



**Exploring the world while staying close to home**

**Our Towns 6**



**Stitching our lives back together, one row at a time**

**Exit Ramp 23**

|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| Our Towns      | 4  |
| Opinion        | 11 |
| LifeCycle      | 17 |
| Agenda         | 19 |
| Touch of Torah | 22 |
| Exit Ramp      | 23 |



*Nurse Sue Pappano with Greenwood House resident Lucy J.*  
PHOTO COURTESY GREENWOOD HOUSE

## As restrictions ease, long-term-care residences assess damage

**Johanna Ginsberg**  
*NJN Senior Writer*

**O**n June 5, the 37 members of the National Guard who had assisted the staff at Greenwood House for about a month departed. They had been assigned to the facility, a Jewish community nursing home in Ewing, when it was down to a reduced crew due to staff illness. Greenwood House sorely needed the help: 96 residents tested positive for Covid-19 and 29 died as a result, and there were 60 con-

firmed cases among the staff. Though they all recovered, at one point 26 members of the staff were out at the same time.

“It was very stressful, every day, not knowing who would be infected. It was very intense,” said Richard Goldstein, executive director of Greenwood House. “Now, I feel like we can breathe.”

As Covid-19 ripped through New Jersey, Jewish long-term-care facilities found themselves in the eye of the storm. Staff endured long hours, constant exposure, and limited access to testing until mid-April, while administrators struggled to mitigate the isolation of residents without increasing their risk of disease, and juggle increasing expenses with reduced capacity.

Now that there are indications, at least in New Jersey, that the

*Continued on page 8*

## Synagogues consider stages of reopening

**During pandemic, safety is the guiding principle**

**Michele Alperin**  
*NJN Contributing Writer*

**C**lergy and leaders are balancing spiritual and pragmatic issues as they consider phased reopenings of their shuttered synagogues. As the pandemic continues, they are evaluating modifications to ventilation systems, analyzing spaces to determine safe occupancy within social distancing requirements, and establishing rules to maintain safety for those entering the buildings. At the same time, many are exploring ways to continue to create meaningful religious experiences via video conferencing platforms, especially on the High Holidays (see story on page 4).

Beth El Synagogue in East Windsor began holding a daily minyan and Friday night services on site the week of June 22. Held in the social hall, it’s limited to 20 participants, with social distancing, masks, and the use of hand sanitizer required. People are asked to sign up ahead of time; drop-ins are permitted if numbers allow and if they provide information for possible contact tracing.

Beth El’s Rabbi Jay Kornsgold told NJN they started with weekday minyans at the Conservative shul because “the goal is to get people in and out,” with “no hanging out,” as is typical on Shabbat.

Randall Brett, president of The Jewish Center in Princeton, struck a cautionary note, shared by others as they consider phased reopenings. “The reality is that so much of this is unknown,” he told NJN.

The Jewish Center was scheduled to hold online member meetings this week, followed by a congregational survey to determine “interest and willingness to return to the building,” according to a July 1 email from Brett to members.

The first of four phases, developed by the synagogue’s Safety and Security Committee, will limit the number of people in the building to 25, with no more than 10 in a single room.

In addition, barriers are being fabricated to protect the clergy.

“We are now trying to get us open for some services for some people sooner rather than later,” Brett said. A starting point is likely to be the Sunday and

*Continued on page 12*



# AN EXIT INTERVIEW WITH AMBASSADOR DANI DAYAN

Ambassador Dayan is heading home after four years as Israel's Consul General in the New York area. What has he learned about American Jewry and our relationship with the Jewish state? How has the experience changed his understanding of U.S. politics — and Israel's?

Join Jodi Rudoren and Andrew Silow-Carroll, editors-in-chief of the Forward and the Jewish Week, for a frank and provocative conversation.



**Jodi Rudoren**  
*Editor-in-chief  
of The Forward*



**Andrew Silow-Carroll**  
*Editor-in-chief  
of The Jewish Week*

## WEDNESDAY, JULY 8 AT NOON

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## What's cooking?

Shiitake mushroom frittata with goat cheese is not exactly camp fare. Neither is chilled melon and mint soup. But both can be found in "The Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook: 125 Homegrown Recipes from the New England Hills" (The Countryman Press) by the first couple of Jewish camp, Elisa Spungen Bildner and Robert Bildner (written with Chef Brian Alberg).

The Bildners, who live in Montclair, created the Foundation for Jewish Camp in 1998, which serves as the central address for American-Jewish camping. But as they say in the introduction, the cookbook is a paean to their "spiritual home" in the Berkshires; it's not an outgrowth of their considerable philanthropic work in the Jewish community. Through profiles of local farmers and restaurants, coupled with lush photos of the produce, livestock, food, and landscape, the Bildners breathe a sense of place into their recipes.

There's not much that's specifically Jewish about the book; a few of the recipes involve pork or seafood. But then again, it's hard to miss the Bildner touch when you turn the page to find Savory Beet Latkes featuring vegetables from Hawk Dance Farm and chevre from Rawson Brook Farm. Or the mention of hosting Shabbat guests and that they "love to cook and entertain, especially on Friday nights."

There's a certain irony in their appreciation of sustainability and eating locally sourced food: Bildner's grandfather founded the New Jersey supermarket chain Kings.

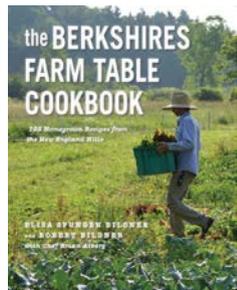
If food is in their DNA, so is writing. While both are attorneys, Spungen Bildner also trained as a journalist and chef.

Though written over several years and finished before the pandemic, the timing is right for cooking some slow food and dreaming about a pastoral view.

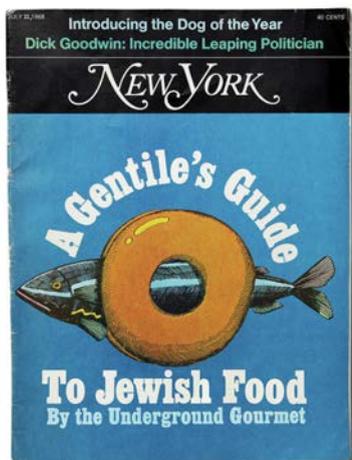
Caramelized onion galette with blue cheese and carrots, inspired by the carrots at Woven Roots Farm and the cheese at High Lawn Farm? Yes, please. — Johanna Ginsberg



Robert Bildner and Elisa Spungen Bildner



## Delicious by design



The July 22, 1968, issue of New York magazine featured a design by Milton Glaser.

The July 22, 1968, issue of New York magazine featured a design by Milton Glaser. The insider/outsider aesthetic was on display in a July 1968 issue of New York, when moonlighting as the Underground Gourmet columnist he co-wrote "A Gentile's Guide to Jewish Food." The first installment treats the appetizer store with almost anthropological respect. "The appetizing store is ... a unique and wonderful institution," it reads. "To be precise, the items in an appetizing store were and are not necessarily Jewish inventions. The Jews exercise an international gastronomic curatorship by bringing together and developing foods of Scandinavian, Middle European and Middle Eastern origins." Oh, and the average price of lox was \$3.15 a pound.

The cover of the magazine featured — what else? — a Glaser design of a whole salmon trapped in a bagel. — New York Jewish Week/JTA

Milton Glaser, the godfather of modern graphic design who passed away on his 91st birthday June 26, was responsible for a number of iconic designs: The "I HEART NY" logo, a classic Bob Dylan poster, the "chubby" psychedelic imagery that inspired the look of the animated Beatles movie "Yellow Submarine." He was also co-founder, president, and design director of New York magazine.

The lifelong New Yorker and son of Hungarian immigrant parents rarely spoke of his Jewish identity, but he made clear that his upbringing defined his artistic sensibility: it gave him, he said, a sense of "never quite feeling at home in any culture."

The insider/outsider aesthetic was on display in a July 1968 issue of New York, when moonlighting as the Underground Gourmet columnist he co-wrote "A Gentile's Guide to Jewish Food." The first installment treats the appetizer store with almost anthropological respect. "The appetizing store is ... a unique and wonderful institution," it reads. "To be precise, the items in an appetizing store were and are not necessarily Jewish inventions. The Jews exercise an international gastronomic curatorship by bringing together and developing foods of Scandinavian, Middle European and Middle Eastern origins." Oh, and the average price of lox was \$3.15 a pound.



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### EARLY DEADLINE AND DATE CHANGE

The deadline for the August 4 issue of Princeton/Mercer/Bucks is July 28. Materials must be sent by 10AM that day.

The Retirement Living issues of Princeton/Mercer/Bucks, Monmouth and Middlesex will close for reservations on July 22 and material should be in-house by Monday, July 27.

The August 11 issues on Monmouth and Middlesex will now be publishing on August 4. Reservations are due by July 24 and materials are due on July 27.

# NJJN

Vol. XXIII No. 2 July 7, 2020 15 Tammuz 5780

### EDITORIAL

Gabe Kahn, *Editor*  
Shira Vickar-Fox, *Managing Editor*  
Lori Silberman Brauner, *Deputy Managing Editor*  
Johanna Ginsberg, *Senior Staff Writer*  
Jed Weisberger, *Staff Writer*

### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Michele Alperin, Jennifer Altmann,  
Max L. Kleinman, Martin J. Raffel,  
Merri Ukraincik, Stephen M. Flatow,  
Jonathan Tobin

### BUSINESS

Nancy Greenblatt, *Manager Sales/ Administration and Circulation*  
Nancy Karpf, *Senior Account Executive*  
Steven Weisman, *Account Executive*  
Lauri Sirois, *Classified Sales Supervisor/ Office Manager*

### GRAPHIC DESIGN/DIGITAL/PRODUCTION

Clarissa Hamilton, Janice Hwang,  
Dani Shetrit

### EXECUTIVE STAFF

Rich Waloff, *Publisher*  
Andrew Silow-Carroll, *Editor in Chief*  
Gary Rosenblatt, *Editor at Large*  
Rob Goldblum, *Managing Editor*  
Ruth Rothseid, *Sales Manager*  
Thea Wieseltier, *Director of Strategic Projects*  
Dan Bocchino, *Art Director*  
Arielle Sheinwald, *Operations Manager*  
Gershon Fastow, *Advertising Coordinator*

### PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

New Jersey Jewish News, an independent voice, seeks to inform, engage and inspire its readers, covering and helping to build community. The Princeton Mercer Bucks edition of NJJN (USPS 1227) is published monthly by the JMMW, LLC, at 1501 Broadway, Room 505, New York, NY 10036. © 2016, NJ Jewish News. All rights reserved. • Periodical postage is paid at Whippany, NJ, and additional offices. • Postmaster: Send address changes to New Jersey Jewish News, 1719 Route 10, Suite 307 Parsippany, NJ 07054-4507. NJJN was founded as The Jewish News on Jan. 3, 1947. Member, New Jersey Press Association and American Jewish Press Association; subscriber to JTA.

