a saucepan to stand 1½ inches deep. When the oil seems hot enough, drop a small piece of the dough into it. If it comes sizzling to the surface right away, the oil is hot enough to fry the dough. Fry a few diamonds at a time, until they are golden on both sides, turning each once. Transfer to paper towels to drain. While the diamonds are draining, heat the honey in a saucepan and let it boil for just 3 minutes. Arrange the frittelle on a serving plate and pour the hot honey over them. Serve immediately.

Bimuelos de Kalavasa

From on www.myjewishlearning.com

Yields 20 3-inch patties.

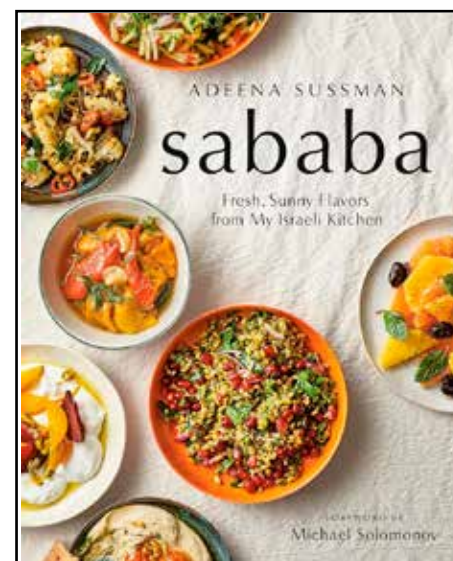
This is another Sephardi recipe for Chanukah if you are tired of potatoes.

- 1½ cup all-purpose flour (or you can use gluten-free flour)
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp coriander
- ¼ tsp allspice
- Pinch of salt
- 3 eggs, beaten
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 1 15-oz can pumpkin (about 1¾ cup)
- Neutral vegetable oil for frying

Serve with honey, date syrup (called Silan), maple syrup and/or powdered sugar, and chopped walnuts or pecans.

Whisk together the flour, spices, and salt in a bowl. In a separate bowl whisk the eggs, maple syrup, and pumpkin until well blended and smooth. Add the dry ingredients to the wet and whisk again to blend everything to smooth. Add about ¼ inch of oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add a very full tablespoon or less to make mini appetizer-sized patties to the hot oil.

With the back of a spoon, slightly flatten and spread each patty into a circle. Cook for about 3 minutes per side and the patty is golden brown. It will be crispy on the outside and soft on the inside. The patties can be refrigerated or frozen by putting them in an airtight container with layers separated by parchment paper. To reheat, defrost slightly, just enough to separate the patties and place directly on a parchment-lined baking sheet and heat in a 350-degree oven for 8–10 minutes.



Potlagela

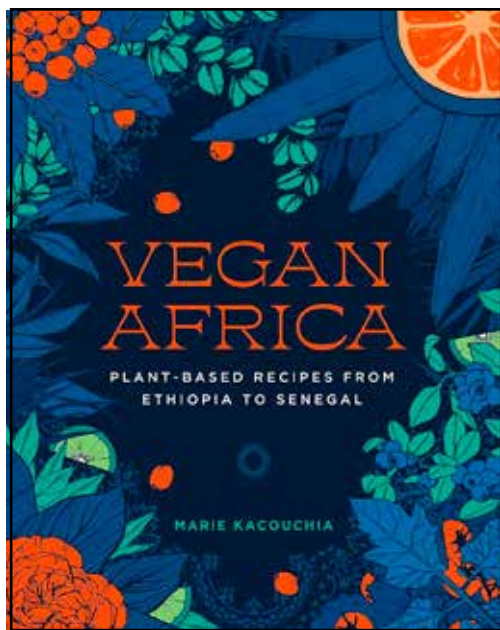
A Romanian recipe, also found on *The Nosh* on www.myjewishlearning.com

Serves 4–6. It ended up being for 2 because my friend and I finished it. I love eggplant but I know it's not for everyone. This works as side or as a dip with pita or challah.

- 1 large eggplant
- Olive oil
- 1–2 medium scallions or 1 shallot or a small onion, chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped (optional)
- ½ cup chopped roasted bell pepper
- 2 tbs lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2–3 tbs chopped parsley to garnish

I really love roasted eggplant recipes, and this one is terrific.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Wash the surface of the eggplant, wipe it dry, and then coat the surface with a thin layer of olive oil. Prick the skin with a fork in a few places. Roast on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper or aluminum foil. Turn the eggplant once or twice during the cooking. Remove from the oven and let cool until you can safely discard the skin and stem. Place flesh in a bowl and mash with a fork. Add the scallion, garlic, optional tomato and/or pepper, and olive oil. Mix the ingredients and add the lemon juice and mix again. Season with salt and pepper to taste.



Bobottie, A South African Casserole

Vegan Africa by Marie Kacouchia

Serves 4

What am I doing with this recipe with a lot of ingredients? I'm interested in recipes beyond what are found in kosher cookbooks, but that can be kosher, are not based on meat, and seem possible for vegans. I already have all the ingredients for this and I'm leaving off the cloves, so this will work for a Shabbat dinner, or replace the tuna noodle casserole.

Vegetable oil

1½ cups green lentils, cooked in 4 cups of water (bring to a boil and then reduce the heat to very low simmer and cook until tender, about 18–20 minutes. Drain, cool and mash to a slightly rough texture.

2 onions, minced

3 carrots, chopped

1 cup walnuts, chopped
2 apples, grated
1 cup raisins
3 tbs apricot jam
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 tbs soy sauce
2 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tsp ground cumin
1½ tsp black pepper
½ tsp cloves (I don't like them)
½ tsp paprika
½ tsp ground turmeric
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
Salt
2 slices whole wheat bread
¾ cup plant milk

Sauce:

¾ cup chickpea flour
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp ground turmeric
¼ tsp salt
1 cup plant milk
2 bay leaves

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease a baking dish with oil. Heat a thin layer of oil in a pan over medium heat. Add the onions and cook until translucent, 5 minutes. Mix the carrots and walnuts in a medium bowl, then add them to the pan along with the lentils. Stir to combine and cook until the mixture is softened, about 5 more minutes. Add the apples, raisins, jam, garlic, soy sauce, all the spices, and then add the lemon zest, lemon juice, and salt to taste. Reduce the heat to low and cook the lentil mixture until the liquid is absorbed. Make the sauce by mixing the flour, baking powder, turmeric, and salt in a small bowl, then slowly stir in the milk. Pour it over the lentil mixture, add the bay leaves, and bake in the oven for 20 to 30 minutes, until golden brown. ■

Restaurant review

Miss Kim's little sister

By Candace Bulkley and Trina Fuller

Candace and Trina became friends in the Temple Beth Emeth adult b-mitzvah class that graduated in 2022. They will be honing their palates, visiting, and writing about a variety of independent, locally owned Washtenaw County restaurants, catering to a variety of dietary preferences.



