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BRYCE DESSNER’S TRIPTYCH (EYES OF ONE ON ANOTHER) ON THE WORK OF ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE OCT. 9
MAX RICHTER PERFORMING WITH AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC OCT. 16
ENSEMBLE AND GRACE DAVIDSON
MISS SAIGNO OCT. 29 – NOV. 3
INDIAN INK THEATRE COMPANY – MRS. KRISHNAN’S PARTY NOV. 15 – 24
GLOBAL PARTY NOV. 15
THE HIP HOP NUTCRACKER NOV. 16 & 17
JON BOOGZ AND LIL BUCK (MAI) – LOVE HEALS ALL WOUNDS NOV. 19
BLUE NOTE RECORDS 80TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR NOV. 21
SEATTLE ROCK ORCHESTRA PERFORMS LED ZEPPELIN I & II NOV. 30
STOMP DEC. 3 – 8
THE HARD NUT – MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP DEC. 6 – 15
TAYLOR MAC – HOLIDAY SAUCE DEC. 19 & 20
SUMMER: THE DONNA SUMMER MUSICAL DEC. 31 – JAN. 5
FIDDLER ON THE ROOF JAN. 14 – 19
DISNEY’S FROZEN FEB. 7 – MAR. 1
GREGORY PORTER FEB. 8
DANI TIRRELL – BLACK BOIS FEB. 14
THE ACTORS’ GANG – THE NEW COLOSSUS FEB. 20 – 22
CAMILLE A. BROWN & DANCERS MAR. 3
SCOTT SILVEN – AT THE ILLUSIONIST’S TABLE MAR. 3 – 15
BILL FRISELL: HARMONY FEATURING PETRA HADEN, HANK ROBERTS, AND LUKE BERGMAN MAR. 5
WHOSE LIVE ANYWAY? MAR. 6
19TH ANNUAL MORE MUSIC @ THE MOORE MAR. 13
SMM – THE ANCIENT LAW / DAS ALTE GESETZ MAR. 23
STARBUCKS HOT JAVA COOL JAZZ MAR. 27
ZAKIR HUSSAIN, KALA RAMNATH AND JAYANTHI KUMARESH MAR. 28
MANUAL CINEMA - FRANKENSTEIN APR. 1
SMM – STAR POWER APR. 6 – 20
ALVIN AILEY, AMERICAN DANCE THEATER APR. 18 & 19
THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG APR. 21 – 26
KRONOS QUARTET & SAM GREEN - A THOUSAND THOUGHTS APR. 23
BLACK VIOLIN MAY 8
DORRANCE DANCE MAY 8
SEATTLE ROCK ORCHESTRA PERFORMS THE BEATLES: RUBBER SOUL & REVOLVER MAY 9 & 10
THE BOOK OF MORMON MAY 19 – 31
ANASTASIA JUNE 16 – 21
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MEAN GIRLS AUG. 4 – 9

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Bryce Dessner’s Triptych (Eyes Of One On Another), On The Work of Robert Mapplethorpe featuring Roomful of Teeth is presented in partnership with On The Boards, Taylor Mac - Holiday Sauce is presented in partnership with On The Boards, Dani Tirrell - Black Bois is presented in partnership with On The Boards and Central District Forum For Arts & Ideas.

SEASON SPONSORS
Editor’s Note

I RESENT SUMMER. More accurately, I resent being an adult. When warm afternoons stretch like lazy dogs waking up from a nap, and we somehow forget that it ever rains, my brain reverts to childhood and I can’t understand why I’m sitting behind a desk. Isn’t school out? Why am I still working?

What I remember — and miss — most about summer are the endless days of reading on beaches and next to pools. The genre of guilty pleasure literature, especially. Over a hundred Baby-Sitters Club mini-novels, on to R.L. Stine thrillers, then John Grisham’s delicious legal mysteries, and, ah yes, my favorite, The Da Vinci Code.

Falling into a riveting story is harder now that time is attached to tasks, accomplishments, money, and other people. Not to mention that our phones are sabotaging relaxation with their Pavlovian pings and the gravitational tug on our index fingers to scroll, scroll, scroll.

In this first fiction issue, we’re excited to share with you the delightfully scary, futuristic world of our Jewish in Seattle fiction contest winning story “Next Year In,” by Portland-based writer Merridawn Duckler. Local young adult author Rachel Lynn Solomon shares a bit of her latest novel, which is much better than the YA lit I was reading back in the day. Then we traipse into myth with Wigalois, whose Yiddish story influenced, of all things, Arthurian legend. Need a book recommendation? We’ve got that, too.

We hope that when you pick this up it will still be summer (and not the rainy kind). Check out of reality for a bit and float into another world. Be sure to leave your phone behind.

Emily K. Alhadeff
EDITOR

CORRECTION:
In the June-July issue teen feature, the profile of Nate Kantor was incorrectly attributed. The article was written by Makena Mezistrano. We apologize for the error.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FICTION CONTEST WINNER!
Merridawn Duckler is a writer of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, plays, and lyrical essays (and more) from Portland, Oregon, and the author of the poetry volume Interstate (Dancing Girl Press). She has a Master of Arts in Jewish Studies from Hebrew College and is an editor at Narrative and the international philosophy journal Evental Aesthetics. Her story, “Next Year In,” appears on page 24.
The 12th Annual Powell-Heller Conference for Holocaust Education

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For more information: plu.edu/holocaustconference
## CONTENTS

### August–September 2019

- **FEATURE**
  - **SUMMER READING**
    - Our fiction contest winning story, a conversation with YA novelist Rachel Lynn Solomon, and the surprising impact of Yiddish culture on Arthurian legend. *By Merridawn Duckler, Erica Sklar, and Emily Boynton*

- **DEPARTMENTS**
  - **SOUND OFF**
    - Leaders and lay people alike talk about unity in Seattle. Chabad is the latest organization to give it a go. *By Emily K. Alhadeff*
  - **MISHPACHA**
    - Make an ethical will part of your legacy planning. *By Michael Stusser*
  - **JPOP**
    - *Everything Is Illuminated* comes to the stage. *By Seth Sommerfeld*
  - **THE SET TABLE**
    - Seattle’s next celebrity chef is 13 years old. *By Claire Butwinick*

- **JEWISH CONNECTIONS**
  - Israel programs connect local couples and youth to our homeland. *By Jim DiPeso*

- **SERVICE AND JEWISH LIFE**
  - Photos of our community in action

- **MOT IRL**
  - Children’s author Brianna Caplan Sayres seeks to change the Jewish book market. *By Emily Boynton*

- **ON THE COVER**
  - Illustration by Tracy Lee

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**JEWISH IN SEATTLE**

**Issue 25** August-September 2019

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Tashlich Service – Casting Off Our Sins
3:00 PM • Luther Burbank Park, Mercer Island
Sha’arei Tikvah Service* – For Jews of All Abilities
4:00 PM • Seattle Campus Only
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WHAT’S GOING ON AROUND PUGET SOUND

Connecting the Pieces

Twenty-five years after the Rebbe’s passing, Chabad perpetuates its mission to unite all Jews. Can they bring us together?

BY EMILY K. ALHADEFF
EARLY IN THE MORNING of June 12, 1994, a drizzly day in New York City, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson passed away. Although he was 92 years old and unable to speak after a stroke three months prior, his loss shocked the tens of thousands of Jews who had come to view him as a father figure, if not the messiah himself.

While the messianic claim seems outlandish to most American Jews, it’s undeniable that the Rebbe, as he is known, accomplished prophet-level work. He attracted multitudes of Jews to Jewish life from every corner of the earth, imbued them with passion and enthusiasm for Judaism, and contributed significantly to the rebuilding of global Jewish life on the ashes of the Holocaust. His vision of a unified Jewish people continues to expand thanks to a growing army of emissaries who espouse an ethos of accepting every Jew wherever they are in their journey.

Rabbi Shmuly Levitin was exemplifying that spirit of unity when he set out to plan an enormous gathering in Seattle in commemoration of the Rebbe’s 25th yahrzeit on June 23 at the Sheraton in downtown Seattle. The evening brought in around 700 people from diverse backgrounds and featured Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, a child survivor of Buchenwald and former chief rabbi of Israel, who shared anecdotes laced with inspiring messages of Jewish pride.

It was, in fact, the second large gathering for Levitin, a son of Chabad of the Pacific Northwest pioneers Rabbi Sholom Ber and Chanie Levitin, and the director of Chabad of Downtown Seattle and Chabad Young Professionals. (See our story on the growth of Chabad locally in the December–January 2018–19 edition.) Last June, in honor of the Rebbe’s 24th yahrzeit, Rabbi Shmuly brought Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, a renowned thinker and author of Rebbe, to a full banquet hall at the Westin.

These programs intend to inspire cohesion around the philosophy of the Rebbe, but perhaps more than anything, the “mega events,” as Levitin calls them, are indicative of the way Chabad is taking a leadership role in Seattle, a city that has struggled with disconnected Jewish communities and competition for resources. The Seattle region already has 19 Chabad-affiliated organizations, most of which are concentrated in the city but include locations in Renton, Bellevue, Shoreline, and Bainbridge Island—not to mention centers around the state.