**TELEPHONES/E-MAIL:** Main — phone: 973-739-8110, fax: 973-887-4152, e-mail: editorial@njewishnews.com, ■ Manuscripts, letters, documents, and photographs sent to New Jersey Jewish News become the physical property of this publication, which is not responsible for the return or loss of such material.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS (INCLUDING POSTAGE): New Jersey: \$52. Out of State: \$56. Call Nancy Greenblatt, 973-739-8115 or e-mail: ngreenblatt@njewishnews.com. For change of address, call 973-929-3198.

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# Our Towns

## Creativity to shape ‘radically different’ High Holidays

**Michele Alperin**

*NJNJ Contributing Writer*

As the pandemic persists, synagogues are planning a High Holiday season like none before. Some may choose to hold services via a video conferencing platform only; others will offer a hybrid affair, allowing a small component of in-person attendees. Either way, said Rabbi Benjamin Adler, religious leader at the Conservative Adath Israel Congregation in Lawrenceville, “we will all have to rethink the High Holidays; they are going to be radically different.”

Adler chooses to look at the positive aspects of a difficult situation. “When you face constraints, sometimes that’s when you have the most creativity,” he said. “In a way it is good to be constantly challenging our assumptions of what Judaism looks like and what it should be.”

At Temple Micah also in Lawrenceville, services will be held



PHOTO COURTESY STEVE LIPMAN

entirely online. The unaffiliated, egalitarian synagogue surveyed its congregants to gauge interest and help Rabbi Elisa Goldberg and other leaders reach a decision about what to offer. For her members, said Goldberg, feeling part of the community was of the highest concern, but also important were hearing the

rabbi’s sermon and including music in the service.

Goldberg is considering sending out a daily email and video during the 10 Days of Awe, between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, “with a short teaching or a musical piece of the service, to give people a little taste.”

Temple Micah members also expressed a desire to see and hear their fellow congregants during online services. As in past years, service attendees will be asked to share reflections on a particular theme, but this year they will record their thoughts ahead of Rosh HaShanah; Goldberg will create a video montage to play during the service or send out to congregants beforehand. She said she might also ask people to take photos of themselves — perhaps eating the traditional apples and honey treat at home while holding up a sign with New Year greetings to share in a slide show.

“When everyone does something active, it engages them,” Goldberg said. “It’s always a question during a service, but even more when we don’t have physical proximity to activate our sense of community.”

Rabbi Aaron Gaber said he plans to add more personal interaction with his congregants by blowing the shofar. *Continued on page 22*

## Rabbi brought humility, humor, pop culture to Har Sinai

**Jed Weisberger**

*NJNJ Staff Writer*

Rabbi Stuart Pollack, recently retired from a 21-year tenure at Har Sinai Temple in Pennington, was always there when his congregation needed him, during times of joy or sorrow, or for a friendly pat on the back. Faith, humility, and love for his community, and for pop culture, were what he shared as spiritual leader of the 200-family congregation.

“It was all an enjoyable experience for myself and my family,” said Pollack, the 26th rabbi to serve the 163-year-old temple. He was succeeded this month by Rabbi Jordan Goldson.

“Our congregation and community are special, and I welcome Rabbi Goldson with open arms,” Pollack said. “I know he’ll be quite an asset to Har Sinai.”

Pollack, a fan of music and TV, was notorious for throwing pop culture refer-



*Rabbi Stuart Pollack, at right, with the 2019 Har Sinai confirmation class, and, from left, temple president Alan Kline and music director Susan Sacks.*

PHOTO COURTESY HAR SINAI

ences into his sermons. “When I spoke of the Jewish understanding of marriage, I went through a list of pop icons. For instance, Paul McCartney was married to Linda for 35 years,” he told NJNJ.

“To me, there was always something

with pop culture or current events that could connect with what is depicted in the bible or the sedra of the week,” he said. “There are a lot of connections to events depicted in the Bible and what is going on currently, especially with laws,

experiences, and decisions.”

Pollack, a resident of Lower Makefield Township, Pa., came to Har Sinai in 1999 from the former Temple Tifereth Israel in Malden, Mass. (It has since merged with another synagogue and is now Temple Tiferet Shalom in Peabody, Mass.) At the time, Har Sinai occupied its ornate sanctuary on Bellevue Avenue in Trenton, and Pollack oversaw the congregation’s 2007 move to suburban Pennington.

He was known for debating various interpretations of Reform theology with students of all ages, always displaying an open mind and a sense of humor.

“I never took a haughty approach, but always listened,” he said. “You can change your opinion.”

“I will miss the debates,” said congregant Peter Buchsbaum, a retired Hunterdon County superior court judge and resident of West Amwell. “There was

*Continued on page 19*

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– Scott Stevens

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– Dan Goodman

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– Debbie Dubin and Family

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# When travel dreams are put on hold

**Lori Silberman Brauner**  
*NJNJ Deputy Managing Editor*

Several months ago, I spent 10 days in Morocco, where I experienced the pleasures (and bumps) of riding a camel in the Sahara Desert, listening to Kiddush at a Fez synagogue, and dicing vegetables at a Marrakesh

**First Person**

cooking school. Several months prior, I was embarking on the inaugural flight of TAP Air Portugal from Lisbon to Tel Aviv. And half a year before that, I was traveling through Portugal, learning about the remnants — and emergence — of a centuries-old Jewish community devastated by the Inquisition.

How quickly things have changed,



*The author in the Portuguese town of Castelo de Vide.*

thanks to the global-pandemic-that-shall-not-be-named, upending all of my future travel plans. Since early March, I have mostly been confined

to northern New Jersey, where I have been working from my dining room table, and only crossed the George Washington Bridge once for an errand in Manhattan. I have seen my parents one time, a few local friends, and one of my coworkers in our Parsippany office — all from a distance, of course.

While I recognize my good fortune to be both healthy and employed — as are all members of my immediate family, thankfully — I still can't help but kvetch that I have no idea when I will board a plane again (or even a bus or train). My explorations are limited to neighborhood walks and local nature hikes, the latter while wearing a mask and having a bottle of Purell close by in the car.

To explain my frustration, I have to provide some context. I first discovered the adventure of travel as a shy, sheltered college junior spending the semester at Tel Aviv University 30 years ago. Having never left the East Coast, let alone the U.S., the experience for me was nothing short of life-altering. Not only did I develop the skills to become (relatively!) independent, I made friends from around the world; traveled to nearby Egypt, Turkey, and Greece; and discovered the exhilaration of random, unscripted moments and encounters with a wide cross-section of people.

My travels mostly came to a halt after marrying and having children, but the yearning for adventure never disappeared. When I turned 40 I treated myself to a week's stay in Israel on a budget, scoring an economical summer fare by changing planes in Spain, staying at a small Jerusalem hotel, and finding an inexpensive one-day bus trip to the Dead Sea. As my kids grew older, I started returning to Israel again and again, for the bar mitzvahs

of both my sons and on another solo jaunt to Jerusalem after a particularly stressful year.

Still, it was hardly a given that I would continue traveling abroad, until I heard about and applied to join a press trip for Jewish journalists to Morocco in the fall of 2017, to the southern Caribbean island of Curacao six months later, and to Portugal a few months after that to learn about the country's Jewish heritage. Yes, it was technically "work" and my peers and I were on the go 24-7, but it was incredible just to pass through the landscapes, visit sites ranging from medieval castles to kasbahs, enjoy Moroccan tagines and bacalhau (Portuguese cod fish), and make friends from Europe and beyond.

In March, the aforementioned pandemic put a hold on all of my future travel plans, including a return visit to Portugal, where I was hoping to do more research on emerging and past Jewish communities. I had also hoped to spend time with my friends from my initial trip there, a Portuguese couple who had converted to Judaism, as well as the lively journalists who accompanied me on the Lisbon-to-Israel tour.

But my home state confinement has not yielded a complete lack of exploration. From noticing budding trees while taking neighborhood walks to going on hikes and scouting for birds with my son, I am slowly emerging from my cocoon. I have discovered that local landscapes can be just as beautiful and photogenic as the mountains, deserts, and seas of my trips abroad, and that I can drive just a few miles from my home to take gorgeous photos, for example, of the Palisades cliffs that frame the Hudson River. With more time spent at home, my family even had the chance to notice a mother bird guarding her nest while waiting for her own chicklings to hatch.

So while I may have to wait until 2021 — or even later — before I can see my friends Pedro T., Ana Sarah, Ana Sofia, Ana Margarida, Margarida, Pedro B., Bruno, Andre, Ruben, and Dolores on the Iberian Peninsula (not to mention my other travel companions!), I am confident that it will feel as if little time has passed at all. Our ways of navigating the world may have changed, but it remains open for discovery. ■

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# Jersey folk singer signs with national label

Mara Levine's repertoire reflects 'tikkun olam' influence

**Sherry S. Kirschenbaum**  
*Special to NJJN*

Included on New Jersey-based recording artist Mara Levine's latest album, "Facets of Folk," is a song she considers "one of the most powerful" written about the Holocaust. "By My Silence" is among several on the album that express themes of social conscience, reinforcing Levine's assertion that her repertoire is shaped "by the Jewish value of tikkun olam."

