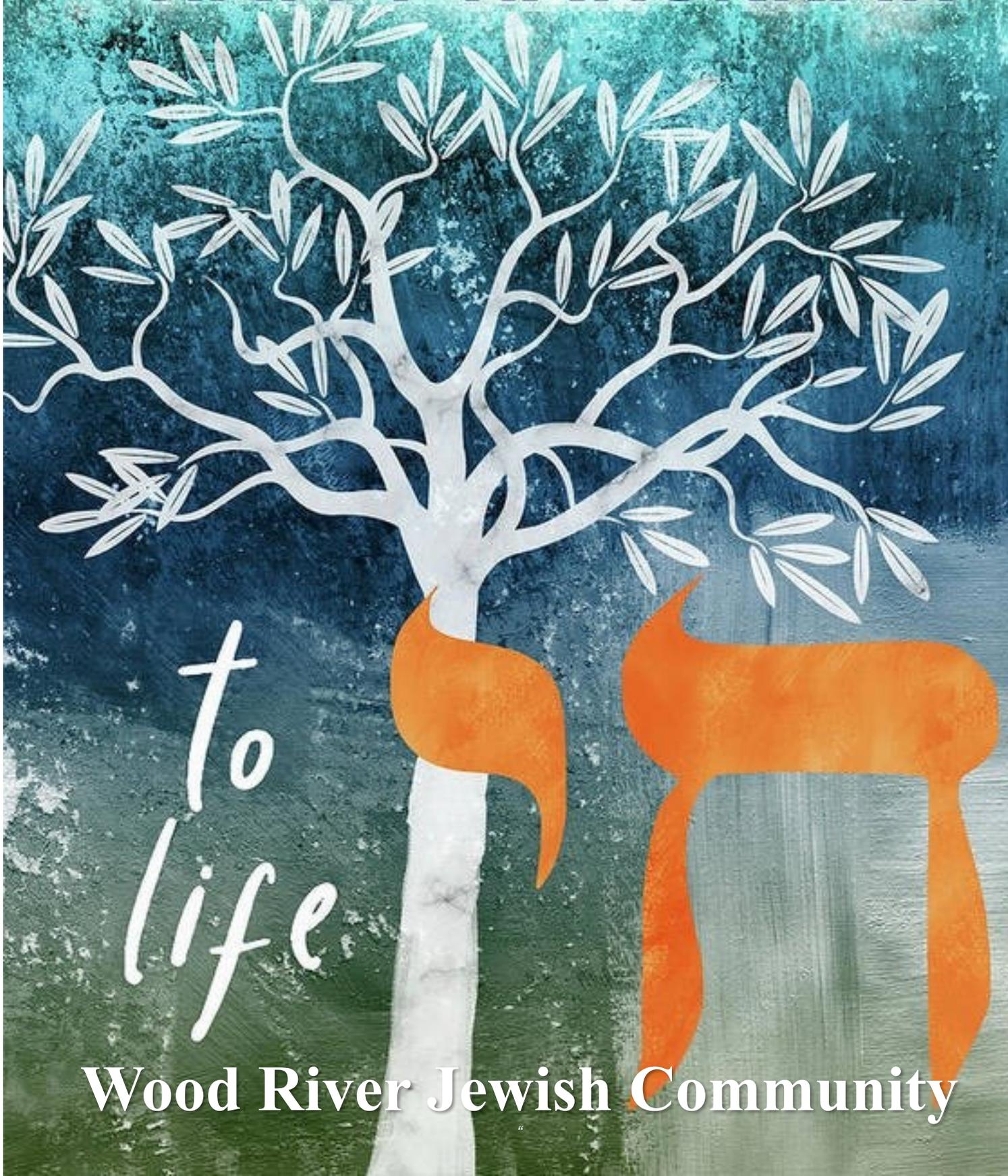


THE SHOFAR

Winter 2021/2022

HAPPY HANUKKAH



*to
life*

Wood River Jewish Community

Co-Presidents' Message

Josh Kleinman

joshkleinman@gmail.com



The Upper runs on Baldy are white, as are the north trails in the Valley. Winter is on the doorstep, and hopefully after 21 months, Rowena and I will be returning to the Wood River Valley in December. Many of you are traveling near and far, let's all hope that some degree of normalcy is returning. As challenging as these times have been, due to the wonderful dedication of our members and staff we have had a remarkable summer & fall.

Shabbat services this summer were outdoors, mostly at the Botanical Gardens and our SV Jewish Film Festival was again very successful. Our Ladies Lunch and annual Shabbat picnic were outstanding, with both familiar and new faces attending both events.

Our groundbreaking ceremony for our Elkhorn building on July 25 was attended by over 100 people and the warmth & ruach was felt by all. The dedication by Rabbi Robbi and remarks by Sue, Jeff and Marty made this special event so memorable. This truly was an historic event for our community, thank you to everyone who attended.

Certainly, an enthusiastic Yasher Koach goes to Rabbi Robbi and Morah Dana for their dedication and teaching of our 10 B'nai Mitzvah students, which reflects the growth and maturity of our community. Kol Hakavod to our B'nai Mitzvah on your momentous accomplishments. We look forward to seeing you at future services and programs with your families.

Our High Holy Days services were attended by over 125 members in a classic SV fall setting under a bright blue sky in and outside our tent in the Festival meadows. We welcomed many new members to our services this year and we look forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming events. Our services were both spiritual and meaningful. Thank you Rabbi Robbi for your leadership and creativity.

Recently, our Board of Directors passed a resolution endorsing a milestone new program for our community of bringing an Israeli Shlichah to our WRJC. You will read more about this initiative from Sergio Bicas, chair of the Shlichim committee program in this Shofar. Our Shlichah, Elinor will deepen our connection to Israel, Israeli culture and Jewish heritage.

Executive committee members Jeff Rose and Judy Teller Kaye, with building chair Marty Lyon continue to lead our dedicated building committee to complete our Elkhorn building project. Updates will be coming shortly.

We would like to express our gratitude to our Board of Directors and all our dedicated volunteers who have made the last few months so special and helped us all navigate through the health and safety needs of our community.

We need to express a gigantic thank you to our Executive Director Claudie Goldstein who rises to every challenge for our community to function at such a high level.

Warm regards & stay healthy,

Josh Kleinman - Co - President

Sue Green - Co - President

Support Our Annual Campaign

The Wood River Jewish Community is sustained financially by the generosity of our members and friends. Our annual dues remain minimal to ensure that we continue to be accessible to all. So we must rely upon additional contributions to meet our budget and to support our programming. New programs will be announced shortly.