Tucked into a quiet courtyard at the Kerrytown Shops, you will find one of Ann Arbor's newest lunch destinations. Across the way from its "big sister," long established Korean cuisine favorite Miss Kim, Little Kim is vegetarian and vegan friendly and the most recent member to join the Zingerman's Community of Businesses.

Our trio of hungry diners stopped by on a football Saturday and found the restaurant was busy but there was still a spot for us at one of the long communal tables indoors. There is additional seating outside in the courtyard in front of the restaurant, and in the canopy covered (and heated) outdoor area overlooking the Kerrytown parking lot. In the format of many new restaurants, orders are taken at the counter and then meals are delivered by a server.

The space is bright, with a wall of windows facing the courtyard with sparse but tasteful decor.

The menu, focused on Korean and Southeast Asian inspired flavors, is not large. Based on the conversation we had with the very nice person who helped us through the selection and ordering process, it is an evolving work in progress where there is something for everyone.

With three diners, we made our selections from each section of the menu. Our meal began with corn tea — a bottled drink available at the register. Reminiscent of the sweet corny aroma of Cap'n Crunch cereal, it was mildly flavored, unsweetened, and a nice refresher as we waited for the rest of our meal.

After ordering at the counter, our wait wasn't long, and the plates started arriving in quick succession. We received the Bombay Bhel — which was described as "Indian Chex Mix." This sweet and savory appetizer was a mixture of tomato, onion, potato, and daikon tossed with crunchy fried chickpeas and the traditional Indian chutneys — date-tamarind and cilantro. With the description, we were expecting something crispy to eat with our hands like the classic chex party mix but this was served in a bowl with a spoon and meant to be shared and eaten with utensils. This was absolutely delicious and a new experience for all of us, with each tasty bite offering a new flavor and texture combination. The Crunchy Sesame Salad was quite good too. Described as celery, fennel, red cabbage, sesame, and golden raisins tossed in a creamy, spicy tahini dressing, it didn't have as much (or any) fennel as far as we could detect, but was light, crispy, and refreshing, and the sweetness of the golden raisins paired well with the mildly spiced dressing.

French fries were offered with a choice of a whopping 11 different dipping sauces. We chose the "trio" option, selecting the wildly popular gochujang made from fer-

mented chili peppers, a vegan chickpea mayo, and creamy spicy tahini. The big basket of shoestring cut fries arrived and looked beautiful. However, it was disappointing when we discovered they were delivered lukewarm. Yes, we asked for a replacement which arrived piping hot. We happily munched away, dipping into our trio of sauces and enjoying the deviation from Heinz ketchup.

We ordered three items from the Sandwiches & Rice section of the menu — the Paneer and Tomato Sandwich, Mushroom Toast, and the Fried Tofu Rice Bowl with Egg. The Paneer and Tomato Sandwich was truly disappointing, despite the flavorful sounding description of paneer cheese, curry mayo, cilantro chutney, farm tomatoes, cabbage and pickled onion. Being in the Zingerman's family, it was served on Bakehouse farm bread. Because of the robust grain flavor and drier nature of this loaf, the sandwich fillings suffered from that choice. The flavors were not complementary, the tomato was anemic, and the final blow was that the cabbage and pickled onion were not added as far as we could detect, leaving us with one sad sandwich. On the side was a garlicky Zingerman's old dill pickle which added zero value to the final product. They need to go back to the drawing board and rethink this item. Equally disappointing was the Mushroom Toast. Served on the same rustic farm bread, it was dry, the mushrooms lacked any discernible flavor or moisture, the "savory mayo" was undetectable and the normally flavorful powerhouse items, pickled red onion and scallions, could not rescue this dish. Great idea, poor execution.

There was a light at the end of the tunnel and it was the Fried Tofu Rice Bowl. We chose to have ours topped with a fried egg. Silky fried tofu and a perfectly cooked runny egg topped with a generous portion of broccolini, radish, pickled daikon, red cabbage, fried chick peas, and creamy ta-

hini sauce. All of this was served atop a bowl of purple-hued jasmine rice. It was lovely. The combination was fantastic, and we collectively decided that this was the dish we would be ordering next time. We also want to try the make-your-own bowl option, which would let us pick our favorite ingredients from our first visit.

The restaurant is off to a great start. Chef Ji Hye Kim was circulating amongst the tables, and stopped by to inquire about our meal. It is always a good sign when the chef-owner is present. We filled out comment cards regarding the highlights and lows of our visit that you have read here and the staff seemed really interested in our experience. It was our feeling that our comments will be taken seriously and they are genuinely seeking feedback as the menu is under construction. Little Kim is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., making it a great spot for lunch after a visit to the nearby farmer's market.

Little Kim 403 N. Fifth Ave., Ann Arbor

littlekimannarbor.com 734-239-7979. ■



December Calendar

Always check websites or call for updates before planning to attend anything listed here.

Monday 1

JCC Book Series. Corey Rosen, author of *A Story for Everything: Mastering Diverse Storytelling for Any Occasion*. Jeff Pickell moderates. See page 11. 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday 2

Picturing Jews: An Interactive Photobook Workshop. Led by Nadya Bair, Frankel Institute Fellow, and Deborah Dash Moore, Interim Director of the Frankel Center. 5 p.m.

EMU CJS: Dan Fellner “From Curry to Kreplach.” 7 p.m.

Wednesday 3

Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group): Zoom. About 45 minutes each of conversation and reading. Free and open to all those interested in Yiddish language, literature, and culture, no matter what level of proficiency. For more information email Elliot H. Gertel at egertel@umich.edu at least one day before scheduled meeting day every Wednesday (except major Jewish holidays). 2 p.m.

Klezmatiks at The Ark. 8 p.m.

Thursday 4

JCC: One Light for Tzedakah. See article on page 1. 5:30

Friday 5

Candle Lighting 4:45 p.m.

Saturday 6 Vayishlach

Havdallah 5:49 p.m.

Sunday 7

Jewish Storytime at the AADL. Pittsfield Branch. Register on JLive. 10:30 a.m.

Monday 8

JCC: *Jason Belongs* – Book and Musical Event with ECC, The Network, and HDS. See article page 11. 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday 9

Wednesday 10

Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m.

Carrying a Big Schick, Dr. Miriam Mora at Zingerman’s Roadhouse. \$45. 6 p.m.

Thursday 11

JCC: Amster Gallery Exhibition with Jen Lew-

is and Sara Young. See page 3. 6 p.m.

Friday 12

Candle Lighting 4:45 p.m.

Saturday 13 Vayeishev

Havdallah 5:50 p.m.

