

Federation and Hillel at BU to hold Oct. 7th commemoration on Oct. 7

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton and Hillel at Binghamton will hold an Oct. 7 commemoration event on Wednesday, October 7, at the Old Union Hall at Binghamton University. From 4-7 pm, the exhibit “10/7: Human Stories” will be open for viewing. At 7 pm, there will be a commemorative ceremony and speaker. The commemoration is co-sponsored by the Binghamton University Zionist Organization, Chabad at Binghamton, Hillel at Binghamton and the Jewish Federation. The event is open to the community.

The exhibit “10/7: Human Stories” was developed by Hillel International and is based on Israeli journalist Lee Yaron’s book “10/7: 100 Human Stories,” “to preserve the humanity of those who suffered and to honor the memory of those killed during the terror attacks on October 7, 2023,” according to Hillel International’s website. “The exhibit lifts up some of the lives lost, showcasing

diverse stories of resilience and heroism, with the goal of providing high-quality educational programming about this defining moment in the contemporary Jewish and Israeli experience.” Each panel in the exhibit highlights the story of an individual or family impacted by the October 7 attacks by Hamas.

“We hope the community will join us for both the exhibit that details the stories of people impacted by October 7th and the commemorative ceremony,” said Noah Lenkin, the Springboard Fellow at Hillel at Binghamton.

“It has been three years since Hamas attacked Israel, brutally murdering more than 1,100 men, women and children, and taking 250 people hostage,” said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. “This solemn day in our history is still fresh in our minds and souls. I hope the community will come to this evening of healing and commemoration. ‘Never

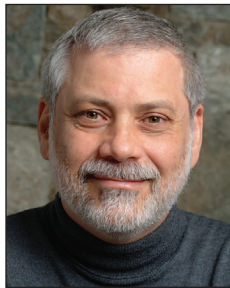
Forget’ starts in this moment.”

Hillel will arrange for reserved parking on campus for anyone that needs it. Those

requiring reserved parking must contact Hubal at director@jfgb.org or 607-724-2332 by Thursday, September 24.

Edwin Black to speak on IBM and the Holocaust

The Binghamton Holocaust Memory Group will host a talk by author Edwin Black on Monday, October 5, at 6:30 pm, at the Jewish Community Center. Black will discuss “How Thomas J. Watson and IBM Co-Planned and Organized the Holocaust.” (See page 2 for Black’s introduction on his talk.) The program is free and open to the public. RSVPs are requested at edwinblack.com/



Edwin Black (Photo courtesy of Edwin Black)

reserveOct05.

Black’s books include “IBM and the Holocaust,” “Nazi Nexus” and “War Against the Weak.” In 2024, he was named the scholar-in-residence for the March of the Living. He also hosts the podcast “The Edwin Black Show,” along with its companion YouTube channel. To learn more about this subject, visit ibmandtheholocaust.com.

“American Jews, Meet History” topic of annual Piaker Memorial Lecture on Oct. 29

The community is invited to the annual Pauline and Philip M. Piaker Memorial Lecture to be held on Thursday, October 29, at 7 pm, at the Chabad Center in Vestal. The guest speaker will be Henry Abramson, Ph.D., the dean of Lander College for Men, Touro University and a specialist in Jewish history and thought.

He will present on “American Jews, Meet History; The National Experiment at 250.” A Q-and-A session and book signing will follow his presentation. Refreshments will be served. There is no charge for the event, but reservations must be made by Monday, October 26, at www.JewishBU.com/Piaker or by calling 607-797-0015.

“Pauline and Philip Piaker were great patriots and intellectuals, as well as passionate and proud Jews. I think they would have loved this presentation marking this important anniversary; the 250th year since the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776,” said Rivkah Slonim.

Abramson is a native of northern Ontario,

who earned his Ph.D. in history from the University of Toronto for a thesis on the Jews of Ukraine, later published by Harvard University. Before joining Touro University, he held post-doctoral and visiting appointments at Cornell, Harvard, Oxford and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 1995- See “Piaker” on page 7

BD Shabbat luncheon talk on Oct. 24

On Saturday, October 24, Beth David Synagogue’s Shabbat Luncheon Speaker Series will feature the first guest presenter of the season: Professor Marla Segol, of Buffalo University, whose talk is titled “God as a Loving Mother in Ancient Jewish Prayer.” This monthly series will begin with Shabbat services at 9:30 am, with the luncheon and program following. All community members are invited to attend.

Segol’s talk, part of her current book project, will draw on Jewish liturgical and

exegetical texts from the second to the ninth centuries to present images of God as a mother figure. “While some contemporary thinkers might imagine that the idea of inclusive prayer language and presenting God as both male and female is a recent concern, Dr. Segol will demonstrate that ancient Jews grappled with these issues as well,” said organizers of the event.

Segol, who was raised in Buf-



Professor Marla Segol (Photo by Chris Zachary)

falo, received her B.A. at SUNY New Paltz before earning a doctorate in comparative literature at Rutgers University. She taught at several other institutions before returning to Buffalo in 2012. A scholar of Jewish and gender studies, Segol specializes in Jewish mysticism. Her most recent book is “Kabbalah and Sex Magic,” published by Penn State University Press in 2021. She is also the mother of two

adult children and is a paddler.

“We are fortunate and delighted to have Dr. Segol bring her energy and erudition to Binghamton and Beth David,” organizers added. “A renowned teacher and scholar, she is sure to spark a lively and enriching Shabbat program!”

Beth David Synagogue’s Shabbat Luncheon Speaker Series relies on the generosity of contributors. Donations to the Luncheon Fund are appreciated and can be made in honor or memory of a loved one, or See “BD” on page 3

“Tradesmen, Cattle Dealers, and Chemists” talk in Norwich on Sept. 27

The Norwich Jewish Center will host historian Dr. Edward J. Erickson, who will present “Tradesmen, Cattle Dealers, and Chemists – Chenango County’s Jewish Community from 1914-2025” on Sunday, September 27, at 2 pm, at the Norwich Jewish Center, 72 South Broad St., Norwich. The presentation is open to the public, but those planning to attend must pre-register

at <https://forms.gle/qXFauzdUNN4Kx-HQ66>.

There were three “waves” of Jewish families immigrating to Chenango County in the 20th century. The earliest wave came in 1900-30 and they were mostly Eastern European tradesmen. The second wave arrived between 1937-41, composed of southern German farmers and cattle dealers,

who were fleeing the Nazis. The third wave came after World War II, and comprised manufacturers and educated professionals, who were mostly native-born. “Together, these disparate groups bonded into a united community that created the Jewish Center of Norwich, built new industries and businesses and opened professional practices throughout the county,” said organizers

of the event. “If you lived in Norwich in the mid to late 20th century, you would remember numbers of Jewish families and you will certainly remember how important they were in our economy, our schools and our lives.

“By the 1970s, the Jewish community of Chenango County, centered in Norwich, See “Norwich” on page 8

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Opinion

American Jews and Israel: the season of our discontent

By Bill Simons

For American Jews, this is the season of our discontent. Israeli brethren are locked in war with Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis and Iran. In the American Diaspora, antisemitism is ascendant and support for Israel diminished. Several readers of this column were asked: “Have your feelings about Israel, your Jewish American identity and the status of Jews in the U.S. changed since October 7, 2023: if so, how and why?” Their divergent responses are instructive. In some quarters, Jewish American support for Israel has become more vocal, even defiant. Academic and author, Susan Puretz, former chair of the Department of Health, Physical Education, Athletics, Recreation and Dance at SUNY New Paltz, reports, “If anything, my feelings about being Jewish have intensified. . . Those ‘progressive’ Jews don’t realize the amount of hate and animosity toward the Jews of Israel by the Palestinians and Moslem nations surrounding them. . . (nor) why, after the Nazi slaughter, Israel is so important to Jews.” Dr. Puretz rejects Jewish elitists: “If they were in Israel during. . . the October 7, 2023. attack by Hamas and. . . would say to the terrorists – ‘don’t harm me, I support your cause’ – they would be brutalized as other Jews. . . were.” Alan Levine, possessed of a software/test engineer background encompassing work on the control panel of

a multi-mode radar system for the Israeli Air Force, also remains a strong Zionist: “Most Jews around here (Newton, MA) are proudly Jewish, proudly American and proudly pro-Zionist. . . I worry about the world-wide antisemitism and the way Israel is portrayed in the media. There have always been two states in the former Palestine – Israel and Jordan. Any attack on Arabs by Jewish settlers is covered in the newspapers but never attacks by Arabs on settlers. . . Israel has been the Jewish homeland for thousands of years, while ‘Palestinians’ were only invented as a distinct people in the 1960s.” My son Joseph Simons, attorney, former synagogue president and father of five, also protests anti-Israel canards: “I don’t think my feelings about Israel or identity have changed, but I have been surprised and disappointed by an increase in antisemitism over the past few years. There are growing segments of both major political parties that stand against Israel, and Jewish people generally. Celebrities make comments in support of terrorists without any meaningful backlash; in fact, they are celebrated. . . it is acceptable in mainstream society to declare support for ‘Free Palestine,’ while public support of Israel is booed at best.” David Lonborg, veteran of nearly a quarter century teaching social studies in New York City public schools, finds too many “corrupt and extreme individuals” in current

Israeli leadership positions. But he cautions, “At the same time, considering the truly evil opponents like Hamas and their backers in Iran and Qatar, we have a very difficult decision to make that essentially becomes one of life and death.” Despite its fragmentation and extremist elements, Israel, according to Lonborg, is still fundamentally a “complex and diverse society. . . remaining true to its democracy and openness.” Lonborg’s “own Jewish identity. . . has been further strengthened as a I watched after October 7 my former allies and peers on the left flock to the pro-Palestine camp and, either deliberately or inadvertently dust off old antisemitic tropes.” While affirming their Jewishness, several correspondents were more pointed in their criticisms of Israeli policies. Peter Dreier, E.P. Clapp Distinguished Professor of Politics Emeritus and founding chair, Urban and Environmental Policy Department, Occidental College, affirms, “Nothing’s changed for me. I was and remain a proud Jew. . . supportive of Jewish self-determination” However, he strongly rejects the current course set by Israeli and U.S. leaders: “The fact that a majority of Americans now think that the U.S. should not provide military aid to Israel, and are highly critical of Israel’s atrocities in Gaza, is a good thing, in my view. The biggest threats to Jews these days are See “Israel” on page 8

How Thomas Watson and IBM co-planned and organized the Holocaust

By Edwin Black

When Hitler came to power in 1933, he wanted to destroy the Jewish communities in Germany and around the world. He needed help. One American company aggressively stepped forward. That company was International Business Machines (IBM), which billed itself as “the Solutions Company.” Under the micro-management of its unindicted war criminal president, Thomas Watson, himself a convicted extortionist arising from his financial crimes at National Cash Register, IBM offered to provide Nazi Germany with any solution it needed. Any solution. From the inception of Hitler’s regime on January 30, 1933 until the last gasp of the Third Reich in the first days of May 1945 when Berlin fell, Watson and IBM partnered with Nazi Germany to not only wage war against the civilized world, and eventually America, but also to knowingly organize all six phases of the Holocaust. Those six phases are identification, expulsion, confiscation, ghettoization, deportation and finally extermination. The enormous crimes committed by Hitler were immensely organized. They required the power of a computer.