Your participation in our Year End Appeal acknowledges how much the WRJC enriches both the lives of its members and the larger Wood River Valley. We are hoping to put the struggles of the pandemic behind us. We need your help to keep creating a vibrant Jewish life for our expanding community.

Please be generous as our future depends on each and every one of you. Your past support has brought us to where we are today and, as your Executive Director and Co-presidents, we want to thank you.

Best regards,

Claudie Goldstein, Executive Director/Director of Development

Development Committee members: Steve Dorinson, Margaret Gold, Phil Goldstein, Joanne Mercer, Bob Safron, Gail Stern, Rhea Schwartz



End of the Year Annual Campaign The time to give is here!

I/We will support the campaign and will contribute the following amount

\$180 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 \$2,500 \$5,000 Other

CHECK INCLOSED: DONATE ON LINE: wrjc.org/Donate

CREDIT CARD #: _____ Exp. Date _____ CV _____

BILLING NAME: _____

BILLING ZIP: _____ PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

Please recognize this donation in honor/memory of: _____

Please keep this gift anonymous.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

**PLEASE MAIL DONATION TO POB 837 KETCHUM, ID 83340
OR GO ONLINE WRJC.ORG/DONATE**

The Three Faces of Chanukah



Some call it the Festival of Lights, while others refer to it as the Feast of Rededication or the Holiday of Miracles. Chanukah, while deemed a minor Jewish holiday, is significant in that it teaches us to appreciate how different versions of the same story need not limit its credibility nor depreciate its value. Rather, we are given a chance to expand our understanding from the various lessons that each version teaches.

The historical version of Chanukah, recorded in the Book of Maccabees, chronicles that in 168 BCE, King Antiochus desecrated the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and issued decrees prohibiting Jewish worship, circumcision and Shabbat observance. Mattathias the High Priest, along with his five, hardy Maccabean sons and a small group of Jewish insurgents, rose up and fought for three years against the Syrian army. On the 25th of Kislev, the Jews restored the Holy Temple and rededicated it to God. We learn from this version that through acts of defiance and resistance, the Jewish people can overcome oppression and live with dignity as Jews.

Another version of the Chanukah story is the quintessential assimilation story. It focuses on the internal conflict between Jews as they struggled to expand and define what practices were acceptable for Jews living within a foreign culture. In the first few centuries BCE, Hellenism and its social, economic and political influences encouraged many Jews to compromise and abandon Jewish rituals and practices. Some Jews attended the gymnasium, participating in nude sporting events, which often required reversals of circumcision. The Maccabean fight was not just against non-Jewish oppression, but against the highly assimilated Jews whose conduct threatened the continued existence of the Jewish people.

Almost 400 years later, the rabbis of the Talmud gave the story yet a different spin. Their version doesn't even mention the name Maccabee and the war against the Syrians or refer to the tensions of fighting against Greek assimilation. Rather, the rabbis focused on the role that faith in God played as the key to Jewish survival. We are taught that "a great miracle happened there" when a small cruse of oil lasted for eight days until more was found to keep the Temple's menorah lit. The eight candles we light on our menorah remind us that we have survived over time because of our faith in God's saving grace and power.

The significance of light itself is another aspect of the Chanukah story. At the darkest, coldest and often bleakest time of the calendar year, Jews come together with family and friends to bring light, hope and joy into their homes. For eight consecutive nights, we add an additional candle, increasing our ability to fight against darkness and despair. It is written in Proverbs 20:27 that "the human spirit is God's candle." Our tradition teaches that each of us has the capacity to bring light and goodness, holiness and compassion, into the world. Through our thoughts, actions and relationships, through our efforts to restore balance, justice and dignity in the world, we have the power to illuminate and inspire, even in the darkest of times.

The shamash is the special candle on the menorah that lights the other candles and is traditionally elevated. This year when you light the shamash, imagine for a moment that you have the power to become "God's candle." What would it mean to light up the world around you with hope and possibilities? What could you do to light up your world? Your efforts don't have to be time consuming or expensive, but consider these eight small efforts that can make a world of difference and a difference in our world:

- Show respect for others' ideas, even when you disagree with them.
- Laugh at yourself, but not at others.
- Avoid harmful speech and gossip.
- Tell someone you love them.
- Donate food, clothing, time or money to organizations in need.
- Visit a friend who is lonely or sick.
- Say you're sorry when you make a mistake.
- Stay present to the blessings in your life and be grateful.

When you light your candles this year, remember that Chanukah is the only holiday when we wish each other "Chag Urim Sameach" – a joyous holiday of light!

Rabbi Robbi

Happy Hanukkah

WRJC Chanukah Potluck Party

*Saturday, December 4 at 5:30 pm
St. Thomas Episcopal Church*

Please bring a dish to share

Last names starting with A-M: Please bring side dish or latkes.
Last names starting with N-Z: Please bring dessert or salad.
Main dish will be provided. Bring your own wine.

*Adult members: \$ 30 per person
Adult non members: \$ 40 per person
Children under 12: \$ 10 each
Under 5: no charge*

Name: _____

Adult members attending: _____

Adult non members attending: _____

Number of children: _____

Total Amount enclosed \$ _____

Check enclosed:

Credit Card:# _____

Name on card: _____

Exp.date: ____/____

CV Code: _____ Billing zip code _____



You are invited to

Piano Recital by Magdalena Stern-Baczewska

Presented by

The Wood River Jewish Community

Saturday, November 27 at 6:00 P.M.
St Thomas Episcopal Church. Sun Valley Road, Sun valley, ID



“One of the most innovative, even radical classical keyboardists in the U.S.”
“Columbia University professor by day, musical sorceress by night.”

Works by Chopin, Schumann, Monk, Bonds and Price”

“More information about the artist at MagdalenaNYC.com”

There is no admission fee but donations are gratefully accepted.