Sunday 14 First Candle of Hanukah

Monday 15 Hanukah

Tuesday 16 Hanukah

Wednesday 17 Hanukah

Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m.

Thursday 18 Hanukah

JCC: Book Series – *The Most Human* by Adam Nimoy. See page 11. 6:30 p.m.

Friday 19 Hanukah

Candle Lighting 4:47p.m.

Saturday 20 Rosh Chodesh Tevet, Mikeitz Hanukah

Havdallah 5:52 p.m.

Sunday 21 Last Candle of Hanukah

Monday 22

Tuesday 23

Wednesday 24

Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m.

Thursday 25

Friday 26

Candlelight 4:51 p.m.

Saturday 27 Vayagash

Havdallah 5:56 p.m.

Sunday 28

Monday 29

Tuesday 30

Wednesday 31

Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m. ■

Pardes Hannah December events

December 6

Shabbat Morning Services. Pardes Hannah. In person and online. 10 a.m.

December 14

Study Session & Chanukah Cele-

bration. Pardes Hannah. In person and online. 3 p.m.

December 21

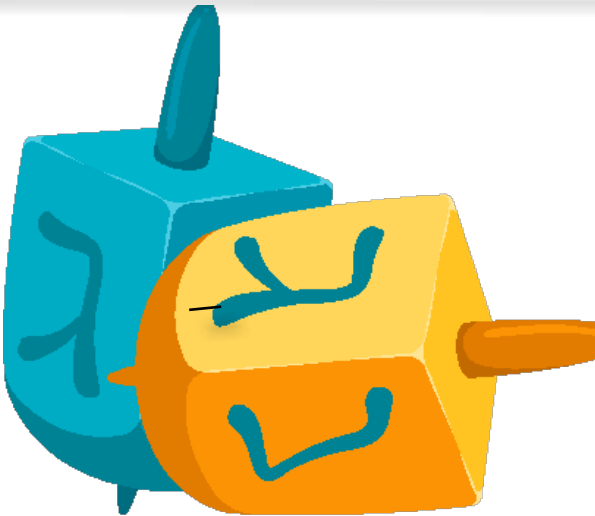
Rosh Chodesh Circle. Pardes Hannah. Online only. 7 p.m. ■

Jewish Cultural Society

First Friday, December 5, 6:30 p.m. at the JCC

All are invited to join the JCS on December 5 at 6:30 to welcome Shabbat. Dinner from a local restaurant follows a short observance that includes secular readings, songs, candle lighting, wine, and challah. Children are welcome. Dinner is free for JCS members.

The cost of dinner for non-members is \$10/person or \$25/family. Advanced registration on our website is available to help with planning: www.jewishculturalsociety.org 6:30 pm at the Jewish Community Center, 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48108. ■



TBE events in December

Events and services are both in person and/or virtual. Please see www.templebethemeth.org for full details, location information, and links.

Tot Shabbat Service & Dinner

Fridays at 5:45 p.m.

Join the Clergy to celebrate Shabbat with fun activities, stories, songs, and age-appropriate learning for children ages 0–5. Registration requested.

Elementary Shabbat Service & Dinner (every second Friday of the month)

Fridays at 5:45 p.m.

A short service, song session, and community building! Most appropriate for children ages 5–10 and their parents, grandparents, and other adults. Everyone is welcome! Registration requested.

Wine & Cheese Shabbat Reception

Fridays at 6 p.m. (except for the second Friday of each month)

Shabbat Service

Fridays at 6:30 p.m. (every second Friday of the month is at 7:30 p.m.)

Saturday Shabbat service

Saturdays at 10 a.m.

Shabbat morning Torah study

Saturdays at 8:50 a.m.

Join us for this weekly discussion of the Torah portion.

Weekday morning blessings

Weekdays at 9:15 a.m.

Join TBE lay leaders each weekday morning for a short service of song, poetry, and meditation.

Twenty-five-minute mindfulness with Jewish spiritual director Linda Greene

Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m.

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

Queer Torah Study

Tuesdays at 7 p.m.

Join us on Zoom for a discussion of queer themes in the weekly Torah portion! Led by Ari Marcotte, Zelda Marcotte & Ari Smith. Guest leaders welcome! Contact Zelda (zeldamaybiz@gmail.com) for more information.

Back Door Food Pantry

Thursdays, 4 to 7 p.m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner

Thursdays at 5 p.m.

Join Claire Weiner for a 40-minute meditation session.

Lunch & Learn with Rabbi Whinston

Fridays at 12 p.m.

Weekly Mahj

Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.

Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m.

WTBE Gift Shop Open

Friday at 5:30 p.m. (Every second Friday of the month is at 7:30 p.m.)

Washtenaw County's only Judaica Shop!

WTBE Hanukkah Bazaar

Friday, December 5, at 11 a.m.

Sunday, December 7, at 3 p.m.

Judith: A Hanukkah Heroine

Mondays, December 1, 8, 15, at 12 p.m. or 7:30 p.m.

Jewish Book Club

Thursdays, December 4, 11, 18, at 11 a.m.

TBE's Got Talent

Saturday, December 6, at 5 p.m.

Plymouth Hanukkah Event

Monday, December 8, at 5 p.m.

WTBE Novel Reading Group

Wednesday, December 10, at 1 p.m.

Brotherhood Guys Night Out

Thursday, December 11, at 6 p.m.

Renaissance Group Hanukkah Party

Sunday, December 14, at 4 p.m.

TBE Hanukkah Party

Sunday, December 14, at 5 p.m.

Adult Hebrew Class

Sunday, December 14, at 4:30 p.m.

Bereavement Group

Tuesday, December 16, at 4 p.m.

Women's Rosh Chodesh Circle

Wednesday, December 17, at 5:30 p.m.

Brotherhood Latke Dinner

Friday, December 19 at 5, p.m. ■

Nourishing our neighbors: Why JFS' Nourish Pantry needs us now more than ever

By Melissa Goodson, Jewish Family Services CDO

In Jewish tradition, we are commanded to care for one another, feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, and uphold the dignity of every person. Here in Washtenaw County, Jewish Family Services (JFS) is doing exactly that through its Nourish Pantry. But as demand rises and costs climb, the pantry is relying more than ever on the strength of our community to keep its shelves and its mission full.

A growing need close to home

Food insecurity is not just a national issue; it is a local reality. Thousands of individuals and families in our county are struggling to access reliable, nutritious food. Many are older adults on fixed incomes, families facing sudden hardship, or newcomers to our community building new lives from scratch. For them, the Nourish Pantry is not simply a place to pick up groceries; it is a lifeline.

Each year, the pantry supports more than 18,000 visits, offering everything from fresh produce and pantry staples to culturally appropriate foods such as kosher and halal options. It also provides medically necessary foods, including liquid nutrition for those with chronic illnesses. Despite generous partners like Food Gatherers that provide roughly 80% of the food, JFS must still purchase approximately 20% of what is distributed. These purchases include toiletries, diapers, cleaning supplies, proteins, and other essentials.

