

THE REPORTER

Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

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BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Federation forms Security Committee

By Reporter staff

As part of its efforts to increase security for Jewish organizations in the area, the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton has formed a Security Committee. The committee is working with Mark Henderson, the director of community security for the Jewish Community Federation of Greater Rochester, to help local organizations increase their security efforts. Henderson is coordinating this effort with the Secure Community Network, the national Homeland Security initiative of the Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"I wish we didn't need this committee," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "But antisemitism and antisemitic attacks are up. While we may

disagree about many things, the need for security is not one of them. We are united in our desire to be prepared for all possibilities and to protect our community."

Steven Malkin has agreed to be the chairman of the committee. "Our local Federation recognizes that a threat to one is a threat to all," Malkin said. "The focus of this committee is the safety and security of our Jewish community. This is consistent with many other Jewish communities across North America, many with far greater resources and dedicated staff, to address the ever present, but changing, threat to Jews. We are formalizing an association with the Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester. The opportunity to draw on this Federation's experience in providing security, grant applications, information sharing and training will provide us with a

valuable resource. We encourage everyone to support this committee by expressing their concerns, questions, ideas and, of course, donations."

Hubal notes that the effort will be helped by the Jewish Federations of North America's LiveSecure program, a \$54 million security campaign and initiative to ensure the security and resiliency of Jewish communities that will take place over three years. "This will be a new program for Federation and another way we can make an impact on the community as a whole," she said. The funds received will be based on new and increased pledges to the annual Campaign, and will be used solely for security.

The Federation has already organized a variety of programs to help keep organizations safe: a security seminar for faith-based organizations in conjunction with

the Broome County Council of Churches; an active shooter training; and a "Stop the Bleed" program in conjunction with Temple Israel's Safety and Security Committee. "We plan to have more training to help our community members prepare in case the worst happens," Hubal said.

Members of the committee include representatives of local organizations, such as Beth David Synagogue, Hillel Academy of Broome County, Hillel at Binghamton, the Jewish Community Center, Norwich Jewish Center, the Rohr Chabad Center for Jewish Student Life, Temple Concord and Temple Israel.

To make a pledge or increase a pledge to help the security efforts, see the form on page 5 or visit www.jfgb.org/campaign-for-2023. For more information, contact Hubal at director@jfgb.org or 724-2332.

Fest Film to show "Incitement" in February

By Reporter staff

The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of the Israeli drama "Incitement" in February. The film is in Hebrew with English subtitles. Registration is required prior to Wednesday, February 1, which is when the link will be sent out. A discussion will take place on Sunday, February 5, at 5:30 pm, led by Rabbi Geoffrey Brown, spiritual leader of Temple Israel. Registration is free, but donations are

welcome. To register, visit www.jfgb.org/.

"Incitement" offers a depiction of the lead-up to the 1995 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin seen through the worldview of his assassin, Yigal Amir. It chronicles the descent of a promising law student to an intransigent ultra-nationalist obsessed with murdering his country's leader. The film was nominated for 10 Ophir awards in Israel and won awards for best film and casting.

In the *Los Angeles Times*, Kenneth Turan noted that "those expecting a bombastic diatribe will encounter a film that is anything but. A chilling portrait of how fanaticism can grow and be enabled, this is a matter-of-fact film that moves with an awful inexorability toward its foregone conclusion." On the website Movie Nation (<https://rogersmovienation.com>), Roger Moore wrote that "'Incitement' is a riveting Israeli docudrama about the

chain of events that led Amir, an intense, fanatical ex-special forces soldier turned law student, to assassinate Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, a murder that directly led to decades of right wing rule in Israel, much of it by the indicted, corrupt darling of Israel's religious right, Benjamin Netanyahu."

"Join us for their thought-provoking and dramatic film," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton. "It packs a powerful punch."

L'Dor V'Dor Next Generation event: hockey game on Feb. 4

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton's next L'Dor v'Dor - Next Generation event will be a Binghamton Black Bears hockey game. L'Dor v'Dor is aimed at those in their 20s and 30s. The game will be held on Saturday, February

4, at 7 pm. Tickets are \$6 per person and must be reserved and paid for in advance. The deadline to reserve is Friday, January 27. To make a reservation, visit <https://www.jfgb.org/>.

"The Federation is excited to get a group of young Jewish adults together

again," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "Our 'Jews and Brews' event last summer was a success. It showed us that there are lots of young Jewish people living in Binghamton and they are eager to make social connections."



L-r: Yigal Amir (Yehuda Nahari Halevi) with Nava (Daniella Kertesz), a fellow student, in "Incitement." (Photo used with permission of Greenwich Entertainment)

Spotlight

Butrimonys: Binghamton's Anatevka

By Rabbi Lance J. Sussman, Ph.D.

I was pleasantly surprised to learn that Binghamton's daily newspaper, the *Press & Sun-Bulletin*, ran two articles at the end of 2022 (November 21 and December 12) by local historian Gerald Smith based on my 1989 history of the Jewish community of the Triple Cities, "Beyond the Catskills." Although it's been more than 30 years since I worked on that project, I harbored a hope of adding a supplement to that study. Now, with the appearance of Smith's articles, I decided that this was the moment to look into what I felt was the missing piece to my work, an exploration of the history of a southern Lithuanian shtetl, Butrimonys, the ancestral home of several of Binghamton's leading Jewish families, including the Koffmans, Rosefskys and Rozens among others.

In every respect, Butrimonys (Lithuanian and German), which has multiple variant

spellings (e.g., Butrimants and Baltromants in Yiddish; Butrimantsi in Russian and Butrymance in Polish), was a typical shtetl (Yiddish, "little city," village or town) in East Europe much like Professor Yaffa Eliach's nearby hometown, Eišiškės (Lithuanian) or Eishishok (Yiddish), which she immortalized in the powerful "Tower of Faces" at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Within the world of East European Jews, Lithuanian Jews are still known as Litvaks.

Located in Alytus County, Butrimonys is 35 miles southeast of Kaunas (Kovno) and 48 miles southwest of Vilnius (Vilna), the capital and largest city of Lithuania. At different times, Butrimonys was part of Poland, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian Empire and twice (including today) an independent Lithuania, as well. See "Butrimonys" on page 6



Firefighters and police, 20th century in Butrimonys. Faces of people standing on the balcony have been "torn" for unknown reasons. Jews no longer live in Butrimonys (population circa 1,000), which prior to 1941 had a Jewish majority. By the end of the 19th century, the town had more than 2,000 Jewish residents.

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Opinion

From the Desk of the Federation Executive Director

With gratitude

SHELLEY HUBAL

Grandma Hannah had a ceramic studio in her basement on Wedgewood Terrace. For years, she taught lessons several nights a week. I remember her students, mostly women, sitting around large tables in the dusty basement. They would schmooze and smoke cigarettes while scrubbing greenware, rolling out clay or glazing their pieces. The bond those women shared went beyond their time in the basement. I recall how they supported one another through the loss of loved ones, divorces and other life events. They created their own community.

We all define community according to our life experiences. Observing the women in grandma's dusty studio care for one another is just one small life experience that impacts my views. I had the honor to work alongside incredibly resilient parents as an advocate for people with

disabilities. The support and compassion they shared will forever shape my definition of community. The work I do as Federation director has shown me another way community has a positive impact on people's lives.

Community is sharing a hug at a *shiva* call. Community is giving a meaningful donation in support of an institution. Community is attending services on Shabbat or coming together to celebrate Hanukkah. Community is checking on our elderly neighbors. The list goes on.

Right now, our Binghamton Jewish community is shrinking and we collectively need to find a new path. The people in leadership positions have no one to replace them. Think about that: in a few short years, we may not have a Federation because there will be no leadership. In case you aren't aware, the Federation is the cornerstone

of our community. We go beyond fund-raising; we are the convener of a multitude of resources that benefit so many. You can go to www.jfgeb.org and click on our "Year in Review" to see all the ways Federation created community in 2022.

If you have ever thought about making a difference, the time is now. This community needs you. I promise you will get back in spades what you give. Being part of something bigger than yourself and knowing you are making a difference in the lives of others will sustain you and forever change your outlook on life. To learn more about volunteer opportunities or to share where you see our community in the future, call me at the Federation office at 724-2332. I look forward to connecting with you and co-creating a compassionate community for all.

Zelensky, a David for our times: "I need ammunition, not a ride."