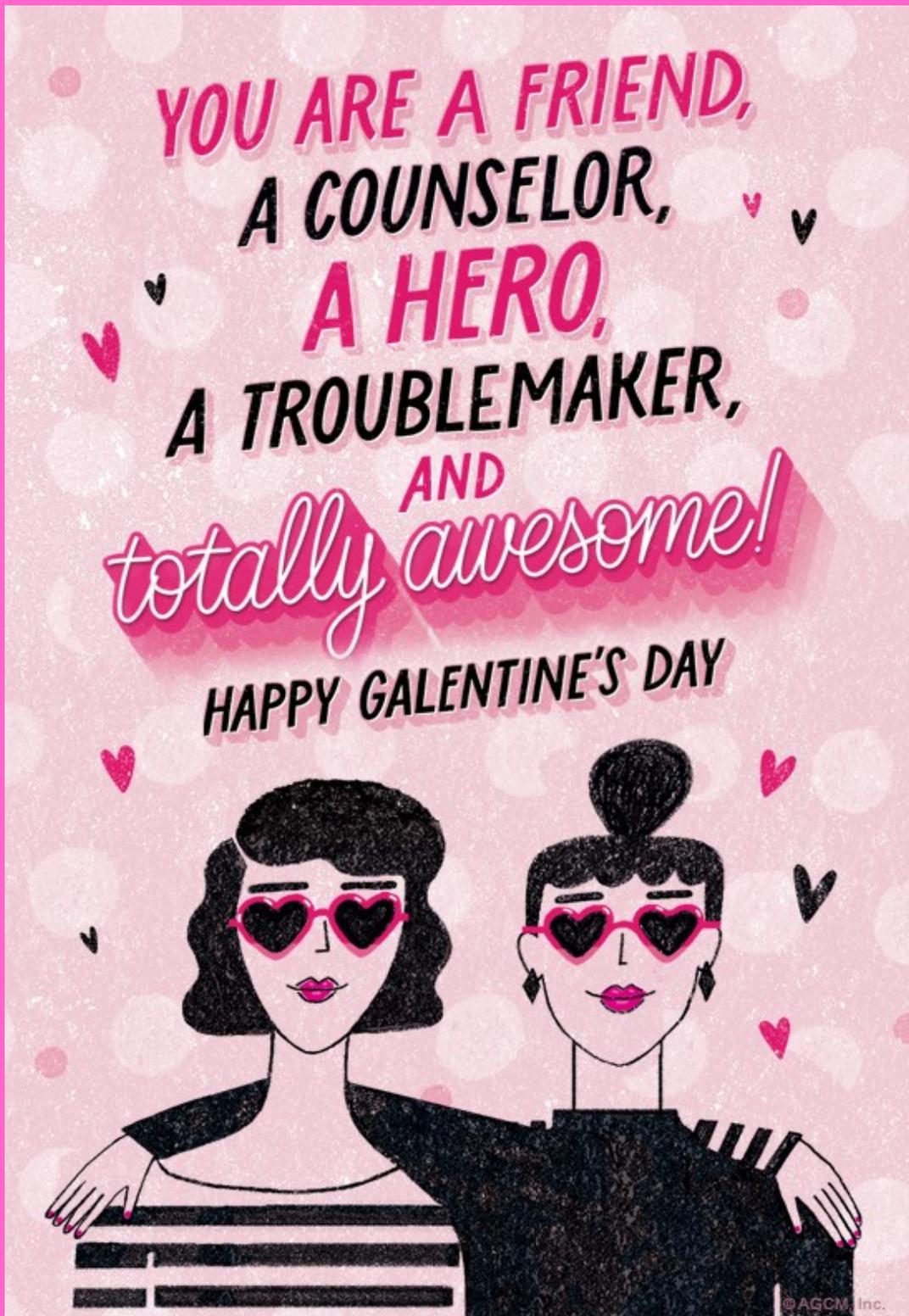
Proceeds to benefit The Hunger Coalition.

*Donation should be sent to WRJC. POB 837. Ketchum, ID 83340
or online www.wrjc.org/donate*



WRJC LADIES LUNCH

Monday, Feb. 14, 2022 at 12 noon



PRICE: \$40 MEMBERS . \$45 NON MEMBERS

PLEASE REPLY claudie@wrjc.org or send check to WRJC PO Box 837, Ketchum, ID 83340

Building Update

Hello,

We hope your New year is off to a beautiful, healthy, and happy beginning. As 2022 is ready to begin, with our goal of moving into our permanent home in the fall, here is a brief update as to the progress:

Thank you to all of our donors and, with the sanctuary project underway, the exceptional generosity of the Lewis Family and Judith Teller-Kaye and David Kaye has enabled our interior designs for the sanctuary (see below) created by Marc Trudeau to come to life. Marc's beautiful creations of the Torah Ark and surrounding structures within the sanctuary will enhance our new home and bring us a warm and inspiring place of worship and prayer for years to come.

With your generosity we have raised more than our first phase goal, and with your additional 2021 contributions to the WRJC Building Fund we are making our new home even more beautiful and functional. We extend thanks to all of our donors who have given in 2020 and 2021. We encourage those who have yet to give and those who can increase their giving to do so for 2021-22.

A special thank you to the WRJC Building Campaign Co-Chairs, Marty Lyon – whose tireless work has brought us to this point. And to Judy Teller-Kaye, who as WRJC Treasurer has managed the fiscal process and responsibilities beyond being such a generous donor to this project. Also to our Design and Building Committee members – Joseph Fastow, Ron Greenspan, Phil Goldstein, Robert Saffron, Julianne Roos, and others not listed here. Also, to our Board Advisor Buzz Coe for taking a particular interest in this project.

Finally, joining our existing Torahs stored in our office at Leadville, Joseph and Ellen Fastow have donated a Torah that has been in their family for many years, as it has been passed down through the Fastow family - "L'dor V'dor – from generation to generation" - our thanks for this gift will continue for generations to come.

To all, thank you again for your continued support of this project.

Jeff Rose
WRJC Building Co-Chair
On Behalf of the WRJC Building & Design Committees



Shlichim Program

The WRJC has the opportunity to bring added Jewish programming to the Wood River Valley community through a Shaliach. A Shaliach (shalee-ach) in Hebrew means "emissary".

Our Shlichah is a young and passionate Israeli who will engage the WRJC in Jewish activities, culture and identity, connections to Israel, and Hebrew language.

There are formal Shlichim (plural for Shaliach) programs that send young Israelis to work and live in Jewish communities throughout the world, including summer camps, schools, synagogues, and universities. Through Maccabi World Union and The Jewish Agency for Israel, we will find a young person specially well-suited for this Valley, a young Israeli with great qualities and experience in education and leadership, and love of Israel and nature.

Some areas that will benefit from the Shlichah's activities include growing the engagement of our members, increasing membership through added activities for adults, young adults, children and teens; a year-round native-speaker Hebrew edu-

cator to work with our staff and leaders and strong Israeli presence that will help counteract Anti-semitism and misinformation about Israel

The WRJC Shaliach will help run and invigorate programs, collaborating with the Rabbi Robbi, Dana, Claudie and the WRJC Committees on activities such as:

- Teen Programing
- Adult Education
- Multi-Generational Social Activities
- Youth Groups and camps
- Hebrew School
- Conversational Hebrew for Adults
- Community Outreach
- Family Shabbat weekend
- Israel content
- Outdoors activities

We will keep you updated as we continue to pursue this program.