A costly operation with growing pressure

Running the Nourish Pantry requires an annual budget of roughly \$350,000. This amount represents a deficit that must be filled each year to keep the pantry operational. While this figure may feel large, the impact is profound. The pantry's coolers, freezers, transportation, staff, and volunteer infrastructure form the backbone of a service that does far more than distribute food.

For many clients, the pantry is the gateway to JFS wraparound services. After coming in for food assistance, individuals are often connected to housing support, case management, mental health counseling, transporta-

tion through JFSGo, employment services, or aging support through WISE. As one JFS client recently shared, "I came for groceries, but what I found was a community that cared about every part of my life."

Food as dignity and connection

JFS approaches food access through a dignity-first lens. Clients can order online, select foods that meet their specific needs, and receive deliveries if they are homebound. Older adults enrolled in WISE receive meals tailored to their health needs, and Meals on Wheels clients rely on JFS for weekly deliveries.

The Nourish Pantry also supports refugees and immigrants resettled by JFS, many of whom have dietary traditions and restrictions that make culturally appropriate food essential, not optional. One new arrival shared, "Having familiar foods helped us feel at home during the most difficult time of our lives."

Where the community comes in

As inflation drives up the cost of food and essential household goods, and as federal and state benefits are unsteady, more people are shifting toward community-based resources, continually raising the pressure on Nourish. JFS is committed to ensuring that no one in need is turned away, but that commitment is only possible with the partnership of donors, volunteers, and advocates.

Supporting the Nourish Pantry is more than a charitable act; it is an expression of Jewish values. It affirms that in our community, no one struggles alone. It is tzedakah in its truest form, repairing the world by caring for those right here at home.

Whether through a financial contribution, a donation of goods, or volunteering time, every act of support helps JFS continue offering nourishment, dignity, and hope.

Now more than ever, the pantry and the people it serves need us.

Visit www.jfsannarbor.org for more information. ■



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quence of visits to Jewish sites and meetings with government officials. This stop is from the first category. We have come here because Jews lived in this neighborhood for hundreds of years, until 1995, and there is a synagogue Lopatin wants to visit.

When we arrive, there is nothing or almost nothing that hints of this. When he was here a few months ago, Lopatin said there was a last arch of the shul still standing. That too has gone. Would-be thieves have dug tunnels down through the rubble in the likely vain hope of finding valuable artifacts. Lopatin does come across what looks very like a shofar, but might just be a decaying, curling tube of wood.

"This was the Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue," Jajati tells me, the oldest to have still been in use in Syria. It was built above a cave believed to have been used by the prophet Elijah in hiding, but there is no trace of that cave now, either. The synagogue had a plaque dating it back to 720 BCE, but is believed to be medieval in origin, and survived through to 2014, when it was hit by mortar shells, further destroyed by fire, and looted. Now, there is nothing.

We make our way out of the area, but, remarkably, this will not be our only encounter with the ghost of the Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue. The next one will be slightly more positive.

The cemetery

Our next stop is at Damascus's Jewish cemetery — graves going back hundreds of years, and some just added.

Syria's Jewish community dates back to the time of King David but is now on the very brink of extinction — from perhaps 100,000 people a century ago, to 15,000 by the late 1940s, to almost none since the 1990s. There seem to be six Jews still living in Syria — four men and two women — two of whom we meet in the next few days. Several others had died in recent years; Chitrik points out some of their graves. He led a funeral ceremony over Zoom for one of them from his home in Turkey during the COVID era. Pride of place at the cemetery is taken by the tomb of Rabbi Hayyim Vital, leading disciple of the father of contemporary Kabbalah, Isaac Luria, who was buried here in 1620. On his previous visit, Lopatin came across the gravestone of Vital's wife Jamila, and he's got the idea that we can maybe carry it the several hundred yards from its current resting place and into the tomb of her husband. As Lopatin disappears into the distance to re-find Jamila's headstone, a local woman, a member of the family that lives inside the cemetery walls next to the building of the hevra kadisha (Jewish burial society), appears and offers us much-needed water. ■



Community

Genesis of Ann Arbor expands its solar commitment

By Murray Rosenthal

Genesis of Ann Arbor, a long-standing equal partnership between Temple Beth Emeth and St. Clare's Episcopal Church, has taken another bold step toward sustainability by expanding its solar energy system.

Genesis's original installation consisted of 160 panels which were mounted on the south-facing roof of the office building and the flat social hall roof. It was activated in February 2020. This installation was owned by an investor group, made up of altruistic congregants, who received a 30% tax credit. Non-profits could not access the credit before 2024.

In June 2025, a new addition, consisting of 76 panels, was installed on the north-facing roof of the office building. The total system now consists of 236 panels

and is rated at 104.7 kW power.

As of the end of September 2025, the environmental impact was significant. The total energy generated was 428 MWh over 5.5 years. Over this time period, this installation avoided 662,000 pounds of CO₂ emissions, which was equivalent to planting 5,003 trees. The panels are estimated to cover 41% of Genesis's electricity needs.

This table shows the financial benefits of our solar installations:

The \$0.115/kWh solar rate, paid to the investor group, remained constant from 2020 until March 2025 (when it was sold to Genesis); during this time, DTE's rate increased 32%. And during the summer months this year, Genesis saved ~\$6,200.

Genesis purchased the original system from the investor

group in March 2025, thanks to a generous anonymous donation, a grant from the Rust Family Foundation and a generous discount from the investor group.

The cost of the 76 new panels was funded as a capital expenditure by both congregations. The tax credits are now accessible to non-profits. Genesis is applying for a 30% Direct Pay credit under the Inflation Reduction Act, with free accounting support from Michigan's Infrastructure Office.

Genesis's solar journey is a model for how houses of worship and nonprofits can overcome financial barriers to clean energy. By leveraging community investment, federal incentives, and strategic planning, they've achieved both environmental stewardship and budgetary resilience.

If you're inspired and want to explore solar for your own organization, reach out to Murray Rosenthal at sci-bridge0@gmail.com.

Financial Benefits

Year	Electricity Rate (DTE)	Genesis Solar Rate	Notes
2020	\$0.125/kWh	\$0.115/kWh	Under investor ownership
2025	\$0.165/kWh	\$0/kWh	Genesis now owns the entire system



The new installation, Photo credit: David Lewis

Community

New tax law brings giving opportunities for 2025

By Osnat Gafni-Pappas, Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Ann Arbor

The so-called “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” (OBBBA) passed by Congress earlier this year introduces several important tax changes that may affect how one plans their charitable giving. Some of these updates make 2025 an especially good year to be generous, before new limits take effect in 2026.