According to Levitin, attendees ranged in age from teenager to elderly and spanned the denominations, including the unaffiliated. Elizabeth Richmond, who has worked for several communal organizations, was impressed by the program and, although a member of a Conservative synagogue, is supportive of Chabad’s work and made a financial contribution to the event.

“The environment in our city is very polarized,” she says. “I think as Jews we pick our camps. We give ourselves labels. It does kind of separate us. The message of Chabad is one of unity. They’re pushing for this sense of joy, and I really like that. It’s really positive.”

Others are skeptical of unity efforts put forth by an Orthodox movement.

“The Rebbe is awesome. I love the Rebbe. My issue is not with the Rebbe at all,” says Rabbi Yohanna Kinberg of Congregation Kol Ami of Kirkland. “But I have taken an issue with some of the approaches of Chabad in my time working in the community.”

Kinberg, who was ordained by the Reconstructionist movement, is openly critical of Chabad’s unity efforts. “How do we build community when one group is post-halachic and one is rooted in halacha?” she asks. Kinberg frequently deals with situations that fall outside the bounds of Jewish law, like interfaith marriages, LGBTQ individuals, and cases of suicide. And traditional rabbis won’t acknowledge her status as a woman rabbi in a liberal tradition. She laments the lack of interaction between liberal and Orthodox communities; the door should swing both ways. “It doesn’t make sense that we have to go to the ‘frumnest’ common denominator.”

The Chabad movement is not going to soften its stance on Jewish law, and this proves challenging for people at odds with Orthodoxy. For many others, though, the open-door policy mitigates any ideological conflicts. “We’re hungry for something,” Richmond says. “It may look a little different from what we think religion is. It’s accessible on a very gut level.”

Levitin is aware of the critique but gravitates to fresher challenges, like Seattle’s rapid population growth. “We have awesome, brilliant, transformative people coming here, but it also leads a little to fragmentation,” he says.

Getting the Holocaust Center for Humanity to cosponsor and the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle, Jewish Family Service, and the Stroum Jewish Community Center on board as partners proved that organizational unity, at least, is possible.

“We are showing we can work together,” Levitin says. “The more we do that stuff, the more cohesive it will be in the community… Slowly we can heal this divide. It’s working as we speak.”

“The message of Chabad is one of unity. They’re pushing for this sense of joy, and I really like that.”
LEAP OF FAITH
Put your clammy hands together for Jason Feld, head of Northwest Yeshiva High School, who jumped out of an airplane as part of a deal with his students. When his seniors came through with raising $10,000 for a Poland–Israel trip, he had to fulfill his end of the bargain: conquering his fear of heights.

“The biggest challenge is in our own minds,” he told King 5.

— Interview and photo by Meryl Alcabes

JEWISH IN SEATTLE

Elchanan Mollot

What does being Jewish mean to you?
It means that it is time to focus on your creator and care what He did for you. Not like, “I don’t care, I can do what I want.” You should thank Him for creating a world for you to live in. If He didn’t create it, you’d be floating in nothing. And if it wasn’t for Him, none of us would be around at all. It would just be a world of trees and animals. We need animals for food and trees for oxygen. Otherwise it would be a terrible world full of nothing but grass. Maybe sky. Maybe water. During tefillot (prayers) we are thanking Him for all the stuff He created.

— Interview and photo by Meryl Alcabes

SHABBAT DINNER GUESTS

Recent newsmakers, guests, and locals who’d make for interesting Shabbat dinner company

1. Rabbi Sydney Danziger, who joins Temple B’nai Torah as the Reform congregation’s new senior rabbi.
2. Rabbi Emeritus Jay Rosenbaum, the spiritual leader of Herzl-Ner Tamid, who retired after 17 years of service.
3. Rabbi Shmuel Brody, who started and led Ashreichem Yisrael, who recently moved to the East Coast.

KVELL-O-METER

HAGGADAH HUMOR
Hats off to Evie Schwerin, who went right to the source when she discovered she couldn’t return an extra haggadah she bought on Amazon. After four failed return attempts, the Washington resident went to the Amazon annual meeting in May and directly asked Jeff Bezos during the Q and A if he could return it for her. Bezos promised to take care of it.

SI, SEATTLE!
Mazels to the Seattle Sephardic Network and community for hosting the biennial Erensya conference, an international meeting around Sephardic Jewish life, in May. It was the first conference held in an English-speaking country. Seattleite Doreen Alhadeff fought for Seattle to host the conference, which hosted 50 delegates from around the world.

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Put your clammy hands together for Jason Feld, head of Northwest Yeshiva High School, who jumped out of an airplane as part of a deal with his students. When his seniors came through with raising $10,000 for a Poland–Israel trip, he had to fulfill his end of the bargain: conquering his fear of heights.

“The biggest challenge is in our own minds,” he told King 5.

HOT DOC
Swoons to Soviet Jewish emigre Mikhail Varshavski, a.k.a. America’s Sexiest Doctor, who saved the life of Birthright participant Matt Faraco on a flight to Israel this summer. Faraco went into anaphylactic shock two hours into the flight. “Dr. Mike” came to the rescue with the airplane’s EpiPen and stayed with the 26-year-old for the remainder of the flight to monitor his vitals.

NO BEER FOR NAZIS
Props to the locals of Ostritz, Germany, who dried out the town ahead of a neo-Nazi music festival. After a Dresden court imposed an alcohol ban on the Shield and Sword Festival to limit the potential for violence, Ostritz residents cleaned out the shelves of the markets in case attendees turned to the local supply. Festival attendance was down by about half compared to last year.
Deborah Harrison trains virtual assistants to model good human behavior. **BY EMILY BOYNTON**

ASK WITTY BOT WHERE THE RESTROOM is in a coffee shop, and it will answer in metered verse: “Two bathrooms, both alike in dignity / In Fourth Coffee, where we lay our scene / To gender norms we pay no scrutiny / And civil tap makes civil hands quite clean.”

Deborah Harrison, the writer behind Witty Bot, is proud of her Shakespearean digital personality. Harrison studied English in college and worked in a bookstore and as a writing tutor before starting in the tech industry two decades ago. In 2013, she became the original writer for Microsoft’s virtual agent Cortana, and today the senior content experience manager at Microsoft is at the helm of Microsoft’s AI and bot conversation creation teams, authoring content for conversational agents across Microsoft.

For Harrison, creating dialogue requires a deeper understanding of human perspectives and communication. “When you converse with anything using human language, you are having the same natural responses — or related emotional responses — to the ones you have when you talk to actual people,” she says. “We honor that emotional reality. It’s really important to us that we aren’t putting people in a position to have a negative experience because of our lack of intention.”

One way her team strives to create positive interactions is through developing virtual personalities that meet the needs of Microsoft’s diverse audience — a goal that requires providing various perspectives and acknowledging the team’s limitations as “a finite set of people with a point of view born of [their] context.” Harrison also champions empathetic interactions. “We talk about how to arbitrate kindness,” she says. “You can declare that a bot is designed to be positive, but how do you ensure that it’s expressed time and again? That’s something we come back to in all the personas we devise.”

Also important is a bot’s ability to manage derogatory remarks. “We built a whole suite of responses that we hoped would make it clear that Cortana understands it is inappropriate to talk to an agent that way,” Harrison says. “The hope was to model appropriate boundaries for the character that we had created.”

This modeling has taken hold in Harrison’s own life. “I am giving these agents a voice I would sometimes hesitate to give myself,” she says. By building healthy boundaries for the bots, Harrison is encouraged to advocate for herself. “Being able to practice agency with these pretend beings has given me a lot more ability to do that in my own universe. It’s pretty remarkable.”

**PHOTOGRAPH BY JOSHUA HUSTON**
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THE SPANISH JEWISH TRANSLATOR Ibn Tibbon (1120–1190) suggested, “Make books your companions.” Books can be our companions when we interact with them through the process of reading. The written word has the power to unite the moment and catalyze feeling. For me, reading and the importance of literacy have always been essential to living a fulfilled Jewish life. Whether we are being read to or reading on our own, the written word has the potential and power to transform and to inspire. I would like to encourage every Jewish person to read the books below. They have all made a difference in my life, and I hope they do the same for you:

1. Meditation from the Heart of Judaism, edited by Avram Davis. In this collection, contemporary Jewish teachers share their insights on Jewish spirituality, meditation, and practice. Spiritual seekers must read this book to unpack and explore the diversity of Jewish spirituality.

2. Text Messages, a Torah Commentary for Teens, edited by Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin. This book condenses each Torah portion in a relevant and meaningful way for teens. Jewish educators must read this book to continue to reach their students through a contemporary and modern perspective.

3. Future Tense, by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. To address the many challenges facing the global Jewish community in the 21st century, Rabbi Sacks has written this book of hope. Judaism is a future-oriented religion, and this book is a must-read that provides the opportunity to see how we can move forward together in the future as a united community.

4. Witness, by Rabbi Ariel Burger. This book chronicles Rabbi Burger’s unique relationship with the late Professor Elie Wiesel as his teaching assistant, mentee, and close associate. This is a must-read for anyone interested in pulling up a front-row seat in Professor Wiesel’s dynamic classroom at Boston University.

SELECTING GOOD ENGLISH-LANGUAGE BOOKS of Jewish interest that retain the emotional charge of the classics while speaking to us about what matters at present is a tall order. This short list includes recent books you don’t want to miss.