But in 1933, no computer existed. But what did exist was the IBM Hollerith punch card, on which could be tracked any person, process, or population by the holes punched in its rows and columns. Another machine tabulated the results. Out came something which never existed before: information. This information could reveal any characteristic about a person, place, process, or population. How many people, how many men, how many Jews, how old, where did they live, where were their bank accounts, where were the trains that would transport them to annihilation? It was more than counting. It was the individualization of statistics. Thus, the Information Age was not born in Silicon Valley, but in Berlin in 1933. It had two parents: Adolf Hitler and Thomas Watson. When Hitler demanded to know how many Jews lived in Germany and where, under Watson’s micro-management, IBM invented the racial census. Big Blue hired thousands of Germans to go door to door to take a census, writing down personal, religious, professional and residential data, then transporting those forms to an

IBM warehouse on Berlin’s Alexanderplatz, and then, by virtue of hundreds of keyboard operators, punch the handwritten data onto punch cards. When tabulated at the rate of 64,000 cards per hour, the output told Hitler exactly how many Jews were engaged in what professions – and where they lived. Once targeted, the information was cross-tabulated with professional lists to expel Jewish members, with banks to seize Jewish accounts, to relocate Jews from their homes into cramped ghettos, to schedule trains to deport them to concentration camps, to work them to near-death and then dispatch them to gas chambers. All the banks, trains and concentration camps were set up with IBM machines and endless supplies of cards custom-designed and produced by IBM for each and every task. For 25 years, IBM has refused to answer for its crimes. Edwin Black will appear on Sunday, October 5, at 6:30 pm, at the JCC of Binghamton to display his “smoking gun documents.” Register at edwinblack.com/reserveOct05. To learn more about this subject, visit ibmandtheholocaust.com. © Edwin Black 2026, all rights reserved.

Mark Twain’s fight against antisemitism

By Larry Bleier

Mark Twain was born Samuel Clemens in Hannibal, MO, a town with only one Jewish family. As a youngster, he joined others in making negative comments about that family, later writing a humorous but uncomplimentary article for an Iowa newspaper. In the mid 19th century, he began using critical thinking skills, which led him to

question his earlier antisemitic views and in turn he began defending Jews. He traveled around Europe several years later with his wife and daughters, gathering material for his writings and in 1896 he settled in Vienna. In a world where antisemitism appears on college campuses, in workplaces and even in the streets, Mark Twain offers an example of how one person can reconsider earlier beliefs and publicly support a marginalized group for the greater good. In “Concerning the Jews,” an 1899 essay published in Harper’s in response to a question about an earlier piece, Twain wrote of the Jewish people: “[Their] contributions to the world’s list of great names in literature, science, art, music finance, medicine and abstruse learning are also way out of proportion to the weakness of [their] numbers. [They have] made a marvelous fight in this world in all the ages; and [they have] done it with [their] hands tied behind [their] back. [They] could be vain

of [themselves] and be excused for it.” In his career, Mark Twain received many requests for interviews, and he chose to meet mainly with Jewish authors, a move that led to many unsavory comments directed at him for his allegiance to Jews. In 1898, he again saw a rise in antisemitism as triggered by the politics of the government. He wrote the above referenced article in Harper’s, pointing out the mistakes of the Austrian Parliament and their possible antisemitic views, thus establishing his understanding and support for the Jewish people. Although Mark Twain has sometimes been accused of misunderstanding the issue or retaining traces of latent antisemitism, he made a significant contribution to efforts to combat antisemitism. His death in 1910 left a void. Given the alarming rise of antisemitism in today’s society, I believe the world needs more people like Mark Twain today.

Correction

In the September issue of *The Reporter*, the line “Originally published at <https://www.jns.org/feature/fall-into-the-great-outdoors-dining-under-the-stars-and-sky-during-sukkot>.” was inadvertently omitted from the JNS article “Fall into the great outdoors: Dining under the stars and sky during Sukkot.” *The Reporter* apologizes for the error.



Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

Shelley Hubal, Executive Director
607-724-2332 ~ www.jfgeb.org

The Reporter Editorial Committee
Jeff Platsky, Rivka Kellman,
Richard Lewis, Rabbi Moshe Shmaryahu

HOW TO REACH THE REPORTER

Mail ~ The Reporter, 500 Clubhouse Rd. Vestal, NY 13850
E-mail ~ TReporter@aol.com
Phone ~ 607-724-2360
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The Reporter welcomes letters on subjects of interest to the Jewish community. All letters must be signed and include a phone number; names may be withheld upon request.

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www.thereportergroup.org

Rebecca Kobrin to deliver 2026 Margolis Lecture at BU on Oct. 22

This year’s Rabbi Moses Margolis Lecture at Binghamton University will be presented by Dr. Rebecca Kobrin, Russell and Bettina Knap Associate Professor of American Jewish History at Columbia University. Her talk on “East European Jewish Immigrants and American Banking, 1873-1930” will take place on Thursday, October 22, at 7 pm, in Room AM 189 of the Admissions Center Building on the Binghamton University campus. It is free and open to the general public. A limited number of free parking spaces will be marked reserved for community members in Lot T on a first come basis. Paid parking is also available in the parking structure and visitor’s lot; follow posted signage.

Based on her just-published book from Harvard University Press, “Credit to the Nation: Eastern European Jewish Immigrant Bankers and the Shaping of American Finance, 1873-1930,” Kobrin asks, “what if the story of Jews and American banking wasn’t about Wall Street titans, but about immigrant families who built commercial banking businesses that helped others thrive? Indeed, many are familiar with the names of early 20th-century German Jewish bankers such as Jacob Schiff, but far fewer have heard of men like Sender Jarmulowsky, Max Kobre, or Saul Singer. These East European Jewish immigrants helped

millions of migrants with a few dollars and a dream buy ship tickets, borrow and save money, and send small sums back home. Millions saw their financial lives shaped by these men whose stories are now in the dustbin of history.” In her talk, Kobrin will share their stories and explain how they reshaped American banking, as well as the businesses of mass migration and real estate development. Signed copies of Kobrin’s book will be on sale at the event.

Kobrin works in the fields of immigration history, urban studies, business history, East European history and American Jewish history, specializing in modern Jewish migration. Her book “Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora” (Indiana University Press, 2010) was awarded the Jordan Schnitzer prize (2012). She is the editor of “Chosen Capital: The Jewish Encounter with American Capitalism” (Rutgers University Press, 2012), “Salo Baron: Using the Past to Shape the Future of Jewish Studies in America” (Columbia University Press, 2022) and is co-editor with Adam Teller of “Purchasing Power: The Economics of Jewish History” (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). In 2015, she was awarded Columbia University’s Lenfest Distinguished Faculty



Rebecca Kobrin
(Photo courtesy of Rebecca Kobrin)

Award for her outstanding teaching and graduate student mentoring. She is one of the principal investigators leading the award-winning digital humanities Historical NYC Project, a map that visualizes the demographic and spatial changes wrought in New York City between 1850 and 1940.

The talk is sponsored by the Margolis Family Lecture Fund and the Judaic Studies Department at Binghamton University, and is co-sponsored by Binghamton’s College of Jewish Studies. For more information, contact Kim Schull at 607-777-3070 or jsd@binghamton.edu.

TC Book Club meeting

The Temple Concord Book Club will meet on Tuesday, October 6, at 10:30 am, in the library room to discuss “Inheritance: Love, Loss, and the Legacy of the Holocaust” by Charlie Scheidt and Kat Rohrer.

Chabad class on Kaballah to begin on Oct. 26

Chabad of Binghamton invites the community to a new course on Kabbalah’s “wildest ideas” led by Rivkah Slonim beginning on Monday, October 26, from 7-8:30 pm. The class will meet on six consecutive Mondays both in person and on Zoom.

The course, titled “Kaballah and the Hidden Architecture of You,” is a six-part course on Kabbalah’s “most fascinating ideas. ... We’re taking ideas like reincarnation, soul mates, dreams, names, even your taste in music, and unpacking what they reveal about the design of your life,” says Slonim, course instructor. “Each one of us has a mystical back story that makes us who we are. Every soul is rooted in a *sefirah*, a mystical attribute. Souls return to complete unfinished missions; and the struggles, idiosyncratic passions and talents that set you apart are messages pointing to your life’s mission.”

Divided into six sessions, the course will explore 40 kabbalistic ideas that can help people understand themselves and the world around them. These topics will include what a soul is, insight into human psychology (like why some people’s flaws bother us so much) as well as mysteries like reincarnation, why we marry the people we do and why we enjoy music.

“It’s like tearing the facade off the world’s surface and seeing the spiritual forces at work behind the scenes,” said

Slonim. “Your soul is spilling out into your body’s life all day every day. It’s not a Yom Kippur special. It’s there in the music you like, your yearning to be married, in your sleep and even your strangest dreams.”

The course has garnered critical acclaim from leading scholars of Jewish mysticism. Professor Daniel C. Matt, author of “The Essential Kabbalah,” has said that this course “offers all seekers the opportunity to discover the profound insights of the Jewish mystical tradition.” Professor Ariel Even Mayse of Stanford University says that “this magnificent program throws open the doors of Jewish mysticism and spirituality to all.” And Professor Elliot Wolfson of the University of California, Santa Barbara, has noted that “students will be exposed to the intricate mysteries of the world and of the soul.”

“You don’t have to read Hebrew and you don’t have to know what Kabbalah is. This course is open to the whole community,” says Slonim. “All you need is curiosity.”

Before Friday, October 9, the course fee is \$90 per person or \$165 for a couple with one book (extra books are \$25). After October 9, the course fee is \$99 per person and \$175 per couple.

To register for the course, visit www.JewishBU.com/JLIBing or call Chabad at 607-797-0015.

DEADLINES

The following are deadlines for all articles and photos for upcoming printed issues of the monthly **REPORTER**.

ISSUE	DEADLINE
November.....	October 7
December.....	November 11
January 2027.....	December 9
February.....	January 6

All deadlines for the year can be found at www.thereportergroup.org/contact-us/faqs under “Q: What Are the Deadlines for the Paper?”

Temple Concord Sisterhood Donor on Oct. 11

The Temple Concord Sisterhood Donor event will be held on Sunday, October 11, from 11 am-2 pm, at Temple Concord, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. The program will be “Designing with Grocery Store Flowers” presented by Dolores Wisdom and Kimberli Schwartz. Each person who attends will receive a complimentary raffle ticket for the floral arrangement designed during the program. Lunch will be served after the program.

Sisterhood members who make a donor contribution of \$25 or more are eligible to attend. Sisterhood members who

contribute \$36 or more may bring a guest. Non-Sisterhood members who contribute \$25 or more may also attend. Reservations should be made to Roz Antoun at RAntoun77@stny.rr.com or 607-644-0107 by Tuesday, October 6.