Levine, who lives in Edison, where she was raised, told NJJN she feels so strongly about "By My Silence" that she sings it at every performance. The lyrics reveal the complicity of those who stood by as the Shoah descended on Europe. Written by Ellen Bukstel and Nick Annis, the song was inspired by the famous poem "First They Came for the Socialists..." by the Rev. Martin Niemoller (1892-1984), a German Protestant pastor who was imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps for seven years for his outspoken resistance to the regime. The song was originally released as a single after the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville,



Mara Levine, singer of songs extolling social activism

Va., which drew hundreds of white supremacists and neo-Nazis chanting racist and anti-Semitic slogans.

Another song on the album that Levine fre-

quently sings in concert is "Be the Change"; written by Arlon Bennett, it was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and civil rights activist Rosa Parks as exemplars of nonviolent action to effect positive change. The message in its chorus:

*Be the change you want to see around you,  
Be the right in a world of wrong,  
Be the one, the one to make a difference,  
Be the change, Be the change.*

Growing up, Levine said her parents instilled in her a deep belief that all human beings have equal worth regardless of race, religion, or sexual orientation. They also taught her the importance of making positive contributions to society. "The songs I choose to sing," she said, "are definitely informed by the Jewish value of tikkun olam, making the world a better place."

In addition to her folk music, for the past several years Levine has been studying, performing, and recording in the bluegrass genre.

*Continued on page 22*

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Shommer Shabbas

## Damage

*Continued from page 1*

worst has passed, long-term-care facilities around the state are admitting new residents, a process that has largely been on hold, and cautiously trying to move forward.

After months of being confined to her room, Norma Alter, a resident of Weston Assisted Living Residence, part of the Jewish Community Housing Corporation's (JCHC) Lester Senior Living Campus in Whippany, is now allowed to see her son and daughter-in-law in person ... once a week, outside, with social distancing, wearing masks, and in the company of a chaperone to ensure safety measures. But it's better than before, when they could only interact through a window. "They are very cautious and careful," said Alter. "To see my son and daughter-in-law, I have to wait for someone to take me. But I'm very grateful."

Even so, few are ready to fully exhale.

Harold Colton-Max, CEO of JCHC, worries about a resurgence as New Jersey relaxes its restrictions. "I don't want us to let down our guard so much that we would allow Covid to get another foothold," he said. "I think that's what could lead to another spike... We're a little bit more comfortable, but... by no stretch of the imagination are we out of the woods." Weston had nine cases among residents with seven deaths, and nine cases among staff with no deaths.

Likewise, Susan Grosser, executive director of Daughters of Israel, a nursing home in West Orange, is still wary.

"We're on the other side now and things have



Members of the National Guard with staff whom they assisted at Greenwood House in Ewing.

PHOTO COURTESY GREENWOOD HOUSE

definitely lightened up," she said of Daughters of Israel, which saw 60 confirmed cases of the coronavirus among residents with 19 deaths, and 51 cases among staff with no deaths. "But I'm not quite feeling relief now. This is not over until it's over. And until I don't have a single coronavirus case, and until everybody is healthy and everybody is well, I'm not going to feel relief."

NJJN spoke with administrators and families at four Jewish long-term-care facilities in the state — Greenwood House, Daughters of Israel, Weston, and Freehold Jewish Home for Rehabilitation & Nursing (administrators at Stein Assisted Living at the Oscar and Ella Wilf Campus for Senior Living in Somerset were unavailable at press time, and Regency Jewish Heritage Post-Acute Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Somerset declined to be interviewed) — about their experiences during

the pandemic and the challenges ahead.

### We couldn't control it

Despite following regulations and even preempting the aggressive steps mandated by the state, early on facilities found that they were no match for Covid-19. "At the beginning, I felt we could control it," said Goldstein. "But it wasn't really possible to control. This virus is so contagious, and it was in the air all around us before we knew what hit us."

Agreed Grosser, "It spread like wildfire, no matter what we did."

Measures like taking the temperature of staff, telling them to stay home if they didn't feel well, and keeping visitors out were insufficient, as asymptomatic staff members were already caring for residents. "If we would have had testing in March, I think this experience would have been very different," said Goldstein.

The weeks around Passover were the worst at Daughters of Israel, when the director and assistant director of nursing, along with many other staff, were out sick at the same time. "It was hell," said Grosser. "We'd be kind of exhausted by the end of the day and not remember what happened [in the morning] because we just kept going at full speed."

To compensate for the long hours and constant exposure and as a show of gratitude, Daughters of Israel has given every staff member "pandemic pay" of \$250 per week on top of their regular pay throughout the lockdown.

After all they went through, Grosser resents the negative coverage of nursing homes, including Daughters of Israel, in the media. "They said nursing homes weren't prepared. Who was prepared?" she asked.

### Social isolation

One of the biggest takeaways for Colton-Max is the connection between physical and mental well-being that he believes the pandemic conditions revealed. Since March, residents have been alone in their rooms with limited interaction with staff, and meals are left hanging on their doorknobs. "The connection between somebody's social life and family life and ability to interact with others and their physical health is quite significant," he

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said. “That they can’t get a hug from a daughter or a grandson or other loved one, and [the fact that] they can’t interact with their neighbors can and does lead to physical problems... We’ve had people who feel their family members may have given up.”

Among them is Ilyse Link, whose mother lived at Weston. Recent vision problems amplified her mother’s isolation, as she couldn’t see well enough to use the buttons on a TV, computer, or phone. Link and her three sisters called regularly, and “Each day we could hear the sadness and desperation in our mom’s voice,” she said. Then her mother stopped answering the phone, and later refused to eat. She died on April 6.

Their family’s struggle to reach staff at Weston to talk about their mother’s condition made matters even more difficult. The nursing home had set up an emergency line to the nurses, Link said, but even though she called and left messages, she didn’t get a call back. “At the end, when we all knew that there was something wrong and we were saying, mom’s dying... we kept calling that number, and we couldn’t get anyone to talk to us.”

Added Link, “She should not have died alone.”

Reached by phone, Colton-Max said he felt “awful” about the situation with Link’s mother and that they are “investigating the claim that they could not reach anyone, as we have systems in place for residents and family members to reach someone on the JCHC staff in case of emergency.” Colton-Max said the expectation is that if it’s a true emergency, the staff will respond as soon as possible, if not within 24 hours.

Colton-Max said they are reexamining ways to improve communication with residents and families, and that the facility will provide families with a contact chain of command: If someone cannot be reached at one staff level, they’ll have a name and number of someone on a higher level, all the way up to Colton-Max, who noted that residents and their families are always welcome to contact him.

Sharon Cohn of West Orange, whose mother recuperated from Covid-19 at Daughters of Israel, is particularly sensitive to this issue. Cohn pulled her mother from one of the hospitals where she was being treated because of her difficulty getting information from the staff there. “You’re at the mercy of calling, to find out how they’re doing,” Cohn told NJJN. At Daughters of Israel, the nurses were responsive. “When we called, they answered.”

Said Yehuda May, executive director of the Jewish Home in Freehold, whose comments to NJJN were relayed through a spokesperson, “We recognize this has been an incredibly stressful period for families with a loved one in a communal living environment, particularly a skilled nursing facility.” To broaden lines of communication, the Jewish Home started using Zoom, Skype, and a new activities platform called LifeLoop to keep families informed.

As mandated by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, a federal agency, all four of the facilities have been sending out regular reports regarding residents, staff, or even outside ven-

dors who have tested positive, and some instituted regular calls with families.

### Filling the ‘comfort gap’

Staff at various facilities tried to come up with creative solutions for residents, providing packages with coloring pages, crossword puzzles, and the like. Doorway Bingo was an innovation at Daughters of Israel — residents played inside their open doors, while staff walked up and down the hallway calling out the numbers. JCHC started the Friendly Callers program, matching community volunteers with residents to call.

“One of our key focuses throughout this challenging time has involved addressing the psychosocial well-being of our residents, who are missing in-person visits with their families,” said May. A dozen residents of the Jewish Home tested positive for Covid-19 and six died, and 16 staff members tested positive, with all recovering.

In trying to address what he calls the “comfort

gap,” staff facilitated residents’ use of FaceTime to communicate with families. They also established an internal video channel over which they could hold “live” events like paint nights, “travel” days, and yoga. They plan to continue using it even after the pandemic ends to benefit residents who cannot leave their rooms.

Looking ahead, many see the biggest challenge at long-term-care facilities will be maintaining restrictions even as the state begins to reopen, and all the residences NJJN spoke with said they would be closely following guidelines from the CDC and the state. Most will continue to restrict visitors indefinitely, though perhaps eventually they would allow limited visits, similar to Norma Alter’s long-awaited reunion with her family at Weston. Her son, Ben Alter, said that, at least for now, he’ll take it.

“Seeing my mother face-to-face with regular conversation,” he said, “that’s a big step forward.” ■

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# Editorial

## What we should do about those statues

Across the country, local and state leaders have been heeding the call of protesters who seek to remove statues and memorials glorifying the Confederacy. In nearly all these cases, it's the right move: The statues are an affront not just to African Americans but to anyone who rejects white supremacy and respects the American idea.

President Donald Trump has defended these statues in the name of "history"; in fact, nearly all were erected in an early-20th-century effort to *rewrite* the history of an inglorious struggle for an immoral cause. Traitors to their country and defenders of slavery were recast as champions of "states' rights" and defenders against "northern aggression." We see the same impulse in Eastern Europe today, where nationalist governments are seeking to rehabilitate Nazi collaborators as anti-Communist heroes. Our own opposition to such propaganda should give us empathy for the anti-Confederate protests.

Granted, some of these efforts go too far in simplifying the historical record and holding historical figures to unfair standards, ignoring the context in which they acted and in which they formed beliefs that today have been shown to be retrograde. The Theodore Roosevelt statue in front of the American Museum of Natural History, which cast the former president as a Great White Father flanked by figures representing black and indigenous peoples, was racist and demeaning and deserved to come down. But that shouldn't lead to a fatwa against Roosevelt or an erasure of his contributions as a conservationist, statesman, and progressive, both in defiance

of and according to the limitations of his time. We can, and should, have conversations about TR's tragic shortcomings without expunging the inspiration he has provided to reformers and environmentalists.