Sergio Bicas, Program Coordinator



SUNDAY SCHOOL

SCHEDULE

2021: November 21. December 5. December 12.
2022: January 9. January 23. February 2. February 13. February 27.
March 6. April 3. April 10. April 24. May 8. May 22

Kids 4/8 years old: 3:45pm to 4:30pm — 9 /12 years old: 4:30pm to 5:30pm

Teachers: Morah Dana Berntson with Rabbi Robbi in attendance whenever possible.

Contact Dana at 208-720-7595 or danahenry@gmail.com

WELCOME to our newest MEMBERS!

Rabbi Marty Levy and Kaycee Canter-Levy

Rabbi Martin and Kaycee are delighted to be part of the WRJC. Rabbi Martin served as the first full-time rabbi for the Wood River community, from 2002 to 2006. During that time period the congregation grew from 70 members to more than 200 member units. In the past twelve years, Rabbi Martin has served as the spiritual leader for Congregation Beit Tikva in Santa Fe, N.M. During the past decade Rabbi Martin has built a dynamic Reform congregation with the help of his wife Kaycee, who is part of the religious school staff and also serves on the board of trustees. Rabbi Martin has continued his interfaith work in Santa Fe, and also assists the Jewish Federation of Northern New Mexico.

Kaycee and Rabbi Martin were married six years ago, in Kaycee's hometown of Las Vegas, Nevada. They met at a Chanukah celebration in Santa Fe, a few years earlier. Kaycee is a graduate of UNLV, and was the youngest person in the history of Nevada to receive her real estate license (at the age of eighteen). She was involved in commercial real estate in Las Vegas and Austin, Texas for many years.

In her early twenties, Kaycee traveled to Israel and volunteered to serve in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces). She was trained as a tank mechanic and served in the desert region for more than a year. When items need fixing in their home, Kaycee is the most competent repair person! Recently Kaycee completed her para-legal studies in Santa Fe, and is now employed as a certified para-legal in one of New Mexico's oldest law firms. She is thrilled to be involved in the legal profession at this time.

Rabbi Martin and Kaycee visited Sun Valley in August 2017, meeting with many friends and also spending valuable time at the skating rink. Rabbi Martin is one of the leaders of the Santa Fe skating club, and has given much volunteer time to teaching young children the basics of figure skating. In the spring of 2015, Martin skated in the U.S. National Adult Figure Skating Championships in Salt Lake City.

He and his partner Marie won the Centennial Dance gold medal. This was an exciting event, as Rabbi Martin and his partner had only been able to practice for fourteen days prior to the competition. The first place medal was a fitting way to conclude his amateur skating career. Over the past few summers, Rabbi Martin has returned to the tennis courts, enjoying doubles games with Kaycee. He is sometimes referred to as "Rabbi Zamboni" when on the tennis courts.

Friends from Sun Valley have visited Kaycee and the Rabbi in the past decade. You are always welcome to call and visit with us in our adopted home town. Our newest WRJC members are looking forward to a Sun Valley visit in the summer of 2022. Warm wishes to the WRJC congregation for a wonderful Chanukah celebration.



The Meyer Family

We are the Meyer family - Jon, Julie, Riley (9), Dylan (7) and Cole (5) + our 12 year old goldendoodle, Dexter.

Jon grew up in Denver, CO and Julie in Houston, TX. After living in San Francisco for ~19 years, we decided to embark on a new adventure and were lucky enough to land in the Wood River Valley. We arrived in August and are so happy to be here, exploring and experiencing a new way of life in a small community. We enjoy most of the outdoor activities that the valley has to offer and are looking forward to skiing in our back yard this winter (we will not miss the drive from SF to Tahoe one bit)!

We are loving life here thus far, though everything still feels very new. We are looking forward to meeting members of the WRJC.



Tony Prater and Robin Dober

Tony was born and raised in Twin Falls, a descendant of Basque immigrants. Growing up in Idaho, he developed a deep appreciation for the outdoors and the Western life-style. He has worked at Jensen Jewelers for 43 years and been the CEO since 2006. Under his leadership, Tony has grown the company to 16 stores, located throughout 4 western states. In his free time, Tony likes to fly fish, travel and be involved in community projects. Robin was born in Trumbull, Connecticut and moved to Boston after college. She and Tony met through work, when she was employed by a company that developed software for the jewelry industry. In 1998, Robin moved to Idaho and she and Tony were married one year later. In addition to continuing her work with the software company, Robin opened a paint-your-own-pottery shop in Twin Falls in 2003 (called Hands On) and ran the store until she sold it in 2017. She is now a part time Pilates instructor. Robin loves to hike, bike, read and travel. Together, Robin and Tony have been organizing the Wednesday night summer concert series, *Twin Falls Tonight*, in Downtown Twin. They are both passionate about promoting Downtown Twin Falls and Tony is even referred to as the "Godfather of Twin Falls". They have two children, Vince (and wife Kristen) and Seneca (and

husband Matt), one grandchild, Keegan and two cats.

When Robin opened her business, she placed mezuzahs on the doors. Over time, these mezuzahs taught her that there were many more Jews in the Twin Falls area than she had originally thought and she slowly began collecting their contact information. When a car accident in 2005 left 6 young Israelis injured and stranded in Twin, Robin and Tony opened their home and hearts to these fellow Jews. After the kids were safely home in Israeli, Robin and Tony decided it was time to form Beth Chaverim of Southern Idaho, a group of Jews who meet and celebrate together in the Twin Falls area. And Tony felt the call to lead this community and became a Humanistic Rabbi in 2014. Tony and Robin are members, not only of the Wood River Jewish community and Beth Chaverim of Southern Idaho but they also belong to Congregation Ahavath Beth Israel in Boise.



Bob Block and Sue Barkhust

Sharon and Michael Landau

Larry and Gloria Monkarsh

Stuart and Michele Shanus

SAVE THE DATE!
December 18, 2021

**LET'S WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS
WITH A PARTY!**

Home of Susan and Ron Greenspan

A Story of Survival in the Warsaw Ghetto

Fran Michael was interviewed by Leslie Kaplan

Most of us have heard many personal stories about the Holocaust. We heard these stories as children, from our parents, our religious school teachers, our friends' parents. These are stories of survival, of suffering, of miraculous luck and unimaginable cruelty. Many people and organizations have worked tirelessly to document these stories in written format, recorded audio format and on film. The importance of remembering is ingrained in us as Jews. "Never again" is a phrase we all know in relation to the Holocaust, lest the world forget the brutality and atrocities, or even worse, deny that the Holocaust even happened.

As Jews, we have a responsibility to retell these stories to keep them alive and to honor all those who suffered or perished at the hands of the Nazis. Our member Fran Michael, has offered the remarkable story of her parents, who against all odds, survived the Warsaw Ghetto, eventually escaped to the Polish countryside, married, and ultimately emigrated to America.