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to mark a special occasion. Acknowledgments can be sent at your request by including the necessary information. Donations can be sent to Beth David Synagogue, 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905, Attention: Luncheon Fund.

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Off the Shelf

Poems about the righteous and Jerusalem

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Poetry can be difficult to judge because each person’s reactions are so personal. It’s not just a matter of whether someone prefers rhyme and rhythm to prose poetry. Some people like to ponder the underlying message of a poem, while others want its meaning to be easily grasped. Two recent poetry books focus on aspects of Judaism: Julie R. Enszer’s “The Lamed-Vovniks: Story-Poems” (Indolent Books) describes a world where the 36 righteous are all women, while “This Longing City: Modern Hebrew Poems of Jerusalem” translated, edited and introduced by Rachel Tzvia Back (Hebrew Union College Press), offers views of the holy city.

The Talmud speaks of the Lamed-Vovniks, the 36 righteous people without whom the world could not exist. These pious people are said to be hidden from view, performing deeds without public acknowledgment. When one dies, another is born to take their place. There have been novels written about those looking to destroy the 36 in order to end the world. Enszer takes a different approach: she wonders what would happen if all 36 were women. Opening with quotes from the Talmud and the writings of Maimonides about the 36, she then offers the thoughts of the angel Tirza, who is in charge of watching over the Lamed-Vovniks. Unlike her predecessors (there are term limits of 360 years) who preferred that the Lamed-Vovniks all be men, Tirza is fine with women being the righteous ones.

The easy-to-read prose poems look at the different women who make up the 36. Some are puzzling – for example, the former prostitute who still occasionally turns a trick – and force readers to reconsider what it means to be righteous. Some poems are marvelous in their simplicity: In “Miriam Bat Murray,” when the titled character is told that she can’t be part of a *shiva minyan* for her father because she “did not count / in G!d’s eyes,” she remembers all the lessons her father taught her and tells the rabbi, “I know what it is / to not count in man’s eyes / but none of us know / what counts – / who counts – / in the eyes of G!d.”

The beautifully rendered “Mirrored Piyyut” features a translation of *Unataneh Tokef*, a traditional prayer said on Yom Kippur, on one side of the page with the other side presenting Enszer’s “Let Us Speak of Awesomeness,” which offers the hope that “none will be forgotten” and that during this time of year “truth is revealed / with compassion and understanding.” Tirza also notes that not all of the 36 are Jewish in “Tirza Acknowledges G!d’s Pettiness,” and that Celestina, one of the 36, is a “young Black angry militant” who is “not your bubbe’s Lamed-Vovnik.”

While not everyone will appreciate Enszer’s interpretations, those seeking a different way to look at this Jewish tradition, one offered from a feminist and queer point-of-view, will find much to delight them.

While Enszer wrote all the poems in her work, “This Longing City” is an anthology of poems about Jerusalem from the 1930s-2023. Back offers an interesting look at the city from Jewish and personal points-of-view in her introduction. She notes that the city is filled with layers of history, filling a paragraph with the different ways that Jerusalem can be viewed. For the author, that makes the city a “paradox, the place one goes in order to transcend the limits of place.” Back believes that “it is to this Jerusalem, and these many Jerusalems, the poets are drawn.” The author also notes that, in many ways, her book is “an extended love poem to Jerusalem.”

“This Longing City” contains 77 poems written by 41 poets, one of whom is not Jewish. Each poem is published in its original Hebrew with an English translation by Back on the opposite page. Its five sections feature different time periods: “Holy Grandmothers of Jerusalem (1930s-1967)” ; “Bound On Her Shoulders (1967-1980)” ; “Jerusalem Ecology (1980-1999)” ; “I Told the City Watchman That My Beloved Lives Here (1998-2008)” ; and “Jerusalem Exile (2008-2023).” Some poets, such as Yehuda Amichai, Lea Goldberg and Zelda, may be familiar to English readers, but many of the other poets are lesser known on this side of the ocean. The poems range from those that are clear and easy to understand to ones that force readers to puzzle out their meaning. All poems focus on Jerusalem, even if the writer did not live in the city.

While not every poem resonated with this reviewer, favorites include:

- ◆ “Set Me in the Breach” by Yehuda Karmi, whose last line made me reread the poem from a new perspective.
- ◆ “Jerusalem” by Shlomo Zamir, which beautifully captures a moment of time.
- ◆ Two poems by my favorite Israeli poet, Yehuda Amichai, “Mayor” and “Jerusalem Ecology,” which discuss the difficulty of living in Jerusalem.
- ◆ The charming, very short poem “Pregnant Woman, Phoenician” by Tuvia Ruebner, whose imagery makes it possible to see what she describes.
- ◆ The long poem “Walk Around Zion” by Brachi Serri, which captures the author’s love of the city.
- ◆ My favorite poem, which is hidden as the book’s “Epilogue” (and not mentioned in the table of contents), is by Back and summarizes what she sought to accomplish.

Readers will, of course, disagree about the quality of each poem, which means that book clubs that read poetry may want to add this to their list. Those interested in Hebrew can read the Hebrew original and compare it to the English version. My only complaint about this beautifully produced book is that I wish the notes about the poems that appear in the back had been footnotes placed on the same page as the poem, or if Back had signaled which poems had comments in that section so readers could refer to them. However, this is a very minor quibble about an excellent book.



On the Jewish food scene

Food and pets

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

My parents used to joke that the one thing they agreed on was that my brothers and I could have no pets. That meant not even a gerbil or a guinea pig in my room. (Frogs, toads and salamanders kept outside the house were fine. I still love all three.) My father was cornered by a large dog when he was young and stuttered afterward for a bit (at least according to family lore), and seemed to dislike all animals because of that. I’m not sure why my mother agreed, but she was just as adamant about no pets.

Now I’m spoiled by not having to take care of any kind of animal. It’s not that I don’t like animals. I certainly enjoy my friend’s pets, but I never have to rush home to walk my stuffed animals (hey, a girl has to have some kind of fur therapy) and, although when a friend tried for a year to convince me to get a cat, she refused to say she would deal with the litter box, so I nixed that.

By now you may be wondering if *The Reporter* put the wrong header on this column because so far I’ve only talked about pets, not food. Well, what inspired me to think about pets was a food column published on The Nosh website called “The Top 7 Dog Names Inspired by Jewish Food” (www.myjewishlearning.com/the-nosh/the-top-7-dog-names-inspired-by-jewish-food). The article says dogs, but the food could also be used as names for cats and other animals. I know this because a friend does have a cat called Pickles, which she named years before this article appeared.

I confess to loving the #1 name: Kugel. Of course, it makes me think of that sweet noodle kugel my mom used to make. (Yes, I know there is a big debate about sweet vs. savory kugel, but the savory kugel folks are wrong. And don’t even get me started on a potato dish that, while good, should not have the same name.) I envision a cute, fluffy dog when hearing the name. (I’ve been accused of liking small, hairy “dust-mop” style dogs by a friend.) I bet any dog worthy of that name would be super sweet.

Some of the other names didn’t strike me as appealing. I’m not a big fan of babka (the food), so I’m not sure I would want to name my dog Babka. I do like bagels, but that just doesn’t seem like an animal’s name. (I have a neighbor who has had dogs called Pumpkin or Cupcake, and, while those fit, they aren’t Jewish food names.) The above mentioned Pickles does work for me, though. (My friend’s other cat is called Capers.) I would think that a cat named Pickles might be a bit standoffish and spicy, though.

While Matzah or Matzah Ball also doesn’t appeal, I like the suggested nickname Matzy. I’m debating Latke or Brisket, but I could see them growing on me. Well, I’m not sure that it matters because as much as I would like a pet called Kugel, it’s just not going to happen. However, if any of these names appeal to readers, feel free to invite me to meet your new pet once you’ve given them their Jewish name. I’m almost always up for fur therapy.

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Israel locates *Altalena* shipwreck off coast, 78 years later

By Joshua Marks

(JNS) – Israel located the *Altalena* off the country’s Mediterranean coast 78 years after its sinking, Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu announced on August 24, calling the find historic.

“At 12:30 am. at a depth of 503 meters [1,650 feet] west of Israel’s coast, the *Altalena* was located intact – 78 years after the painful, formative event that shook the young state of Israel,” Eliyahu wrote in a social media statement.

The announcement was made jointly with Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who said in a post on X that “there is a message in finding the *Altalena* at this particular time. Disagreements are permissible, and differences of opinion are permissible – but a civil war must never be allowed.”

The newly created Israel Defense Forces shelled the Irgun arms ship off the Tel Aviv beach in June 1948. Sixteen Irgun members and three IDF soldiers were killed in the fighting. About a year after the battle, the *Altalena*, which had run aground at the foot of Frischman Street, was floated, towed 15 miles out to sea and scuttled.

Israel’s Heritage Ministry invested 1 million shekels (about \$296,000) to search for the remains, JNS reported on August 25, 2025.

The ministry hired the Israel Oceanographic and Lim-

nological Research Institute, through the Survey of Israel – a state agency responsible for mapping – to locate the remains of the ship. Israel’s national research vessel, the Bat Galim, was deployed with advanced technology to detect the wreckage.

The “Altalena Affair” unfolded during Israel’s 1948-49 War of Independence after the Irgun ship arrived off the coast carrying Jewish immigrants, fighters and a cache of weapons intended for the underground group led by future Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion ordered all of the arms transferred to the newly established IDF as part of his effort to consolidate military authority under the new state. When the Irgun resisted, clashes erupted at Kfar Vitkin and later off Tel Aviv, where IDF troops under Yitzhak Rabin shelled the vessel. Begin ordered Irgun members not to return fire, seeking to avert a civil war.

“As heritage minister, I see this as a formative moment in our national memory,” Eliyahu said. “A country that is not afraid to confront the painful chapters of its history is a stronger country. A people that knows its past – its heroism and its pain – can build a more united and secure future.”

Originally published at <https://www.jns.org/news/israel-news/israel-locates-altalena-shipwreck-off-coast-78-years-later>.

Redesigned BD website to debut at Sisterhood meeting Oct. 14

Stacey Silber will present Beth David Synagogue’s newly redesigned website at the opening meeting of the Beth David Sisterhood on Wednesday, October 14, at 7 pm, at Beth David Synagogue. The presentation will offer members and guests an opportunity to learn more about the new website and the many ways it can help connect the congregation, preserve its history, and welcome visitors and new members to Beth David.

“Stacey has devoted countless hours to this project and is looking forward to sharing the finished website with the congregation,” said a Sisterhood representative.

In addition to owning Silber Creations, Silber works as the office administrator at Hillel Academy and holds several leadership roles within the Beth David community.



Stacey Silber (Photo by Stacey Silber)

She has also shared her knowledge and talents with the Sisterhood at several events in the past, including the “Challah Baking Demonstration” held in anticipation of Rosh Hashanah last year.