FICTION: 1. The Immortalists, by Chloe Benjamin. After their father dies, four siblings in late 1960s New York City seek out a fortune teller who claims to know when each of them will die. What they find out ends up changing the course of their lives. 2. Kaddish.com, by Nathan Englander. This novel is about a son’s failure to say Kaddish for his father, but much more complicated than that, the book’s interplay between technology and religion is fascinating. 3. The Flight Portfolio, by Julie Orringer. In this gripping historical novel, Varian Fry is an American journalist attempting to save the work and lives of Jewish artists fleeing the Holocaust.


MISCELLANY, BUT MAINLY FUN: The 100 Most Jewish Foods: A Highly Debatable List, by Alana Newhouse. Not sure what Jewish food is or what it means? Are there traditional Jewish foods you “should” know about, but don’t? Here is a collection of the foods most significant to the Jewish people, culturally and historically, explored with essays, recipes, stories, and context.
**CALENDAR**

**August**
- **Shabbat in the Park**
  - August 9 at 5:30 p.m.
  - Luther Burbank Park
  - templedehirschsinai.org

- **Confronting Antisemitism and Intolerance Course**
  - August 13 at 4:30 p.m.
  - Holocaust Center for Humanity
  - holocaustcenterseattle.org

- **Summer Shabbat BBQ**
  - August 16 after 6:15 p.m.
  - Temple Beth Am
  - templebetham.org

- **Exploring Dignity – Mental Health: Fighting Isolation**
  - August 29 at noon
  - Jewish Family Service
  - jfsseattle.org

**September**
- **Gaia Dinner with Guest Speaker Michael Medved**
  - September 1 at 5 p.m.
  - Congregation Ezrassarah
  - ezrassarah.org

- **A-WA**
  - September 5 at 9:30 p.m.
  - Nectar Lounge
  - nectarlounge.com

- **StandWithUs Community Reception**
  - September 12 at 7 p.m.
  - standwithus.com

- **American Society for Yad Vashem First Gaia**
  - September 16 at 6 p.m.
  - Columbia Tower Club
  - yadvashemusa.org

- **A Taste of ADL with Featured Speaker Christian Picciolini**
  - September 19 at 6 p.m.
  - Block 41
  - seattle.adl.org

- **AJC Advocacy in Action Dinner**
  - September 24 at 6 p.m.
  - ajcseattle.org

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**Community-Wide Food Drive**
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  - jfsseattle.org

**FEATURED EVENT**
- **American Society for Yad Vashem First Gaia**
  - September 16 at 6 p.m.
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  - yadvashemusa.org

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  - Block 41
  - seattle.adl.org

- **AJC Advocacy in Action Dinner**
  - September 24 at 6 p.m.
  - ajcseattle.org
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Parting Words

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BY MICHAEL A. STUSSER
Looking through a pile of old handwritten postcards at an estate sale recently, I began thinking about my own worldly possessions. Who will wind up with my mini-bottle collection? How much will my heirs get for my vinyl records? And might there be something more valuable than knick-knacks to leave behind?

Judaism has a tradition of the “ethical will” — not so much who gets what, but rather the passing down of emotional scruples scavenged over a lifetime. Known as “tzava’ot,” ethical wills go back thousands of years. Rabbi Asher ben Yehiel (1250–1327) left his community 131 rules for proper behavior (“Do not hold back from acquiring a trusted friend;” “Pave a path of righteousness in the middle road in eating and drinking”). Glückel of Hameln (1646–1724) embedded her memoir with advice for her 12 children (“Above all, my children, be honest in money matters, with both Jews and Gentiles, lest the name of Heaven be profaned”). Famously, Judah Ibn Tibbon (1120–1190) uses part of his ethical will to admonish his son (“And you, my son! You have disappointed my objectives and hopes”).

Elana Zaiman, a sixth-generation rabbi who lives in Seattle, has written a book on the subject. The Forever Letter is inspired by her father’s own ethical will. It cites the above examples and provides guidance for writing our own ethical wills, or “forever letters.”

According to Zaiman, forever letters can come in many forms: personal stories, expressions of gratitude, blessings and encouragement, reflections on humility and vulnerability, even petitions for forgiveness. Forever letters are written for offspring and spouses, of course, but also parents, siblings, mentors, and anyone who plays a key role in your life.

With this in mind, I undertook my own forever letter in hopes I might distribute the communiqué while I’m still alive and well. Every trip I’ve taken has opened my worldview, and so I included a section of my own travel in my letter, pleading for my circle to use my inheritance to get out of town, see the differences in other cultures, and, most importantly, see what we have in common. (I also suggest meditation; buying the car you want; and telling everyone you meet thank you, you’re welcome, and I love you, though not necessarily in that order.)

I’m lucky. My tribe is large, and I’ve devoted paragraphs to specific friends and loved ones. My stepson, Riley, has his own chapter. Full of compliments about the gentle, caring man he’s becoming, it shares my belief in him and future generations. I also wrote candidly about my divorce, and how, while painful, the effort at love and commitment had made me a better person for giving it a go. I shared how important it is to keep striving for interconnectivity, and how wonderful it is to see couples that are making unions work and the work that goes into those relationships.

MEANINGFUL MISSIVES
Learn more about The Forever Letter at elanazaiman.com.

The act of writing any letter — much less a forever one — in this age of tweeting and texting and selfie-taking is refreshing. While so many of us repost inspirational quotes and articles on social media from greats like the Dalai Lama, Anne Lamott, and Eckhart Whatchisname, we don’t take time to cultivate our own set of insights and vision.

Zaiman makes it clear you don’t need to be a writer to pen a forever letter, and she gently coaxes readers through the process of self-examination and discovery. She suggests sharing not just values but desires, stories, dreams from the heart, and tradition. No one likes to be lectured, especially from beyond the grave, so tone is key. Don’t play favorites, give up family secrets, or preach values you never lived. “Our goal in life is not to figure out how to be someone else but to figure out how to be ourselves,” she writes. “When we write a forever letter, we have only to be ourselves.”

Given that I’m aiming for mass appeal, I included humor, some self-penned poems, and a few photographs that defined and moved me. My thoughts also are directed to my (thankfully) still-living parents, Herb and Isabel, who have played a prominent role; while I’ve thanked them for their love and (often financial) support, my missive hammers the notion home.

The biggest benefit of putting time into a forever letter has been homing in on my own core principles and philosophy. What have I learned on the trip? What values do I wish to pass on? And, most importantly, am I living and sharing these values each step of the way?

I’m still finishing up my forever letter, and I plan on distributing it this year to friends, family, and my folks. Like a legal will, it can be revised. If I’m lucky, I’ll be working on a new draft in 30 years or so.
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Illuminated Manuscripts

Book-It Repertory Theatre takes on Jonathan Safran Foer’s defining novel.

BY SETH SOMMERFELD

EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED, Jonathan Safran Foer’s critically acclaimed 2002 novel about a young American man, also named Jonathan Safran Foer, who travels to Ukraine in search of the woman who saved his grandfather’s life, can be quite a journey to describe. Two plotlines weave in and out: One is Jonathan’s travelogue, told in letters sent by Alex, his Ukrainian translator with a creative grasp of English; the other is a magical-realist history of Trachimbrod, the obliterated shtetl where Jonathan’s grandfather was born. Jonathan collects obscure mementos along the way so his family’s history, the one the Nazis tried to erase in the Trachimbrod narrative, won’t be forgotten.
A movie based on the book came out in 2005, starring Elijah Wood, but screenwriter and director Liev Schreiber cut most of the Trachimbrod history in favor of Alex and Jonathan’s comedic and touching road-trip adventure. Now Seattle’s Book-It Repertory Theatre is taking a crack at bringing *Everything Is Illuminated* to stage. A new production, adapted and directed by Book-It’s associate artistic director, Josh Aaseng, will kick off the company’s 2019-20 season with a run at The Center Theatre from September 11 through October 6.

Aaseng discovered the book in 2006 in a fitting place: Ukraine, where he and his wife were working in the Peace Corps. Aaseng read the book during his frequent train rides and found himself drawn to Jonathan’s and Alex’s distinct voices and the zaniness of their chapters. “The humor of the piece was the most endearing and engaging thing from the beginning,” he says. “And then you get pulled into this really compelling, harrowing narrative that ends up punching you in the gut and breaking your heart.”

Soon the wheels were turning. “There’s a very creative use of language that [Safran Foer] uses that I always felt the theatrical medium could really capture in a way that maybe even the film can’t,” Aaseng says. “Time, space, and worlds can overlap and commingle on stage in a way that’s harder to do on film.”

Book-It has been producing staged adaptations of literary works in Seattle for three decades. For this adaptation, Aaseng started anew, not referring to the film script at all. The result is a production that will feature five actors, two musicians live-scoring the show, and “DIY live animation” with overhead projectors and shadow puppetry to bring the Trachimbrod sections to life.

Because of the layered density of the book, zeroing in on which threads of the overlapping narratives to highlight in the script presented an exciting challenge for Aaseng. The Trachimbrod narrative, which spans 1791 to 1942, “is so distant from Alex’s world,” Aaseng says, that “landing on a compelling, creative way to tell that story really kind of formed the adaptation.”

Aaseng hopes the play will touch on those enduring themes of Jewish identity, history, family, and intergenerational trauma that resonate on a universal level.