Here are some key takeaways on what is changing and ways to maximize charitable giving. This information was prepared by Jewish Federations of North America.

Changes going into 2026

Tax rates made permanent: OBBBA permanently extends several key provisions, including the individual income tax brackets (10% to 37%), the increased standard deduction, and the elimination of personal and dependent exemptions.

Of note, some people aged 65 and older may be eligible for a new deduction of up to \$6,000 for tax years 2025 through 2028.

State and Local Tax (SALT) deduction increased: The SALT deduction cap temporarily increases to \$40,000 for married couples filing jointly who have a modified adjusted gross income below \$500,000, effective for 2025.

This increase could enable some to claim itemized deductions, including the charitable contribution deduction, on their 2025 tax return.

Charitable Deductions subject to floor and ceiling: Starting in 2026, only the portion of charitable gifts above 0.5% of one's adjusted gross income will be deductible for those who itemize. In addition, the value of all itemized deductions, including charitable contributions, will be capped at a tax savings of 35% for those in the higher 37% bracket.

For those contemplating a large gift to charity in 2026 or later, it may be beneficial to accelerate the gift before the end of 2025 to avoid the application of the new floor or ceiling. Accelerating contributions to Donor Advised Funds (DAFs), including bunching several years' worth of contributions before December 31, 2025, will avoid or minimize the impact of the new charitable deduction cutbacks.

Non-itemizers will be entitled to a charitable deduction for cash gifts: Starting in 2026, those claiming the standard deduction still will be entitled to a charitable contribution of up to \$2,000 (married filing jointly) for cash contributions to public charities, but not DAFs.

Ways to maximize charitable giving

Donations to charity can reduce current income taxes and avoid capital gains taxes. Gifting appreciated assets held for more than one year — rather than cash — both lowers one's overall income tax bill and is not subject to capital gains. Gifts of retirement assets can provide a current tax benefit as well as remove the gifted assets from one's estate.

Charitable gifts of appreciated assets remain a best practice, especially for those who have experienced significant growth in their investment portfolio. Such gifts can provide a deduction for the full current value of the asset, as well as avoiding the capital gains tax

that would apply if the assets were sold and then the after-tax proceeds were gifted.

Donate to a Donor Advised Fund (DAF).

For those considering a significant donation to charity over time or who want the ability to plan their charitable grants over a period of years, opening a DAF or adding funds to an existing DAF can be a strategic option. Funding a DAF with appreciated assets can be especially beneficial.

The Greater Ann Arbor Jewish Community Foundation's DAF program is an accessible option for those looking to give charitably over time. A DAF can be established with just \$5,000, and those funds can be disbursed over any period of time, in increments of \$100 or more — a lower and more accessible threshold than many similar programs.

“Bunching” charitable gifts to maximize tax benefits:

While not everyone has sufficient deductions to itemize and claim the benefit for charitable contributions in 2025 (\$31,500 for married couples), there is an option to utilize a “bunching” strategy, which combines two or more years of giving before year-end, making itemizing advantageous. This strategy can be even more beneficial this year with the new floors and ceiling on charitable deductions taking effect in 2026.

Utilize qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) from Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs):

For those over age 70.5, IRA rollovers, or QCDs, are an attractive option that permit transferring directly to charity up to \$108,000 from each individual retirement account, free of any income tax, in 2025.

QCDs are an effective charitable giving strategy especially for those who do not itemize their deductions. In addition, such rollovers help satisfy pension law requirement minimum distributions (RMDs) for those who have reached the age when such distributions must be taken into income (generally age 73). Note that QCDs also remove these retirement assets from any potential estate tax exposure. Additionally, Congress recently expanded the IRA rollover to allow for a one-time distribution of up to \$53,000 to fund a charity gift annuity that can pay the holder a fixed amount of money each year for life.

Gifting assets to younger generation or others:

The annual gift tax exclusion for 2025 is \$19,000 per recipient. Gifting assets is an effective way to both reduce current taxable income as well as remove the assets from one's estate.

For more information about charitable giving options, visit JewishAnnArbor.org/ways-to-give/foundation. For those interested in talking through their philanthropic goals with someone, reach out to Jewish Federation CEO Eileen Freed (eileenfreed@jewishannarbor.org). ■

Lucinda Kurz

New Moon Poem: Thirty-Six

Thirty-six hours of primordial light,
Adam and Eve gazed at creation,
limitless light across roiling oceans
grassy plains, jagged peaks,
the whole expanse, revealed,
flashes of fresh green leaves
red poppies in dancing fields
yellow, orange parrot plumes.

Through the ages,
wise sages murmur,
thirty-six righteous ones
in each generation
sustain the world
see again this endless light
through a clear, radiant lens.

On this new moon of Kislev,
may the boundless inner light
of thirty-six tzaddikim
merge with doers and dreamers,
guide us as we kindle
thirty-six Chanukah candles to
dispel the descending darkness.

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The Galveston Plan, in their words

Melting Point: Family, Memory, and the Search for a Promised Land, by Rachel Cockerell, reviewed by Ann S. Epstein

If we cannot get the Holy Land, we can make an-
other land holy.

(Israel Zangwill, 1906)

So begins *Melting Point*, Rachel Cockerell's account of the search for a Jewish homeland. The story is a family saga; her great-grandfather, David Jochelman, was instrumental in bringing 10,000 Russian Jews to Galveston, Texas, pre-WWI, when Palestine was unattainable. The family tale also illuminates an era of Jewish history, a story likely to surprise readers as much as it did Cockerell herself. Today, when asked "Are you a Zionist?" many of us are uncertain of the term's meaning, let alone its origins and evolution. *Melting Point* is therefore a timely book. Knowing the past allows us to better assess the State of Israel and worldwide Jewry now and in the future.

The Galveston Plan was one site in the search for a refuge where Jews could escape Russian and Eastern European pogroms and poverty. Improbably, other proposed destinations included East Africa, West Africa, Madagascar, Cyprus, Mesopotamia, Australia, Canada, Argentina, Mexico, and Antarctica. The initiative grew out of the early Zionist movement, founded by Theodor Herzl, a charismatic Viennese journalist, abetted by Israel Zangwill, an early follower. Largely unknown today, Zangwill, a novelist, was then the English-speaking world's most famous Jew.

[Herzl is] tall, handsome, black-bearded, clear-eyed,
erect in bearing, suave in manner, like kings ought to
look.

(Cyrus Sulzberger, American philanthropist)

[Zangwill is] the very archetype of his race, spare
of form and bent of shoulder, whose face suggests one of
those sculptured gargoyles in a mediaeval cathedral.