Removal is an easy call when the statues glorify slavers and Nazis; as the historical record becomes more ambiguous or even forgotten, the verdict is less clear. Few Jews, we imagine, have a visceral reaction to statues of Peter Stuyvesant, who in addition to being a reminder of New York City's Dutch roots, was a vicious anti-Semite. His name is shared by an elite high school that counts countless Jews as alumni, various streets and post offices, and the sprawling East Side residential development. Paul Newell, a district leader in Manhattan, tweeted on June 21 that Stuyvesant is the "most over-named person in #NYC in terms of both his moral worth and historical significance." But rather than an orgy of renaming and removal, we might all be better served by an ongoing discussion of why his memory was important to the New Yorkers who honored him and what lessons — and warnings — we can take from the city's colonial past.

Such discussions should be part of a careful process that takes into account the views of historians, preservationists, artists and, crucially, members of the public who represent our country's diversity.

Removal can't be the only option. Often, history and the public good would be better served by talking about the true and complicated legacy of those being honored, and providing signage and education that puts their memorials in context. ■

Some of these efforts go too far in simplifying the historical record and holding historical figures to unfair standards, ignoring the context in which they acted.

# Letters to the Editor

## Ginsberg's 'gift' to readers

NJJN Senior Writer Johanna Ginsberg's articles and features are always informative, well-written, and enlightening. Her opinion piece, "Our silence equals consent" (June 16), was that and much more; it's crucial to an understanding of the burning issue of racism in America today. That she moved out of her "objective" role as journalist and was willing to share her personal experiences and background is a gift to readers of NJJN.

Ginsberg gives sad testimony to examples of racism, brutality, and vindictiveness that she witnessed from the inside as a criminal defense lawyer for the Legal Aid Society in Brooklyn. What she attests to is not only the racist, unjust, and injudicious use of force by members of a police department, but its reflection of the attitude of the government officials whose role it is to supervise and pay these "officers of the law."

Were her observations only about her experiences nearly 30 years ago, it would be worth reading as background to understanding current issues being discussed widely following the tragic murder of George Floyd, plus Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, and so many others. The fact that her experiences reflect all too closely the news of the day uncovers the fact that the misdeeds of today are deeply seated and multi-generational in origin.

Importantly for us as Jewish readers of NJJN, Ginsberg reminds us implicitly that there's no room for rationalizations and expressions of knee-jerk abhorrence of anti-Semitism, misplaced emphasis on the reprehensible acts of a small number of vandals and their disregard for property, and unrelated matters concerning Israel's deeds and misdeeds, when the suffering of our fellow African Americans is highlighted.

As American Jews we must stand up against racism in our society as a whole and injustice, brutality, and insensitivity among a putrid minority of our "officers of the law." We must call our elected officials to account for their leadership in this regard. Let us remember the biblical injunctions

to act with mercy, justice, and "choose life."

**Richard Hammerman**  
Rabbi Emeritus, Congregation  
B'nai Israel  
Toms River

## Anti-Semitism of Black Lives Matter

With all due respect to Rabbi Avi S. Olitzky's empathy for the pain caused by the tragic death of George Floyd, the foundational anti-Semitism of Black Lives Matter's (BLM) platform remains (Opinion, "Our holy obligation to make black lives matter," June 16). To support BLM is to support its claim that Israel is an apartheid state and to support its embrace of Omar Barghouti's anti-Semitic Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement.

Consistent with BLM's platform, at the end of May synagogues were desecrated and Jewish-identified businesses were destroyed by some of the movement's supporters.

Olitzky referred to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. King would have understood the threat the BLM platform represents. He is known to have said, "When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews. You're talking anti-Semitism." To ignore the anti-Semitism of the BLM platform is to be just as myopic as the Judenrat whose members ignored the anti-Semitism of "Mein Kampf."

**Richard Sherman**  
Margate, Fla.

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NJJN reserves the right to edit letters for length, clarity, content, and accuracy.

# Why Zionists should stand with Black Lives Matter

**Michael Koplow**  
Special to NJJN



The murder of George Floyd has sparked outrage and protests across the country, creating new attention to the challenges faced by black Americans and a resurgence of the exhortation that black lives matter. As is often and admirably the case, many American Jews have championed the call to social justice, but there has also been a nagging concern that in identifying with the larger Black Lives Matter movement, American Jews are compromising their Zionism.

## Center Field

While the principle that black lives matter is as important as ever, the coalition of groups that comprise the Movement for Black Lives includes a statement in its platform calling Israel an apartheid state and accusing it of being “complicit in the genocide taking place against the Palestinian people.” Given this inflammatory language, some Jews and Jewish groups are wary of affiliating with a movement that is open in its anti-Israel stance, and see Black Lives Matter as the latest example of Jews being unwelcome in progressive circles unless they denounce Israel and Zionism as the price of entry.

This stance is understandable. It is also a mistake.

One of the markers of American Judaism is that it is a distinctly American project. This means that American Jews are part of a larger tradition of Jews and Judaism, but are a unique subset that represents the most successful Jewish diaspora in history. That success is partially because American Jews are so well integrated into larger American society and culture, to the point that we are all familiar with the oxymoronic and largely American concept of “Judeo-Christian civilization.” Both the American component and the Jewish component are critical

for American-Jewish identity, and it means being responsive to larger American societal concerns.

In this instance, the quest for justice and equity irrespective of race or skin color is not only a core American value, but also an unquestionably Jewish value. Taken together, that creates a strong argument for American Jews to take up the Black Lives Matter banner as a movement. It does not mean that Israel is not important to American Jews and that we should not wear our Zionism proudly on our sleeves. But if we take the American part of our identities seriously, Israel is an important priority that has to be balanced against others as well.

What makes the balancing test here easier is that in standing up for black lives, American Jews are not being called to sacrifice one core priority in service of another. While there is anti-Israel sentiment, anti-Zionism, and even anti-Semitism to be found in Black Lives Matter groups, Israel is ancillary to their focus at best. The central cause is justice and equity for a group of Americans living 6,000 miles away from Israel and with no connection whatsoever to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, irrespective of the intersectional argument made in the Movement for Black Lives platform. Identifying with this cause does not actually require checking or compromising one’s Zionism. In asserting that black lives matter, there is no implication that Israel is to blame or that this is in some way inconsistent with support for Israel or Zionism.

Furthermore, if we as American Jews start creating ideological purity litmus tests for solidarity with other minority groups, it will inevitably boomerang on us. Following violent attacks on American Jews, our expectation as a community is that we will be supported by other Americans who also abhor anti-Semitism. If the standard was that solidarity with Jews under assault

could only come if those Jews were anti-Zionist, for instance, or only voted Democratic, we would reject that as an absurd distraction and a dangerous standard to impose. And in fact, after shootings such as those at the Tree of Life synagogue and Poway (California) Chabad, many groups and individuals who are outspoken in their anti-Zionism stood in solidarity with American Jews, setting ideological purity tests aside. We rightly recoil at those who make lists of good Jews and bad Jews based on our relation to Israel, and we should not in this moment engage in similar behavior.

Identity is not singular, and ideological and values-based commitments do not have to be zero-sum. Discomfort with anti-Zionism in the Movement for Black Lives platform is natural, but we should not allow this dis-

comfort to outweigh everything else. The question is not whether our pro-Israel identity should be discounted — it certainly should not — but whether that part of our identity will be subsumed by standing up for black lives and all that it entails. In this fraught moment, it is clear that pursuing justice means standing with black Americans and pushing back against systemic racism. Doing so meets our need to be both Jewish and American, and it also does not have to compromise our Zionism and support for Israel. Just as Jewish law considers a dish with a 60-to-1 ratio of kosher to non-kosher food to be unequivocally kosher, there is no question that we should view Black Lives Matter in similar terms. ■

**Michael Koplow is policy director at the Israel Policy Forum.**

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# Our Towns

## Synagogues

Continued from page 1

Wednesday morning minyans. “We will probably also give preference to people who are saying Kaddish, because they need to be there with a live congregation in order to feel complete in doing that.”

One critical issue is the effectiveness of ventilation systems in filtering out the virus and bringing in sufficient fresh air. Technologies use either ultraviolet light or especially dense filters. But installation can be costly, and bringing in fresh air can be problematic: The sanctuary at Adath Israel Congregation in Lawrenceville, for example, has no windows or doors to the outside, and opening doors and windows in the social hall has security implications. “It is much more complex than people think,” said the Conservative synagogue’s Rabbi Benjamin Adler.

Synagogues are also strategizing about how many individuals and family groups can fit into their prayer spaces while observing the six-foot distancing requirements. Adler noted that “the health office says six feet is good, but not a guarantee, and people sometimes encroach.” He wondered if a specification of 12 feet apart might be required to

actually achieve the proper separation.

Brett pointed to another complexity: how to define a family unit that can sit together. At the Jewish Center through the end of August, Brett said, “This will be strictly limited to a family’s household — not grandkids who don’t live with you or cousins and aunts and uncles.”

He said that people with health conditions and those 65 and older will be encouraged “to stay away for a while.” People will need to preregister, and temperature checks will be held at the door. Masks will be required.

To limit the spread of the virus through aerosols, Kornsgold said, they will “not encourage any kind of singing,” except for prayer leaders, who mostly face the ark. Congregants will not come to the bima for honors, and aliyot will be chanted from the pews. People will be encouraged to bring their own siddurim, kipot, and tallitot.

Adler said that before people are permitted to enter Adath Israel, they plan to purchase face coverings to “make sure everyone is wearing a good mask,” as well as thermometers and hand sanitizer. A registration system will be set up so that “if something happens, we can do contact tracing.”

On-line services at Adath Israel will continue, Adler said, because not everyone is comfortable with coming to the building, and in-person services will be shortened because duration is a factor in transmission.