Both of Fran's parents had the fortitude, when they were in their 60's, to put their stories down on paper for future generations to read. They wanted to be sure that others did not forget the atrocities of the Holocaust. They also wanted it to be known that many Jews fought back for their lives.

In 1981 Fran's father, Ralph Schifberg, wrote "I feel a weight that will not be lifted until after I have told this story. I must write about what happened in the Warsaw Ghetto after April 19, 1943 (until October 1943) because I am the only who can."

Ralph was born in Warsaw in 1922; his family included six brothers and three sisters. The family lived in a small basement apartment that was shared with the family business, eventually moving to a larger ground floor apartment with a private bathroom and a balcony. "(Ralph's) family manufactured folding beds and chairs. These were items much in demand in Warsaw, a city of large families who lived in relatively small apartments." The family lived comfortably, with all members helping out in the family business. Ralph went to the Jewish school, had a bar mitzvah and was an active participant in the Zionist movement called Betar. Many Jewish youth participated in Zionist movements in Poland during this time.

In 1939, one of Ralph's older brothers, Avraham-Menashe, a devoted Zionist, decided to leave Poland for Palestine. He eventually made it to Palestine, much to the joy of their father, and was the only immediate family member aside from Ralph who survived the Holocaust.

Zelechow, Poland, a village about 85 km outside of Warsaw. Her father was a boot maker. She had three sisters and one brother. Hannah's family, though not wealthy by any means, lived very comfortably. Hannah joined a Zionist youth group when she was eleven called the National Guardian (Hashomer Haleumi). The children danced Israeli folk dances, sang Hebrew songs, went on hikes and listened to lectures, all of which added greatly to the vitality of Hannah's life. After elementary school Hannah moved to Warsaw to go to high school. When war broke out between Germany and Poland in 1939 Hannah was forced to return to her family and village soon after.



The Warsaw Ghetto was created and completely sealed off from the rest of the city on November 15, 1940. An estimated 400,000 Jews from Warsaw eventually were forced into the Ghetto. Life became very difficult for Ralph's family and their livelihood making cots began to disappear. They began to buy sofas that people were selling, dismantled them and sold the stuffing to the Germans who used it for cots for their soldiers. In this way, the family managed to earn enough money to buy food and survive for a time. Ralph's oldest brother, Herschel, contracted typhus which was rampant in the Ghetto. He died in December 1941.

Between June 1942 and April 1943 there were mass deportations of Jews from the Ghetto. Ralph eventually managed to get a job in a German work camp about 15 km from the Ghetto. In October of 1942 Ralph got word from a brother that his parents and four siblings, a spouse and their young children had been deported. His brother hid in the basement. In December of 1942 Ralph decided that he was at too much risk continuing to live and work at the German work camp. He escaped over a wall and made his way back to the Ghetto. By this time, the Germans had significantly reduced the population of the Ghetto and it was estimated that only 25,000 -30,000 Jews remained.

Meanwhile, in Zelechow, life became more and more difficult for the Jews there. They were harassed, rounded up, shot or deported to concentration camps. In the fall of 1942 Hannah's father went to visit her married sister, never to return.

Fran's mother, Hannah Phrechter, was born in 1926 in

About our members

Hannah later learned that he was detained by the Germans, imprisoned and eventually shot. Desperate, Hannah, her mother and two of her sisters trudged to a village where they found a barn to sleep in and hid out in the woods during the day. One day, Hannah left her family to try and buy some bread. Shortly after, she heard shots, only to find upon her return that the Germans had killed her mother and two sisters and other Jews who had been hiding with them.

Hannah was in a state of shock. After several days, she decided to make her way back to Warsaw, with the help of Polish friends in her village. She went to stay with another Polish family in Warsaw. Hannah was able to pass for Polish, she had Aryan features, and the family encouraged her to stay with them, get a job and pass as a member of the family. But Hannah could not shake the brutal loss of her mother and sisters. While "grateful for the kindness of (her) friends (she) felt a compulsion to be with those who were bound to (her) by greater ties – (her) people. (She) decided to go into the Warsaw Ghetto. At that time, the Ghetto had a population of 20,000." What an incredible act of bravery and courage!

In the Warsaw Ghetto during the winter of 1943, most of the Jews hid in empty apartments during the day, while some continued to leave each day to work in German factories. During this time, there were many close calls with German soldiers. Ralph lived in an apartment with his childhood friend, Moniak. He would go out at night in search of food. One night he made a dangerous trip back to his family's apartment in search of family photographs. Although the entire apartment had been looted, Ralph found the photographs inside a chest of drawers. Ralph managed to keep those photographs in a valise and bring them to America.

It was in March of 1943 when Ralph was first introduced to Hannah, by his dear friend of Moniak.

By mid-March Ralph and Moniak, along with a few friends, decided it was time to move into the basement hiding place that Moniak had created underneath a bathroom. There were groups of Jews throughout the Ghetto living in these carved out spaces below ground, hiding during the day and searching, at great peril, for food and water at night.

April 19, 1943 marked the beginning of the end of the Warsaw Ghetto. The SS stormed the Ghetto but many of the remaining Jewish youth fought back. The Germans systematically set fire to the buildings, hoping to force the Jews out.

In mid-May Hannah and the friends she had been hiding with found their way to Ralph and Moniak's hiding place. They remained together from that point on. Over the next several months life became impossible for the remaining Ghetto residents. Food and water were scant, the group had to move periodically to avoid detection by the Germans and there was a constant fear of being turned in by

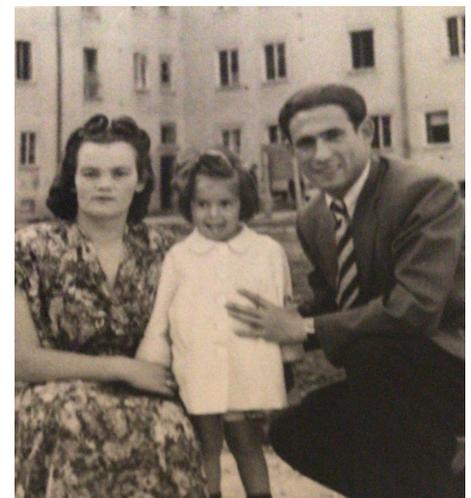
other Ghetto residents who had been captured. The scorched buildings left few good hiding spots. Slowly the population dwindled as people were hunted down and captured by the Germans, with aid from bloodhounds.

Ralph and Moniak, with help from the others in the group, dug a tunnel from one hiding spot, underneath the street and across to another building. This gave them an escape route in case the Germans discovered them. But day by day, these survivors found it harder and harder to find food and water and were slowly starving to death. In the beginning of September 1943, they began to hear noises during the day and realized that people were taking apart what remained of the buildings, brick by brick. They knew it was just a matter of time before they came to the place where Ralph and his friends were hiding.