(The New York Herald)

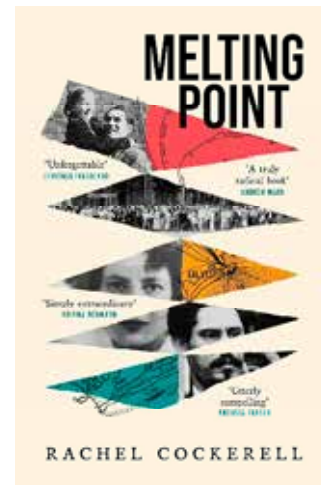
Zangwill also played a significant role in Cockerell's family, unbeknownst to younger generations. Says the author, "At some point the story of the Galveston Plan, and my great-grandfather's role in it, was lost. Perhaps David Jochelman told his daughters about his work in Russia, or perhaps, as a new arrival in England in the 1910s and '20s, his pre-war existence belonged to a lost world."

Cockerell, who set out to write about her grandmother and great aunt, sought a way to insert historical notes into the family tale. Emulating George Saunders, author of *Lincoln in the Bardo*, "I gradually began to delete more and more of my own 'voice-over' ... to tell the story through the eyes of those who were there, and create something more like a novel than a history." As such, *Melting Point* consists entirely of memories — diaries, letters, news clippings, essays — assembled without commentary. The unusual format works — disparate sources "dialogue" with one another — although there are too many. Cockerell or an editor could have "killed her darlings." That said, don't skip sections. Skim instead, then read the full entries that speak to you.

The book is divided into three parts. Part One: Vienna, Basel, Galveston; Part Two: New York; and Part Three: London. My review highlights Part One and the end of Part Three. The rest of the book, while of interest to the family, dilutes the universal impact and would be better served in a separate volume. The book's final pages address post-WWII Zionism, where the reactions of David Jochelman's descendants are illustrative. Oddly, Jochelman himself is mostly absent from the book. Still, his exploits and the resumption of the urge to return to Zion are worth reading.

For some time past, I have been occupied with
a work of infinite grandeur. It has the appearance of a
dream. And if my conception is not translated into real-
ity, at least out of my activity can come a novel. Title: The
Promised Land.

(Theodor Herzl)



Dr. Herzl takes a dark view: Anti-Semitism changes its dress but
not its essence. There is no possible escape, unless Jews re-
move themselves.

(Jewish Chronicle)

Herzl's dream receives a strong response, "not from the comfortable bourgeois Jews of the West but from the masses of the East, the Galicians, Polish, and Russians of the ghetto" (Stefan Zweig, Austrian author). In July 1897, the first Universal Congress of Zionists takes place in Basel.

No hero ever received a greater ovation than did Dr.
Herzl.

(American Hebrew)

Israel Zangwill, who had been sitting silently at the
reporters' table, sprang up, his face aflame with enthusiasm,
cheering, waving his kerchief with energy.

(Pall Mall Gazette)

The movement gains steam after a brutal Easter attack on the Jews of Kishinev, Russia, in 1903. Herzl, acknowledging Palestine isn't open, proposes "planting Jews on a soil of their own" elsewhere. But when he advises them to accept Chamberlain's offer of Uganda, Zionists revolt. When the map of Palestine was covered by a map of Uganda, the delegates felt as though they were watching a total eclipse of the sun.

(Delegate Shmarya Levin)

Herzl resumes his focus on Palestine until, plagued by a weak heart, he dies at age 44. Zangwill takes over as leader, but as the Holy Land remains distant, he too pushes for alternatives. At the seventh Congress, the movement splits and Zangwill and his followers form a new movement, ITO, which stands for Jewish Territorial Organization. The idea originates with David Jochelman.

Throughout his career, Dr. Jochelman was a stormy
petrel, demanding and organizing a bolder Jewish stand
than that of the more cautious leaders of Anglo-Jewry.

(Jewish Chronicle)

The restriction as to Palestine is formally abolished.
The whole world is within the purview of the new organiza-
tion. The movement is 'Zionism without Zion.'

(Jewish Chronicle)

Cockerell captures the hype as each new territory is offered and ensuing dejection as each proves inhospitable and uninhabitable. The litany could be a comedy sketch, were it not a heartbreaking reminder of the low regard in which Jews are held by the international community.

continues to pg 25

The promised land of the Jew is America.

(Jacob Schiff, German-American Banker)

When noted political and religious figures seek to redirect the flow of immigrants from New York's Lower East Side to other sites in the U.S., Schiff convinces Zangwill to choose a Gulf port. In 1906, Zangwill proclaims Dr. Jochelman the Russian Director of the newly created Emigration Regulation Department. Jochelman arranges to transport 10,000 Jews to Galveston; upon arrival, they are dispersed throughout the Southwest and Midwest. Alas, the project grinds to a halt when German submarines make the 6,000-mile journey even more treacherous. With the wisdom of hindsight, we can see the model's deeper problems, and the "point" of the book's title:

No people in history has ever been able to live unmelted in the bosom of a bigger people, except when safeguarded by a separate religion.

And the religion of American Jewry is not strong and separate enough to save the American Jews from absorption. The salvation of the Jews cannot be achieved without a territory for the Jews.

(Zangwill)

The project's end also redirects Dr. Jochelman. After a brief visit to Galveston, accompanied by the son from his first marriage, he returns to London. In Part Two, his son settles in New York, achieving modest success as a playwright under the name Emjo Basshe. Part Three, in London, covers the lead-up to WWII and its aftermath, a history so thoroughly reported elsewhere that I recommend skimming, save for when the post-war desire for a sovereign homeland is renewed.

Is it fair to expect them to rebuild their shattered lives among the tombstones of their fellows? (Baron Thomas Horder, British physician and member of Parliament)

The principal difficulty is that Palestine is already the homeland of another people.

(Neville Barbour, BBC journalist)

The book meanders until we finally meet Jochelman's daughters from his second marriage: Fanny, Cockerell's grandmother, and Sonia, her great aunt. The sisters and their families, assimilated Londoners, share a big house. The arrangement holds until Israel is created in 1948. Sonia emigrates to the Jewish homeland; Fanny stays behind. Neither side gets over the loss, a poignant ending that foretells the divisions in generations to come, including ours. An Afterword, in Cockerell's own voice, adds that Sonia's husband grows disillusioned with Israel and only one of her four children settles there. Israel is the "fork in the road" that drives them apart.

Melting Point is one family's intercontinental and centuries-spanning story. It is also a Jewish diaspora tale of hope and futility, historical reality and present-day reckoning. Cockerell offers no voice-over narration to interpret or answer the questions the book raises. Records from those decades, and those we compose today, will have to speak for themselves.

Ann S. Epstein is the author of eight novels, several of which portray Jewish families during WWI and WWII. Her latest book is *Who Cares?* Her website is <https://www.asewovenwords.com>. ■

Obituaries

The WJN prints obituaries, memories, and eulogies free of charge for family members of Washtenaw Jewish community members as a service to the community and to honor the lives of those who have passed away. When local congregations send condolence notices to the WJN, the editor searches for obituaries online. Also, community members are invited to send obituaries to the editor.