Rabbi Aaron Gaber of Conservative Congregation Brothers of Israel in Newtown, Pa., said that although Bucks County is going into the “green phase,” easing most restrictions, his synagogue has set no date for reopening. Regular shul-goers, he said, “are not pushing to come back into the building at this time because we are all still very concerned about what will happen with Covid-19,” adding that many congregants say they will return only after there is a vaccine. And Zoom services are drawing four times as many people for Friday night services, with 60-80 attending.

At Har Sinai Temple, in Pennington, they “are taking a conservative approach,” said Lewis Dauer, president of the Reform congregation; “the general

consensus is that people are not ready to come back.”

Rabbi Jordan Goldson, who just began his tenure at Har Sinai, said, “It’s challenging to come to a place where we can’t all come together.” So he envisions using the outdoors to safely meet with congregants. “We are thinking of putting a tent or sukkah outside where people can meet with me and have a soft drink — like Moses in the Tent of Meeting,” he said.

That safety is paramount is evident. “As we reopen,” Brett wrote in a June 12 email to Jewish Center members, “it is important to remember that the virus that causes COVID-19 is still present in our community.... This makes reopening and interactions with large groups of people dangerous. Caution must be taken to keep our congregation safe.”

Echoing his fellow clergy members, Kornsgold said, “The number one thing is safety. We will do nothing that is not safe.” ■

## Synagogue Connection MARKETPLACE

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As most in the area know, Adath Israel is home to The Mosaic Program, a Center for the Arts and Culture. This past year before the quarantine, The Mosaic Program presented Deadbeats and Hustlers; Bruce Warren from WXPB; Rachel Wainer Apter, director of the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights; Gary Kraut, an award-winning travel writer who presented an Illustrated Tour of Jewish Paris; and a Musical Performance: One Community/Many Voices. Then came Covid-19, so we missed a Lecture in Song by Fred Miller featuring Composers of

Bucks County: Hammerstein and Sondheim, and we missed a special opportunity to see the hidden places on Ellis Island on a private Hard Hat Tour.

That said, we look forward to Zoom Mosaic presenting Fred Miller's Lecture in Song, a virtual interactive cooking demonstration, and the chief photo archivist for the New York City Parks Department giving us a virtual tour of the archives.

We are pleased to say that our rabbi, Benjamin Adler, and his family Zoomed their Passover seder from their home, so all could partake of the holiday.

Zoom Shabbat services, Havdalah, Monday and Thursday minyans, and popular and pertinent events like "Ripped from the Headlines," led by Rabbi Adler, and our Healing Service, led by Evette Katlin, continue over Zoom.

New programs such as Rabbi Adler's "Tales of the Rabbis" and Hazzan Arthur Katlin's "Adath's Got Talent" are interesting and fun. "Adath's Got Talent" has member participation from ages 5 through 95 with an audience full of smiles and applause.

Women's League and Men's Club remain active, having presented through Zoom, "The Story of the AT&T Pole Farm." In July, Women's League will present "Get Your Kicks on Route 206," about the twists and turns and ups and downs of the 400-year history of Lawrence Township's main thoroughfare. Both programs are with historian Dennis Waters.

Going forward, committees are hard at work developing a reopening plan according to state

guidelines. Live streaming for adult and separately for kids' High Holiday services are in the works, along with some in-person participation and attendance, depending upon the safety and comfort concerns of our members and clergy. Activities will also be planned on our beautiful outdoor campus.

Watch for our flyers and news articles, or call the synagogue office for information, so you can join in on these great programs. Please see our Education article in this newspaper to keep up with what's going on for the kids. This August we'll have a drive-by loop around to say 'hi' to Rabbi Adler, Hazzan Katlin, and some of our lay leaders, and take a bit of sweets home for the New Year. Hope to see you soon.

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 2421 Pennington Rd.  
 Pennington, NJ 08534  
**www.harsinai.org**  
**(609)730-8100**

## 2020-2021 REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

- Our Religious School is Exciting and Fun
- We meet on Sunday mornings
- Classes are taught by Experienced Teachers
- Enjoy vibrant Youth Programs & Services

Open to Non-Temple Members

Call or email our Educator, Cantor Orna Green, for more information.

Come meet our new Rabbi, Jordan Goldson.

(609)730-8100 [www.harsinai.org](http://www.harsinai.org)  
[Cantorornagreen@harsinai.org](mailto:Cantorornagreen@harsinai.org)



**LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?**



**CHECK OUT OUR CLASSIFIED & PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY SECTIONS!**

**Adath Israel Congregation**  
1958 Lawrenceville Road  
Lawrenceville, N.J. 08648  
609-896-4977  
adathisraelnj.org

Wow! What a year! The Adath Israel Religious School was up and running and then March arrived!

To summarize, after interviewing various school parents, "The school handled the transition exuberantly well" and "They didn't miss a beat." Another parent says she was thrilled that even during this time of using Zoom instruction new programming was developed that will continue as the September 2020 school year begins.

Adath Israel Religious School is a nationally award-winning school dedicated to enriching and educating students about Jewish values, holidays, rituals, prayer, and Israel, from pre-K (Tot Fundays) through high school. It is a multi-year recipient of the Solomon Schechter Gold and Silver Awards and Torah Aura Curriculum Award.

This year, from the beginning to the end of school in June, every Sunday and Tuesday class, Havdalah, and the "asafa" (full school assemblies) were maintained. Even during Zoom classes, individual classes would break off to contin-

ue instruction at each appropriate level. In addition, resource/special needs through IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) were maintained. Private b'nei mitzvah lessons were seamless.

Recognizing the extraordinary need for connection during the quarantine, our invested, experienced, and caring teaching staff; Rabbi Benjamin Adler; and Hazzan Arthur Katlin "Zoomed" in beyond the regular school hours through Kahoot (a game-based classroom response system played by the whole class in real time). The kids loved it.

Adath Israel will get back to a regular school situation as soon as possible with all programming resuming based on the safety and comfort levels of parents, teachers, and the kids. September 2020 may bring in-person, virtual instruction, or a combination of both.

However, recognition of individual talents, music and art programs, and the study of Jewish values, holidays, rituals, prayer, and Israel will continue. Call the synagogue at 609-896-4977 for more information and to register your child. Ask to speak with Rabbi Adler or contact him at rabbiadler@adathisraelnj.org.

Enjoy the summer, be well, and stay safe from the Adath Israel family.

## Everyone is different and that's a good thing!

At Har Sinai Religious School in Pennington we provide a Jewish education that welcomes children from traditional, interfaith, and other families. We embrace the differences that make Jewish life and learning today such a delightful, diverse, and vibrant experience.

At the Religious School we help our students appreciate the relevance of Jewish teachings, practice, and ethics in today's changing world. We study prayers, learn Hebrew, and celebrate Jewish and Israeli history, culture, and traditions. Building on our rich Reform tradition, each student's voice is honored, resulting in a diverse community of learners who find meaning and pride in Jewish living.

Our new, visionary model offers young families a Jewish education without requiring temple membership. We provide welcoming opportunities to gather, forge new

relationships, and ease into the latter years of Jewish learning (grades 4+) with other like-minded families in our Reform congregation.

Our Religious School is open to the entire community and offers young families a Jewish education without requiring temple membership. We provide welcoming opportunities to be together and create new relationships. In an effort to keep everyone healthy, we are planning to meet virtually on Sunday mornings beginning in September. For more information on how our dynamic curriculum will be taught via Zoom, please contact our educator, Cantor Orna Green. Or make an appointment to meet with our new rabbi, Jordan Goldson, who will also be teaching in the Religious School. Contact us at 609-730-8100 or cantorornagreen@harsinai.org.

## A gift to JFCS...



...can be a bag of groceries for a family struggling to get by on unemployment.



...can be a week's worth of meals delivered to the doorstep of a homebound senior.



...can be an understanding counselor there for someone overwhelmed with anxiety.



...can be a friendly voice on the phone, checking in on a senior.

A gift to JFCS is always a gift of *Help, Hope and Healing,* right here in Mercer County.

[www.JFCSonline.org/donate](http://www.JFCSonline.org/donate)

## THE FUTURE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS IN YOUR HANDS.



## HOW WILL YOU ASSURE JEWISH TOMORROWS?

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JEWISH  
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Assuring JEWISH TOMORROWS  
A program of the HAROLD GREENSPON FOUNDATION

To create your Jewish legacy, contact Amy Zacks, Director of Philanthropy  
amy@foundationjewish.org • 609.524.4374 • www.foundationjewish.org

## Living your philanthropic values through a Donor Advised Fund

*We do much of our charitable giving through a Donor Advised Fund at the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Mercer. We are able to direct grants of any value to any nonprofit at any time. And by having a fund at JCFGM, we help to preserve our Jewish community, right here in Mercer County.* — Miki and Randy Krakauer

A Donor Advised Fund (DAF) is a philanthropic account where you set aside money for charitable contributions. A DAF represents a flexible alternative to creating your own private foundation and to handling your own direct giving. Once established, you (or anyone you designate) can recommend grants to any Jewish or secular charitable organization of your choice.

### WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES?

- **EASE** ... Use our online access to easily recommend grants. There's no check writing or mailing.
- **TAX SAVINGS** ... With each deposit into your fund, you may receive an immediate charitable tax deduction. Gifts of appreciated stock may also avoid capital gains tax.
- **LONGEVITY** ... The assets in your fund continue to grow, to be used for future grants and to engage children and grandchildren in philanthropy.
- **TRANSPARENCY** ... Our Foundation processes your grants, provides statements for tax reporting, and maintains online records.

Learn more about how we can benefit you and your family while also sustaining Jewish life in our region. Visit [foundationjewish.org/funds](http://foundationjewish.org/funds) or call 609-524-9914.

## How do we move forward in times of uncertainty?

The pandemic has impacted every facet of our lives — from work and schooling, to mental health, to caring for aging loved ones, to financial security. Now, as our world reopens, there is a new wave of challenges, whether it is lingering or new anxieties about how to personally reenter spaces, continued isolation and fear for seniors who continue to stay at home, and ongoing financial challenges as some furloughs turn into unemployment.