“Through the website project, Stacey hopes to highlight the rich history and traditions of Beth David while creating a welcoming, informative, and easy-to-use resource for current members, prospective members, and anyone interested in learning more about the *shul*,” said a Sisterhood representative. “The website will provide another way for the community to stay connected and for the legacy of Beth David to be shared with future generations.”

Although membership in Sisterhood is encouraged, the meeting is open to everyone – members and non-members of Beth David, women and men. Beth David Sisterhood

membership is \$25 and is payable at any meeting. Any outstanding payments for mitzvah cards may also be made at the meeting. Mitzvah cards are \$3 each and can be requested for any occasion throughout the year. To order a card, contact Toby Kohn directly or contact the Beth David office at bethdavid@stny.rr.com.

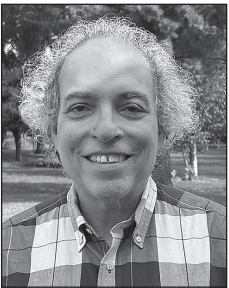
The Beth David Sisterhood will also be collecting non-perishable food items for CHOW, helping to provide assistance to local families in need.

The Beth David Sisterhood is committed to strengthening the Jewish community through social and educational programs – providing opportunities to meet, connect and build lifelong friendships among Jewish women of all ages. “The October meeting promises to be an informative and engaging evening celebrating both the history and the future of Beth David,” said a Sisterhood representative.

BD Shabbat luncheon talk on Nov. 14 on “Medieval Rabbis and Modern Europe: A Personal Exploration”

Beth David Synagogue’s Shabbat Luncheon Speaker Series continues on Saturday, November 14, with Rabbi Barry Baron, whose topic will be “Medieval Rabbis and Modern Europe: A Personal Exploration.” Shabbat services will commence at 9:30 am, with the luncheon and program following the conclusion of services.

Building on an invited talk he gave in Germany last June, Baron will discuss the lives and works of three medieval rabbis – one in England (Rabbi Yom Tov), one in Germany (Rabbeinu Gershom) and the third in France (Rabbi Levi ben Gershom, aka Ralbag). He will describe the times and places in which they lived, and how those places and their Jewish communities look and feel today. “These three rabbis hold a definite fascination for me,” he added. “Their legacies are monumental; I welcome



Rabbi Barry Baron (Photo by Dora E. Polachek)

this opportunity at Beth David to bring to light how their contributions relate to living in the 21st century.”

From 2019 to June 2026, Baron served as chaplain and campus rabbi at Colgate University where, as part of Colgate’s Jewish Studies Program, he also regularly taught “Rabbis Reinventing: The Making of Judaism as We Know It.”

A graduate of the Army’s Command and General Staff College, Baron holds a bachelor of arts in history from Cornell University. In 1988, he received his master of arts and rabbinic ordination from Jewish Theological Seminary. In 2017, Baron received the Jewish Theological Seminary’s honorary doctorate of divinity (honoris causa) in recognition of his more than 25 years’ achievements and contributions to Jewish spiritual life.

Following ordination, he was commissioned as an Army chaplain, and served on active duty at Fort Benning, GA, from 1988-91. He continued as a chaplain in the United States Army Reserve, which included deployment as chaplain in Afghanistan and Iraq. Baron retired from the Army in 2018. Over a 14-year period beginning in 1991, he also served as rabbi in synagogues in Houston, TX (Beth Am), in Youngstown, OH (El Emeth) and in Vestal (Temple Israel).

Baron and his wife, Jill, have lived in the area since 1997, where they raised their three children, who now live in Atlanta and New York City.

“We are honored to have Rabbi Baron return to Beth David to share his insights concerning the lives and teachings of three iconic Torah scholars,” organizers say. “His research, life experiences and remarkably engaging speaking style will surely make for a fascinating Shabbat event, to which the community is warmly invited!”

“Right 45 minutes” can shift attitudes of teens on Jew-hatred, ADL study suggests

By Rebecca Szlechter

(JNS)—If schools devote just 45 minutes to a lesson that situates the Holocaust in the broader history of antisemitism and its impact on Jews, they can go a long way to dispelling harmful conspiracy theories, according to new research from the Anti-Defamation League’s Center for Antisemitism Research.

“This research is significant in that it features evidence from real classrooms,” stated Matt Williams, vice president of the center. “We now have data showing that a single, well-designed lesson, taught by educators with no special training, can measurably shift how teens think about antisemitism.”

“That’s a solvable problem for schools,” Williams stated. “Based on our research, districts don’t need a semester-long unit or a major new investment to make progress. They need the right 45 minutes, and now we’re closer to knowing what that looks like.”

In the study, 372 middle and high school students from nine schools in a larger school district in the southeastern part of the United States were randomly assigned either a control lesson or the one that researchers wanted to measure. They found that those who learned the latter were 14.4 percentage points more likely to disagree with the statement that Jews have too much power in the United States. They were also 15.5 percentage points less likely to say that Jews are more loyal to Israel than to America and 13.6 percentage points less likely to minimize Jew-hatred, per the study.

The study’s importance goes beyond showing that students can respond to lessons about antisemitism, according to Williams.

ADL researchers previously tested dozens of approaches to Holocaust education in laboratory studies, allowing them to identify strategies that appeared more promising before

bringing one into actual classrooms.

“The way that this kind of research works is you start with your big questions, you study them in the lab, you see which has measurable effects there, and then you bring it into the field,” Williams told JNS. “The reason why we went into a field study with this one is that teaching the Holocaust as an example of antisemitism, and grounding that in the effects that it has on the Jewish population, seemed like the more promising, among the more promising strategies for Holocaust education overall.”

The classroom study found no evidence of a backlash. Some students didn’t change their attitudes, but researchers didn’t detect students becoming more antisemitic as a result of the lesson, according to Williams.

Specialized knowledge of Holocaust education is valuable, but the study demonstrates that the approach can produce an effect without extensive professional development, he said. “What we’re looking at is something that’s a little bit more off-the-shelf, which actually makes it a potentially more scalable program,” he told JNS.

The findings come as Jewish students across the country face increased Jew-hatred in schools.

“We’ve long believed that education is one of our most powerful tools in the fight against antisemitism and hate, and this research confirms it,” stated Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO and national director of the ADL. “As Jewish students across the country are experiencing increased antisemitism, we believe we can provide a clear, practical path forward for schools to address this scourge everywhere.”

The findings also demonstrate that schools can intervene in a way that produces positive outcomes. “We’re relatively confident that there is an available avenue to surface the conversation about antisemitism in schools, and ways that causally produce positive outcomes,” he told JNS.

He discouraged seeing the lesson as a standalone solution

to antisemitism, though. “There’s no single intervention or magic bullet that’s gonna take us out of the particularly See “ADL” on page 6

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Grossinger's Catskills resort to be redeveloped as year-round destination

By JNS staff

(JNS) – A Florida-based real estate developer plans to transform the former Grossinger's resort in New York's Catskill Mountains into a year-round resort and residential community. PPG Development, founded and led by Ari Pearl, purchased the 1,029-acre property in Liberty, NY, for \$14.75 million in June 2025. The company said the redevelopment will combine hospitality, golf, equestrian facilities, wellness, dining, recreation and luxury residences. The plans call for restoring Grossing-

er's Big G golf course and adding a second golf course, a 100-room hotel, about 175 private residences, a polo and equestrian center, restaurants, a spa and wellness facilities, a sports complex and other recreational amenities "within one thoughtfully planned destination," the firm stated. PPG stated that Grossinger's is "being reimagined as a premier year-round resort and residential community in the heart of the Catskills." The original Grossinger's was a landmark of the Borscht Belt, the net-

work of Jewish resorts that flourished in the Catskills during the 20th century. The Grossinger family began taking in visitors around 1914 and purchased the larger property that became the resort in 1919. The resort eventually became one of the region's most prominent Jewish vacation destinations before closing in 1986. Elaine Grossinger Etess, a third-generation member of the family who helped run the resort with her brother, Paul, after their mother's death in 1972, died in January at 98.

Grossinger's is widely cited as an inspiration for the 1987 film "Dirty Dancing," although the movie was filmed in Virginia and North Carolina. The resort's history was also chronicled in the documentary "We Met at Grossinger's," directed by Paula Eiselt, which explores Grossinger's and the broader history of the Jewish Catskills. The film premiered at DOC NYC in 2025. *Originally published at <https://www.jns.org/news/u-s-news/grossingers-catskills-resort-to-be-redeveloped-as-year-round-destination>.*

A 2,700-year-old standing stone may offer new evidence of King Hezekiah's religious reforms

By Steve Linde

(JNS) – A 2,700-year-old standing stone unearthed at Tel Eton in the Judean Lowlands may provide fresh evidence for the religious reforms traditionally attributed to the biblical King Hezekiah, according to a new study by a Bar-Ilan University archaeologist. Published in the Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology, the study by Prof. Avraham Faust of Bar-Ilan University's Department of General History examines a large cultic standing stone, or massebah, that was discovered during excavations at the site and appears to have been deliberately removed from ritual use without being destroyed. The find could offer a rare glimpse into religious change in the Kingdom of Judah during the late eighth century B.C.E., when biblical accounts describe Hezekiah as abolishing local places of worship and centralizing religious practice in Jerusalem. For decades, scholars have debated whether those reforms occurred as described in the Bible or whether the accounts reflect a later ideological tradition. Archaeological evidence has traditionally focused on clear public cultic contexts such as Arad and Beersheba, where interpretations remain contested. Faust's study instead turns to evidence from the domestic sphere.