By Bill Simons

For those who value freedom, the last two years started badly. On January 6, 2021, a violent mob stormed the U.S. Congress, intent on overturning the presidential election. And on February 24, 2022, Russia mounted an invasion of Ukraine, expecting to emulate Adolf Hitler's rapid blitzkrieg conquests. But liberty did not buckle in America or in Ukraine.

It is astonishing that Volodymyr Zelensky is the president of Ukraine, even more extraordinary that he has earned comparisons to Winston Churchill, Great Britain's World War II prime minister. Prior to his 2019 election as

president, Zelensky was known as a comedian and actor. Unlike former U.S. President Ronald Reagan, politically seasoned as governor of California, Zelensky jumped directly from entertainment to head of state. Initially, his presidential leadership floundered, unable to fulfill campaign promises to eradicate corruption and resolve tensions with Russia. All that changed when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Amidst devastating damage inflicted by Russian tanks, missiles and drones, Zelensky summoned a personal courage that inspired and matched that of the brave Ukrainian people. When the U.S. offered to evacuate Zelensky from

the dangers in the Kyiv capital, he responded, "The fight is here; I need ammunition, not a ride." Beyond Ukraine, Zelensky's words and actions fostered a new unity in the West that flummoxed Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, who had dismissed the liberal democracies as weak and decadent.

Zelensky holds special meaning for Jews. Ukraine was once home to one of the largest Jewish populations in the world. The majority of Jews observed traditional practices; others followed more secular lifestyles and made major contributions to culture and commerce. Under Cossacks, Soviets and Nazis, antisemitism – including "the Holocaust See "Zelensky" on page 8

In My Own Words

My life as a reader

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

"Wait! You read the books!"

That quote was an answer to a comment I made about the books I review for the paper. It's not the first time someone was surprised by that I actually read the books: my other friend thought I just skimmed them. I confess to periodically fast-reading a book (not exactly skimming, but close), but that is actually very rare. I've always been a reader, but the number of books I read increased when I lost the last of what I refer to as my "normal hearing."

Normal hearing was when the world sounded the way my brain remembered it, something my hearing aids could not reproduce. I've written about losing the ability to really hear music (especially recorded music), but I haven't written as much about the other changes that came with that loss. That's because, even before my final hearing loss, I was no longer able to go to the movies or the theater. Although I'd been a big fan of both, I began missing far too much for the experience to be a pleasant one.

When my hearing loss occurred, I was grateful that I already loved to read. Not only could I still get absorbed in a story, but while reading, I was able to ignore the awful ear ringing that replaced my ability to hear. (Not being able to hear was actually extremely noisy and those sounds were unpleasant and nerve wracking.) The sounds have not disappeared, but my hearing aids and CI bring in enough stimulation to my ears to replace them, although they sometime appear if the world gets too quiet.

What I still could do was watch TV, at least shows that had closed captions. My use of captioning began before my last hearing loss since otherwise I missed too much of the dialogue. But once my normal hearing disappeared, I was completely dependent on it. Even my hearing aids

didn't really help. Before getting my cochlear implant, I usually watched the TV without sound or without my hearing aids, which meant it was not a particularly relaxing activity. With my cochlear implant, I do watch more TV, but still spend most of my evenings reading.

I read a variety of genres, but read each of them for the same reason: those rare moments when you become so lost in what is happening that when you lift your eyes from the book, you barely recognize the world around you. That also used to happen when I went to the movies and the theater, or visited a museum and saw a painting or sculpture that helped me transcend my life.

But I don't need those moments to enjoy a book. Fiction can make me laugh, cry or reconsider how I think about the world. I also find some nonfiction incredibly exciting, especially the ones that offer me new ideas to ponder. In fact, I will periodically read something to deliberately challenge my thinking. One of my favorite things in the world is to discuss an idea or a book with someone who interprets the work differently. That's one of the reasons I enjoy Torah study: I never know when someone is going to offer insights I would otherwise have never considered. Sometimes a friend radically interprets a story differently than I did: even if I retain my original interpretation, I love the challenge of being forced to consider the work from a different perspective.

The bottom line, though, is that I love stories. That's why I read more fiction than nonfiction. That's also why I used to go to the movies and theater: there I could see stories acted out before my eyes. But books – at least, hard copies of books – allow me to share the stories I love. I See "Reader" on page 4

Letters

Law of Return

Since the founding of the modern state of Israel in 1948, the Law of Return grants all Diaspora emigrating Jews automatic Israeli citizenship. We now read that the new government in Israel is proposing a revision to the Law of Return wherein Jews converted to Judaism by other than Orthodox rabbis would not enjoy the right to automatic Israeli citizenship.

In 1997 at the General Assembly of Jewish Federations of North America at Seattle, WA, attending members rejected the idea of such a revision, voting a resolution that there should be no changes made to the Law of Return. Subsequently, same such resolutions from worldwide Jewish organizations caused the Israeli government to drop the idea.

Actually, the issue is not so much "who is a Jew" as it is "who is a rabbi" since only Orthodox rabbis conversions would be recognized in Israel regarding the right of return if such a change were to be legislated.

It now falls upon us to let the new government of Israel know that we again oppose any change to the Law of Return. I propose that we, each of us, write to the Israel Consulate in New York City, the Israel Embassy in Washington, our local Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton and the Jewish Federations of North America decrying the proposed change to the Law of Return.

◆ Consulate General of Israel in New York, Consular Department, 800 Second Ave., New York, NY 10017.

◆ Israel Embassy to the United States of America, 3514 International Dr. NW, Washington, DC 20008.

◆ The Jewish Federations of North America, Inc., 12804 Norwood Rd. Raleigh, NC 27613.

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Vestal, NYJewish Federation
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BINGHAMTON, NY

OPINIONS

The views expressed in editorials and opinion pieces are those of each author and not necessarily the views of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton.

LETTERS

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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DEADLINE

Regular weekly deadline is noon, Wednesday, for the following week's newspaper.

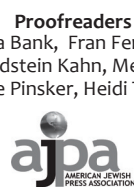
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www.thereporter.org

New JLI course to cover 33 centuries of Jewish literature

Registration is open for the all new Jewish Learning Institute winter course. For six consecutive Mondays at 7 pm, beginning on January 30, Rivkah Slonim will offer "Book Smart" in person at the Chabad Center and virtually. An 8:45 pm section of the course will be offered if there are a minimum of 10 registrants for that time. The course will explore the history, authors and content of Judaism's "most important titles" subdivided in eight general genres.

To register, e-mail Rshea@ChabadofBinghamton.com, call the Chabad Center at 797-0015 or visit www.myjli.com. The course fee is \$79 (\$150 for a couple) and includes the course textbook. "Please register sooner rather than later if you are planning to join so we can order the correct number

of text books for all interested participants," said Slonim. During the 90-minute sessions, participants will begin a six-week survey of traditional Jewish literature, including Torah, Talmud, *midrash*, *halachah*, ethics and philosophy, as well as Kabbalah and Chasidic mysticism. "We'll meet the authors behind the big ideas of Jewish history over a period of 33 centuries," explained Slonim.

The history of Jewish literature is a broad subject, but Slonim noted that the course will also go deep: "We're not just going to learn why these works were written. We're actually going to get a taste of what it's like to participate in a talmudic debate, unpack a philosophical conundrum and decipher a kabbalistic text from the Zohar."

BD luncheon on Feb. 11 to feature Bill Simons

On February 11, Beth David Synagogue's second-Saturday-of-the-month Luncheon Speaker Series will feature Professor Bill Simons. Morning services begin at 9:30 am, with the talk and luncheon following; all are open to the community. A featured columnist for *The Reporter* since 2020, Simons will present on "Jews, Dodgers and Brooklyn: Before the Diaspora."



Bill Simons (Photo courtesy of Bill Simons)

Simons will focus on "the unique connection" that existed between Brooklyn's large Jewish community and the Dodgers baseball team before its departure for Los Angeles. In addition to offering information about a specific time and place in American history, Simons promises that the story is filled with humor and verve. "A special relationship connected the Dodgers and Brooklyn Jews," Simons pointed out. "Arguably, no baseball team ever forged a closer relationship with Jewish fans than did the Dodgers during their Brooklyn years, where they were drilled deep into the social fabric. The Dodgers provided Brooklyn's soundtrack. In her Brooklyn youth, retired SUNY historian Judy Wishnia remembers that you could walk by open windows, go into stores and take cabs without missing any of Red Barber's Dodgers radio broadcasts!"