Corinne K. Baker, of Livingston, New Jersey, passed away on November 5, 2025. Loving wife of 64 years to Charles L. Baker. Unparalleled mother of Scott Baker (Sylvia Veitia), Jill Gelbert (David), and Sherri Feinberg (Frank). Cherished grandmother of Nathan, Harry, Madeleine, Samantha, Hailey, Mallory, Ariel, and Zachary. Corinne is predeceased by her beloved parents, Rose (Leibowitz) and Joseph Krim, and her dear sisters, Eleanor Barchanowitz and Lorian Finkelstein.

Corinne's life was deeply rooted in family extending to aunts, uncles, nieces, nephew, cousins, and close friends. She will be remembered for her warmth, kindness, strength, laughter, and devotion, and she will be greatly missed by all.

Contributions in her memory can be made to The American Heart Association, The American Cancer Society, or a charity of donor's choice.



Albert Nadler (November 5, 1925–October 8, 2025) passed away peacefully in his home at the age of 99 after a life that was both long and well lived.

Albert was born in the city of Oradea, Romania, where he lived a happy life with his parents and younger sisters. He was dotted on by his aunts.

During the Holocaust, Albert managed to avoid death when Romania began to deport Jews to death camps due to having technical skills acquired from attending a technical high school, and was instead put to work as a slave laborer. His entire family

perished in the death camps.

He worked in various Nazi munitions factories in Germany and other parts of Nazi-occupied Europe, at one point working in a factory that produced V2 rockets under the direction of Wernher von Braun, the famous rocket scientist who went on to lead NASA's rocket program.

He seems to have been born under a lucky star, with many scrapes and close calls that he somehow survived. These included being shot while trying to escape from a moving train, and surviving the obliteration of the German munitions factories under Allied bombing. But it was his unfailing sweet personality and good spirits in the face of adversity that was his most winning character. Even the Nazis could be won over by him. On one occasion, his coat was stolen and when he went to get a new one from the commissary, the guard made a point of giving him the warmest coat. His fellow prisoners also took care of him, making sure that he ate enough to survive.

After the war, he emigrated to the U.S., where he married Marta, a fellow Hungarian-speaking survivor from Slovakia, eventually settling in Forest Hills. While his dream after surviving the Holocaust had been to become a doctor, due to the non-recognition of his European medical studies by New York State, he opted instead to become a physical therapist, and obtained degrees from NYU. He supported his family while in school in part by going door to door selling neckties and brushes and also as a carpet salesman.

Ultimately, Albert became a well-known and successful physical therapist, with a thriving practice on Fifth Avenue. His patients included many famous television and movie personalities, dancers, athletes, diplomats, and more.

Albert and Marta created a warm and loving environment for their two children, Edmond (Edi) and Peter. He was a devoted family man.

He is survived by Edi and his wife, Eileen, and their children Rachel (Reuven) Katz and Adina, and Peter and his wife, Robyn, and their children Ilana and Joseph. Additionally, he was blessed with two great grandchildren. ■

Simchas and Sorrows

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends condolences to the families of:

Corinne Baker, mother of Scott Baker.
Albert Nadler, father of Ed Nadler.

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends mazel tovs to:

Galit Dunietz and Inbal Shani on their bnot mitzvah, December 6.
Talia Primus on her bat mitzvah, December 13.
James and Jamie Abelson on the birth of their grandson, Heny Reuben Farrales, son of Rabbi Leora Abelson and Rayray Farrales.

HDS continues from pg 1

joined the Covenant board in 1994 and served as its executive director from 2005 to 2021. Harlene brought her professional expertise to HDS, helping shape curriculum and establishing professional development programs for teachers. Her philosophy and approach to Jewish Life & Learning, one of our school's core values, remains woven into Hebrew Day School's DNA.

"We were paying tuition, and I don't know when we started giving donations in addition," Appelman recalls, "but somewhere along the line we did — because when our kids graduated, we were still supporting the day school."

This month, Hebrew Day School launched its annual campaign: "Create Strong Beginnings — Today!," inspired by distinguished alumnus Robert Axelrod's speech at our 50th anniversary celebration.

The message of lasting impact on



the lives of over 900 graduates is well established in Appelman's experience: "The parents who were day school students grew up and raised their kids to be

Jewish. Not very religious Jewish, but very committed Jewish. They made sure that their children, my grandchildren, have had their bat and bar mitzvahs." Henry shares, and describes the essence, the whole purpose of our mission: graduates who are committed and carrying on, dor l'dor, Jewish life and values.

Appelman, the son of two Jewish professionals, did years of communal work in the Jewish community. He was heavily involved in the United Jewish Appeal, in Beth Israel Congregation, the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor and, and of course, the Hebrew Day School. "It's in my blood," Henry effectively sums it up.

When asked about being honored as a "founder," Appelman characteristically deflects: "You can honor all the parents who sent their kids over the years. You can honor

all the teachers who devoted themselves — they weren't getting paid much — and they gave it all to the children."

This interview with Dr. Appelman is the first in a series of interviews we're conducting with our founding generation, whose vision and sustained commitment built the school we know today. We will honor the dedication of our founders, community members, and faculty with a Legacy L'Chaim event this spring.

An enrollment crisis for one four-and-a-half-year-old became five Appelman children who have all graduated from Hebrew Day School and are now raising the next generation. Now that ... must be a world record!

To support Hebrew Day School's annual campaign "Create Strong Beginnings — Today!" or learn more about the Legacy L'Chaim event, visit hdsaa.org or contact tjacobson@hdsaa.org. ■

Og the Giant in Poland

Jack Zaiantz

Og the Giant was sitting on a riverbank with his massive hands shoved into his armpits to keep warm. He was used to warmer weather and cheerier places than the banks of the Vistula River in December. Og was sitting on a large, moss covered, rockpile, and was so tall that his head peaked over the trees enabling him to see all the way to Krakow. He was on his way there to get a new winter coat. His current one had worn thin, with more holes than pockets, and had a family of woodpeckers living under the collar.

Now, Egypt was warm! And Cannan! And his beloved Bashan! On cold miserable days like this Og thought back fondly to his days as King of Bashan. This was before Moses and the Israelites had come through and he'd warred with them. Yes, he's promised Noah, all those years before, to serve Noah's children but Moses and his tribe were marching straight through Og kingdom and something needed to be done! What was done was not the victory that Og had hoped for. When he picked up a rocky hill to drop on Moses, Moses somehow called ants to chew and breakup the stones before Og could throw them. They dropped, thumping Og's head, and the battle was over. Og didn't like that part of the story, but it happened sure enough and now Og was cast out and wandering. That was a long time ago and he was now freezing in Poland.