“It’s a story of creation out of a void that’s been left by apocalyptic destruction,” Aaseng says. “In the void that’s left by massacre and destruction, there’s a great need to create something new…. I think the act of creation — the act of making art — is inherently an act of hope. It implies that we’re creating for something in the future. Making art is an act of defiance against destruction.”

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**Lights Up**

*Everything Is Illuminated* runs September 11 through October 6 at The Center Theatre. [book-it.org](http://book-it.org)
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By Merridawn Duckler

WINNER OF THE
JEWISH IN SEATTLE
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NEXT YEAR IN

By Merridawn Duckler
The day of Team meeting for the spring robot fashion launch, it was raining hard. Other protectorates have man-made precipitation but here in New Cascadia we still have the real thing, from little eyelash dusters, to the full, sideways sliding downpour. I like real rain. I've experienced the human-made stuff and it's just not the same; too uniform, each drop perfect, dries too fast. Plus, it stops. Still, I complain about the rain like everyone else. The last thing we need is for more people to emigrate here.

I caught a few drops on my palm for luck, then swiped my passport, exited the train and went straight into UAI, where I work as an automaton clothing designer. The Artificial Intelligence part of our old name is becoming an embarrassment as Robata rights laws gain traction in some protectorates, but here in New Cas we are very conflict averse. Maybe it’s the surfeit of yoga PhD professors but people only really care about True Forest. History hardly seems to matter. Few among my schoolmates either knew or cared that some seventy years ago New Cascadia was in what was then known as states: Oregon and Washington (alternate spellings say Ory-gun), distinct localities with their own infrastructure and even political offices. You could drive from one to another, back when there were personal cars. “But who ran the passport checks?” I asked Abe, a grand-elder who lives with Ada, my birth-mother, and me, though she has to pay higher and higher taxes to keep him. “No such thing,” he waved me off. “The world was not so divided, then.”

“How did they travel without bio-markers?”
Abe sighed. We have a similar sigh, though no genomes connect us. “It was so different then, I cannot explain all the differences. Will you trust me? Come to seder and I’ll explain in detail.” No one knows what that word means. My birth-mother, Ada, is supposedly researching this seder (sometimes spelled cheder) that Abe is obsessed with. She is a tenacious, driven person, far different than me. She curated everything about her life, from selecting me and my sister as eggs, to scouring the oldie communes for a perfect grand-elder to adopt. I’m more of a whatever type. That is until I have to deal with my boss, Officer Kren.

We’re not rich but we are comfortable; my birth-mother is actually my birth-mother. The papers are framed in my bedroom, which overlooks a south section of True Forest. I am female, self-assigned. I’m not sure of my exact age, as no one cares about those numbers anymore. I work for UAI, of course. I volunteer at the Tertiary School, where I specialize in literature. I love to read. My other great love, much more secret,
is for this self-assigned male named How, who I have known since childhood. I haven’t seen him in many years, since he works at the UAI in Posh Sea-board Protectorate. I doubt he will ever return because all the important stuff goes on in PSR. No one would give a sphincter squirt about us here in New Casca-dia if we didn’t own the last forests. We know we have it very good and are not eager to share that fact with the rest of the world.

I don’t care about politics. I set my vote for progressive and hardly even look at it anymore, though Abe gets excited every fall and always asks me if I’ve punched in. He worries about the oddest things. Still, I often go to him and not to Ada to discuss my problems. Once at the ATM, among all the ads, I got this fortune: Honor Your Elders. I thought about it and decided it was a good idea. One way to honor something is to acknowledge that there is a reason it exists.

The meeting about the spring robot fashion launch had already assembled. My Team was there, though this is a very busy time of year for us and I am fully expecting a credit raise due to progress I accomplished on SOX, the new feline product. It took a lot of effort on my part to get assigned to that unit and I am very proud of my creative work. Just thinking about how much there was left to do gave me a shiver, and fearing my health monitor band would send a report, I slid it under my jeweled cuff. They will send you on health vacay for five reports or over and it’s a total career-killer as everyone knows.

Officer Kren opened the meeting by saying that the past was our strongest trend. Consumers were nervous and wanted an old-fashioned look. They say this every year, as if it is the biggest news. We roll out some virtuals, orders come back less than expected, and everyone tries to pass a levy to make up the difference. Then the Major Sports holidays arrive, and people head for the forest where all is forgotten. For the last few years I’ve stayed around our southern section; it’s just as beautiful and I don’t have to deal with the train traps. Abe and I play cards and I catch up on reading. Everyone is happy except Ada, who urges me to attend these dumb Mid-summer orgies I have no interest in. She doesn’t care that no one marries anymore, and though no one notes ages, she keeps track of mine with a daily graph she posts on the neighborhood FactBook. I wish my birth-sister Bea was here to take off some of the heat, but she elected Mars branch and we only talk on her lunar schedule.

Finally, someone from my Team wrote into air quotes with a question about Easter. They wanted to know what the heck it was. People suppressed groans but I was prepared. I answered that though Christmas is about advanced shopping techniques, Easter, which was once related, had an interesting backstory. Then we presented our designs and wrapped. Mine got upvotes, and I was heading back to the desk warehouse when I got an alert. I figured it was one I’d set for release of the all-important New Jersey look books, but instead it was an amazing message.

How was coming to New Cascadia for a meeting. Now my heart was pounding like a drum. I ran into the toilet and put my health monitor under the hand-dryer so Personnel would just think it malfunctioned. I wanted to sing and dance and also call Melba, Concourse, Sweethbybe and Fila and jump up and down and scream with them. Rushing out of the toilet I almost bumped into Officer Kren. She eyed me coldly and wanted to know where I had gotten my Easter information. I wanted to tell her I read about it, but to make it sound more trustworthy I just said I’d heard it as a rumor.

“From your family DNA archives?”

No. “Maybe that was it.”

“I don’t think so, Dea. In fact, your comments have confirmed my suspicions. So, you’ll be glad to hear that SOX is off your schedule.”

I stood there, dumbfounded.

“But I initiated that line! I have so many ideas for...”

“Off. That is the final word.”

“Are you saying I’m relin- quished of employ?”

“Of course not. You are a valuable member here at UAI. But management has long seen you as more in the financial, rather than creative sector. You are good with money, yes?”

“I’m not!”

“Don’t be arrogant. It doesn’t become you. The move to Loans and Cost Crisis is immediate. Please move your desk, clear your air comments and report to that expertise this after time.”

“Officer Kren.”

“Your health monitor wasn’t just now sitting under the laser-dry was it?”

Then alerts pinged again. How was on the move.

“Off. That is the final

word collapse in a single moment? I wasn’t a cool designer anymore. I was relegated to some warehouse, miles from green view, where mostly self-enforced males with terrible haircuts sat and looked at ancient monitors that were like stuck to tables. I wasn’t going to last a week.

Ada came in with some kind of brown water, in it floated a sphere.

“What is that thing?”

“I don’t know. A recipe for ball soup that Abe requested. I don’t think robota-to-order made it right.”

“You shouldn’t use that ser- vice, mom. They send those parts over here and don’t even bother to assemble them correctly or give them any volition or barely a cloth covering.”

HOW COULD THE WHOLE WORLD COLLAPSE IN A SINGLE MOMENT?
The next day at work one of my co-workers came up behind me and put his hands over my eyes. It wasn’t very pleasant, but I thought maybe something the employees of this department did to cheer each other up. They spun me around until I felt quite nauseous and told me to open my eyes and there stood Melba, Concourse, Sweetbyebye and Folia, looking so stylish they were like a bunch of those flowers that people used to hide when climate change deniers ran free.

Sweetbyebye hugged me and grabbed both my hands and said, “I’m just stealing Dea for a sec, guys” and the five of us strode down the halls, giggling and hanging onto each other like old times.

“Where’s Officer Kren?”

“She’s busy ruining Gaiety Day!”

We went into the desk warehouse. My emotions were mixed because the hustle, the busy hum, even the smell of the place made me so homesick. On the other hand, it felt great to see how far the Team had come on SOX, who sat adorably in the glass container breathing away. Concourse showed me how the accordion sequence I’d developed was now giving off that authentic noise.

“What’s up next?” I said. I felt as invested in the feline fashion line as if I was still working on it. I mean, I’d spent all last summer as invested in the feline fashion line as if I was still working on it. I mean, I’d spent all last summer on the claw spread alone.

Folia had been blocking the view of others. You remind me so much of some people in my past life group a long time ago. They didn’t make it and yet here you are. And now you have problems at work, yes?”

Instead I told him about How that Gzsleb is like fake rain, uniform, everything so perfect and if he ever has tears, they will dry too fast.” I have no idea why I said that. He seemed like a perfectly nice guy who happened not to be How.

“Wait, his name is Gzsleb?”

“The G is only hinted at.”

“How is it we arrive at names again?”

“They’re earned.”

I swept the grasses into the basket to take them to university compost and Abe stopped me and took out the wild onion and put it on his plate.

“No, remember that one was bitter.”

“Exactly. Perfect for this meal.”

It’s just that Gzsleb is like fake rain, uniform, everything so perfect and if he ever has tears, they will dry too fast.” I have no idea why I said that. He seemed like a perfectly nice guy who happened not to be How.

Folia and Sweetbyebye exchanged looks.