Before, during, and after these uncertain times, Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Mercer County (JFCS) is here for the Mercer community.

For those who need support to cope with the emotional and psychological challenges, our counseling team is here for

all with drop-in phone hours and webinars. For our seniors struggling with isolation, fear of going to the store, and questions about available resources, our team of geriatric care managers steps in to provide care and connect seniors to volunteers who help deliver meals, shop for groceries, or make friendly check-in calls. For individuals and families in a difficult financial position, our on-site food pantry and Mobile Food Pantry are stocked with shelf staples, meat, and produce to any who need.

If you need a helping hand to move forward, or if you are in a position to make a donation so that those who are struggling have a light of hope, contact JFCS by visiting [jfcsonline.org](http://jfcsonline.org) or calling 609-987-8100.

## How will you assure Jewish tomorrows?

Have you been a member of a congregation, celebrated simchas with friends, and received support during difficult times? Have you volunteered at an agency, camp, or synagogue? Have you observed firsthand how our local Jewish organizations have helped those in need, cared for the elderly, taught Jewish values to our children, and provided connection and community? If you want to sustain these organizations so the next generation can benefit too, consider making a LIFE & LEGACY Promise.

### What is LIFE & LEGACY?

Conceived by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and implemented locally by our Jewish Community Foundation, LIFE & LEGACY is a collaborative effort of synagogues, agencies, and organizations working together to sustain our Jewish institutions through after-lifetime gifts and the growth of endowment funds.

### Why make a LIFE & LEGACY Promise?

By making a Promise, you can

- Perpetuate the Jewish traditions and values you cherish.
- Preserve the programs and institutions that support Jewish life in our area.
- Plan for your family's philanthropic interests and enjoy tax advantages.

### What organizations are participating in LIFE & LEGACY?

- |  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Adath Israel Congregation                  | Jewish Federation      |
| Beth El Congregation                       | Kehilat HaNahar        |
| Congregation Beth Chaim                    | Temple Beth-El         |
| Greenwood House                            | Or Chadash             |
| The Jewish Center                          | Rimon Center           |
| JCC and Abrams Camps                       | Shalom Heritage Center |
| Jewish Community Foundation                |                        |
| Jewish Family & Children's Service         |                        |
| National Museum of American Jewish History |                        |

To learn more, visit [foundationjewish.org/legacy](http://foundationjewish.org/legacy) or call 609-524-4374.

### SUPPORTING CHARITIES WITH A Donor-Advised Fund

**HOW IT WORKS**



**1 DONATIONS** .....

A donor makes an irrevocable, tax-deductible donation to the Jewish Community Foundation.



**2 INVESTMENTS** .....

The donation is used to establish a Donor Advised Fund, and the assets in the fund will share in the market performance of the Foundation's investment portfolio, including interest and dividends.



**3 GRANTS** .....

The donor may recommend grants to qualified public charities. All recommendations are honored so long as the recommended donations meet IRS requirements.





4 Princess Road • Suite 211 • Lawrenceville, New Jersey 08648  
 609.524.4374 • [www.foundationjewish.org](http://www.foundationjewish.org)

## Obituaries

### Thomas Renner

Thomas Renner, 93, of the Bronx died June 7, 2020.

Mr. Renner is survived by his wife, Renee; and a daughter, Pamela.

Private services were held June 9 with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing.

### Elyse Halperin

Elyse Baruch Halperin, 63, of Hamilton Township died June 9, 2020.

Ms. Halperin was a special education teacher.

She was an avid reader with a passion for art, culture, and poetry. She was also supportive of various causes.

She is survived by three daughters, Stephanie, Marissa, and Kimberly Halperin, and a sister, Ruth (Tom) Kaminsky.

Private services were held June 12 with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing. Memorial contributions may be made to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Inflammatory Breast Research Center, P.O. Box 849168, Boston, MA 02284 ([dana-farber.org/gift](http://dana-farber.org/gift)).

### Richard Dondes

Richard Dondes, 64, of Newtown, Pa., died June 15, 2020.

Mr. Dondes is survived by his wife, Susan; his son, Jason; his daughter, Alyssa Falder; a brother, Phillip Dondes; and a sister, Roberta Katz.

Private services were held with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing.

### Audrey Lavine

Audrey Ullmann Lavine, 87, of Langhorne, Pa., died June 15, 2020. She was born in Easton, Pa.

Mrs. Lavine had a teaching career of over 50 years. She taught at a number of schools, including The Ring Nursery school, Har Sinai Temple Sunday School, Covenant Presbyterian Nursery, and for 25 years as a first-grade teacher at Lanning Elementary School in Ewing Township. A mentor to many college students majoring in early childhood education at Trenton State Teachers College, during her career she was awarded the Governor's Teacher Recognition award by Gov. Thomas H. Kean in 1988.

She graduated from Trenton High School. She attended the University of Delaware and graduated from Trenton State.

Among her interests were traveling the world, playing tennis and bridge, attending

theater performances, and baking desserts.

Predeceased by her husband of 49 years, Barry, she is survived by two sons, Andrew (Lisa) of Mahopac, N.Y., and Joseph (Beth) of New Providence; her daughter, Ellen (Daniel) of Washington Crossing, Pa.; and eight grandchildren.

Private services were held with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing. Memorial contributions may be made to Greenwood House.

### Andrew Blowstein

Andrew Blowstein, 32, of Robbinsville died June 15, 2020.

The brother of the late Dana Blowstein, he is survived by his parents, Barbara Horn and Alan Blowstein.

Private services were held with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing.

### Edna Silberman

Edna Silberman, 83, of West Windsor died June 21, 2020. She was born in Brooklyn.

Mrs. Silberman worked as a secretary and

assisted with office management in several settings. Prior to her retirement she worked for Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Mercer County (JFCS).

She was a member of Congregation Beth Chaim, Princeton Junction.

Predeceased by a daughter, Sharon, she is survived by her husband, Maurice; a daughter, Pamela Silberman-Mills; and a son, Mark.

Services were held June 23 with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing. Memorial contributions may be made to JFCS at [jfcsonline.org/donate](http://jfcsonline.org/donate).

### Lynda Weiner

Lynda Weiner, 73, of Jackson died June 23, 2020. She was a former resident of East Windsor.

Predeceased by her first husband, Louis Rosenberg, and her second husband, Paul Weiner, she is survived by her children, Melissa Pavonarius and Robert Rosenberg, and a sister, Sandy Peltz.

Services were held June 26 with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing.



Be part of a  
tradition  
that honors those who've passed.



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# Investing legend Sanford Greenberg looks back on a life of blindness

**Sandee Brawarsky**  
*Special to NJJN*

Sanford Greenberg was a junk dealer's son from Buffalo when, in 1959, he arrived in New York City with one suitcase, to attend Columbia College on scholarship. Flourishing, he studied anthropology with Margaret Mead and poetry with Mark Van Doren, and made sure to get around the city to museums and concerts.

Within his first month on the Morningside Heights campus, he met a classmate, Arthur Garfunkel, who asked him to look closely at a certain patch of grass and consider its color and shape. He was taken with the young man's dreaminess and intelligence, and they became fast friends and then roommates — and more than 60 years later, Greenberg and Garfunkel and their other roommate, Jerry Speyer (who would become a major New York real estate developer), remain the best of friends.

But the golden glow Greenberg felt when he entered the gates of Columbia didn't last. During his junior year, Greenberg lost his sight to misdiagnosed glaucoma — a surgery to save his eyes couldn't save his vision. Back home in Buffalo, he felt like his dreams of study, perhaps Harvard Law School and even a governorship, were quashed. A social worker suggested that he might become a justice of the peace in a small town or learn to cane chairs. Soon after, Garfunkel traveled up to Buffalo and convinced him to return to the Columbia campus, and that he would help in every way.

With a title inspired by his friend, Greenberg has written a memoir, "Hello Darkness, My Old Friend: How Daring Dreams and Unyielding Friendship Turned One Man's Blindness into an Extraordinary Vision for Life" (Post Hill Press), with an introduction by Garfunkel, foreword by Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and a final word by Margaret Atwood.

Greenberg ultimately graduated Phi Beta Kappa (as class president) and went on to doctoral studies at Harvard and Oxford and a life of great accomplishment, including serving as a White House Fellow under President Lyndon Johnson. He invented and holds a patent for a compressed speech machine that can speed up the reproduction of words from recordings without distorting sound, was named to presidential commissions, built companies, was a pioneer in technology and philanthropy, and more. Greenberg now chairs the Board of Governors of The Johns Hopkins University's Wilmer Eye Institute.

The memoir is for the most part focused on his childhood and education and on the early part of his career, and perhaps he will write more about his entrepreneurial success at another time. The strength of this book is in Greenberg's powerful descriptions of blindness and his determination to choose life — not to be seen or pitied as a blind man. His is a life of resilience, never surrendering to the darkness. Readers will think anew about sight and color, about the way we see and what we see — and appreciate the light.

It's also a story of deep friendship, written with humil-

ity and gratitude. In the introduction, Garfunkel writes, "My friend is my gold standard of decency. I try to be his cantor, the tallis that embraces him."

In one unforgettable scene, while they were seniors at Columbia, Garfunkel accompanies Greenberg to an appointment in midtown Manhattan to see a social worker who specializes in helping blind people. She suggested that he consider a seeing eye dog or a cane and to at least acknowledge that he was blind; he would do none of that. After the meeting, Garfunkel, studying architecture then, remembered an assignment in midtown and suggested that Greenberg wait for him. They argued a bit and then Greenberg said he needed to get back and set out on the subway on his own.

Stumbling, sometimes falling and getting bloodied, asking people for directions and trying to follow them, bumping into people, stumbling some more, Greenberg made his way through Grand Central Station, feeling his way onto the shuttle train and then transferring to the uptown train. He then trudged up the stairs at the 116th Street station and a man bumped into him, excusing himself — and he realized it was Garfunkel, who had been trailing him the entire time.

"I knew you could do it . . . but I wanted to be sure you knew you could do it," Garfunkel said.