A native of Lynn, MA, Simons earned his doctor of arts degree from Carnegie Mellon, with a specialization in American History. As the former chairman of the SUNY-Oneonta History Department, he continues teaching there as professor emeritus, with courses that include "Athletics, Society, and Sports." He is the recipient of The Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, the highest such award in the SUNY system. Simons also served for 16 years as president of the Oneonta chapter of United University Professions and is the recipient of the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Service. He and his wife Nancy reside in Oneonta and have four grandchildren.

Simons indicated that his passion for baseball began in his youth. "Growing up, I developed my interest in baseball," Simons said, "by watching games coached by my Dad, Shep. His stories about his superhero, Hank Greenberg,

made me appreciate the important symbolic role sport holds for Jewish Americans."

Simons is the co-director of the Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American History, an annual academic conference on the national pastime co-sponsored by the National Baseball Hall of Fame and SUNY Oneonta. He has served as editor and contributor to 12 baseball anthologies published by McFarland Press. His articles, reviews and essays have appeared in many journals and books, and include "Addressing Antisemitism and Racism in Statuary and Text: A Pedagogical Approach," *Israel Journal of Israel Foreign Affairs*, "Jackie Robinson and

the American Mind: Media Images of the Reintegration of Baseball," "From Jack Johnson to LeBron James: Sports, Media, and the Color Line," "Greenberg at the Bat: A Twenty-first Century Jewish Moonlight Graham," "Baseball and American Culture: A Seminar" and "Baseball in the Classroom: Essays on Teaching the National Pastime." In 2021, he received the American Jewish Press Association First Place Award for Excellence in Writing About Sports.

"As a longtime speaker for the New York Council for the Humanities," organizers said, "Professor Simons has delivered invited lectures in more colleges, libraries, museums and community groups than we can count. We are honored to have him add Beth David Synagogue to that list, and are certain that the program will be a highlight of our luncheon series!"

Since the no-charge monthly series' continuation depends on the generosity of contributors, Beth David welcomes and appreciates donations to the Luncheon Fund in order to keep the program going. Donations as well as sponsorships can be made in honor of or in memory of someone, or to mark a special occasion. Those wishing an acknowledgment to be sent to the person being honored, or to the family of someone being remembered, can indicate that, along with the necessary information. Donations can be sent to Beth David Synagogue, 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905, Attention: Luncheon Fund.

JFS looks back and ahead

By Reporter staff

Although some see the pandemic as decreasing, Jewish Family Service noted that COVID related stressors continued throughout 2022. Rose Shea, director of JFS, said those stressors complicated other economic and social problems that took place during the year.

"The last year was busy, but manageable, as JFS sought to help with a range of needs," Shea said. "The Jewish community has always willingly and graciously helped those in need in a compassionate and caring way."

Shea noted that one large problem is the aging Jewish population of Greater Binghamton. "Community members are looking for guidance for elder care for loved ones," she said. "This is a challenging time for both older and younger generations, and JFS has been there to help provide resources. It helps that we have established a good rapport and good relationships with community agencies, resulting in collaborations that serve our community members. And this is not only true for the elderly population, but anyone in the Jewish community who is in need."

She noted that there has been a steady flow of requests to assist with utilities, in addition to calls from those having other financial or emotions crises, something that has also resulted in an increase in emotional support calls. Shea noted how important it was for these people to have someone listen to them, in addition to helping them with practical support.

Shea's relationship with local rabbis has helped her coordinate outreach to discover those whom JFS can help. "The rabbis in our community are often the first to know that someone is in need," she noted. "I believe they

feel comfortable in directing people to JFS since we have the resources to help them and know we will treat their congregants with respect."

While JFS helps anyone in need, its focus is on Jewish community members. One example of this is the successful We Remember You program. "JFS welcomed the generosity of community members and successfully distributed support gifts to Jewish families in need five separate times throughout 2022," Shea said. "Our community is there for those in need."

As utility rates increase, Shea predicts there will be an increased need for utility support and is planning the best way to help people. She also noted that she would also like to expand volunteer opportunities for community members who want to give back.

For more information about JFS, contact Shea at familyservice@jfgb.org or 724-2332.

Women in Business

If you are a woman who owns or manages a business, *The Reporter* has a unique advertising opportunity for you! **WOMEN IN BUSINESS**, the highlight of our Feb. 10 issue, will feature an advertising section of display ads in a variety of sizes to suit your copy. As a bonus, for all ads over 4 col. inches, we'll include a FREE mini feature using the information you provide.

February 10 issue • Ad Deadline: February 2

For information, please contact Kathy Brown at 724-2360, ext. 244 or advertising@thereporter.org.



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Federation Alert

JFNA to host virtual Israel seminar

The Jewish Federations of North America will hold a virtual seminar "The Future of Religion and State in Israel" on Thursday, February 9, at 1 pm. JFNA organizers noted, "Questions about the relationship between religion and state in Israel have been debated for decades. Some members of the new Israeli government are determined to make changes to the current situation, and this is reflected in coalition agreements. Join us to explore which changes may be made, and the possible consequences of such moves."

To register for the event, visit www.jfngb.org.

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to the family of

Susan Faye Ackerman Mitchell

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to **Ralph Rosenberg** on the death of his wife,

Narola Rosenberg

DEADLINES

*The following are deadlines for all articles and photos for upcoming **REPORTER** issues.*

ISSUE	DEADLINE
February 10-23	February 1
February 24-March 9	February 15
March 10-23	March 1
March 24-April 6	March 15

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

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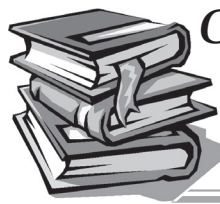
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Off the Shelf

The road to true repentance

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Some of the best books are also the most challenging, especially if they force you to think carefully about how you view the world. Take, for example, "On Repentance and Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World" by Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg (Beacon Press). It's not that I disagree with what she says: in fact, she does a wonderful job explaining the steps we need to take for personal and communal repentance. What's more difficult is putting all these steps into action and expecting others to do the same. For those of us who grew up in different times and/or are more cynical, it's hard to believe the world will really change. But that's the challenge: becoming one of the people who helps make these changes happen.

To understand what Ruttenberg is attempting, it's necessary to understand the difference between forgiveness and repentance. American culture focuses on forgiveness: if someone apologizes, we are expected to forgive them. In fact, that's often the first question asked of those who have suffered a tragedy: do you forgive the person who did this to your family? But, as Ruttenberg notes, that emphasis is wrong. Not only should a person have to follow the long, difficult road to true repentance before they should ask for forgiveness, they must come to understand why what they did was wrong and accept responsibility for their actions. They must also recognize that they can't ask for forgiveness and then expect their lives to return to the way they were before. That's the most difficult part of what Ruttenberg expects: their lives – just like the lives of the person they harmed – will never be the same. They also have to recognize and accept that they may never be forgiven.

To show readers how to attain repentance, Ruttenberg uses ideas offered by Moses Maimonides (a 12th century philosopher who also wrote the first Jewish law code, the Mishnah Torah), which she believes can be helpful to everyone, Jewish or not. She notes there are several steps

that must be taken before a person should even attempt to ask for forgiveness. The steps include:

- ◆ Naming and owning the harm one has done. That means not making excuses for one's behavior or refusing to recognize the damage this behavior has done to others.
- ◆ Starting to change one's behavior. This means taking steps to understand what was done, and why it was wrong, in order not to make the same mistakes again.
- ◆ Making restitution and accepting consequences, even if that means confessing to the deed in a court of law, contributing money to help the person harmed regain their prior status or helping others who have been harmed by similar behavior.
- ◆ Apologizing without expecting to be forgiven for the behavior and, even if forgiven, understanding that the person may not want to have their abuser be part of their lives. Plus, even before apologizing, it's necessary to make certain the person harmed wants to have contact with their abuser because sometimes even talking to that person can cause additional harm.
- ◆ Making different choices so the same thing won't happen again. It means accepting that real change has to occur and, just as important, understand why those changes are necessary.

Ruttenberg also emphasizes that performing this cycle of repentance does not return the world to what it was before the harm was done. The point is to break the cycle of harm, which affects future actions and also recognizes that the past can never be changed. Anyone who hopes the process will erase what occurred and allow them to continue on the same path has not done the work that Ruttenberg requires. She also notes that even if the victim offers forgiveness, it doesn't mean they have healed. Healing is a completely different process and one of the reasons why the person may prefer never to have contact with the person who has done her/him harm.