“Come on, just tell me,” I said. “What difference can it make now? I’m doomed anyway.”

Folia had been blocking the monitor and now she stepped away to reveal Officer Kren’s bio-signature scrawled all over the project manifest.

“It’s not possible!” I shouted. “I made that! I did that work.”

“People in finance can’t get...
“The commune who copied some
but I still have good friends from
mentioned,” said Abe.
and for everyone.
when beauty was everywhere
kids. I’m glad I grew up here,
stack of bark with squashed bugs
arranged it from Mars. Abe had a
one I had designed for a long-ago
and brought me an Ingrid robe,
told to bring. An avatar came up
the bag of ingredients I’d been
tive mood. I joined him and or-
in the bar in
, which
friends were still my friends.
talking about. But at least my
reinstated.”
be for folks, trying to get them
but some passports have been
tests for bio-markers are never
the glare, Dea. These purity
you’re hanging out, away from
the ingredients for and I hugged
Ada, describing some new recipe
I had no idea what she was
My body completely re-
dered a lemonade and put down
say something, but Ada inter-
Tribe. They were early printers
Audience and have to send Abe
causing Ada to lose her job in
of this sacred text. Now we can
seder tonight. I have four
of this sacred text. Now we can
seder tonight. I have four
of this sacred text. Now we can
Ada and Abe and me.
And How.
lot harder to erase. And it is also
I couldn’t understand everything
that was going on, but because I’ve always been good at
languages, I was able to ask Four
Questions (I was the youngest
at the table) using a household
translator. And Hebrew is easy if
you know anything about vintage
rap music, which of course I
now did, having had to endure
endless loops of it at Crisis and
Loan. We read these crazy
stories about slaves and spirits who
never came inside or drank but
demandd doors and glasses
anyway. God was a constant
word. My body completely re-
axed next to How, who looked
fantastic, even better than I re-
nembered him. He sat next to
me as if we had been sitting like
this forever, and kept praising
the food to Ada. referred to Abe
as Sir (which was hilarious since
I doubt anyone was buying Abe a
title, even as a gag gift) and look-
ing often at me, especially when
he thought I wouldn’t notice.

When it was over, no one re-
ally wanted it to end, so we
sat around talking, discussing
things we’d just read. I thanked
Abe, for arranging this, and said
how much I loved him even if
we didn’t share genomes. He
frowned at that and started to
say something, but Ada inter-
rupted with a fancy tea service.
She asked me how it was going
with the spring robot launch
and then the words just poured
out and I told them everything
that had happened. Everyone
started talking at once. until Ada
shushed them and turned to me.
“What do you mean, no cred-
its for your work on SOX? That’s
completely illegal!”
I explained that Officer Kren
ran the branch like their own
little orchard and it just wasn’t
worth the fight. Meanwhile How
had gone into his message sys-
tem and was retrieving some-
thing from his fancy finger
monitor.
“Is this SOX?” He laid an image
out on the table and I bent down
and examined it.
“Yes. Or no. It does look like the
product but see this claw spread?
I worked on that so long, so it
would clasp just perfectly. But
what are those? They look like
detonators.”
How sighed heavily. “That’s
exactly what they are. Evidently
they’ve taken your work and
given it a military application.”
I gasped.
“No. No way.”
How spread his own hands
in sympathy. He said a political
pack had released it in a super-
secret confidential blast to al-
most everyone on rumor. I
opened my notebook to show
him how the proprietary designs
had my bio-marker.
“Did you Protec?”
“Of course. I’m not stupid.”
“Those can be defaced.”
“Not mine. I use a decoy.”
“It’s not unusual.”
“Yeah but mine are fake deco-
y. So, when they’re overwrit-
ten, they revert into a second
layer and the bio-marker is a
lot harder to erase. And it is also
hidden.”
How whistled admiringly.
“Smart. What gave you the idea?”
My cheeks went pink at his
words. “No big deal, really. It’s
from these ancient world hats I
was studying. Because I’m kinda
into hats, as you can see from the
notebook. They wore these on
shaved heads, for modesty regu-
lations, but then the hats them-
selves resembled even more
beautiful and desirable hair!”

“But they have the prototype
and without that...” his words
trailed away, we looked at each
other and jumped up at the
same time.
“Absolutely forbidden,” said
Ada, but How kissed her hand
and patted it and said we would
watch out for each other.

UAU Bathed in vrients
total light, closed for the night.
We didn’t exactly have a plan for
how to get in but when we saw
all those Roomba lined up for the
late shift we knew exactly what
to do, as if it had been ordained.
How crammed his six-foot frame
inside one and I wriggled easily
into another and we cruised in
like a spring breeze. SOX opened
one eye as we circled, but I was
prepared with shields. I’d been
there when that Curiosity mod-
ule had been installed.
We circled idly. The thrill and
excitement of our spontaneous
pilgrimage had started to fade at
the reality of the problems be-
fore us. How used his pointer to
highlight all the security in place
while SOX activated and sat up.
“I just don’t see any way.”
“Look, I have a plan I devised
on the way over here. One that
will work.” Or not work, or get
me fired, or have How deported,
cauing Ada to lose her job in
Hospitality and have to send Abe
back for taxes owed.
Other than that, great idea.
“You could easily leave now,” I
said to How. “I’m obliged to pres-
ent that option.”
“I am in love with you,” said
How. “I have been in love with
you since we were children and

UAU Bathed in vrients
Rachel Lynn Solomon’s young adult novels, You’ll Miss Me When I’m Gone, Our Year of Maybe, and the forthcoming Today Tonight Tomorrow, weave themes of identity, including Jewish identity, into exquisite stories of growth and development. Her writing explores the experience of Jewishness as it relates to learning and prayer, ability and sexuality, and ultimately, finding hope, even in desperate moments.

I saw you in True Forest, helping those squirrels.”

“Are you asking me to get married, even though no one does that anymore?”

“Yes.”

I looked at SOX, who is of course a non-sentient enterprise and yet I could swear I heard its accordion sequence start. Then I thought about my plan. I’d been thinking on the way over about the story we’d been reading. They left too fast for the bread to rise. They had bread, but it was still in its new born state. I passed the monitor, scrawled with false bio-markers, and went into the check-in. I used my old key to start it up. No one would have bothered to change codes on such a minor matter. Sure enough, there was the schematic from day one.

“I have this idea.”

“I think that’s how you got your name.”

We strolled out of fashion lab, right out the front door, ordinary as can be just as true dawn was rising. Then How ran off and came back with some kind of ancient cart that lacked even a simple hoverboard. He started it up and insisted on seating me and the single piece of code that had once been a full-blown feminine project sitting in my lap, in full view. Then he took a painting of the whole scene.

“I have a feeling we’re going to want to commemorate this.”

I felt oddly calm and very content.

“What do you think they’ll do when they find out we reversed SOX down to its original prototype and just walked it out?”

“They should be glad I exposed such a big security breach. The sensors are so sophisticated they can’t even be bothered to detect the past.”

“Very poetic. We could be in a lot of trouble.”

“Me, I could be.”

“We. From now on, it’s we.”

READ ON
Learn more about Rachel Lynn Solomon and check out her novels at rachelsolomonbooks.com.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY Brianna Ashby
JEWISH IN SEATTLE: Are there fundamental ways that writing for young audiences differs from writing for adults?
Rachel Solomon: To me, the biggest difference is that books for young readers should end with a sense of hope. That doesn’t mean every plot thread needs to be tied with a neat bow, but can you imagine The Hunger Games if Katniss hadn’t overthrown the Capitol? I believe we have a responsibility to show young readers that whatever hardship they’re dealing with, they can get through it.

Can you talk a little bit about your writing process? How do you get to know your characters?
I start with a premise. My goal is to be able to tell someone, “my book is about X,” and for them to immediately get excited. From there, I write a short synopsis, then an outline, and then an extremely rough draft. Each step adds more depth, and I get to know my characters along the way. It’s usually not until I’m revising that I’m able to fully inhabit their voice.

There have been amazing YA books in recent years that focus on often politicized identities — The Hate U Give, The Fault in Our Stars, Towelhead. How does Jewish identity inform your work?
I was living in a bubble when I drafted my debut five years ago — anti-Semitism didn’t feel immediate to me. You’ll Miss Me When I’m Gone doesn’t touch on it, and there’s a brief reference in Our Year of Maybe, but in my book coming out next year, Today Tonight Tomorrow, the characters discuss and confront it on-page. Now when I write Jewish characters, it’s with the knowledge that they have likely experienced hate. Most of my characters are also, like me, still figuring out what being Jewish means to them.

How is it different to be a young adult today from when you were a young adult? Is that something you think about as you’re writing?
Social media, of course, and teens today are incredibly engaged and aware. For me, writing YA is a mix of catharsis and an exploration of modern relationships with characters whose emotions are big and messy. That’s my favorite part of YA: These characters feel so much. Maybe I like torturing them a bit, but I make it up to them by the end.

My teachers let me record their lectures because I have a lot of trouble listening and taking notes at the same time. I sort the past week’s audio files into folders on my computer. Then I download an audiobook for English and curl up in bed with my headphones and heating pad and imagine Peter next to me, warm and solid. His hand on my back, tracing the ridges of my spine. I don’t always think about kissing him. Sometimes it’s enough to imagine him holding me.