Ralph and Hannah came to the realization that the only way to save themselves was to attempt to leave the Ghetto and escape to the countryside. "[Hannah] and I were two desperate people, without homes or families to hold us to the past. We had nothing left to bind us to life, except each other. Our affection for each other gave us the strength to go on, our love gave us the courage to continue fighting in our desperate struggle for life. In a way, it was our love that saved us, as much as anything." In early October they decided they would try to attract the attention of a Polish guard outside the wall. It was their luck "that no German was near and that on the Polish side of the Ghetto was an angel. The angel was in the guise of a Polish policeman."

The policeman helped them over the wall, hid them in a stairway overnight, brought them food, and in the morning guided them past the German guard to the train station. Ralph and Hannah had a harrowing trip, with multiple people suspecting Ralph of being a Jew, but they made it back to Hannah's village and hid out in the forest. Ralph and Hannah "hid in the Dobrover forest for nine months, before being liberated by the Russians in January of 1945 (They traveled to Lublin as refugees and were married there." That year Fran was born.

A year later they escaped to Austria, where they lived for three years in the Bindermichl Displaced Persons Camp. On December 21, 1948 they arrived in the United States.



.../

About our members

.../...

Once the family arrived in the United States, they experienced life not unlike many other immigrants and Holocaust survivors. The family was sponsored by an uncle of Ralph's. Two more children were born, both boys. The family lived in Brooklyn. Ralph rented a storefront in Williamsburg and opened a lingerie shop. The shop was successful and after a few years the family was able to buy a larger home in Queens. Ralph's uncle had six children – 3 lived in NY and 3 lived in LA. Ralph had heard about opportunities in Los Angeles and in 1958 he got on an airplane, flew to LA and contacted one of his cousins. The next day he called Hannah and said "pack up, we're moving to LA!" Fran was in 7th grade. The family sold their business and home, packed up their 1951 Chevy and drove across Rt. 66 to Los Angeles.

This very powerful story of Ralph and Hannah (Phrecter) Schifberg is a reminder of the resiliency of the Jewish people. It is a reminder of the responsibility we Jews have to hold close the memories of both those who lost their lives in the Holocaust and those who survived and went on to rise up and thrive, to give back to the world, and to continue the rich legacy of the Jewish people.

Note to readers: If you are interested in reading the full accounts of Ralph's and Hannah's experiences in the Warsaw Ghetto and during the war, please contact Fran Michael at franmichael@icloud.com



*Schifberg family 1932 (approximately).
Fran's father is standing next to his mother on the right.*

Ralph bought a rundown hotel in downtown LA, cleaned it up, and turned it into a business. He then bought another and did the same thing. Fran worked the old-fashioned switchboard in one of the hotels. Over time, Ralph became very successful in the real estate business. The family built a large community of friends in LA, mostly immigrants and mostly Holocaust survivors. The family was culturally religious and Fran's brothers had bar mitzvahs. The family socialized with all their friends and were known for their fabulously fun parties. Even with such a successful transition to their new home country, Fran knew that the memories of the Holocaust were always lurking in the recesses of her parents' lives. Her parents travelled to Israel and Europe, looking for relatives. They found a man who hid out in the woods of Poland with them and was a leader of the partisans who fought the Germans.



Fran and her husband Oscar, last month in Greece.

WRJC STANDS WITH ISRAEL



Marlene Samuels' Column

Marlene B Samuels, PhD
(1) 312.882.1967
marlenesamuels@gmail.com

The idea of Thanksgiving as originally having been a Christian holiday but then, over the centuries, having evolved into the epitome of a secular American one impressed me greatly in the first year we were living in the United States. My European-born parents were Olympic-caliber pros when it came to any Jewish holidays that involved food — from latkes to Hamantaschen and gefilte fish to charoses, but cranberry sauce and sweet potatoes with melted marshmallows on top was an entirely different matter.

My mother's sister, Esther, had moved to Chicago with her German-Jewish husband directly from Germany two years after the war, both were Holocaust survivors. It was fourteen years later when the U.S. government finally granted our family their immigration visas and we joined theirs, in Chicago. By that time, they'd already been acculturated into the entire Thanksgiving dinner tradition, long enough for them to have mastered the event like a well tuned violin.

The concept of a secular, national holiday that occurred annually in late fall, traditionally decorated with pumpkins, ears of corn, chestnuts, apples, and all manner of harvested goods evoked Sukkoth in my mind. After all, didn't those Pilgrims and Native Americans have their dinners outside, too? Of course, never mind that they overlooked the building of a sukkah. No matter. They did get the key points right: gratitude, family, friendship, sharing, and food.

We celebrated our first Thanksgiving with my mother's sister and her family in Chicago, however, never having had turkey nor seen a picture of one, I was totally unsure what it was other than one mega-chicken! And what about the cranberries, anyway? I couldn't help but wonder what happened to the idea of enjoying brisket and charoses especially given how spectacular my mom's was. To me, it seemed that suddenly, I'd become a green-card holding American resident and because of that, I had a new responsibility. With a mere two weeks until our first Thanksgiving dinner, I realized how important it was that I learn something of those Pilgrims and Indians in addition to how it came to be that we Jews celebrate the same holiday as do Pilgrims, Christians, atheists, Buddhists, Moslems, and everyone in between — all who surely were not Jews.

Today, while I busied myself planning my very own Thanksgiving dinner at my own home with my own, now grown-up sons, I took a few moments to consult my notes hoping to refresh my memory about how our forthcoming holiday actually came to include both Jews and non-Jews.

However, more interesting: Thanksgiving has retained its significant role in our annual calendar for decades, offer-

-ing all Americans a critical opportunity to take a break, give thanks and to remind ourselves just how fortunate we really are.

Here's What I Learned: Strong historical connections between Judaism and Thanksgiving actually do exist. Most Pilgrims who observed the original

Thanksgiving holiday were Puritans and Puritans embraced a particular branch of Protestantism. Consequently, they also identified strongly with the traditions and customs of Biblical Israelites. Who, among us, could have imagined such a thing, right? In addition, I learned from my research a fact that intrigued me greatly: Puritans considered that their journey to America was analogous with the Jews' exodus from Egypt into Israel. Hence, Puritans considered themselves to be just like the "Israelites," that they entered into a brand new covenant with God in a promised land — namely, America. Another interesting point is that most Puritans had Hebrew names.

At the time of the first Thanksgiving, most non-pilgrims believed that the Pilgrims modeled Thanksgiving after the Jewish holiday of Sukkoth. There are strong historical connections between the two. Both are harvest festivals and both take place in the fall season. Further, it's during this time of year in Israel that the harvest is ending and final crops are gathered and stored. Sukkoth is known as "Z'man Simchateinu" — the time of our rejoicing and the time when our ancestors gave thanks for the harvest and the land's bounty.