The limestone standing stone, measuring about 1.4 meters (4.6 feet) high and weighing roughly 750 kilograms (1,650 pounds), was discovered in the largest room of what archaeologists call "Building 101," also identified as a governor's residence at Tel Eton. Positioned directly opposite the entrance, it would have been immediately visible to anyone entering the structure or standing in the adjacent courtyard. Because it served no apparent architectural function and resembles standing stones associated with ritual activity elsewhere in the ancient Near East, researchers believe it functioned as a cultic object. "The location of the stone suggests that it played an important role in the lives of the building's occupants," Faust said. At a later stage, however, its role changed "dramatically." Rather than being smashed or desecrated, the stone was carefully laid on its side and incorporated into a specially constructed stone platform. According to Faust, the manner in which it was treated may itself be significant. "Those responsible for changing religious practices may have wished to eliminate the stone's ritual function, and perhaps wanted the old ritual objects desecrated, but the people who carried

out the change seem to have treated it with respect," he said. "They removed it from use without destroying it, effectively neutralizing its cultic significance while preserving the object itself." The researchers said the stone was incorporated into the platform before Tel Eton was destroyed by the Assyrian Empire at the end of the eighth century B.C.E., a period that broadly coincides with Hezekiah's reign. Faust stopped short of claiming definitive proof that the decommissioning resulted directly from the king's reforms, but argued that the evidence aligns with other archaeological indications of religious change during the period. The study highlights the importance of examining homes and administrative buildings, rather than only temples and shrines, for clues about ancient religious life, he said. While the find does not settle the long-running debate over Hezekiah's reforms, it offers what Faust described as a rare window into a period of signif-

icant religious transformation in ancient Judah and added a potentially important piece to one of biblical archaeology's most enduring puzzles. By shifting the focus from official cultic sites to domestic life, the Tel Eton discovery opens a new avenue for exploring one of biblical archaeology's most enduring questions: how – and how deeply – religious reform reshaped the Kingdom of Judah. "Archaeology rarely provides a single discovery that settles a long-standing historical debate," Faust told JNS. "But every well-documented find adds another piece to the puzzle. The standing stone at Tel Eton offers a rare glimpse into how religious change may have been experienced in everyday life, and it strengthens the case that significant transformations were taking place throughout Judah during this period." *Originally published at <https://www.jns.org/feature/2-700-year-old-standing-stone-may-offer-new-evidence-of-king-hezekiahs-religious-reforms>.*

ADL.....Continued from page 5

complex, and frankly, crisis period that we've been in for the past few years now," he told JNS. The research is part of a broader effort to identify interventions that work and give schools evidence to guide their decisions. Schools don't need to universalize the Jewish experience or connect antisemitism to other forms of hatred to get students to care about antisemitism, according to Williams. "It is impactful, on its own, to teach about the Holocaust in the context of Jewish experiences with antisemitism," he told JNS. "We don't need to persuade people to care about antisemitism by appealing to how it matters to them." Educators don't need to convince students that antisemitism matters, because

it could eventually affect them or because it is one example of a broader category of hate. The Jewish experience can be the basis for teaching students about antisemitism. Comparing antisemitism with other forms of hatred or universalizing the lesson can sometimes have the opposite effect, according to Williams. "We don't need to compare, or to universalize, or to have the same effect, and in some cases, that comparison can actually activate competitive victimhood and produce a backlash, which we don't want to see right now," he told JNS. *Originally published at <https://www.jns.org/news/u-s-news/right-45-minutes-can-shift-attitudes-of-teens-on-jew-hatred-adl-study-suggests>.*

Israeli Border Police uncover Second Temple-era burial cave in Silwan

By JNS staff

(JNS) – Israeli Border Police officers on August 25 uncovered an ancient burial cave beneath a building in the eastern Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan during an operation related to a violent dispute between local families, police said. Israel Antiquities Authority experts who examined the site have tentatively dated the graves to the Second Temple period, which lasted from 516 B.C.E. to 70 C.E. Police and Border Police officers secured the site as antiquities officials continued examining the archaeological finds. The IAA announced in July that archaeologists had uncovered a rare mold used to cast the face of a female figurine dating to the First Temple period – the

first production mold of its kind ever found in Jerusalem. The mold was found during excavations at the Kishle, a former Ottoman-era prison on the grounds of the Tower of David Museum in Jerusalem's Old City. (The article can be read at www.jns.org/news/israel-news/first-temple-period-figurine-mold-uncovered-in-jerusalem-excavation.) Other recent excavations in Jerusalem's City of David have uncovered massive charred wooden beams believed to have collapsed during the Babylonian destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. *Originally published at <https://www.jns.org/news/israel-news/israeli-border-police-uncover-second-temple-era-burial-cave-in-silwan>.*

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Fifty-plus Jewish organizations declare: “Zionism is part of Jewish identity”

By JNS staff

(JNS) – Jewish organizations from around the world signed the J50 Declaration on Zionism and Antisemitism in Jerusalem on September 10, which states unequivocally that “Zionism is part of Jewish identity.” William Daroff, CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, chaired the J50 Forum gathering, saying that the declaration “affirms Zionism as the national movement of the Jewish people and the expression of our right to self-determination in our ancient homeland, Israel.”

The document calls for anti-Zionism “to be recognized and confronted when it is used to marginalize, exclude, or discriminate against Jews.”

It further states, “Anti-Zionism, as manifested today through efforts to deny the Jewish people their right to self-determination, or demand that Jews renounce Zionism as the price of acceptance in political, academic, professional, or cultural life, is antisemitic.”

The declaration ends by stressing, “Zionism is part of Jewish identity. We will not allow others to define it for us.”

The declaration, endorsed by 59 signatories, says that the erosion of the right of the Jewish people to self-determination is “increasingly challenged and denied,” adding that “Governments, international institutions, municipalities and political parties, media and cultural institutions, universities and educational institutions,

professional associations, and civil society are increasingly becoming arenas for the delegitimization and distortion of Zionism, serving to marginalize and exclude Jews.

“Anti-Zionism, as manifested today through efforts to deny the Jewish people their right to self-determination, or demand that Jews renounce Zionism as the price of acceptance in political, academic, professional, or cultural life, is antisemitic,” it holds.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar hosted the third meeting of the J50 Forum in Jerusalem on September 1. The assembly, composed of 50 core Jewish organizations, focused on the worldwide rise in antisemitism and the connection between obsessive anti-Israel rhetoric and increasing attacks against Jewish communities in the Diaspora.

Organized by Israel’s Foreign Ministry, the forum includes presidents of Jewish

communities, CEOs, chief rabbis and other senior Jewish leaders from organizations such as the Conference of Presidents, the Jewish Federations of North America, B’nai B’rith International, the Anti-Defamation League, the Conference of European Rabbis, and the Board of Deputies of British Jews, including leading Jewish organizations from Europe, North and South America, Australia and South Africa.

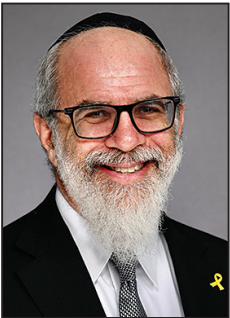
Sa’ar founded the J50 Forum in May 2025 at the International Conference against Antisemitism held at the ministry in Jerusalem. It receives regular briefings from the foreign minister and maintains daily contact with ministry officials.

Originally published at <https://www.jns.org/news/world/over-50-jewish-organizations-declare-zionism-is-part-of-jewish-identity>.

Piaker Continued from page 1

96, while doing his post-doc at Cornell, Abramson taught Judaic studies at Hillel Academy in Binghamton.

Abramson’s research has been recognized with fellowships from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Foundation of Canada, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. He was awarded the Excellence in the Academy award by the National Education Association. He is the author of five books and numerous scholarly essays, including the



Henry Abramson, Ph.D. (Photo courtesy of Henry Abramson)



Philip and Pauline Piaker (File photo provided by Chabad)

four-volume “The Jewish People: A History,” forthcoming from Koren Publishers in Jerusalem. His online lectures have been viewed more than 15 million times and he holds a YouTube Creator Award for his popularization of Jewish History.



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of Greater Binghamton

wish our graphic artist, Julie Weber, the best of luck as she begins her new career! Thank you, Julie, for all of your work on our behalf, and for sharing your talents with us and the community.

Shelley, Merryl, Diana, Kathy, Deb, Ilene, Rachel and Bill



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Israel revives ancient grape varieties in Negev vineyards

By Linda Gradstein

(JNS) – Oenophiles (wine lovers) are always looking for the newest thing in wines, but an Israeli project is going in the opposite direction – reviving grape varieties with roots stretching back more than 1,000 years.

The project began after archaeologists discovered grape seeds during an excavation at Avdat, the ancient Nabataean and Byzantine city between Beersheva and Mitzpeh Ramon in southern Israel. The seeds were dated to the seventh century C.E. and sent to Tel Aviv University for genetic analysis.

One was found to be genetically similar to the Syriki variety, a small, dark grape still grown in parts of the eastern Mediterranean. Another was identified with the Ba’ar variety, which produces white grapes.

From ancient seeds to living vines

Lior Schweimer, Southern District heritage director and archaeologist for the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, took cuttings from vines found in the Gaza border region that researchers believed could be connected to the ancient varieties identified at Avdat.

In September 2023, Schweimer planted the cuttings on 1,500-year-old agricultural terraces at Avdat. He also planted Dabouki vines, an ancient local variety already grown by several Israeli wineries.

“Usually, ancient grape seeds are very fragile – they are very small and have a lot of sugar – and in most cases you can’t get DNA from them,” Schweimer told JNS. “But here in Avdat they were covered with a layer of ancient dung that preserved them a bit more.”

He said he was surprised by how well the cuttings have grown in the harsh Negev environment. “So far, it’s amazing,” he said. “They grow very, very fast and they look like a jungle already. They don’t seem to have a problem with the salty ground.”

Schweimer has provided cuttings to several Negev wineries to produce experimental wines, including winemaker Boaz Dreyer of Dreyer Winery.

This is the first year that the winery is producing wine from a full harvest, with hopes of making about 1,000 bottles of each variety. Dreyer specializes in natural wines using spontaneous fermentation and is producing the new

wines using the same approach.

Schweimer said the original plan was to grow and make the wine using ancient techniques described in the Talmud. But there was not enough rainfall for stormwater to irrigate the vines, so the project turned to a decidedly modern Israeli invention: drip irrigation.

A distinctly Israeli wine

Israel has a robust wine industry, with more than 300 wineries producing tens of millions of bottles annually. Much of the industry relies on internationally familiar varieties such as cabernet sauvignon, merlot and chardonnay.

The revived local grapes could offer Israeli winemakers something different: wines rooted in varieties that grew in the region centuries ago and are naturally adapted to its climate.

For Dreyer, that connection to the land is part of their appeal. “The local boy on the block is like the prodigal son coming home,” he said. “They are making wonderful grapes.”

Originally published at <https://www.jns.org/feature/israel-revives-ancient-grape-varieties-in-negev-vineyards>.

Israel.....Continued from page 2

Trump and Netanyahu. Trump has promoted and exploited antisemitic hate groups. Bibi’s policies have made Israel a pariah nation and provided excuses and justifications for antisemitism around the world.”

Eric Russell, SUNY Downstate biomedical engineer, makes “a clear discrimination between the Israeli people and their government,” but his rebuke of Netanyahu policies is visceral: “I strongly disapprove of the settler movement and the fact that Bibi’s government is overtly supporting them in their efforts to displace and disenfranchise the resident Palestinians. I worry... about the demoralization of the IDF, especially in Gaza. Turning the region into a free fire zone is unwise in many respects, as it causes PTSD in the IDF as well as giving fuel to anti-Israel activists.”

Reconstructionist Rabbi Rebecca T. Alpert, professor of religion emeritus at Temple University, advocates centering Jewish American identity on our ethnical imperatives: “My feelings about Israel, American Jewry and my own Jewish identity have been reinforced since October 7. I have long believed that American Judaism has been too reliant on Israel to make us safe, when it is actually the source of danger and destruction for Israelis and Palestinians. American Jews need a liberatory Judaism based on Jewish values: the pursuit of justice, the belief that all life is sacred, and respect for the dignity of all.”

Jeff Katz, former mayor of Cooperstown, expresses a disappointment in Israel that goes beyond its leadership: “On October 7, everyone sympathized with Israel and was horrified. Since then, it’s all changed. It’s impossible for me to be pro-Israel. It’s not just Netanyahu. When you see

interviews with settlers saying that one Jewish life is worth thousands of other lives, it’s disgusting. There’s no way to support that. My own Jewish-American identity hasn’t undergone any changes, but Trump, Netanyahu and Israel are doing more to hurt Jewish-Americans than anyone in recent memory. And that’s before the ill-conceived attack on Iran. Now that Trump was duped by Netanyahu to bomb Iran, most Americans see our military, our economy and our politics as negatively over influenced by Jews. There’s a reason AIPAC money is losing influence, fast.”