I dance my thumb along his name in my phone, though if I really wanted to see him, I could go across the street. Right now putting on a coat, slipping into shoes, walking seems like too much effort. The lights are off in his room anyway.

Playing with him always feels incredible. But tonight was different, maybe because it had been so long or because I was keenly aware of the scars connecting us. This time when we played, we had more in common than we ever had before.

Instead of feeling like the surgeons stole a part of me and gave it to Peter, it feels like that missing piece stitched us closer together.

I wonder if he felt — feels — it too. When my feelings for him changed, it wasn’t because of a singular romantic moment between us. It was gradual, a side effect of the music we made and the hours we spent together. I started noticing how cute his smile was, how much I liked his eyes, the warmth that flooded my body when we hugged or leaned against each other while watching a movie. When I made him laugh, something deep inside me rumbled along with him. Something that said, Do that again.

After his declaration of love, the one in hindsight I wish I could have returned, Peter went out of his way to ensure I knew he didn’t feel that way anymore. I don’t
think we hugged for a full month. So I decided I’d wait for a sign. The problem is, anything can be a sign if I wish hard enough.

Over the years, it gradually dawned on me that if he didn’t get off the transplant list, he might die. And I would lose not only my best friend, but someone I was starting to love in a completely different way. That was when I vowed that if there was any chance I could help him, I had to try.

At dinner, I was surprised by his sudden interest in Judaism. I wear my Star of David necklace every day, the one my parents gave me for my bat mitzvah, but to me it’s more a symbol of belonging to something than a statement of religious devotion. Plus, my dyslexia made my Torah portion really freaking hard, so this necklace is sort of a reminder that I did it.

To me, “being Jewish” isn’t the same as “practicing Judaism.” I’m pretty sure there’s a difference, that I can feel part of something, that I can like that it makes me unique even if I don’t like going to temple. I’m Sophie Rose Orenstein and I have red hair and freckles and I dance and I’m Jewish. It feels like a defining quality, though it’s not the only quality that defines me.

Someone knocks on my door. I’m positive it’s one of my parents, so I’m surprised when Tabby enters.

"Luna’s asleep," she says quietly, “and Josh went home. Can I come in?"

"You mean he doesn’t live here?" Tabby lifts her eyebrows.

I dial back the bitchiness. “Sorry. That was uncalled for.” “Yeah. It was.” She steps inside, fidgeting with her hair. “I can’t imagine how hard this is for you.” “You’re suddenly so smart?”

“I’ve always been smart.”

It’s true. Tabby was seven months pregnant when she took the SAT. She scored in the ninety-eighth percentile.

My bed creaks as Tabby sits down. “I’m sorry,” she says. “Me too,” I grit out. If she can be mature, I can too. “I... didn’t mean to take that out on you. You’re a good mom.” “Thanks. What you did was amazing. Complicated, but amazing. And... I know the way you look at Peter. I see what’s there.”

“You don’t.” I shake my head. “There’s nothing there.”

"Remember when I said I’ve always been smart?" She taps her temple. “Does he know?”

“I don’t think so.” I take a deep breath and then let her in. “I’ve been hiding it for the past three years. Gahhh, it feels like I’ve been suffering forever.” I mash a pillow over my head and groan into it.

“Oh my God, that long?”

I nod. We are sisters sharing secrets. The kind of sisters we’ve never really been.

That’s why uncertainty is so safe: I can wrap myself in this potentially unrequited love and never risk getting shut down.

And as much as I hate to admit it, Tabby knows significantly more about romantic relationships than I do. I wonder what it would’ve been like if she’d confided in me about Josh when they started dating. If, when she got pregnant, I’d been a confidante as opposed to a mess of confusion and shock.

“Maybe you’re right,” I say, and then add: “Thanks.” She yawns. “It’s past my bedtime. God, I’m old.”

I whack her with a pillow. “Go to sleep, Grandma.”

After she leaves, I lift up my shirt and trace the jagged scar on my abdomen. It will fade, maybe one day even disappear, but I’ll always know what happened beneath my skin. I wonder how long I’ll be nervous about changing in front of other people. Peter is the only one who would understand how I’m feeling, but I can’t burden him with this, too.

I mull over what Tabby said, imagining all the different ways I could tell him how I feel. If I could hug him and have him not only hug me back, but bury his lips in my neck and tell me I’m beautiful, amazing, his. We could belong to each other, tied together in the most intimate pas de deux.

I’VE THOUGHT ABOUT OUR PERFECT SECOND KISS A HUNDRED, A THOUSAND TIMES, AND ALL THAT MATTERS TO ME IS THAT IT LASTS LONGER THAN THE FIRST.
Samis Foundation is excited to announce three new Trustees who have joined our Board.

**Maria Erlitz** has worked in every facet of organizational development from strategic planning to facilitation to executive coaching. For the past 30 years she’s helped day schools grow and thrive, as Board President and then Head of School of the Jewish Day School of Metropolitan Seattle, and with PEJE.

**Judy Neuman** was the CEO of the Stroum Jewish Community Center after working 3 decades as a leader in the consumer marketplace. Her dedicated lay leadership include roles at the Federation, JFS, JDS and Herzl Ner Tamid. Judy is a Wexner Fellow from the first Seattle cohort in 1997.

**Louis Treiger** is a Seattle native whose law career has ranged from a partner with a downtown law firm to general counsel to various private businesses in the area. Louis has been a volunteer leader for day schools, synagogues, the Jewish Transcript, the Federation, Washington State AIPAC, and Washington State Jewish Historical Society.

These Trustees bring a wealth of experience, wisdom and commitment to our mission and to the greater Seattle Jewish community. Please join us in welcoming them to the Samis Foundation Board!

A full list of board members and their bios can be foundation samisfoundation.org
The Knights Who Say Nu
And Yiddish? One Arthurian figure, Wigalois, has piqued the interest of Annegret Oehme, a University of Washington assistant professor of Germanics who specializes in pre-modern literatures and languages. She argues that the story of Wigalois (pronounced vee-gah-loy) is an intercultural production between medieval German and Jewish societies. Not only does Wigalois appear in Yiddish, but Oehme argues that it interacted with and influenced Germanic versions of the story.

“It’s really important to see that the Jewish community was familiar with courtly literature, they participated with transmis-

sion, and didn’t just read and produce religious texts,” Oehme says.

The son of prominent Arthurian knight Gawain, Wigalois grows up in a fairylike land with his mother before setting off to find his father in Camelot. While at court, he accepts the quest of a maiden seeking aid for her kingdom, which is under siege. Battling dragons and giants along the way, Wigalois successfully defeats the usurper and frees the kingdom, becomes a knight, and marries a princess.

The tale packs enough action for an HBO series, yet Oehme argues the real stakes of the story lie in what it tells us about early modern Yiddish culture. Several adaptations of the Wigalois story written in Yiddish interacted with and influenced their German counterparts, leading to a collaborative construction of the tale. “So many people participated in the story, changed [it], and made it relevant for their time, language, and religious background.”

The original German text, written around 1215 by Wirnt von Grafenberg, includes Christian themes and subplots that the Yiddish interpretation, produced in the 14th or 15th century, removed. In doing so, the Yiddish version became more applicable to various cultures and time periods, increased the longevity of the story, and furthered Arthurian legend — even influencing later German adaptations. Moreover, Oehme notes that the Yiddish adaptation adjusted the original German text in favor of a more traditional Arthurian romance format. “It shows a lot about the literary culture of the time,” Oehme says.

Her research pushes back against the presentation of the medieval literary canon, which poses German interpretations as dominant. “This is a narrative where Yiddish doesn’t just adapt a German text or retell the story, but where later German texts actually built on Yiddish text. [Later Germans] had no clue that at some point there was a medi-

eval German text from the 13th century, and instead kept adapting and retelling the story based on the Yiddish tales.”

Oehme, whose Twitter handle is @medieval_ista, pushes back on mainstream medieval narratives to “give voice to unheard voices, or voices that are lost nowa-

days.” Both online and in the classroom, she explains the importance of Yiddish texts in creating the Arthurian tradition, which empowers Jewish culture as essential to medieval literature. “I really want to decolonize my syllabus and go beyond the majority-

established voice that students are confronted with,” she says. Her methods challenge customary notions of the Middle Ages — which she argues have been whitewashed to portray a nationalist narrative — and allow students and the general public to explore medieval stories in new contexts, such as feminist and queer theory. It’s a quest worthy of an Arthurian knight, and Oehme is doing her fair share of slaying dragons.

Though Oehme researches the joint story telling between early modern Jewish and German cultures, she is hesitant to extend this collaboration to the cultures’ overlapping interactions. “I don’t want to draw a happy picture of the early modern German and Jewish relationship,” she says. “I don’t offer a complete counter-narrative to pogroms or expulsion.” What she has found is positive interactions between early modern Germans and Jews in intimate, shared spaces where stories could be passed back and forth, such as courts, marketplaces, and weddings. “Storytelling brought different cultures — the majority and repressed minority — together and inspired stories not about separation but about hope.”

“Í REALLY WANT TO DECOLONIALIZE MY SYLLABUS AND GO BEYOND THE MAJORITY-ESTABLISHED VOICE THAT STUDENTS ARE CONFRONTED WITH.”
Shelf Life

FIND YOUR NEXT BOOK WITH THESE LOCAL FICTION AUTHORS.