Greenberg recalls that he wanted to kill him — and then he was euphoric. He still feels the satisfaction he felt then, the triumph that he could be independent.

"If you can go through the New York City subway system blind, you can accomplish anything," Greenberg says in a telephone interview from his office in Washington, D.C. "That was the defining episode of my life. That moment was the spark that caused me to live a completely different life, without fear, without doubt. For that I am tremendously grateful to my friend."

Also at his side throughout has been Sue, his high school girlfriend and now his wife.

His earliest memories, while he was still sighted, are of tough times. His father, a tailor who fled persecution in Poland and then Germany, died when Greenberg was very young. Inscribed in his memory is a blind beggar in their neighborhood, in torn clothing, sunglasses and holding a metal cup, who has been a regular visitor in his dreams. The very first poem he wrote as a child was about the horror of blindness and cancer. A few years after his father's death, when Greenberg was 10, his mother married her late husband's brother Carl and their lives improved, as they moved from the city's poorest section into their own home, and Greenberg attended a better high school, where he was class president and prom king.

He began writing the memoir in 1962 as he was starting graduate school at Harvard. He says, "I was trying to make sense of what had happened. I took out my Smith-Corona typewriter and wrote 40 pages. It was as though my unconscious was writing. I put it aside for 40 years, after decades of introspection and thought." He began this version about 15 years ago.

Greenberg details adventures in life, including a Marshall Scholarship at Oxford, world travel on behalf of

presidential commissions, trips with his kids and Garfunkel, and basketball practice with Bill Bradley, often circling back to explorations of blindness.

He draws connections between blindness and memory and imagination, places where he often dwells. His memory is sharply attuned, and it's "one of the things that saved me all these decades. I live much of my life inside my own head," he says. "There is my mind and beyond that the universe. I have the pleasure of roaming anyplace I'd like, dreaming of the wonderful things that might be."

Since he had 19 years of sightedness, he also has visual memories and colors remain vivid in his memory, as does the art he saw in his early years at Columbia.

"That treasure of visual images has stayed with me all these years, enabling me to visualize every situation I'm in. It may not be the view a sighted person has."

When asked about the experience of driving through the mountains of Utah, he explains that there are some spaces you can feel, like the phrase between musical notes. "Walking between office buildings, when you come to a clearing, you can feel the space; soon you would come to another building and would feel a change. So I cannot see mountains but I can feel the space on either side of them."

Still, he admits to difficult moments, when he might lie on the floor and listen to his friend's recording of "Bridge Over Troubled Water." Prayer has always been part of his life, and when asked about feelings of anger toward God, as he expressed when he first got back from the hospital, blinded, he said, "I would be lying if I said no. I have felt anger, but rarely. I believe in what Harry Truman said: 'I have no time for bitterness.'"

Back in 1961, when Greenberg was in the hospital in Detroit, newly blinded, he made a promise to God that he would do everything he could, for the rest of his life — to make sure that no one else would go blind. That thought has stayed with him. In 2012, he and his wife announced an international prize, End Blindness by 2020 — with a cash award of \$3 million. The winner will be announced on Dec. 14, 2020.

In the announcement of the prize, Garfunkel wrote, "We are searching for nothing less than light."

In the final chapters, Greenberg details his own Blindness Balance Sheet, describing debits ("I have not seen the faces of my children") and assets in separate chapters. He also dreams up a grand party, gathering the living and dead as guests in a ballroom on a houseboat on water "dappled with sunlight," with music, dancing, and celebration. In his toast, he describes himself — as he does when he is not dreaming — as "the luckiest man in the world." ■

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*As part of The Folio: A Jewish Week/UJA Cultural Series, Sanford Greenberg will be in conversation about "Hello Darkness, My Old Friend," with Sandee Brawarsky, culture editor of The New York Jewish Week, on Thursday, July 9, at 6 p.m. Register for the free event at thejewishweek.com/folio-greenberg.*

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**Sandee Brawarsky is culture editor for The New York Jewish Week, NJJN's sister publication.**

# Agenda

*Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, most synagogues and organizations have cancelled all in-person activities for the time being. Some are offering online learning opportunities or plan to reschedule. Please email [calendar@njewishnews.com](mailto:calendar@njewishnews.com) with online events open to the community.*

## Business Briefs

**Douglas J. Zeltt** has been appointed president of the board of directors and chair of Greenwood House Home for the Jewish Aged in Ewing. The nonprofit organization provides comprehensive wellness-focused care and services to seniors in central New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania.



Doug Zeltt

Zeltt has served as a member of the Greenwood House board of directors, executive committee, finance committee, and board development committee.

Visit [GreenwoodHouse.org](http://GreenwoodHouse.org).

### Teen summer series

Jewish Family & Children's Service of Greater Mercer County (JFCS) will hold a Summer Teen Series focusing on service and personal development.

The series includes three "Summer Serve" sessions for youth and teens grades 6-12 and three college- and career-focused discussions for students in 11th grade and above:

On Tuesday, July 7, at 7 p.m. a Career Exploration Workshop will be offered for grades 11+ at 7 p.m.

On Sunday, July 12, a Summer Serve session will focus on ways to customize your summer service experience at 1 p.m.

On Monday, July 20, "College Perspectives," a panel of college students discussing their post-high school experiences, will be held at 7 p.m.

On Sunday, July 26, a Summer Serve school supplies drive will be held at 1 p.m.

On Monday, Aug. 3, Promoting Yourself & Your Skill Set, an interactive workshop to build your resume and develop talking points, will be offered for grades 11+ at 7 p.m.

On Sunday, Aug. 9, a Summer Serve Challah Bake at home will be held at 1 p.m.

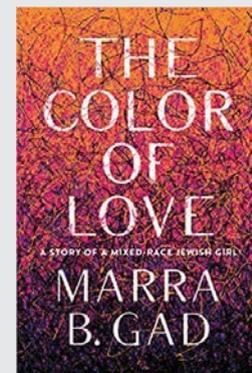
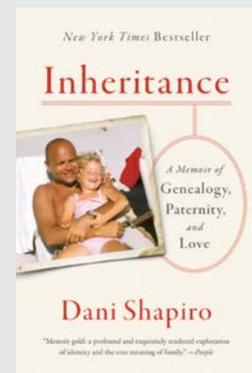
To register, go to [tinyurl.com/yb5d9rt2](http://tinyurl.com/yb5d9rt2).

### Summer reading series

Congregation Beth Chaim in Princeton Junction will continue its Summer Reading Series on Thursday, July 23, with a discussion of Marra B. Gad's "The Color of Love." Gad, a biracial woman, was adopted by a white Jewish family in Chicago in 1970.

On Thursday, Aug. 27, a discussion will be held on Dani Shapiro's "Inheritance: A Memoir of Genealogy, Paternity, and Love."

Both programs begin at 12:30 p.m.; go to [bethchaim.org/calendar](http://bethchaim.org/calendar) for log-in information.



## Our Towns

### Pollack

*Continued from page 4*

always a scholar's interpretation to discuss."

Pollack, 68, taught at the Jewish Education Connection, Har Sinai's inclusive education program, welcome to all families. The school's philosophy is in line with Pollack's open-hearted approach to interfaith families.

For Pollack, now Har Sinai's rabbi emeritus, retirement already feels different from when he was leading a busy congregation. "At this time, I would always start to think about the High Holidays, but now it's not my situation," he said.

A native of Lansdale, Pa., Pollack decided to enter the Reform rabbinate while a college student at Penn State, where he was president of the Hillel. "I had decided to apply to the Jewish Theological Seminary, but after talking to my father, we decided I would be more comfortable as a Reform rabbi, so I applied, and was accepted," he said.

He was ordained by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Re-

ligion, then received his Master of Science in education and counseling from Johns Hopkins University. Pollack also participated in a divinity program at Harvard University and studied under Elie Wiesel at Boston University. He was an adjunct professor of Jewish studies at Tufts University.

"We'll be staying in the area," said Pollack, who now might find more time for some of his hobbies, such as screenwriting and listening to alternative rock, heavy metal, and other types of music. This fall he's starting a master's degree program in screenwriting at Drexel University.

He has been married for over 40 years to wife Robin, a learning consultant for the Hamilton School District. They have two grown sons, Max and Eli.

Pollack and Robin had hoped to travel, but the pandemic has curtailed those plans.

"There are places we wanted to go, to see my nieces in Israel and visit my son Eli in Houston, but Covid-19 has limited us and everybody." ■

[jweisberger@njewishnews.com](mailto:jweisberger@njewishnews.com)



**INTERGENERATIONAL GIVING** — After the sudden passing of Rabbi James S. Diamond, former executive director at Princeton University's Center for Jewish Life, in 2013, his wife Judy and children created the Rabbi James S. Diamond Memorial Fund, a donor-advised fund at the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Mercer.

This spring, with the onslaught of the coronavirus pandemic, Judy Diamond challenged her grandchildren, now in their teens and early 20s, to identify nonprofits in need. Among their recipients was Pantry Packers, which delivers food and necessities to needy households in Israel, and where they volunteered in 2016 in celebration of Avi Diamond's bar mitzvah.



# THE ANNUAL CAMPAIGN EXTENDED TO JULY 10TH!

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Federation feeds people in need locally and around the world by supporting Jewish Family & Children's Services and with JDC, the global Jewish humanitarian organization.

Federation connects children and teens to their Jewishness at school and summer camp with scholarships and subsidies.



## Answer the Call ...



Federation supports JCYF, the Jewish youth philanthropy program for local teens in 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades, in partnership with the Ricky and Andrew Shechtel Philanthropic Fund.

Federation addresses the issues of anti-Semitism and security and ensures the future of a connected, committed, global Jewish people with a strong Israel at its center.



## Whose life will you change?



Federation provides free Jewish books to families each month through the PJ Library program, in partnership with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Federation supports Jewish seniors and helps them engage in our community.