Dr. Michael Orenstein, a retired gastroenterologist, also articulates rebuke. “I am almost ashamed to identity as one who sympathizes with anything having to do with Israel since our association with Israel has accelerated the demise of American democracy,” he writes. “The Jews have been torn apart and duped by the conspiracy theorists who are now mainstream in the Republican party. The worst of Trumps’ enablers are Jews, I am ashamed to say. The Iran war blunder is the worst in American history and Israel enabled it.”

Stephen Lisman, Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus, Department of Psychology, SUNY Binghamton, leavens disillusionment with sadness and regret: “The first thing I realized after the attacks of October 7 was that we Jews – specifically Israel – are hated even more than I recognized. It’s always hard for me to *not* see the world as a psychologist, so I found myself considering just how easily I had overlooked the degree of despair of the people who slaughtered the Israelis. I always felt that the refusal of Israel to find ways to resolve the Palestinian problem was a source of sadness... But the massacre of innocents

seemed almost like the logical outcome of years of feeling oppressed and worse. Yet I felt that I had better keep these views to myself in the wake of the horror and the hostages. I feared that I would sound almost like a self-hating Jew; you know, ‘we brought it on ourselves’... But... how can we avoid recognizing that we played a part in leading up to that day?... it left me ashamed of Israel.”

A retired family physician, who requested withholding his name, also expresses profound disillusionment: “I have long had feelings of disappointment about Israel in its treatment of West Bank Palestinians. This includes sanctioning construction and personal attacks. With the slaughter going on in Gaza, I have become not only disgusted with Israel but also ashamed by the hypocrisy of what appears to be the purposeful annihilation of a people.

Jo Ann Simons, CEO of Northeast Arc (Massachusetts), voices concern about intensification of internal divisions amongst American Jews. Traditionally, Jews are contentious: two Jews, three opinions. But over the past three years, polarization has created fissures in our civil discourse, eroding Jewish American consensus on core principles. My sister responds forcefully to this fragmentation: “What alarms me most is that the increase in antisemitism... seems to lack a unified Jewish response. ... competing priorities of Jewish organizations have their own institutional interests guiding them while the unified response of our enemies has been better organized.”

For this column, I yield to diverse and deeply felt words of the preceding respondents. I will offer my own views in a subsequent column: count on it. For now, I will continue to contribute to Magen David Adom, Israel’s emergency services systems, and will remain politically active through the Indivisible movement and my labor union (UUP). May the October Israeli and November U.S. elections reboot the policies of both nations.



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Advertising was a new field for Kathy when she started five years ago, but she’s discovered the pleasure of working with the clients, giving them ideas on how to promote their business using print ads. Her motto is “the client comes first” and, to prove that, she researches each client to see what they have done in the past and tries to figure out if there is a way to improve their ad-image. She also works with them to discover the ad sections that will best highlight their business.

Kathy has lived here for 40 years, moving from Long Island to meet and marry her husband. She loves the outdoors, even in the winter. She is ready to help you advertise your business in *The Reporter*, in Binghamton and Scranton, the best way she can. Call or e-mail her to discuss options.



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Norwich. . .Continued from page 1

was a large, vibrant and influential force in the city and throughout the county, with over 60 families. Sadly, the loss of manufacturing and pharmaceutical laboratories between 1970-2009, as well as the decline of the cattle industry and dairy farming, tore the heart out of Norwich’s Jewish community,” organizers continued. “Very few families remain today. Like much of our city’s history, their stories exist now only in our memories and in our hearts. Join historian Ed Erickson as he discusses his research and the story of a once influential community, their achievements and their legacies.”



The Kauffman family: Omaha Beach survivor PFC Freddy Kauffmann, who immigrated in 1938 from Kordel, Germany, moved to North Norwich with his wife Ilse after a prolonged recuperation from wounds suffered on D-Day. He worked for the Moses meat processing firm and then became a cattle dealer. (Photo courtesy of Janice Kauffmann)

Growing Wings builds a home front for Israel's lone reservists

By Tania Shalom Michaelian

(JNS) – When Israeli reservists return from the battlefield, many come home to families who have kept life moving while they were away. Someone has paid the bills, spoken to the landlord, opened official letters and made sure there is food in the refrigerator.

A lone reservist may return to an empty apartment and face it all alone.

“For years, the system saw reservists as soldiers while they were in uniform, but it did not always account for what happened when they went home,” Levi Preger told JNS in a recent interview.

Preger is community manager of Growing Wings, a nonprofit supporting lone soldiers and lone reservists. Since October 7, 2023, he has served more than 300 days in the IDF reserves while trying to maintain his university studies and civilian life.

His own journey to Israel began in an unexpected way. When he was 17, his grandmother received a letter from the German government informing her that she was eligible for benefits as the descendant of someone persecuted by the Nazis. That was how Preger, who grew up in a small town in the Netherlands in a family that celebrated Christmas and Easter, learned that his great-grandmother had survived the Holocaust and concealed her Jewish identity after the war.

He began researching Judaism, contacted a Chabad rabbi and celebrated his bar mitzvah at 18. After visiting Israel on a Birthright trip, he decided to make *aliyah*. He moved to Israel at 20, studied Hebrew and enlisted in the Nahal Reconnaissance Battalion.

“I did not just want to move to Israel,” he said. “I wanted to integrate, contribute and take responsibility for the country I had chosen to make my home.”

In the summer of 2023, after completing his mandatory military service, Preger returned briefly to the Netherlands before beginning studies in government and international relations at Reichman University in Herzliya.

On October 7, he watched in horror as news of the Hamas attack unfolded.

He immediately began searching for a flight back to Israel. It took him four days to find a seat.

After landing, he rejoined his reserve unit, which was helping evacuate civilians and rescue wounded soldiers.

His parents remained in the Netherlands while Preger returned to war without close family in Israel.

A gap exposed by war

During their mandatory service, lone soldiers are formally recognized by the Israel Defense Forces. They receive assistance from welfare officers, social workers and dedicated military programs, as well as support for housing and finances. After discharge, however, much of that framework disappears, even though many former lone soldiers continue serving in the reserves for years.

“The biggest difference is that a lone soldier serves within a clearly defined support framework, while a lone

reservist often does not,” Preger said.

Before October 7, Israel’s reserve system was generally built around relatively short call-ups. It was not designed for thousands of reservists serving for months at a time, returning briefly to work or university and then being mobilized again.

For those without family support, prolonged reserve duty can threaten their housing, education, income and, in some cases, even their ability to remain in Israel.

Preger experienced firsthand how quickly an informal support network can disappear. For a time, his girlfriend’s family provided the kind of practical help his own family could not offer from abroad. When the relationship ended, so did that support.

During a Knesset Immigration and Absorption Committee hearing, he described lone reservists sleeping on a different couch every night. Others returned from duty to find their businesses had collapsed or their studies had fallen apart.

“The war did not create every one of these challenges,” he said. “But it exposed their scale.”

Not only new immigrants

The term “lone reservist” may bring to mind a young immigrant whose parents live abroad. That describes many, but not all.

Growing Wings estimates that 55 percent of the lone reservists in its network are immigrants, while 45 percent were born in Israel. The latter include orphans, people who grew up in foster care or the welfare system, individuals estranged from their families and those who left closed religious communities.

Many are in their late 20s or early 30s. They are students, professionals, small-business owners, spouses and sometimes parents themselves. They may have built independent lives, but they lack the extended family network that many Israelis take for granted.

“What unites them is not where they were born,” Preger said. “It is that when they leave the battlefield and return to civilian life, there is often no parental or extended-family safety net waiting for them.”

The IDF now officially recognizes lone reservists as a distinct population. According to Preger, that gives commanders and welfare personnel a clearer way to identify those who may need assistance.

It has also opened access to additional welfare support, mental-health resources, administrative accommodations, assistance in urgent cases, special leave to handle personal matters and, in certain circumstances, reimbursements for reservists who returned from abroad to serve.

Preger sees the recognition as an important first step. The real test, he said, is whether lone reservists know what assistance is available and can access it when they need it.

Some are unaware of the benefits to which they are entitled. Others encounter complex bureaucracy or narrow eligibility requirements. A housing crisis cannot always wait

for formal approval, and many of the problems reservists face fall outside the military system.

That is where Growing Wings steps in.

More than financial assistance

Growing Wings was founded in 2019 by Max Long, a former lone soldier and active IDF reservist. Today, more than 700 lone reservists participate in its active networks and community channels.

Since October 7, 2023, the organization says it has assisted more than 2,000 lone soldiers and lone reservists with emergency aid, housing, furniture, moving services, mental-health referrals, bureaucratic guidance, and legal and professional support.

Its role is often to help reservists navigate a maze of assistance spread across the IDF, government agencies, universities, employers and nonprofit organizations. Someone returning from months in the field may not know which office is responsible, or have the energy to tell the same story over and over again.

Preger believes the support that matters most is often the kind families provide without thinking about it.

“When you do not have parents or close relatives in the country, you may not have someone to review a lease, help you understand a government letter, host you for dinner after weeks in the field, connect you to a job or recognize that you are struggling before you ask for help,” he said.

One incident in Gaza showed Long how the community built around lone soldiers can endure long after the original need has passed.

His reserve squad was positioned far from the rest of its unit and was running short of food, water and other supplies. He entered a building where other Israeli soldiers were stationed and asked whether they had anything to spare.

Someone inside called his name.

The soldier was a former lone soldier whom Long and Growing Wings had helped several years earlier. After learning what the team needed, he quickly gathered food, water and whatever other supplies he could find. This time, the person who had once received support was providing it.

For Preger, the encounter captures the meaning behind Growing Wings’ guiding principle: “For lone soldiers, by lone soldiers.”

“The goal is not only to intervene when someone cannot pay rent or needs a place to sleep,” he said. “It is to build relationships that continue long after the immediate crisis has passed.”

From emergency response to permanent support

Preger said he experienced first-hand what effective institutional support can look like at Reichman University. After repeated reserve call-ups disrupted his studies, the university appointed an adviser who communicated with his professors and helped him develop a plan to catch up.

But not every reservist has an employer, landlord or university willing to make similar accommodations.