The author offers examples of celebrities and others who have offered facile apologies, but have shown they do not understand the harm they did or changed their behavior. Their defense is not that they did something wrong, but that the problem rests with the other person. The cases of sexual harassment or abuse she discusses also show just how many people have/had no idea, or didn't care, that their actions were harmful to others.

Ruttenberg is not only interested in using these ideas of repentance for individuals, but for the larger culture. Her discussions on this topic include the treatment of Native Americans by the United States and Canada, the former institution of slavery in the U.S. and the U.S. criminal justice system. In the latter case, she is looking not to reform the system, but change it so it offers real justice, especially to those without resources.

The most important lesson of "On Repentance and Repair" is one that Ruttenberg repeats several times and which goes against American/Christian ideas of repentance: atonement does not erase the past. The past can never be changed. What true repentance does is help the person who harmed someone no longer be defined by that action. That can only happen, though, when they have gone through the complete redemption process and changed their behavior. That is the real reason her work is challenging: it takes true determination and understanding to be willing to face what one has done and make the changes necessary, rather than hoping for a shortcut.

"On Repentance and Repair" was the subject of talks and classes during the past High Holiday season, but reading and studying Ruttenberg's ideas should not be limited to that time period. Anyone looking to become their best self – and who is willing to face the struggles necessary for that to happen – will find Ruttenberg's book a good place to start.



Off the Shelf

Bonding over adverse circumstances

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

It's often a matter of luck who our neighbors are. We pick a house based on a variety of factors, but rarely do we interview the people who live next door or across the street before making a decision. Yet, those neighbors can have a great impact on our lives as seen in two recent novels: "Signal Fires" by Dani Shapiro (Alfred A. Knopf) and "Never Meant to Meet You" by Alli Frank and Asha Youmans (Montlake).

Shapiro's novel opens in 1985 with an example of youthful stupidity that ends with disaster and which resonates throughout the rest of Sarah and Theo Wilf's lives. It also has a profound effect on their father, Dr. Ben Wilf. The story then moves forward and backward through the years – 2010, 1999, 2020 and 2014 – to not only show how their lives were affected by that disaster, but Ben's connection with a neighbor's son, Waldo. Waldo is an unusual child: he is a brilliant, social disaster whose father does not know how to talk with him without yelling and demanding he change. Readers learn how Sarah and Theo have moved forward without dealing with the guilt of their teenage years and see how life has changed for Ben since dementia has claimed his beloved wife, Mimi, who lives in a nursing home. One snowy night in 2010, the characters converge for what might become another disastrous event: this time, one not of their own making.

It's difficult to write about "Signal Fires" without giving away the plot that is best discovered while turning its pages. Although the novel focuses on family members who are unable to connect, at its heart it offers a lesson on the importance of those connections, especially the ones that occur unexpectedly. The relationship between Ben and Waldo is particularly poignant, considering that Ben and his children are not on close terms and that Waldo's father seems unable to show his appreciation for his son, even though he does love him.

"Signal Fires" is beautiful and profoundly sad. The cosmic connections Waldo sees offer readers the possibility that no one is ever completely lost. That may resonate with those who have suffered a loss this past year. However, whether or not readers agree with Waldo's idea, they should be moved by Shapiro's intense tale of fragile humans striving to discover compassion and love in a difficult world.

Loss also plays a role in "Never Meant to Meet You." The narrator, Marjette Lewis, has vowed never again to become involved in her neighbors' business and has remained distant from her new neighbor, Noa Abrams. Yet, when she sees Noa sitting on the porch of her house looking less like her perfect self, Marjette can't help but try to discover what happened. It turns out that Noa has suffered a tragic loss and the two neighbors slowly begin to connect.

African American Marjette goes to her first *shiva*, bringing her fried chicken and her common sense on

what best serves someone in distress. When it turns out that Noa's daughter, Esty, is in Marjette's kindergarten class, the two women grow closer. Yet, Marjette feels there is more to Noa's story than she first thought and slowly learns why Noa is in such pain. That brings her own sorrows – her divorce and struggles with money – to the forefront. Marjette also worries about her son, Darius, who is in high school and has a girlfriend. She wants him to go to college and worries if he'll do something that will be disastrous for his future.

Watching the two households interact – particularly when Darius begins to babysit Esty – shows how friends can become family. Not that the road is easy. The two women don't always understand each other's cultures and have to navigate those fault lines. Then there's the question of Noa's extremely handsome brother, Max, whom Marjette finds attractive, even though she has not dated since her divorce. The two women begin to learn from each other and even appreciate the connections and understanding that come from being part of a minority.

While "Never Meant to Meet You" has its serious moments, it also contains a great deal of humor. Many of the scenes in her classroom show how Marjette's attempts to control her life and class can go awry in unexpected ways, especially when dealing with her students' parents. Readers will also enjoy watching Marjette discovering that there may be more to life than she expected, and seeing Noa recover from her loss.

Reader. Continued from page 2

see this as an extension of the introduction my parents gave me to books. I remember my mom telling me about stories she loved and my reading them (although we did disagree on a few favorites). When I reached my tween years, my father began to share the books he loved when he was young (although older than I was at the time). That's why the works of Eric Marie Remarque became such a formative influence in my life. It also helped me bond with my father at a time when some fathers begin to withdraw from their daughters.

What makes this even more amazing is that my older brother, Richard, who is also a big reader, and I had difficulty learning to read. My mother decided that we were not being taught correctly and bought a book about teaching children to read phonetically, one she lent to many others over the years. My mom joked that once Richard and I started reading, we never stopped. I can't really argue with that. If I don't have a book to read, I'll read whatever is around, even if I normally wouldn't be interested in it. I don't mind if a doctor is running late

because I usually have a book with me and look at the wait as extra reading time.

I know that not everyone loves to read. For some, especially those who have a learning disability, it's not a relaxing activity. I understand the desire to do something else – from listening to music to watching TV to creating something with your hands. But my default activity is sitting with a book in hand (I still prefer to read print copies, even when I need a book pillow to hold them) lost in whatever story/world the author presents. My vision of a heaven is a library that contains all the books that have been published and which will continue to receive new books as they are written. If there are no discussion groups already organized, I can foresee another activity to keep me busy.

So, yes, I read the books I review. I also read books that aren't for review. After listening to people talk about bucket lists, I've come up with one of my own: I want to read all the books I have on my not-for-the-paper piles (well, really bookcases). That should keep me busy for a very long time!

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THE REPORTER
Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

TC Sisterhood sets annual book talk with Rabbi Rachel Esserman

The Temple Concord Sisterhood will hold its annual book talk featuring Rabbi Rachel Esserman on Sunday, January 29, at 11 am, at the synagogue, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. This is an in-person event only and will take place in the mansion. Brunch will be served at no cost. The event is open to the community. The snow date will be Sunday, February 5.

Esserman will discuss three books: "Shanda: A Memoir of Shame and Secrecy" by Letty Cottin Pogrebin, "From Dust, A Flame" by Rebecca Podos and "Village Idiot" by Steve Stern.

Esserman said, "I'm once again looking forward to one of my favorite events of the year. It's always a pleasure to talk about books and it's an extra pleasure to be doing

it with members of Sisterhood. For the third year, I'm including a nonfiction work by request. As happens every year, I have not read the books yet since I want them fresh in my mind for the review. But I'm looking forward to reading the books, writing my notes up and sharing them at this always fun event."

"Shanda: A Memoir of Shame and Secrecy" is a memoir by the noted feminist that tells of the secrets and lies kept by her family, and how they affected her life. "From Dust, A Flame" is a young adult fantasy filled with mystery and suspense that takes place in contemporary times. "Village Idiot"



Rabbi Rachel Esserman

is a novel about Jewish artist Chaim Soutine, which has been described as both "heartbreaking and funny."

Esserman, the executive editor and book reviewer for The Reporter Group, noted this past year she won three Syracuse Press Club awards and one Rockower award from the American Jewish Press Association. The year before, she won two Syracuse Press Club awards and two Rockowers.