Finally, because the Puritans were devoted bible readers, they definitely would have known about Sukkoth — a festival that may well have inspired them to begin celebrating Thanksgiving in the first place. Saying "thank you" truly is, and always had been, a key Jewish value. We're taught that one of the ways in which to give thanks is by what we're to say when we sit down to eat — a blessing over bread and wine for instance. The attitude of gratitude, "hakiras hatov" as said in Hebrew, is a central Jewish theme. All that aside, consider that the name, Thanksgiving. Hopefully, it can serve as a reminder to us all of just how important giving thanks is and can be.

What follows? My personal and very first Thanksgiving experience. In the transpiring decades, it's come to be referred to by family members as:

That Creepy Turkey



That Creepy Turkey

The entire family agreed that Aunt Esther's obsession with holiday decorations, especially that damned creepy plastic turkey, was the underlying reason for our nutty Thanksgiving dinner. It was Aunt Esther's turn to host the feast and what was to be my first experience with this American tradition. My mother's younger sister adored all the hullabaloo surrounding every American holiday, particularly those she hosted. Esther was the antithesis of my mother who was a no-nonsense woman and considered most holiday-related activities besides the food, to be total time-wasters.

The fact that Aunt Esther and Uncle Sigmund would be hosting Thanksgiving dinner in their brand new, first ever house made it all the more special. Esther would take charge of everything related to the feast: creating a seating chart — something she'd read about in *Better Homes and Gardens Magazine*, deciding a menu and establishing cocktail and dinner hours. But she was most excited by the opportunity to demonstrate her under-appreciated creativity, especially when it came to decorations.

A naturalized American citizen, Esther made a great effort to learn about the traditions and symbols of American holidays, as well as about the foods associated with each. No doubt this Thanksgiving would be her time to shine. She decided that in order to honor the holiday and to prepare herself for her forthcoming hostess role, she'd begin to collect every relevant decoration and place-setting she found anywhere and everywhere months in advance. She was a "more of everything always is best" kind of woman.

Thanksgiving loomed large on the horizon. My aunt's life acquired a significant purpose as she contemplated her responsibilities as hostess of such an important dinner.

The first we'd laid eyes on "that thing" was at the Hanukkah-latke dinner our family celebrated at Esther and Sigmund's small, over-crowded apartment. But for Aunt Esther, everyone declared the thing was beyond repellant. When out of her earshot, we whispered about it in the hallway, on the back porch and at the dinner table. But she was so proud of it, she insisted on circulating it around the living room when we'd gathered for pre-dinner appetizers. Esther couldn't resist gloating about how clever she'd been to buy the thing the instant she'd laid eyes on it.

"Nu, would you believe I found such a thing last July for almost *"gournischt"* (nothing) at a barn sale in the Wisconsin Dells? Amazing, right?" No one dared express less-



Norman Rockwell's famous painting entitled: Freedom From Want

than-favorable views for fear of hurting Aunt Esther's feelings. We knew she tended toward the hyper-sensitive side.

So what was it about that gigantic plastic turkey, anyway? For starters, it had glass eyes that meandered in different directions, in itself beyond creepy. The slightest movement within several feet of it was enough to set its eyes to bouncing. Once set in motion, they came to rest forward but cross-eyed. Surely the eyes were enough to unnerve anyone who looked at it. My brother and I concluded that was a minor yet welcome distraction compared with that turkey's absolute worst feature: the repulsive, overbearing stench of barnyards, cow dung and sour milk that emanated from its tail feathers.

Months earlier, Esther concluded that in America, a turkey decoration was the perfect dining table centerpiece. "All Americans have turkey center-pieces on Thanksgiving, yes?" Then she elaborated about the scene from her favorite Norman Rockwell painting. Despite our efforts to dissuade her, she stuck that thing exactly in the table's center.

"What is it with these people?" I asked my brother in a whisper. "Could it be that they lost their sense of smell when they were in the camps?" I couldn't stop thinking about where the thing had been or what might be clinging to its tail-feathers. Aunt Esther was so proud of her turkey, she'd named it and insisted that in the spirit of the holiday we show respect and refer to it by name — Tom-Turkey, rather than "the plastic turkey" or "that thing."

From my perspective, the prized decoration was vastly out of proportion to serve as the table's center-piece. Tom-Turkey was so wide that anyone seated facing his front, or staring into its behind, would find it impossible to see anyone seated across the table. Just as bad was that Tom-Turkey was no less than three times too tall for the table. The top of his head touched the bottom light bulbs of the room's glowing chandelier. To complete his garishness, he sported a coat of iridescent paint in colors wholly absent in nature. Sure, his tail was made of real feathers but no one believed they were from a turkey. We were fairly certain that at one time they'd been attached to a peacock.

We'd just finished gorging ourselves on appetizers called "Pigs in a Blanket," a ridiculous name for miniature Hebrew National Kosher hot dogs wrapped in kosher dough made without butter. In single file, the fourteen of us moved into the dining room to take our seats designated with leaf-shaped name cards in autumn colors. We knew the significance that particular Thanksgiving dinner held. It would be the very first holiday dinner Aunt Esther and Uncle Ziggy hosted in their new house — everything brand new with a kitchen that rivaled those in magazines. Had it not been for Tom-Turkey, the table would have been a work of art. Color-coordinated napkins and plates in autumn tones of terra cotta reds, umber golds and warm earth-tones graced each place setting. Esther has scattered paper maple leaves atop the rust red paper table-covering. But for creepy Tom in the center, it was picture-perfect.

Esther had arranged vanilla-scented votive candles symmetrically, two on either side of Tom-Turkey, in what we kids concluded was her effort to camouflage the bird's stench. From the look of the room, it was obvious she'd studied Good Housekeeping Magazine's special: The Thanksgiving Issue. Candles were lit, wine poured and toasts were made.

"Mazel Tov!" my father shouted, his wine glass held above his head.

"Mazel Tov and a Happy Thanksgiving!" We shouted in response. Then all heads turned in unison to admire Uncle Ziggy as he entered the dining room bearing the weight of a massive golden roast turkey surrounded by roasted potatoes and carrots on an immense ornate turkey-platter. He struggled toward the table like a stork trying to hide the effort he was exerting. But just as Ziggy reached the table, he stumbled forward plopping the weighty platter onto the table with more force than intended. The table shimmied under the sudden addition and as it did, Tom-Turkey toppled over taking the candles with him in different directions. That's when the event got interesting! Tom's tail-feathers caught

fire, smoldering at first and emitting an even more unbearable stench. Seconds later, the paper "tablecloth" burst into flames.