When Og reached the town he's spied, he found it wasn't Krakow at all but the Jewish shtetl of Kazimierz Dolny. But a town's a town and there must be a tailor who could make a sturdy coat quickly. Og tromped down the main street, looking in the high windows at the startled Jews. Finally, he reached a shop with a tailor's

sign and he leaned down and knocked on the door, gently so as not to break it down. Out scurried a tall bony man with scissors in his hands and pins stuck in his hat.

"A coat? In one day? Sir, I'd be honored.

But it will take a week!" the tailor squeaked once Og explained the nature of the visit. Og was cold, though, and not in any mood for delay. "You'll have it done by this time tomorrow or I'll knock this town to bits," he growled. The

frightened tailor agreed, as Og clomped back towards the Vistula.

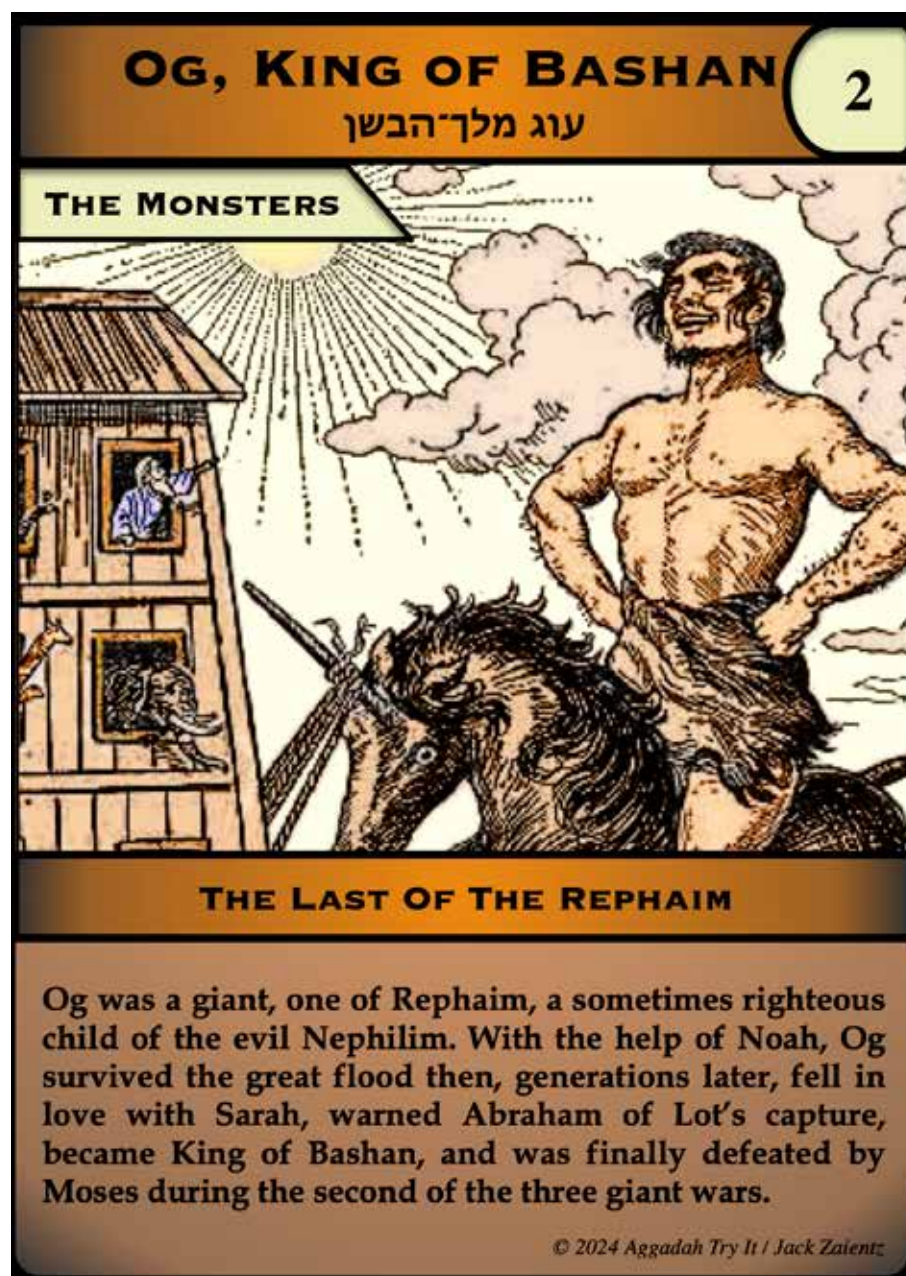
As soon as Og was out of sight, the tailor spread the word. He called for all the tailors in all the nearby towns to come help and they came! They arrived quickly with wagons of wool fabric, miles of thread, and even wooden barrel covers for buttons. They worked all night cutting, stitching, and sewing only resting to say their evening shema. They were just clipping the last threads when they heard the giant stomping down the street. While the original tailor bravely walked up the street to meet Og, the rest of the tailors were so scared they hid in the coat pockets. Og dropped his payment, some fine tall tree's he'd knocked over and carried into town, put on the coat, and jammed his hands into the pockets nearly squishing the hiding tailors.

"Ahh" he sighed, warm at last.

Pleased with himself and the town he stood straight, hands in his pockets, and started walking to Krakow. The hidden tailors stayed quiet and still in Og's pockets for hours until Og finally stopped to sleep and they were able to slip out and run home. The last they saw of Og was him snoring so strongly that the ravens had to flee the branches overhead and even the moles underground had to dig deeper for quiet.

Some say that Og is still wandering, but he hasn't been seen in Poland since.

For information on and to order Jack Zaiantz's "Jewish Monster and Magic Trading Cards" see <https://ko-fi.com/adnesadeh/shop>. Jack will be teaching a four-class series on Jewish Monsters and Magic at Temple Beth Emeth starting in January. Registration information will be posted at <https://www.templebethemeth.org/upcoming-events>. ■



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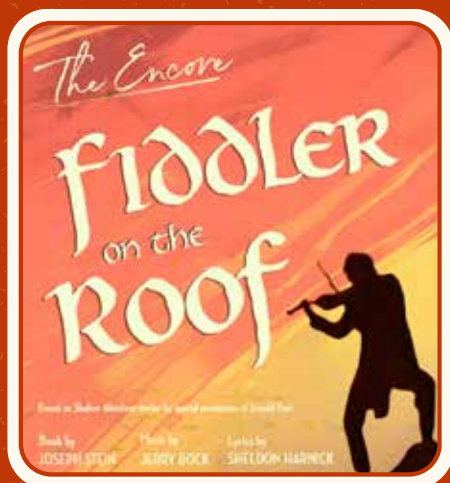
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