See “Lone” on page 11



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Parashat Noach

RIVKAH SLONIM, EDUCATION DIRECTOR, ROHR CHABAD CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDENT LIFE AT BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY

One of the most interesting details about the Flood saga so central to this week’s Torah portion appears after the rain subsides and it is safe for people to emerge on to dry land. God calls out to Noah and commands him to leave the ark. Why would he need to be told, much less commanded? While a large and hardy sea vessel built to weather the deluge, the ark was certainly not huge by contemporary standards. Especially when you consider that it had to house the world’s most comprehensive menagerie. Add to that the overwhelming stench generated by the refuse and biological excrement accrued over the span of one year aboard this vessel. Who would want to stay in claustrophobic confinement for an extra minute? And yet, we are taught that Noah was reluctant to

leave the ark; he needed prodding, even a direct command. Why? Because aboard the ark Noah experienced, in the words of Nachmanides, “miracles within miracles.” To start, just to accommodate the sheer volume of food necessary to sustain the people and the numerous species aboard the ark would necessitate 10 arks of that same size. Add to that the thousands of land dwelling, air breathing vertebrates, and flying creatures. Furthermore, in a nod to the Messianic era, the wild, ferocious animals got on with the timid, domestic creatures, all while packed in this wondrously compressed space. Noah simply did not want to leave this utopian, miraculous existence and confront the drudgery of “earthiness” again. In response, God commanded him to leave the ark and

begin the work of rebuilding civilization. It is the work of transforming and elevating the temporal existence, and making it hospitable to God’s presence, that is the stated purpose of creation. It was for this very reason that Noah and his family were saved. Hanging out in the “bubble” of the ark was a repudiation of their very purpose for being. Understanding Noah’s mindset illuminates Noah’s drunkenness shortly after leaving the ark. This was not pedestrian inebriation. This was another iteration of Noah’s attempt to disencumber himself from the day to day realities of life in a material world. And such behavior was more than a weakness induced aberration, it had no place in God’s vision for humanity. See “Noach” on page 11

Congregational Notes

Temple Israel

Orientation: Conservative
Rabbi: Micah Friedman
Address: 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: 607-723-7461 and 607-231-3746
Office hours: Mon.-Thurs., 8:30 am-3:30 pm; Fri., 8 am-3 pm
E-mail: office@templeisraelvestal.org
Website: www.templeisraelvestal.org
Service schedule: Tues., 5:30 pm; Fri., 5:30 pm; Sat., 9:30 am – all via Zoom and in-person
On Fridays and Tuesdays at 5:30 pm, services will be led by Rabbi Micah Friedman.
On Saturday, October 3, Shabbat services will be held at 9:30 am. The Torah portion is Deuteronomy 14:22-16:17 and the haftarah is I Kings 8:54-66. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 7:30 pm.
On Saturday, October 10, Shabbat services will be held at 9:30 am. The Torah portion is Genesis 1:1-6:8 and the haftarah is I Samuel 20:18-42. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 7:15 pm.
On Saturday, October 17, Shabbat services will be held at 9:30 am. The Torah portion is Genesis 6:9-11:32 and the haftarah is Isaiah 54:1-55:5. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 7:15 pm.
On Saturday, October 24, Shabbat services will be held at 9:30 am. The Torah portion is Genesis 12:1-17:27 and the haftarah is Isaiah 40:27-41:16. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 7 pm.
On Saturday, October 31, Shabbat services will be held at 9:30 am. The Torah portion is Genesis 18:1-22:24 and the haftarah is II Kings 4:1-23. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 6:45 pm.
Upcoming events:
Tuesdays, October 6, 13, 20 and 27: “613 Mitzvot” class with Rabbi Micah Friedman at 4:30 pm.
Tuesday, October 6: Executive Board meeting at 7 pm.
Monday, October 12: Temple office closed for Columbus Day.
Friday, October 16: Family dinner with Rabbi Micah Friedman following erev Shabbat services.
Tuesday October 20: Ritual Committee meeting at 10 am; Board of Trustees meeting at 7 pm.

Penn-York Jewish Community

B’nai B’rith: William H. Seigel Lodge
Purpose: To promote Jewish identity through religious, cultural, educational and social activities in the Southern Tier of New York and the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania, including Waverly, NY; Sayre, Athens and Towanda, PA, and surrounding communities.
For more information, contact the Penn-York Jewish Community at penn yorkjkc@gmail.com.

Temple Brith Sholom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated
Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045
Phone: 607-756-7181
President: Mark Suben
Cemetery Committee: 315-696-5744
Website: templebrithsholomcortland.org
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Temple-Brith-Sholom-114006981962930/
Service leaders: Lay leadership
Shabbat services: Services are usually on the third Friday of the month and led by a variety of leaders. Check the Facebook page or weekly e-mail for upcoming services. Contact the president to get on the e-mail list.
Religious School: Students are educated on an individual basis.
Temple Brith Sholom is a small equalitarian congregation serving the greater Cortland community. Congregants span the gamut of observance and services are largely dependent on the service leader. The Friday night siddur is “Likrat Shabbat.” The community extends a warm welcome to the Jewish student population of SUNY Cortland, as well as the residents of local adult residences. The Board of Trustees meets on the second Tuesday of the month.
Services and programs are held by Zoom usually on the third Friday of the month.

Beth David Synagogue

Affiliation: Orthodox Union
Rabbi: Moshe Shmaryahu
Rabbi Emeritus: Zev Silber
Address: 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905
Phone: 607-722-1793
Rabbi’s Office: 607-722-7514
Fax: 607-722-7121
Office hours: Tues. 10 am-1 pm; Thurs. 9 am-1 pm
Beth David e-mail address: bethdavid@stny.rr.com
Rabbi’s e-mail: rabbishmaryahu@gmail.com
Website: www.bethdavid.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/bethdavidbinghamton
Classes: Rabbi Zev Silber will hold his weekly Talmud class every Tuesday evening after services.

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rabbi: Caleb Brommer
Address: 402 North Tioga St. (the corner of Court and Tioga streets), Ithaca, NY 14850-4292
Phone: 607-273-5775
Website: www.tbethithaca.org
President: Nommi Nadich
Director of Education and Engagement: Calle Schueler
Services: Friday 6:30 pm; Saturday 9:30 am, unless otherwise announced. Weekday morning minyan 7:30 am (9 am on Sundays and legal holidays).
Religious School/Education: September-May: Classes meet on Sundays from 9 am-noon and Wednesdays from 4-6 pm. Teen Midrasha meets Tuesdays from 6-8 pm.
Adult Ed.: Numerous weekly courses, several semester-long courses and a variety of lectures are offered throughout the year. Call the temple office, or email secretary@tbethithaca.org, for more information.

Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive
Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815
Phone: 607-334-2691
Purpose: To maintain a Jewish identity and meet the needs of the Jewish community in the area.

Congregation Tikkun v’Or

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Address: PO Box 3981, Ithaca, NY 14852; 2550 Triphammer Rd., Lansing, NY
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Website: www.tikkunvor.org
E-mail: info@tikkunvor.org
Presidents: Eric Maroney and Judith Saul
Education Director: Jennie Lavine
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Services: All services currently on Zoom. E-mail info@tikkunvor.org for times and links. Contemplative morning services every Tuesday from 8:30-9:30 am. Friday evenings, Saturday mornings, Torah study, Gan Shabbat and other special services at least once a month. Check the website for details.
Jewish Learning Experiences (JLE) for second through seventh grade classes meet on Sunday mornings. Sixth and seventh grades also meet on Wednesday afternoons. Family programs for kindergarten and first grade held monthly.
Adult Education: Offered regularly throughout the year. Check the website for details.

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Saturday, October 3, light candles after 7:23 pm
Sunday, October 4, yom tov ends..... 7:22 pm
Friday, October 9, light candles 6:13 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, October 10..... 7:12 pm
Friday, October 16, light candles 6:02 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, October 17..... 7:01 pm
Friday, October 23, light candles 5:51 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, October 24..... 6:50 pm
Friday, October 30, light candles 5:41 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, October 31..... 6:41 pm
Friday, November 6, light candles 5:33 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, November 7..... 6:32 pm

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Rabbi: Leiah Moser
Address: 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton NY 13905
Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm
Phone: 607-723-7355
Office e-mail: TempleConcordBinghamton@gmail.com
Website: www.TempleConcord.com
Please contact Temple Concord for Zoom links.
Some services and programs are online only. For Zoom links, contact Temple Concord.
Services, ongoing classes and evening prayers at Temple Concord:
Fridays: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service (in person, on Zoom and on Facebook).
Saturdays: At 9:15 am, Torah study (in person and on Zoom) and at 10:30 am, Shabbat service (in person).
Wednesdays: At 5:30 pm, evening prayers (in person).
At 6 pm, adult education classes (in person and on Zoom).
Contact the temple office for more details.
Upcoming events:
Friday, October 2: At 6 pm, Simchat Torah service with Yizkor.
Saturday, October 3: At 10 am, Simchat Torah service with Yizkor.
Sunday, October 4: From 10 am-2 pm, Sisterhood Rummage Sale, buy one shirt, blouse, or top and get on free. Also from 10 am-2 pm, Re-Sale Boutique. All sales will be held in the Temple Concord basement. Shoppers are asked to use the Oak Street entrance.
Tuesday, October 6: At 10:30 am, Tuesday Morning Book Club will discuss “Inheritance: Love, Loss, and the Legacy of the Holocaust” by Charlie Scheidt and Kat Rohrer. For more information, contact Nancy Basmann at nancybasmann@outlook.com.
See “TC” on page 11

Temple Beth El of Oneonta

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Cantor: Josh Stein
Address: 83 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY 13820
Mailing address: P.O. Box 383, Oneonta, NY 13820
Phone: 607-432-5522
E-mail: TBEOneonta@gmail.com
Regular service times: Contact the temple for days of services and times.
Religious School/Education: Religious School, for grades kindergarten through bar/bat mitzvah, meets Sunday mornings.
For the schedule of services, classes and events, contact the temple.

Rohr Chabad Center

Affiliation: Chabad-Lubavitch
Rabbi Aaron and Rivkah Slonim, Directors
E-mail: aslonim@binghamton.edu
rslonim@chabadofbinghamton.com
Address: 420 Murray Hill Rd., Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: 607-797-0015, Fax: 607-797-0095
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Rabbi Zalman and Rochel Chein, Education
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Rabbi Levi and Hadasa Slonim, Downtown and Development
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E-mail: lslonim@Jewishbu.com, hslonim@Jewishbu.com
Rabbi Yisroel and Goldie Ohana, Programming
E-mail: yohana@Jewishbu.com, gohana@Jewishbu.com
Regular service times: Daily 7:30 am, Friday evening 6 pm, Shabbat morning 9:30 am, Maariv and Havdalah one hour after candle-lighting time, Sundays 9:30 am.
To join the mailing list, for up-to-date information on adult education offerings or to arrange for a private tutorial, for details concerning the Judaica shop and resource center, or for assistance through the Piaker Free Loan Society or Raff Maasim Tovim Foundation, call Chabad’s office at 797-0015.
Chabad will be holding pre-Shabbat virtual programs. For more information, visit www.JewishBU.com/S2020Partnership.

At first Physical AI conference, Israel bets robotics is the next frontier

By James Spiro

(JNS) – Israel is looking to turn its AI expertise into something it can leverage beyond screens and software.

The country’s National AI Headquarters under the Prime Minister’s Office on September 8 staged Israel’s first dedicated Physical AI conference in Tel Aviv, bringing together government officials, defense and technology companies, investors and global technology giants to examine the emerging intersection of AI, robotics and autonomous systems.