Those of us still seated were immobilized, staring at the scene but somehow failing to comprehend just how rapidly that flames were spreading before us. It was the mounting stench of burning feathers and melting Tom that catapulted us back to our senses. Without hesitation, Ziggy lunged at the table, grabbed hold of the roast turkey on its platter and made a hasty exit from the room. Meantime, my mother jumped from her chair, grabbing her seat-cushion where upon she began to pummel Tom Turkey hoping to smother his flames. My father also jumped to his feet. He grabbed two water pitchers and emptied them on the burning paper around Tom.

In the ensuing chaos, my brother, cousins and I took advantage of a sanctioned opportunity for craziness. We collected all water-filled glasses then added to the deluge.

"Fast work putting out that fire, Meyer!" Aunt Esther said to my dad. "And Ziggy," she gushed, "you saved both the turkey and our Thanksgiving dinner!"

"I saved the only turkey worth saving!" said Ziggy. "Didn't I tell you that thing was a total piece of *dreck* (shit)? So enough excitement already *mit* this disgusting Tom-Turkey *mishugas!* (craziness). Let's eat!"

Esther stood. Taking her plate from the table, she emptied the water that had collected in it onto the table's center. Next, she gathered her wine glass, napkin and silverware and led our procession. "Come, we still have our dinner and all the food Ziggy rescued, so into the living room. Now let's eat for real! We didn't exactly forget how to eat without a dining room, right?"

"Right!" Everyone agreed, following her lead they carried whatever would be needed into the living room. Ziggy had placed our feast atop the console television. As we seated ourselves on sofas and around the floor, he began his knife-sharpening performance. The first slices of golden turkey were carved and Esther added numerous unidentifiable side dishes next to the turkey slices as plates were passed along. Again, we raised our glasses. My father shouted, "L'Chayim!"

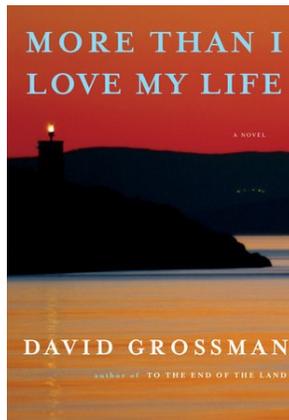
"L'Chaim and a Happy Thanksgiving!" We shouted as one. My father wasn't done because he had an important message to issue.

"Never mind *mit* this Jewish *mishugas* (craziness) about 'next year in Jerusalem.' I say, God bless America, next year in the dining room!"

Harriet's Books Reviews

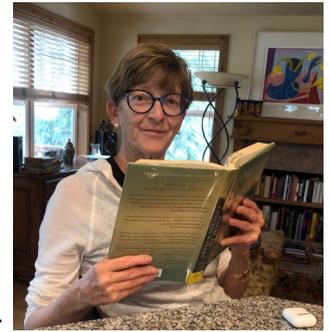
I have been deliberating over which of two books to review for *The Shofar*. I simply couldn't decide, so I will write about both. One fiction, one non-fiction but their differences are far greater than their categories.

I have been anxiously awaiting the release of **David Grossman's** new book, **More Than I Love My Life**, translated from the Hebrew by the talented Jessica Cohen. Considered by many to be the pre-eminent contemporary Israeli author, Grossman has produced a novel that, to me, exceeds the excellence of his previous novels. This novel is perfection! Loosely based on the life of a friend, Grossman tells a story of suffering, love and healing through three generations of women and the secret that has dominated their lives. Vera, a Croatian émigré to Israel, suffered terribly at the hands of the Yugoslav Communists. Her daughter Nina grew up in the shadow of Vera's dark and treacherous secrets about her time in the feared and horrifying political prison, Goli Otok. Years later, Nina, who is terrified of taking up the mantle of motherhood, abandons her own daughter, Gili, when Gili was but 3 years old. The wounds of Vera's history linger through the generations.

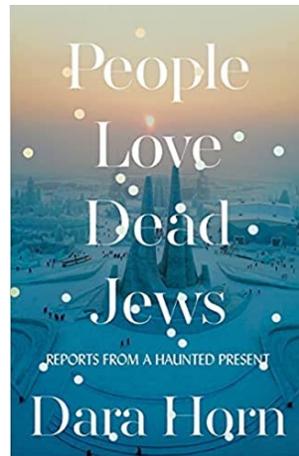


Gili has become a documentary filmmaker. As Vera's 90th birthday approaches, Gili plans to document the event. However with Nina exhibiting early signs of dementia, Gili changes her focus. She decides to document her mother's life before Nina is too far gone to talk about her past. Nina insists that Vera, Nina and Gili travel to Croatia where both Nina's life began and where the desperate spiral of Nina's life was fomented.

Through this visit to Croatia, Gili attempts to understand her own life as she lays bare the intertwining of the mercy, love and fear embodied in her mother and grandmother. The reader gets the sense of history as a never-ending stream of violence...violence that lives from generation to generation.



Throughout her life, acclaimed novelist **Dara Horn** has been asked to write essays for various major publications. She was troubled when she realized that all of these assignments had a common thread: she was being asked to write about dead Jews, never about living ones. The defiantly confrontational title of her new book sets the tone for this dazzlingly readable yet distressing series of essays: **People Love Dead Jews**. Horn explores, often very irreverently, disparate people, subjects and eras...from her first chapter "Everyone's Second Favorite Dead Jew", about Anne Frank, (the favorite of course being Jesus Christ), to a chapter entitled "Commuting with Shylock" to which she listened with her ten year old son, who had questions that made Horn rethink the entire play. We visit the "Jewish Heritage Site" in Harbin, China, a better marketing name than "Property Seized from Dead and Ex-



pelled Jews". Horn analyzes as well the purposes and affects of various Holocaust memorials and exhibits on antisemitism. (Hint: very little impact as evidenced by the alarming rise of antisemitism worldwide). Horn's arguments are fierce and logical. Her research is unique and her humor is edgy. Horn's mission is "to unravel, document, describe and articulate the endless unspoken ways in which the popular obsession with dead Jews, even in its most benign and civic-minded forms, is both an affront to human dignity and a shaping influence on American life, for Jews and non-Jews alike". As a companion piece, Horn has a podcast entitled "Adventures with Dead Jews". She covers different topics and expands on some that are in her book. With these titles of both the book and the podcast, it seems incongruous to say that they are funny, enjoyable and very educational. But they are!

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We apologize for misspelled or missing names. Please email us at claudie@wrjc.org with any corrections.

Thank you.

The Shofar is Published by Claudie Goldstein and produced entirely in the WRJC office.

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Feb. 9-14

March 7-14

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