THE BONES AND THE BOOK
by Jane Isenberg

Want a mystery with substance and a local Jewish angle? The Bones and the Book by Seattle-area author Jane Isenberg uncovers, literally, the life of Aliza Rudinski, a Ukrainian Jewish immigrant whose bones (and a Yiddish book) are found in Seattle’s underground in 1965. It’s up to translator Rachel Mazursky to sort out Aliza’s story—and her own.

UNCOUNTRY
by Yanara Friedland

Winner of the 2015 Noemi Press Fiction Award, Uncountry is a dreamlike stroll through fairy tales, myths, and Biblical tales. Connecting present to past, this “mythology” lives in the space between poetry and narrative, waking and sleeping. Friedland is a German American poet, translator, and professor at Western Washington University.

THIS IS HOW IT ALWAYS IS
By Laurie Frankel

Named the 2018 Washington State Book Award winner and Best Book of the Year by several magazines and book-sellers, This Is How It Always Is tells the story of a young boy who becomes a girl. The novel, inspired by Frankel’s own experience of raising a transgender child, captures the beauty and challenge of a family with a child they planned for but didn’t expect.

THE BONES AND THE BOOK
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Want a mystery with substance and a local Jewish angle? The Bones and the Book by Seattle-area author Jane Isenberg uncovers, literally, the life of Aliza Rudinski, a Ukrainian Jewish immigrant whose bones (and a Yiddish book) are found in Seattle’s underground in 1965. It’s up to translator Rachel Mazursky to sort out Aliza’s story—and her own.

DAUGHTERS OF THE AIR
By Anca Szilágyi

Szilágyi, a UW MFA graduate and former Hugo House and Jack Straw fellow, put out this debut novel in 2017 to high praise. Not your everyday coming-of-age novel, Daughters of the Air tells the story of “Pluta,” a teen runaway in 1980 New York dealing with the fallout of her father’s disappearance in Argentina’s Dirty War.

PORTLAND ZIONISTS UNITE!
by Eric Flamm

Portland-based Eric Flamm’s collection of short stories zeroes in on the tensions of Jewish identity in relation to Israel. Flamm, who served in the IDF in the wake of Rabin’s assassination, delivers a debut collection of stories from the perspectives of disillusioned soldiers, an American synagogue director, and a young gamer.
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Taking the Cake
Sadie Suskind has all the ingredients to become a celebrity chef. BY CLAIRE BUTWINICK
Suskind admits that she was intimidated by Ramsay at first but found his mentorship to be priceless. She recalls his guiding words: “If you want to be a chef, follow your dreams,” she says. “You don’t need to play by the rules. Don’t just go by the recipe. I’ve used his advice on the daily in my school work when I have to do a big test. The same thing can be applied to all parts of life.”

Back at home, famous Seattle chef and restaurateur Tom Douglas took notice of Suskind’s talent. After participating in 13 episodes of MasterChef Junior, the pint-sized cook met Douglas and talked with him about their shared interests in food and the environment.

“Tom is my spirit animal and a huge idol of mine,” she says. “I have every one of his cookbooks. When I finally got to meet him in person, he was everything I thought he would be: kind, smart, cool-headed, and just a really down-to-earth person.”

Selected as one of 24 contestants from across the country, Suskind made it to the semifinals with dishes inspired by classic French cuisine with hints of Jewish flavors, like spaetzle with cabbage and apples.

“I feel super connected to my Jewish heritage,” she says. “It’s always been a tremendous part of my life and family. And it’s been comfort food for me.”

Throughout the competition, Suskind impressed the notoriously tough judge with dishes like her citrus mille-feuille and an olive oil poached halibut. She also won on episode three with a concoccake coated in rose buttercream icing on the cake. 

In the first half of the competition, the teen took her passion for food all the way to celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay’s MasterChef Junior, the kid-oriented spinoff of FOX’s intense cooking competition, MasterChef. Selected as one of 24 contestants from across the country, Suskind impressed the judges with dishes inspired by classic French cuisine with hints of Jewish flavors, like spaetzle with cabbage and apples.

“Cooking is very therapeutic. I know that after a hard day I can stuff my hands in bread dough and knead away my stress.”

This summer, Suskind and her family will travel to France to follow in the footsteps of her biggest inspiration, Julia Child. The teen will visit Le Cordon Bleu culinary school in Paris before heading to the South of France, where Child spent her summers. There, she will spend a week taking cooking classes.

At such a young age, Suskind’s passion for French cuisine and national television appearances are already mirroring Child’s career.

This trip will be the rose buttercream icing on the cake.

Salmon Leek Filo Pouches

YIELD: 2 POUCHES

This recipe is adapted from Gino D’Acampo’s salmon and mascarpone leek parcels recipe. Sadie would bathe in creme fraiche if she were allowed to, and she will always swap it in when another soft cheese or cream is in a recipe. After talking at length with one of her biggest cooking heroes, Tom Douglas, she is fully committed to sustainable fishing efforts in the Pacific Northwest and will only cook with wild salmon. Sadie says, “In order to save the wild salmon, we have to eat them!”

INGREDIENTS

1. 4 leeks, sliced and chopped
2. 5 T butter
3. ½ c creme fraiche
4. 2 skinless salmon fillets
5. salt and pepper

TO MAKE THE POUCHES:

1. Heat oven to 390°. 2. Lay out a sheet of filo on the counter-top, and using a pastry brush, brush gently with melted butter. Repeat with two more sheets of filo. Place salmon fillet in the center of the sheets, gently feel for any bones that may be lurking and remove them, then spoon a large portion of the sautéed leeks over the salmon fillet and season with more salt and pepper. Fold the ends of the filo over the top of the fillet, then pull the sides over to enclose the salmon. Feel free to scrunch the tops of the filo to create a ruffled “package” look on top of the pouch. Repeat with second fillet. 3. Place the pouches on a lightly greased baking sheet, brush them with more melted butter, and cook for 20 minutes until the filo is nicely browned. 4. Decorate your pouches with fresh herbs and serve with green veggies or salad.

TO PREPARE THE LEAKS:

Wash and dry leeks and cut into slices, discarding the darker, thicker parts, and then chop finely. Add the chopped leeks into a saucepan with 3 T of butter and 2 T of water and sauté for 10 minutes or until the leeks are tender and translucent. Let the leeks cool, then add the creme fraiche and salt and pepper to taste.

TO PREPARE THE FILO:

Lay out a sheet of filo on the counter-top, and using a pastry brush, brush gently with melted butter. Repeat with two more sheets of filo. Place salmon fillet in the center of the sheets, gently feel for any bones that may be lurking and remove them, then spoon a large portion of the sautéed leeks over the salmon fillet and season with more salt and pepper. Fold the ends of the filo over the top of the fillet, then pull the sides over to enclose the salmon. Feel free to scrunch the tops of the filo to create a ruffled “package” look on top of the pouch. Repeat with second fillet. Place the pouches on a lightly greased baking sheet, brush them with more melted butter, and cook for 20 minutes until the filo is nicely browned.
Summer Strawberry Tart with Lavender and Honey Cream

SERVES 12

The strawberry tart is adapted from Mary Berry Everyday. Sadie adores Mary Berry in large part because she is British — both Sadie’s maternal grandparents are from the UK. Sadie’s grandmother, Sally, was a superb cook and loved to bake with Sadie.

FOR THE PASTRY:
1 c plain flour, plus extra for dusting
3.5 oz (about ½ c) almonds
2.6 oz (about 5 T) powdered sugar
6 oz (¼ c) cold butter cut into cubes
1 large egg yolk

FOR THE LAVENDER SUGAR:
10.5 oz (1⅓ c) granulated sugar
¼ T dried lavender

FOR THE FILLING:
9 oz (about 1 c) mascarpone
220 ml (about 1 c) heavy cream
4 T lavender sugar (above), plus extra to serve
4 T lavender honey
Finely grated zest of 1 orange, plus 2 T juice
2 T lemon juice (or more for a tarter flavor; you can add ¼ c creme fraiche to cut the sweetness if you prefer a less sweet filling)
25 oz (about 3 c) strawberries, hulled

FOR DECORATION:
Mint leaves, thyme leaves, or any other herb that is in season

1. Blend the flour, almonds, sugar, butter, and a pinch of salt in a food processor until the mixture looks like coarse breadcrumbs. Transfer the mixture to a bowl. Beat one egg yolk with 1 tsp water and add it to the dough. Mix gently until everything is well combined. If necessary, add some extra water. Roll the pastry into a ball and wrap it in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes until firm.
2. Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured surface. Gently drape the pastry over a 10-inch tart tin with a removable base (it should be 1 inch deep). If the pastry breaks apart, simply press it into the tin and patch wherever necessary. Prick the base with a fork. Place the tin in the freezer for at least 30 minutes.
3. Heat the oven to 390°. Make the lavender sugar by blending the ingredients in a food processor for 1 minute until combined. Set aside until ready to use.
4. Line the chilled pastry case with parchment pie weights, baking beans, or rice, and pre-bake it for 15 minutes until the sides are holding their shape. Remove the paper and weights and bake for 5–7 more minutes until the pastry is golden. Let it completely cool in the tin, then gently remove it.
5. For the filling, beat the mascarpone with a wooden spoon until it’s smooth, add the cream, and beat with an electric whisk until it’s holding its shape. Add the lavender sugar and honey, orange zest, and orange and lemon juice. Whisk to combine, and check for sweetness. Add creme fraiche and/or more lemon juice to cut the sweetness if desired.
6. Fill a pastry bag with the cream filling, piped in or just spread over the pastry crust.
7. Arrange the strawberries on top. If they’re smaller in size, just lay them in, pointed side up. If large, slice them about the thickness of a quarter, then layer them in overlapping slices, using the bigger slices for the middle of the tart and the smaller ones toward the edge.
8. Sift more of the lavender sugar on top, then decorate with mint and thyme.
N A PLEASANT SUNDAY MORNING this past spring, 30 local high school students spent several hours immersed in learning about US foreign policy towards Israel. Fully engaged, the teens asked informed questions and demonstrated their nuanced grasp of the complex, wide-ranging issues.