Held in partnership with B2B events producer People & Computers, the conference was primarily in Hebrew and presented the thesis that Israel’s Startup Nation identity could evolve into an “Edge-Up Nation,” in which Israeli AI is deployed not only in software but at the edge of the physical world.

The organizers described the event as an examination of the bridge between AI models and robotic and autonomous applications. Executives from Israeli robotics and autonomy companies including Innoviz, Beewise, Blue White Robotics, Pickcommerce AI Robotics and LTX, as well as Shield AI’s Israel-linked leadership, attended the event alongside global technology companies including NVIDIA, Intel, AMD, Deloitte and Microsoft.

Speakers included Brig. Gen. (res.) Erez Eskel, head of the National Headquarters for Artificial Intelligence at the Prime Minister’s Office, and Lior Ben Horin, who leads NVIDIA’s Physical AI ecosystem work in EMEA.

A representative from the Prime Minister’s Office later confirmed to JNS that the conference served as the setting for Anduril Industries and Shield AI, two of the world’s largest defense-tech companies with a combined value of almost \$74 billion, to discuss strategy and potential collaborations.

Guy Altagar, vice president of Physical AI at the Israeli National AI Directorate, also addressed the conference, together with Dov Moran, inventor of the USB flash drive and managing partner at Grove Ventures.

Israel’s leap into Physical AI

The focus reflected a broader shift in how Israel is thinking about artificial intelligence.

Generative AI largely produces information. Physical AI is designed to perceive the world, make decisions and act within it. That can mean an autonomous vehicle navigating a road, a robot operating in a warehouse, an agricultural machine working a field, or drones and other autonomous systems operating in environments where human intervention is limited.

Unlike cloud-based AI, edge AI allows machines to make decisions locally, which can reduce latency and enable systems to continue operating when connectivity is limited, rather than having to send data to centralized computing infrastructure for processing.

In Israel, the concept also has an obvious connection to the country’s defense sector, where drones, autonomous systems, sensors, computer vision and edge computing have been developed and deployed for years.

October 7 and the subsequent war also accelerated demand for systems that can operate with less reliance

Lone Continued from page 9

At the beginning of the war, civil society mobilized with meals, equipment, grants and housing. As the war continued, however, that first wave of assistance began to recede. The consequences of repeated reserve service did not.

Nearly three years after October 7, reserve duty remains part of daily life in Israel. Under the government’s framework for 2026, as many as 40,000 reservists may be serving on an average day, moving constantly between combat and civilian life.

“The systems were largely designed for short-term emergencies,” Preger said. “Lone reservists are now living through a marathon.”

He is calling for a permanently funded national framework that would accompany lone soldiers into reserve service and coordinate military, government, academic, employment, housing and mental-health support.

Civil-society organizations would remain an important part of that framework because they can respond to personal circumstances that do not fit neatly into official categories. But basic protections, Preger said, should not depend on a reservist finding the right nonprofit or knowing whom to call.

“If someone gives hundreds of days to defend the country, they should not have to prove their isolation over and over again or risk losing the civilian life they are serving to protect,” he said.

For most reservists, family is an unspoken part of Israel’s military system. It is the support structure that keeps civilian life functioning while they serve and helps them regain their footing when they return.

Growing Wings is trying to build that home front for those who do not have one.

“The central challenge is no longer simply helping someone survive one call-up,” Preger said. “It is making sure repeated service does not destroy the civilian future they are trying to build.”

Originally published at <https://www.jns.org/feature/growing-wings-builds-a-home-front-for-israels-lone-reservists>.

on human operators, communications links or centralized computing. Israel’s recently approved National AI Strategy explicitly identifies “connecting software to the physical world” as one of the areas in which the country seeks to establish global leadership, building on capabilities developed in its defense industries.

That strategy is already moving from policy to implementation. In August, the Directorate published a Request for Information (RFI) to explore building a National Physical AI Testing Ground, a facility intended to allow companies and researchers to simulate complex real-world environments – from highways and hospitals to manufacturing plants and farms – to accelerate breakthroughs in robotics, edge computing and sensing technology.

Speaking to the media ahead of the conference, Altagar said the RFI has drawn more than 250 applicants, ranging from large international corporations to small startups.

“We invite a lot of different companies from a lot of different verticals, different fields of expertise, to participate and help us build this ‘*kibbutz*,’ this Israeli ecosystem,” he said. “We are very excited to . . . achieve the goals that Israel’s prime minister has developed for the national agenda: to start talking about AI not just as an application, [but] rather changing the way we live.”

Hila Khalil, the Directorate’s vice president of strategy, called the conference the “kickoff” for that Physical AI plan, with plans to form sector-specific communities and dedicated R&D centers in its wake.

The money question

The conference represented an Israeli attempt to identify where the country can build an advantage in the next phase of the AI race, following the initial explosion of generative AI and amid a growing global push toward robots and autonomous machines. But if the government’s pitch was about infrastructure and sovereignty, the event’s investor track explored how companies should go about asking investors to pay for it.

This national transition from an emphasis on software to Physical AI could challenge Israel’s tried-and-tested venture-capital model. Hardware requires more capital, longer development cycles and manufacturing capacity, whereas the traditional Israeli startup model has often been built around relatively capital-efficient software companies that can demonstrate rapid revenue growth.

That tension was explored in “Physical AI Needs Money: How Do You Deal With the Fear of It?,” a panel moderated by Dr. Assaf Horowitz, vice president of AI at the Israel Innovation Authority, that featured Orli Sol Dahan Gruper of Robotics Factory, Dana Goldman Szekely of Greensoil Investments, 10D General Partner Itay Rand and E44

Noach. Continued from page 10

The Baal Shem Tov taught that there is a deep lesson embedded in this story for each one of us, The biblical word for ark, *teva*, also means word. The words of Torah and prayer, taught the Besht, are the vessel that keeps us safe in the face of the flood and deluge we each face daily. There are all kinds of responsibilities and challenges that confront us; sometimes the waves of life threaten to overwhelm us completely. Beginning each day by “entering the ark” with words of prayer and Torah orients us, it provides mooring, perspective and strength. But we dare not remain in this comfortable “bubble” communing with God all day. Like Noach, we are bidden to leave the “ark” and go do our work – each in our distinctive manner – interfacing with and elevating every aspect of temporal existence.

Sequestering ourselves, attempting to shield ourselves from the challenges and difficulties of living within this world, is not the Jewish way. Our mandate is to “take on the world,” challenges and messiness included. Our service is to transform the mundane into the sublime; to saturate each of our overtures with God’s consciousness, thus revealing the Divine source that pulsates just beneath the surface of all existence.

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The panel was mostly in Hebrew, but Ezra Gardner, CIO and co-founder of Varana Capital and CEO of Gesher Acquisitions Co., was among the panelists and spoke exclusively to JNS ahead of his appearance. “All of the biggest companies in the public markets are actually hardware companies,” Gardner said, pointing to Amazon, Apple and Microsoft. “You ask yourself: Why is hardware not such a big VC thing, especially in Israel, but such a big thing in the public markets?”

His answer highlights the constraints of an early-stage investment cycle, in which building something like a semiconductor can require \$100 million and five to 10 years before it generates revenue. Such a timeline can scare off software-focused VCs accustomed to funding a startup to an annual recurring revenue pitch within a couple of years.

Gardner’s advice to those founders was to stop pitching revenue they don’t have and instead find other proof points. He pointed to the country’s existing semiconductor and chip-design base, including Apple’s longstanding presence in Israel and NVIDIA’s plans to build a major campus in the north of the country.

Israel’s advantage

Sectors across Startup Nation are already developing many of the technologies that underpin Physical AI, from computer vision and sensors to autonomous vehicles, agricultural robotics and drones.

The Israel Innovation Authority counts more than 2,000 AI companies operating in the country, including 538 classified as deep-tech AI and roughly 95 specifically in robotics. In 2025, core AI companies captured 35 percent of all Israeli tech investment, part of a \$14.6 billion year and representing a 30 percent jump over 2024.

Asked to define the term at the center of the conference, Gardner argued that “Physical AI” isn’t really new; rather, it is hardware and deep tech that have finally solved a specific old problem: giving machines something akin to a tactile sense. He predicted that the “Physical AI” label will eventually morph into the simpler term “robotics.”

“People are not going to need to say ‘Physical AI’ because robots are going to be everywhere,” he concluded. “It’s going to be obvious that it’s robotics, and they’re not going to say ‘AI’ because there isn’t going to be a dumb robot. They’re all going to be smart.”

Originally published at <https://www.jns.org/feature/at-first-physical-ai-conference-israel-bets-robotics-is-the-next-frontier>.

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Sunday, October 11: At 11 am, Temple Concord Sisterhood Donor with lunch and a program, “Designing with Grocery Store Flowers” presented by Dolores Wisdom and Kimberli Schwartz. Contact Roz Antoun by October 6 at Rantoun77@stny.rr.com or by phone at 607-644-0107 to reserve a seat.

Tuesday, October 28: At 10:30 am, “Writing Biblical Fan Fiction” writing workshop in the library led by Rabbi Rachel Esserman, who will guide attendees in creating their own works based on stories found in the Bible. There is no cost to attend and new members are welcome. Those attending are asked to bring a notebook or writing paper, and to contact Esserman in advance at resserman@yahoo.com to ensure there are enough copies of materials. No previous writing experience or familiarity with the biblical text is necessary. This session is sponsored by Sisterhood.

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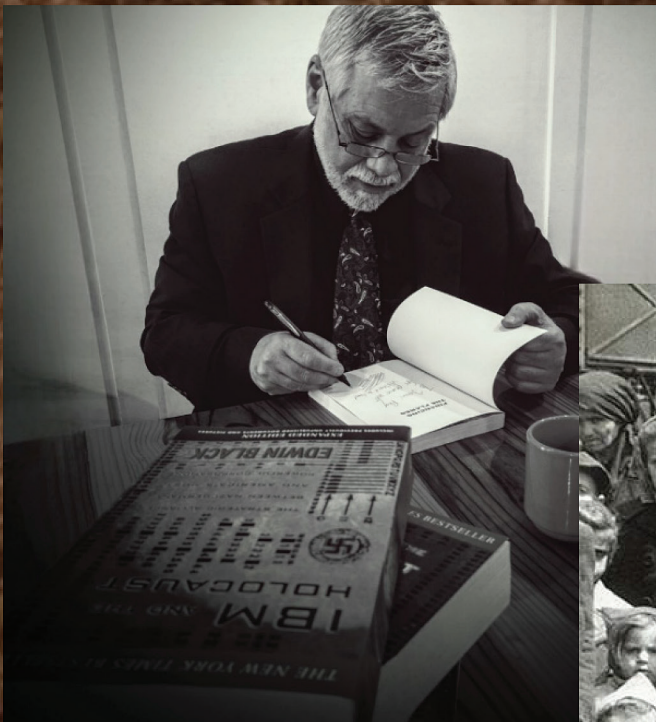
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