She also serves as the Jewish chaplain for Broome Developmental Disabilities Service Office. Her work has been published in "The Women's Torah Commentary" and

"The Women's Haftarah Commentary" both by Jewish Lights Publishing. She also has had a book of poetry, "I Stand by The River," published by Keshet Press of Temple Concord. A Reconstructionist rabbi who says her first love is teaching, she sees her position at *The Reporter* as an opportunity to educate the public about Judaism.

In addition, Esserman is a freelance rabbi who performs lifecycle events, hospital visits and chaplaincy. She is rabbi-on-call when needed by local Reform and Conservative synagogues. Her education includes a bachelor of arts degree in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania, and rabbinic ordination and master of arts in Hebrew letters from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Wyncote, PA.

Chabad and Federation "Tea and Talk" in Feb.

Chabad of Binghamton, with co-sponsorship from the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, announced its

next Tea and Talk programs will be held Thursdays, February 2 and 16, from 11 am-noon, in Chabad's atrium lounge. "Tea

and Talk" is a monthly hour-long gathering for local Jewish seniors who are looking for "a meaningful conversation."

To RSVP and for more information, visit www.JewishBU.com/Tea or call 797-0015.

BD Sisterhood to hold planning meeting on Feb. 8

Beth David Sisterhood will hold a business and planning Zoom meeting on Wednesday, February 8, at 1 pm. The meeting will be open to any members or friends of Beth David Sisterhood, male or female, who wish to share ideas for consideration by the board.

"Times have changed as has our membership, so it is appropriate that we take a fresh look at how we do things," said organizers of the event. "We will examine the effectiveness of our committees and review our most recent programming. Feedback on both topics will be encouraged."

Organizers added, "As always, we are

looking for new ideas for programs that will be of interest to our membership and, if possible, have a Jewish connection of some sort. If you wish to suggest a topic or a particular speaker, this is your opportunity to do so. The availability of Zoom meetings means we can now consider speakers not in our geographic area.

"Also to be discussed is how best to accommodate members who prefer not to drive at night," organizers said. "In the future, we need to consider scheduling some of our meetings in the afternoon, so all of our members have an opportunity to attend a few meetings each year."

Organizers continued, "Volunteers are, of course, always needed. Vacancies on our board and committees present a great opportunity for anyone who is looking to become more active in our sisterhood. Let us know what your special skills are. You just might be exactly what we have been looking for."

"Do you have a fund-raising idea?" organizers asked. "Are you interested in visiting the sick or welcoming new families to the area? Is there some other activity like a Purimshpiel you would like to coordinate? Let us know. This is your opportunity to influence the future of Beth

David Sisterhood. Please help Beth David Sisterhood plan for the future. If you are unable to attend the meeting, then please e-mail us your suggestions."

Zoom link information for the meeting will be sent to everyone on the Sisterhood mailing list and will be included in Rabbi Zev Silber's weekly e-mail from Beth David Synagogue. Anyone who is not on either of these lists may request the link from the Beth David Synagogue office by e-mailing bethdavid@stny.rr.com or rabbisilber@stny.rr.com, or calling 722-1793 during office hours.

"French Collaboration in the Holocaust"

TBE Ithaca to hold lecture on Feb. 22

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca will hold the lecture "French Collaboration in the Holocaust: The Story in Film and Fiction" with Dr. Daniel Schwarz on Wednesday, February 22, at 7:30 pm. The program will be available live at the synagogue, 402 N. Tioga St., Ithaca, or virtually via Zoom. The event is free and open to the public. To view the synagogue's in-person guidelines, visit www.tbeithaca.org/in-person-guidelines.html. To receive the Zoom link for the program, e-mail secretary@tbeithaca.org.

"Films and fiction, in the form of narratives about the Holocaust, have helped overcome the dominant and incorrect history of the 1940-1944 Occupation years," said organizers of the event. "Schwarz will explore the roles of both documentary and imaginative films in exposing the active collaboration of the Vichy government with the Nazis in the deportation and murder of the Jews living in France. He will address important existential and ethical issues that involve the persecution of Jews and the politics of memory, namely how this genocide could

happen in France, why it was suppressed and repressed, and what cultural events changed the dominant narrative and corrected historical amnesia." Among the films he will discuss are Louis Malle's "Lacombe, Lucien" and "Au Revoir Les Enfants"; François Truffaut's "The Last Metro"; Alain Resnais' "Night and Fog"; and Marcel Ophüls' "The Sorrow and the Pity," as well as the 72-episode television series "A French Village."

Schwarz is the Frederic J. Whiton Professor of English and Stephen H. Weiss Presidential Fellow at Cornell, where he has taught for 55 years. He has lectured in the U.S. and internationally, including delivering the Paley lectures at Hebrew University. The author of 18 books, plus half of two others, he has worked in the field of Jewish studies for decades beginning with his book on "Disraeli's Fiction" (1979). His "Imagining the Holocaust" is used in many courses. Both his book on "Endtimes?: Crises and Turmoil at the New York Times" and his "Reading Joyce's Ulysses" have Jewish studies components.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Iowa to test United Hatzalah EMS model in rural areas

Iowa will fund a pilot program to test the efficacy of the United Hatzalah emergency response model in rural parts of the state, according to Iowa Lt. Gov. Adam Gregg. Gregg, who was sworn in for a second term on Jan. 10, along with Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, said they had learned about the model during a trade mission to Israel last year when they visited the organization's headquarters in Jerusalem. "When an emergency occurs and 911 is called, nearby trained volunteers are alerted through an app on their phone, allowing them to respond quickly and stabilize the patient until an ambulance arrives," said Gregg during his inaugural speech. "This Israeli model has driven down response times in Jerusalem to 90 seconds on average." He described it as Uber for emergency medical services, and said, "We believe this concept can be adapted to help us address our EMS challenges in rural Iowa."

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- 2) Pledges and payments (checks should be payable to "Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton") can be mailed to the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.
- 3) Fill out the form in this ad and mail it to the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

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Amount Pledge: _____

We Create Community



Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

Butrimonys.....Continued from page 1

as part of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. Butrimonys was decimated by Napoleon in 1812 during his advance into Russia but was quickly rebuilt. During both World War I and World War II, the German Army occupied Butrimonys.

Butrimonys was founded around 1400 by Lithuania's Grand Duke Vytautas (1350-1430) on an East-West road linking Vilnius and Punia on the Nemunas River. It slowly emerged as an important hilltop market town with a well-known center whose municipal flag depicts the major crossroads converging in the town. Numerous ethnic groups, including Tatars and Jews, settled in the area. Butrimonys was first mentioned as a village in 1699 and as a town in 1720. Fires heavily damaged the town in 1787, 1835, twice in 1869 and again in 1904.

For much of its existence, the majority of the residents of Butrimonys were Jewish. In 1765, 282 Jews lived in the town. By the middle of the 18th century, they had established their own cemetery. In 1861, the town's total population was 1,827. Seven years later (1868), the Jewish population was reported as 1,151 and, in 1897, 1,919 out of total of 2,394 residents were Jewish. Following years of immigration at the end of the 19th century and warfare beginning in 1914, the town's population fell to 1,631 in 1921-1923, of whom 943 were Jewish. The current population is approximately 1,000 (not Jewish). While Alytus County is largely agricultural, the Jews of Butrimonys largely engaged in business, including the making of bagels.

Although tiny by any measure, Butrimonys had a complex culture typical of shtetl life. Lithuania itself was a major center of Jewish life for several hundred years distinguished by intense talmudic scholarship in the region's numerous *yeshivot*. By the end of the 18th century, with the completion of the Partition of Poland, approximately 250,000 Jews lived in Lithuanian territory. In 1863, a Russian secondary school opened in the town. In 1864, a new building was constructed for the local yeshiva. Thirty-two years later in 1898, the town's first Zionist organization was formed, which included both Orthodox Jews and Maskilim, secular proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment, headed by Eliezer Shtrashun, the town's rabbi. A separate women's organization, Daughters of Zion, was organized subsequently, as well as Zionist youth organizations and a sports club. In 1919, in the wake of Lithuanian independence, a Lithuanian primary school was opened in the town and, in 1920, a modern Jewish "Culture" school (Hebrew, "tarbut") was also established there. Prior to the Holocaust, Butrimonys had three synagogues, at least two Jewish religious schools, various societies to aid indigent and convalescing Jews, a Jewish burial society and a Jewish cemetery with 550 tombstones, whose restoration commenced in 1997.