The morning was the closing session of a generously subsidized Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle program, the three-day Center for Israel Education (CIE) Teen Israel Leadership Institute (TILI). At TILI, teens participated in an experience that equipped them with substantive knowledge about Jewish history and Israel, and Jewish leadership skills at a critical time in the development of their Jewish identities and educational careers.

TILI is an example of the Federation’s new focus on deepening connections with Israel through shared experiences. For the teens, TILI was time well spent. Says participant Hannah Boden, “the TILI program was an amazing and inspiring experience for me. By participating in [TILI], I was able to meet others my age around the Seattle area and build a deeper knowledge and connection to Israel.”

Another participant, Edee Polyakovsky, gave TILI high marks for “the sheer amount of material” to which students were exposed. The topics, she says, were presented “rapid fire, one after another.”

A participant survey attested to the program’s impact. Ninety-three percent said TILI increased their knowledge about Israel. Nearly 90 percent hope to travel to Israel before high school graduation using the $2,500 Samis Foundation travel grant they were eligible to receive as a pilot grant, which also can be combined with a Federation Teen Israel Experience Scholarship.

Knowledge Is Power
TILI helps teens gain a stronger connection with Israel.

BY JIM DIPESO
TILI helps teens internalize their connection to Israel as a core part of their Jewish identity.

To apply what they learned—and to be eligible for the travel grant—each TILI participant is required to create an Israel learning project and present it to a youth group, school, or synagogue within six months of completing the program.

For her Israel learning project, Polyakovksy carried out a “distance game” for friends at a USY Shabbat dinner, at which they compared distances in Israel to those in Washington. She says the “most impactful” topic was Stein’s geography lesson, which brought home “how important [it] is to understand the history and politics.” She recalls Stein’s use of a floor map made of masking tape that put into perspective the short distances within Israel. By road, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv are only 42 miles apart, about the same as driving between Seattle and Gig Harbor.

Having a solid knowledge base is critical before teens head off to college, where they are likely to encounter challenging viewpoints and misinformation about Israel. As Boden says, the experience “will significantly help me as a transition into college in the next few years.”

TILI helps teens internalize their connection to Israel as a core part of their Jewish identity. Says Ariel Lapson, the Federation’s Israel & World Jewry Program Manager, “Coupling meaningful learning with immersive travel to Israel exemplifies holistic Israel education and must be a priority for our community to ensure future generations build solid Israel connections. Teens with substantive knowledge about Israel and first-hand experiences in the country will have the tools, confidence, experience, and leadership skills to own Israel’s story as their story.”

IMPACT STATS

30 TILI students

From 30 schools

18 public

12 private

EIGHTEEN communities

4 have visited Israel

26 hope to visit Israel before graduation
A Chapter in Their Jewish Story

Honeymoon Israel propels couples on Jewish journeys.

BY JIM DIPESO
HEN DAN DEGGINGER returned to Seattle after his college years on the East Coast, he found that the Jewish relationships of his youth had faded. He wanted to rekindle those community connections, and a Honeymoon Israel trip looked like the perfect answer.

Dan’s wife Ingrid was drawn to the trip for reasons of her own. Raised as a Protestant, Ingrid thought Honeymoon Israel would be an opportunity for “learning more about Judaism through the eyes of Israel” as well as a way for the couple to make new friends.

“The trip blew me away,” Ingrid says. “It beat all my expectations.”

Twenty couples were on the first local trip, offered to the Puget Sound region by the organization Honeymoon Israel and the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle. The goal was to give committed couples knowledge and a sense of belonging to connect with Jewish life.

“It was incredibly rewarding to see the vision for Honeymoon Israel come to reality in Seattle,” says Jenna Hanauer, the Federation’s Young Adult Leadership Program Manager. “I was honored to travel with such a delightful group of people! To watch them explore their identity or that of their partner was very powerful. Now that we are back in Seattle, it’s been so fun to see how the group is keeping the spirit of the trip going here.”

Rabbi Callie Schulman from Temple De Hirsch Sinai, who accompanied the couples on the journey as a Jewish educator, says the trip was “the beginning of a process, a means to an end — creating a community back here in Seattle.” The key to creating Jewish connections, she explains, was the immersive nature of the experience — nine days traveling together through Jerusalem, Israel’s north, and Tel Aviv.

Avi Rubel, Co-CEO of Honeymoon Israel, says the trip accomplished its goal of building community and connecting committed young couples to Jewish life. “I was with the first Seattle cohort in Israel, and I can confidently say that these couples will be an integral part of each other’s lives for years to come,” Rubel recalls.

For mixed-heritage couples, meeting similar couples on the trip helped with bonding and building community. “Right off the bat, before you go on the trip, you have an orientation, and you realize how many couples are in a similar situation as yourself,” Dan Degginger says.

For Lauren Spiegel and Brandon Lane, new-comers to Seattle from New York City, “one of our big takeaways from the trip is that being Jewish and Jewish life can look different for every couple and family.” An impassioned talk to the group by author and educator Avraham Infeld “really resonated with us, as we are trying to figure out what being Jewish looks like for our family,” Spiegel and Lane say.

“A trip to Israel is not complete without sampling the delectable cuisine — especially hummus. “Our group was joking by the end that our stomachs were just lined with hummus,” Spiegel and Lane remember. For Ingrid Degginger, hummus she tasted in Akko “just ruined grocery store hummus for me,” she laughs.

The trip left indelible memories. In Jerusalem, the group made its first stop in the outdoor market, “the busiest market you could imagine, like the busiest day at Pike Place,” Dan Degginger recalls. Hours later at sundown, “seeing the stillness and silence fall over the city” for Shabbat “got me into a state of mind that, here we are.”

Visiting Yad Vashem made a profound impact. The group was “overwhelmed,” Rabbi Schulman recalls. A follow-up group discussion, one of the structured “Honeymoon Israel conversations” that were part of the trip experience, helped the couples process the immensity of what they had seen. “We gained more insight by being able to reflect together,” Ingrid Degginger says.

Traveling to Israel together planted seeds for building community. Now, the seeds are beginning to sprout. Couples have gone on hikes, enjoyed happy hours together, visited each other’s homes for Shabbat, and they held a reunion at the end of June.

Say Amber Dawn Hallet and Ben Smith, “We are going to raise families together, and it’s an incredible beginning to community we never could have built on our own.”

“This trip will definitely play a role in shaping the future of the Jewish community,” Spiegel predicts.

“Plan your trip”

The second Honeymoon Israel trip is taking place March 19–29, 2020. Applications will be open August 15–September 26, 2019. To learn more, go to jewishinseattle.org/hmi.
SERVICE & JEWISH LIFE

1. MERYL ALCABES; 5. NITYIA PRZEWLOK; 15. MATTHEW SCHULMAN

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

THERALACABES, S. NITYA PRZEWLOK, B. MATTHEW SOULMAN
“Children continue to love books.”

Brianna Caplan Sayres, author of the series Where Do Diggers Sleep at Night?, wants to create stellar stories for Jewish children.

BY EMILY BOYNTON

What makes a quality children’s book?
I want a book that kids love, books that draw children in and make them crack up. The best picture books write words that truly are open, words that beg for pictures.

Do you worry about the future of books in the tech era?
Kids are very drawn to stories. There are different ways people use tech, but I know that children continue to love books. There is something about getting on your parent’s lap and cuddling up with a picture book that is a wonderful experience, and I hope it will continue even in the age of tech.

You recently opened your own publishing company, Intergalactic Afikoman, with books coming out in 2020. What spurred this decision?
I’ve dreamed of putting together a very small Jewish publishing company, and when the name Intergalactic Afikoman came to me, the tagline came, “out-of-this-world Jewish books for today’s Jewish kids.” I want intergalactic in the sense of the quality of the books, where kids aren’t just reading them because they’re Jewish books, but because they are as good as all of the secular books that kids read.

Any advice for aspiring writers?
For simple advice, write. Be creative and have fun with it, and don’t take rejections as a bad thing. They’re just a part of the process, and you’re going to get them — we all do, but the more you write and the more you submit the better you get at writing. Each editor, agent, and publishing house is looking for something different and unique, and you want to find the one who absolutely loves what you wrote, because that’s the right person for you.

Brianna’s Favorite Bedtime Routines
1. Our family loved counting the Omer together
2. Saying the bedtime Shema
3. And, of course, reading a really nice, fun bedtime story
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