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*The mission of the Jewish Federation of Princeton Mercer Bucks is to preserve, secure, and strengthen Jewish life and values in our community, the State of Israel, and throughout the world.*



# Thank You!

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*Thanks to your gifts the Fund distributed \$150,000 in grants to:*

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## When taking a census, everyone counts

### Pinchas

*Numbers 25:10-30:1*

### Rabbi Joyce Newmark

This week's parasha is Pinchas. Its two principal sections describe the census conducted at the end of the wilderness period that will be the basis for apportioning the land and the catalogue of the musaf — that is, additional — sacrifices that were to be offered on Shabbat and holidays.

But our parasha begins with the conclusion of the story of Pinchas, which began at the end of last week's Torah portion. Last week we learned that while the Israelites were camped at Shittim, the men were drawn into acting immorally with the Moabite and Midianite women and worshipping their gods, so that God became enraged and a plague broke out in the camp. And if this were not bad enough, an Israelite man brought a Midianite woman to the

center of the camp, to the entrance of the Mishkan, and began to have sexual relations with her in front of Moses, Elazar, and the leaders of the community, who seemed to be unable to do anything but stand there and weep. At this point, Elazar's son Pinchas grabbed his spear and killed them both, causing the plague to stop. Still, 24,000 Israelites died.

This week's parasha then begins with God proclaiming Pinchas's reward for his zealotry. Then the Torah says:

When the plague was over, the Lord said to Moses and to Elazar son of Aaron the priest, "Take a census of the whole Israelite community from the age of twenty years up, by their ancestral houses, all Israelites able to bear arms."

Rashi explains, "This may be likened to a shepherd into whose flock there entered wolves and killed some of them, and he counted them to know the number of the remaining sheep."

So far, so good. But, of course, one of the themes of the book of Bamidbar is leadership. And Rabbi

Shlomo Ressler finds an important leadership lesson in this command to take a census. He points out that this verse is the very first time God speaks to Elazar after his father Aaron's death. What, he asks, is the significance of the fact that this — the census — is the very first task God instructs Elazar to perform?

Rabbi Ressler says that God is teaching the newly installed leader that he must care about each and every one of his people — because they all count.

So we find that, once again, the Torah speaks to the issues of today. As Ben Azzai teaches in Pirkei Avot:

Do not disdain any person, do not underestimate the importance of any thing, for there is no person who does not have his hour, and there is no thing without its place in the sun.

**Rabbi Joyce Newmark, a resident of River Vale, is a former religious leader of congregations in Leonia and Lancaster, Pa.**

## Our Towns

### High Holidays

*Continued from page 4*

far in a different part of the community every day during the month of Elul, leading up to Rosh HaShanah. For the the High Holiday services for his shul, Conservative Congregation Brothers of Israel in Newtown, Pa., Gaber is planning to run different online channels simultaneously, to meet the differing needs of his congregants.

"In normal times, people self-edit themselves about how long they come to services," Gaber said. "My expectation is people will pop in and pop out of activities, and I want to give them permission to do so. My job as rabbi is to help my congregation nourish their souls during High Holidays."

One channel will feature a traditional, though abbreviated, Conservative service in 30-minute modules of Shacharit, Torah reading, and Musaf. A second channel will replace the interactive, contemplative learning service that the synagogue regularly offers; it will include options for meditation and for diving deeper into relevant topics and prayers.

The Jewish Center in Princeton is seeking to enhance its use of Zoom and Livestream for the High Holidays. "We are looking for ways to make the services more stimulating and meaningful to people if they cannot attend services in the building," said Randall Brett, president of the Conservative synagogue. Congregation representatives are talking to production companies that stage large events, he said, "to see if they can help us make things more interesting, so people aren't sitting passively at a screen for three or more hours." Cameras may be set up

in different parts of the sanctuary, and certain elements of the services — like the president's Kol Nidrei address, sermons, and divrei Torah — may be prerecorded.

Leaders of Beth El Synagogue, the Conservative congregation in East Windsor, are weighing a range of possibilities, all of which include a virtual component. Rabbi Jay Kornsgold said he hopes that at least a small contingent of worshippers will be able to attend services in person. "Sitting at home is not the same thing as coming to shul," he said. "We feel if we can somehow do something in person, it will allow those people to have a different experience than those at home. But," he acknowledged, "we are in uncharted territory."

Adler of Adath Israel said his congregation is looking at two options, one with everyone participating remotely, possibly with a small number in the sanctuary, and another with more people — the number limited by social distancing requirements — in the sanctuary.

Services at Har Sinai Temple will be held remotely. Rabbi Jordan Goldson, who just took the pulpit at the Reform synagogue in Pennington, is considering ways to let people see and connect with their fellow members, perhaps as simple as having a congregational leader saying, "Good yontif; I'm so happy to be together with you today."

Har Sinai's choir, which is typically a big part of the temple's High Holiday services, is working on a couple of pieces, trying to successfully bring together the individual voices recorded at home into a choral piece.

"It is an interesting time," Goldson said. "It is challenging, but it is making us be creative in ways we haven't been." ■

### Folk singer

*Continued from page 7*

She said she is thrilled to have just signed a national record deal with the Tennessee-based Bell Buckle Records label.

Before her introduction to the genre six years ago, Levine admitted, she had a false impression of bluegrass. "I certainly wasn't listening to it voluntarily," she said. "The exciting thing about bluegrass is that it's evolving. There are subgenres like grassicana" — defined as music that lies between progressive forms of bluegrass and the broad spectrum of Americana — "which is my style, and elements of folk."

Levine, who has no formal training, said she has always loved to sing and grew up listening to the folk music of Pete Seeger, Arlo Guthrie, and Judy Collins. She only decided to pursue a professional career in music in 2006, when she returned to New Jersey after living and working corporate jobs in Pennsylvania for 20 years.

She began by singing vocal harmony with a number of folk groups. She has since been hailed by Midwest Record, an online journal, as "the new standard bearer for folk music" and has released three albums, including "Facets of Folk" in 2019, which hit No. 1 on the Folk Alliance International Folk DJ charts and had nine songs featured among its Top 20. Levine has appeared on numerous radio programs and performed at venues and festivals across the United States and abroad. Locally, she has performed in a concert sponsored by the Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ, which serves Middlesex and Monmouth counties, and the JCC of Middlesex County in Edison, where she performed "By My Silence" at its 2019 Yom HaShoah commemoration. ■

*Information about the artist's upcoming performances can be found at maralevine.com.*

# ExitRamp

## With a pattern and a prayer

**Merri Ukraincik**  
NJN Contributor



Close to Home

**Y**ears ago, on the Friday after Thanksgiving, I found myself at Michaels with a cart full of yarn. A doorbuster sale inspired me to arrive early with plans to replenish my dwindling stash. The line, as expected, was long.

“What are you making?” I asked the gentleman next to me, both out of curiosity and to pass the time.

He smiled, shifting around the skeins of wool in the cradle of his arms. “An afghan, a surprise for my wife’s birthday on Sunday.”

“Lovely — also ambitious,” I remarked, before wondering aloud how he’d learned to crochet. “From my grandmother,” he told me. By teaching her rambunctious grandson to make things with his hands, she nurtured his ability to remain in one place — and out of trouble — for longer stretches of time.

As we moved forward in line, he asked how I learned and what I had planned for the wool in my cart. I said that a friend taught me ages ago, and that I hadn’t settled on anything specific yet for the stash I was buying. Like any yarn buff, he understood what I meant by just wanting to have the skeins around.

Now, whenever I sit down to crochet, I think of that Michaels encounter. My husband calls me a little mouse because I am so often scuttling to and fro. But crochet slows me down, anchors me, stops time, and keeps me in place for a while, focusing on the here and now with pretty and useful results.

Crochet has been proven to divert a worried mind as well. According to the Craft Yarn Council, 85 percent of knitters and crocheters experience reduced stress while they work. For me, the process feels a lot like prayer. When crocheting an afghan, I usually get to repeat a pattern often enough to memorize the language of its stitches. It hums along, becoming a mantra with its own gentle melody, something akin to the poetry of the Psalms I try to recite daily.

And yet, I hardly crocheted after 2020 began. Instead of finding comfort from the news in my stitching, the chaotic trajectory of the current calendar year kept me from focusing on stitching at all. It was only back in March, when I came upon the pattern for a beautiful, though complicated, afghan while sorting through papers on my desk, that I decided it was time to pick up my hook.

It offered none of the comforts I treasure in an afghan pattern. It would require me to master several new stitches that would change — along with the yarn in shades of grey, green, and blue — with each of the blanket’s 50 rows. There would likely be more colorful pronouncements than prayers on my tongue. And yet, the challenge offered most of the appeal.

Starting a project usually feels like meeting a new friend with whom I find a quick intimacy. But not this time. Though I thrilled in choosing the yarn and soon settled down to stitch, I struggled from the beginning. The creative enthusiasm that often compels me to ditch household chores or delay making dinner to crochet instead just wasn’t there. I managed only a few rows at a time, though they somehow added up when I wasn’t counting. I was startled to discover it was nearly done.

I worked three rows while on hold for an

hour with Old Navy customer service late on a Thursday evening. I hoped to complete the afghan the next morning, allowing me to lay down my hook and put away the remaining bits of yarn in time to embrace the best Shabbat has to offer: the chance to disconnect, to rest from the need to run and make and accomplish, and to simply breathe.

The last two rows I finished with my Daf Yomi podcast playing in the background on Friday. I paused only once, in wonder, when the discussion on Talmud Shabbat 98 turned to the intricacies of weaving the tapestries that covered the mishkan, tabernacle, in the desert. It was handiwork that ceased on Shabbat, the artisans resting just as God Himself did after He created the world.

*How’s that for living Torah?* I asked myself as I stitched the very last stitch, seeing my crochet project in a new light.

I’m already writing about the afghan and I haven’t even woven in the loose ends of yarn, though I finally laid it out on the bed to get a good look at it. I wish I could show it to you. As with childbirth, I’ve already forgotten the painful parts of the process and am focused solely on the baby in my arms. I’m even inspired to make another one. Something easier, more comforting, something with a pattern that’s more like a prayer. ■

**Merri Ukraincik of Edison is a regular contributor to NJN. Follow her at [merriukraincik.com](http://merriukraincik.com).**

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