A number of famous Jews came from Butrimonys, including Rabbi Meir Simkha HaCohen (1843-1926), the son of a wealthy local merchant, Samson Kalonymus. Reflecting the rich and diverse Jewish culture of his hometown, HaCohen was both an anti-Chasidic scholar of the Talmud (Mitnagd) and of Moses Maimonides' legal writings. HaCohen was a religious Zionist who opposed secular Jewish nationalism, but allowed rabbis to study secular subjects. He frequently clashed with the leading Mitnagdic rabbinic authority of the period, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (also known as Chafetz Chaim) (1838-1933).

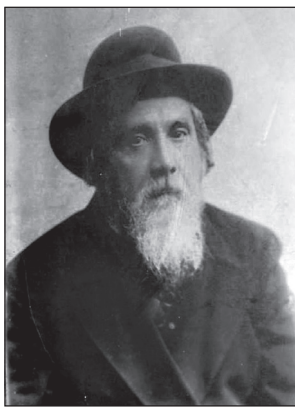
A second leading Jewish son of Butrimonys was Henry Hurwitz (1886-1961), who emigrated from Butrimonys to Boston with his family in 1891. While a student at Harvard, he helped found the Harvard Menorah Society for the Study and Advancement of Jewish Culture in 1906. The Menorah Journal was widely recognized as an important intellectual venue for American Jews for most of the first half

of the 20th century. Finally, in 1928, Hurwitz helped organize the Federation of Lithuanian Jews of America. Two other famous Jews originally from Butrimonys (there are many) who succeeded outside the Jewish world include Bernard Berenson (1865-1959), a leading Renaissance art historian who later converted out of Judaism, and his sister, Senda Berenson Abbot (1868-1954) of Smith College, the mother of women's basketball. The family immigrated to America in 1875, settling in Boston.

According to Brandeis University scholar Prof. Jonathan D. Sarna, Jewish immigrants from Butrimonys organized a section in Boston's famous Baker Street Cemetery under the name of Butrimantzy. A number of Butrimonys Jews found their way from Boston to Binghamton, NY, which by the end of the 19th century was well known for its cigar industry and its large, diverse and growing population of immigrants from Eastern Europe, including Jews. At the end of the 19th century, a number of Jews, religious and non-religious, from Butrimonys also immigrated to Israel.

In "Beyond the Catskills," I reported, "In the wake of the assassination of Russia's Czar Alexander II in 1881, the May Laws and government [sanctioned] pogroms, Jewish emigration from East Europe soared." Eventually, more than two million Yiddish-speaking Jews came to America, including Jews from Butrimonys who settled in Binghamton. Following an 1890 pogrom, Jewish immigration from Butrimonys increased. According to written accounts and oral interviews provided by Dr. Israel J. Rosefsky and Marion Rosefsky Kliensky, the first member of their family originally from Butrimonys, Leibe (Louis) Rosefsky, arrived in the Parlor City in 1892. A chain migration followed, bringing other members of the Rosefsky family to Binghamton. One of Leibe's brothers, Boruch (Barney), arranged to bring a young woman, Bluma (Bertha) Stasia, from Butrimonys. They married, moved to New England, then back to Binghamton and opened a small clothing store on Chenango Street. In a private conversation, Victor Rozen (1910-94) told me he was the last Jewish person from Butrimonys to come to Binghamton, arriving around 1925, just as the gates to America were closing due to highly restrictive immigration laws then adopted by the United States' Congress.

Rabbi Jacob Hurwitz (1912-2003), who served Temple Israel in Binghamton and Vestal from 1948-82, told me that the Binghamton Jews from Butrimonys generally joined the Sons of Israel Congregation, the original name of Temple Israel, which was founded in 1885 and later built a new synagogue in 1899 on Water Street in downtown Binghamton, the first *shul* in the area. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, Hurwitz also reported that there was palpable tension between Butrimonys Jews and other members of the Jewish community who came from other parts of Europe, often accusing the "Butrimontzers" of being *ferd gnovim* (Yiddish) or "horse thieves," just like in the song of Butrimonys under Nazi control during World War II. "It was a horse, it was a mule!"



Meir Simcha HaCohen (1843-1926), born in Butrimonys, was one of the leading rabbis and talmudic scholars in Lithuania and Latvia. Author of several major scholarly books, HaCohen was considered a moderate in the world of the Lithuanian yeshivot (rabbinic schools). (Photo courtesy of Andrius Karlonas, mayor of Butrimonys)



Butrimonys Jewish Cemetery was first established in the mid-18th century and partially restored beginning in 1997 with almost 600 graves. Documenting surviving European Jewish cemeteries in the wake of the Holocaust is an arduous process initially impeded by Communist governments.

Remarkably, current online tourist information about Butrimonys acknowledges a long history of horse stealing in the town!

While the Binghamton Butrimontzers Americanized and began to enjoy various levels of economic success, the situation in Lithuania changed dramatically after World War I, when an independent Lithuania was established with a complex history of its own. Then on September 9, 1941, two years after the Nazi invasion of Poland and following weeks of increasing persecution and executions, Nazi death squads – Einsatzgruppen aided by Lithuanian collaborators – slaughtered the remaining Jewish community of Butrimonys. In a matter of hours, nearly the entire remaining Jewish population of the town, as well as that of nearby villages, 965 people, were machine-gunned to death. Only a handful of local Jews and a heartbreaking eyewitness account written in Yiddish by Khone Boyarski and his son, Avraham, survived the slaughter. Subsequently, the two memorialists were also murdered. More than 90 percent of all Lithuanian Jews perished during the Holocaust.

By the late 1990s, following the fall of the Soviet Union, descendants of the shtetl, including members of the Rosefsky family, began to find their way back to their ancestral home and erected modest memorials to the slain Jews of Butrimonys. Today, those markers still stand in the southern farmlands of Lithuania. If you listen closely as I have tried to do, echoes of the once vibrant shtetl of Butrimonys can still be heard among their descendants in Binghamton, Boston and Jerusalem, and surely in other places, as well. And by the way, it was a horse!

Lance J. Sussman, Ph.D., served as rabbi of Temple Beth El (Endicott, NY, 1986-90) and Temple Concord (Binghamton, NY, 1990-2001). During the same period, Sussman was an associate professor of history and Judaic studies at Binghamton University. Subsequently, he taught at Princeton, Rutgers and Hunter College. Today, Sussman is rabbi emeritus of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel (Elkins Park, PA) and immediate past chairman of the Board of Governors of Gratz College (Melrose Park), where he is a professor of Jewish history, as well as the scholar-in-residence at Philadelphia's Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center. Currently, Sussman is editing a second volume of his sermons and co-writing a book on "Jews, Law and the American Revolution."

Thank yous and acknowledgments

Rabbi Lance Sussman and *The Reporter* would like to thank the following for their help in making this article possible: Krista Butvydas Bard, honorary consul general of the Republic of Lithuania to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; Andrius Karlonas, the mayor of Butrimonys; Steven Koffman for his information on the origins of the Rosefsky family; Dr. Lara Lempert, director, Judaica Research Centre, National Library of Lithuania; Dr. Vilija Malinauskaitė, CEO of Vilnius-based tour provider Travel Deli, which offers heritage travel for Jews and Lithuanians; Prof. Jonathan D. Sarna, Brandeis University; and Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel whose generous donation made this article possible.



Five unidentified Jewish women from Butrimonys, circa 1935. "Carte de visite" photographs were displaced by "Cabinet Card" pictures in the 1870s. Black and white family and individual pictures were popular in the Jewish community in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, often depicting a mix of traditional and modern cultural elements.



Aerial picture of modern Butrimonys' town square and park. Butrimonys is located at the intersection of three roads from Vilnius, Alytus and Punia. Thus, a triangular square was formed that became the place of the town market and is now a city park. The park includes a monument to Senda Berenson Abbot (1868-1954), a Jewish woman born in Butrimonys known as the "mother of women's basketball."



Butrimonys firefighters in front of a burnt house with pressurized hoses (date unknown). Butrimonys was destroyed by fire in 1787, 1812 by Napoleon, 1835, twice in 1869 and in 1903. Pressurized water hoses in this photograph document modernization efforts in the town early in the 20th century.

Bar & Bat Mitzvah Planning Guide

Mazel tov to these 2023 b'nai mitzvah

B'nai mitzvah	Parents	Date	Synagogue
Mona Kallandar	Amy Kallander and George Kallendar	February 18, 2023	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Miriam Sharick		April 1, 2023	Temple Beth El, Oneonta
Eli Ash	Rachel Ash and Ethan Ash	April 29, 2023	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Sammy Epstein	Colleen Barry and Andy Epstein	May 13, 2023	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Adam Gerson	Maggie Gerson and Hank Gerson	June 3, 2023	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Aviva Kaminsky	Alex and Tara Kaminsky	June 3, 2023	Temple Israel
Josh Kraak	Wendy Kenigsburg and Dan Kraak	June 10, 2023	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Zach Brenner	Rebecca Morgenstern and Jacob Brenner	June 17, 2023	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Sally Brenner	Rebecca Morgenstern and Jacob Brenner	June 17, 2023	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Isabelle Gindi	Jacob Gindi and Amber George	June 17, 2023	Temple Israel
Zach Lindenberg	Anna Tamis and Aaron Lindenberg	July 22, 2023	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Lionel Margolin	Liesl Margolin and Drew Margolin	July 29, 2023	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Sam Bael	Sandy Thananart and Tim Bael	September 2, 2023	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Shai Yarkoni	Alon and Joy Yarkoni	September 2, 2023	Temple Israel
Thea Yarkoni	Alon and Joy Yarkoni	September 2, 2023	Temple Israel
Lee Foreman	Abbi and Brett Foreman	October 7, 2023	Temple Concord

All information was provided by area synagogues.

Mazel Tov to the 2022 B'nai Mitzvah



Alexa Jane Friedman
May 7, 2022

Parents: Rachel and Dave Friedman
Grandparents: Linda and Steve Lisman

(Photo by Hechler Photographers)



Kalena Nielsen
July 9, 2022

Parents: Enid Williams and Erik Nielsen
Grandparents: Deborah and Gil Williams, and Sandy and Roger Nielsen

(Photo by Mui Rossing)



Levi Asher Dale Potchinsky
August 26, 2022

Parents: Zachary and Tove Potchinsky
Grandparents: Micki and Phil Potchinsky

(Photo by Mui Rossing)



Ezra Leeson-Schatz
November 5, 2022

Parents: Joe Schatz and Jackie Leeson
Grandparents: Marshal and Phyllis Schatz

(Photo by Julio Bravo)

Bar/bat mitzvah service prep timeline

By Temple Concord's Religious School Committee

Editor's note: Some of these things may only apply at Temple Concord, but many are generally applicable. The Religious School Committee's original guidelines have been edited here.

2 years before:

- Parents set date of bar/bat mitzvah service with rabbi
- Decide priorities: bar/bat vs. sports, music, etc.
- Work on Hebrew prayerbook

1 year before:

- Parents and bar/bat mitzvah meet with rabbi
- Obtain Torah and *haftarah* sections
- Start tutorials in/out of Hebrew school/evaluate

- Sign contract for facility use at temple
- Go to/observe other bar/bat mitzvahs
- Seek out parent-parent mentor

9 months before:

- Lock in on *tzedakah* project/gift
- Work on Torah portion in Hebrew
- Decide on chanting as option
- Work on *haftarah* blessings
- Attend Friday night (Saturday morning) services
- Tallit* and *kippah*: Place orders

6-5 months before:

- Know minimum verses from Torah

- Start reading Torah without vowels
- Review Hebrew prayerbook selections with rabbi
- Begin *haftarah* in Hebrew

4 months before:

- Begin practicing Hebrew parts in sanctuary
- Arrange for music at services

3 months before:

- Read English translation of Torah and *haftarah* (3 times)
- Attend Friday night (Saturday morning) services

2 months before:

- Discuss speech with rabbi
- Begin practicing English parts in sanctuary (with parents)
- Review Friday night (Saturday morning) parts with rabbi
- Add cues to service book/Hebrew names?

1 month before:

- Write speech with rabbi
- Work on parents' speech

2-3 weeks before:

- Full rehearsals in sanctuary

1 week before:

- "Welcome" pamphlet (office)
- Family rehearsal

Your Shabbat:

- Mazel tov, you made it!

Planning Timetable

At birth:

When the child is born start saving! Only joking. But if you can, it's not a bad idea to start a "bar/bat mitzvah club" savings account. If you don't use it, put it toward college.

1-3 years ahead:

- Set bar/bat mitzvah date
- Set a budget
- Reserve synagogue hall for *kiddush*
- Reserve hall for additional receptions
- Arrange for caterer/party planner and band/music for occasion (if desired)
- Buy a loose-leaf binder with dividers, or start a filing system for keeping business cards, estimates, notes, lists, etc.

10-12 months ahead:

- Begin bar/bat mitzvah lessons
- Begin attending weekly Shabbat services
- Arrange for photographer and/or video
- Book hotel s and investigate transportation for out-of-town guests

6 months ahead:

- Plan color scheme and/or theme
- Arrange for florist and/or decorations' coordinator
- Make guest list

4-5 months ahead:

- Order invitations, thank you notes, imprinted napkins and personalized party favors
- Shop for clothing and shoes
- Purchase *tallit*, *tefillin*, etc.
- Choose a calligrapher, if desired

3 months ahead:

- Plan Sunday brunch (if applicable)
- Order printed yarmulkas, if desired

2 months ahead:

- Meet with photographer
- Meet with florist and/or decorations' coordinator
- Mail out-of-town invitations

6 weeks ahead:

- Order tuxedos (if applicable)
- Take care of clothing alterations
- Order wine for *kiddush*
- Mail in-town invitations

4 weeks ahead:

- Prepare bar/bat mitzvah speech
- Finalize hotel reservations and transportation
- Meet with caterer(s)
- Make up welcome gifts for out-of-town guests (if desired)
- Arrange *aliyot*
- Send honorary gift to synagogue
- Meet with rabbi
- Make up seating charts for reception

2 weeks ahead:

- Give final count to caterer
- Check with florist and/or decorations' coordinator
- Meet with rabbi
- Order bar/bat mitzvah cake, etc. for Friday night *oneg*

A few days ahead:

- Have bar/bat mitzvah rehearsal and take *bima* photographs
- Xerox copies of speeches, room and table layout, etc. and give them to a friend to hold or drop off at synagogue and reception hall, in case you forget to bring your copies that day.

Special Day:

- Prepare to enjoy your *simcha*!

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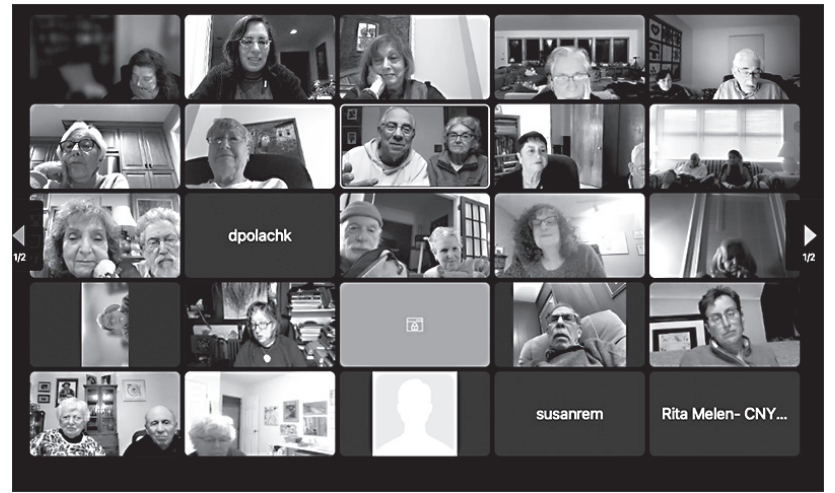
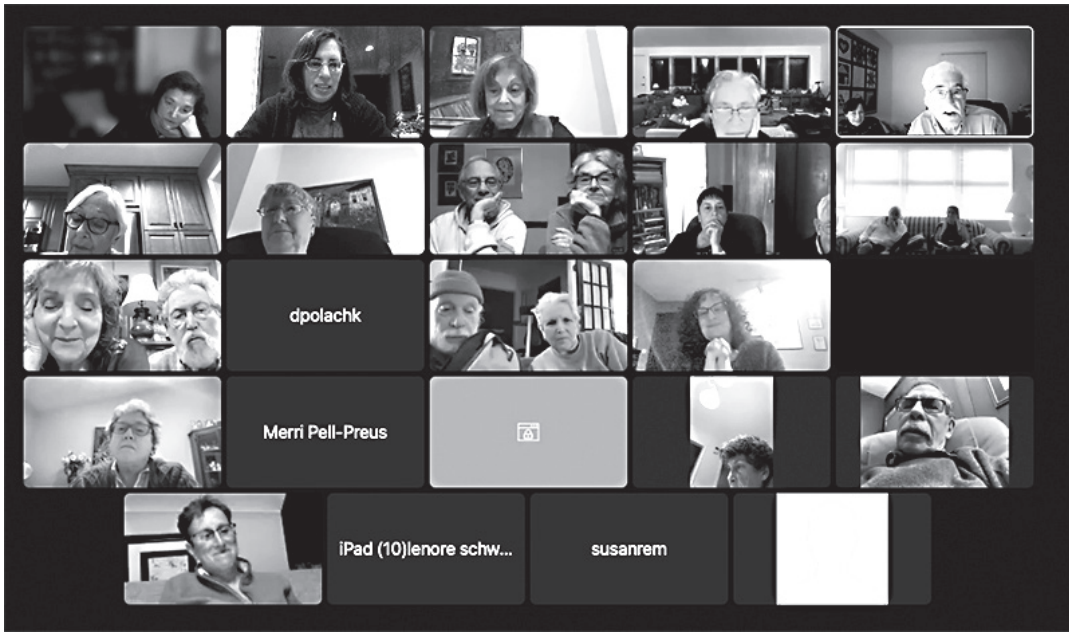


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Film Fest held discussion on Jan. 15



At left and above: The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest held a virtual discussion of the film "Greener Pastures" led by Neisen Luks on January 15. Shown are some of the 28 households that signed on for the discussion.

Zelensky.....Continued from page 2

by bullets” – took countless Jewish lives and spurred immigration. Many American Jews have roots in Ukraine. A Jewish population, greatly reduced in size, however, remains in Ukraine.

Zelensky, age 44, is Jewish and widely identified as such. Both of his parents are Jewish. Zelensky’s paternal grandfather, a colonel in the Soviet army, fought against Nazi Germany. Several members of the Zelensky family perished in the Holocaust. Zelensky’s media-adverse parents, Oleksandr, formerly chairman of the Department of Cybernetics and Computing at Kryvyi Rih State, and Rymma, an engineer, are now retired. Like most Soviet-era Jews, Oleksandr and Rymma were largely assimilated and secular. Zelensky’s wife, Olena, is a Gentile, and their two children were reportedly baptized in the Christian Orthodox Church. Zelensky has visited Israel only once: for a Holocaust remembrance. During his presidential campaign, Zelensky stated, “The fact that I am a Jew is about the 20th question among my characteristics.”

Many Jews of the Diaspora, particularly those whose ancestors were subject to pogroms and genocide in Eastern and Central Europe and were viewed as – and often carried the legacy of – perpetual outsiders, Christ killers and decadent subversives, identify strongly with Zelensky. Zelensky, Jewish by birth and history, reversed the narrative of Jewish otherness and victimization. Possessed of physical and moral courage, patriotic and charismatic, he epitomizes resolve, opposition to tyrants and Jewish inclusion. In *The Atlantic*, Gal Beckerman observed, “[W]hat is remarkable, truly mind-blowing

in the long sweep of history, is that his Jewishness has not stood in the way of his being embraced as a symbol of the nation... Just outside embattled Kyiv is Babi Yar, where 33,771 Jews were shot and thrown into a ravine over the course of two days in 1941... this conflict... has found Jews feeling finally, improbably, one with a land that has perpetually tried to spit them out.”

Standing against the Russian Goliath, Zelensky is the David of our times. Like the shepherd boy, the former actor is an improbable hero and small – 5’5”, 137 pounds – albeit fit and coiled. Armed with a Western arsenal of weaponry and growing number of international volunteers, Ukraine, with Zelensky at the front, is unbowed.

From late 2015-early 2019, Zelensky starred in the Ukrainian television series “Servant of the People” as a high school teacher, Vasily Goloborodko, implausibly elected to the presidency when his students covertly videorecorded his rant about corruption and posted it on YouTube. The series, available with scroll carrying English translation, is both revelatory and prescient about Zelensky’s future. In the initial episodes, “Servant of the People” is primarily comedic, depicting Goloborodko as a naïve and inept idealist continuing to live in austere circumstances with his hectoring parents and sister, and the target of complaints by his ex-wife that he is an absentee father to their son. However, as the series evolves, the tone of the series grows more serious and Goloborodko acquires judgment and competency. Demonstrating grit when imprisoned by political enemies and regaining the presidency, he aggressively pursues an agenda against

corruption, oligarch influence and centrifugal forces turning the Ukrainian provinces into autonomous regions. By series end, Goloborodko is an accomplished leader, inspiring the people to share his dream that a democratic Ukraine can assume its place as major economic and diplomatic power, exemplified by the launching of a satellite into space. Within a few weeks of the TV program’s final episode, Zelensky was elected president of Ukraine under a party label that shares the name of the series, Servant of the People.

Zelensky’s growth as a wartime president has proved exceptional. Time magazine named him its person of the year. Unshaved, bags under his eyes, dressed in olive green military fatigues, sharing danger and deprivation, and speaking candidly and frequently, Zelensky has become a symbol of the bravery of the Ukrainians and the common values of all democratic peoples. These attributes animated Zelensky’s words in an impassioned address to a joint session of the U.S. Congress on December 21, 2022: “The battle is not only for life, freedom and security of Ukrainians or any other nation which Russia attempts to conquer... This struggle will define in what world our children and grandchildren will live, and then their children and grandchildren... Your money is not charity. It’s an investment in... global security and democracy.”

Bill Simons is a professor emeritus at SUNY Oneonta where he continues to teach courses in American history. He is also the co-director of The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture, and served as a speaker for the New York Council on the Humanities.

Financial Planning

Quick Reference Guide to Planned Giving

Use this planned giving quick reference guide to help determine the best strategy for achieving your philanthropic and financial goals.

For further information or assistance, please contact Shelley Hubal at 724-2332 or director@jfgb.org

If Your Goal is to:

Make a quick and easy gift

Avoid tax on capital gains

Defer a gift until after your death

Receive guaranteed fixed income that is partially tax-free

Avoid the two-fold taxation on IRA or other employee benefit plans

Make a large gift with little cost to you

Reduce taxable income from IRA Required Minimum Distributions

Then You Can:

Simply write a check now or use a credit card

Contribute long-term appreciated stock or other securities

Put a bequest in your will (gifts of cash or a share or the residue of your estate)

Create a charitable gift annuity

Name a charity as the beneficiary of the remainder of the retirement assets after your lifetime

Contribute a life insurance policy you no longer need or purchase a new one and designate a charity as the owner

Make a qualified charitable donation directly from your IRA (after age 70½)

Your Benefits May Include:

An income tax deduction and immediate charitable impact

A charitable deduction plus no capital gains tax

Exemption from federal estate tax on donations

Current and future savings on income taxes plus fixed stable payments

Tax relief to your family on inherited assets

Current and possible future income tax deductions

Reducing taxable income



Jewish online resources

By Reporter staff

A variety of Jewish groups are offering educational and recreational online resources. Below is a sampling of those. *The Reporter* will publish additional listings as they become available.

◆ Maven will hold several virtual programs in March: "Jews of Iran: A Photographic Chronicle" on Tuesday, March 21, from 3-3:45 (<https://maven.aju.edu/events-classes/program/jews-of-iran-a-photographic-chronicle>); and "To Be or Not to Be: The Jewish American Paradox" on Tuesday, March 28, from 3-3:45 (<https://maven.aju.edu/events-classes/program/to-be-or-not-to-be-the-jewish-american-paradox>).

◆ The Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning will hold "Yiddish: Wanted Dead or Alive" on Monday, March 20, from 1-2 pm. There is an \$18 cost to attend. Dr. Rachel Seelig will explore the fate of Yiddish culture since World War II. For more information or to register, visit <https://events.org/events/calendarcourse?tid=448d68b3-c734-40fc-9480-8575fe4e1fe8>.

◆ The Jewish Theological Seminary will hold the virtual program "We Are Not One," which is part of "Between the Lines: Author Conversations from The Library of JTS," on Tuesday, February 7, from 7:30-8:30 pm. Historian Eric Alterman will talk about his book "We Are Not One," which traces the debate about the fate of the state of Israel and the Zionist movement that gave birth to it, from its 19th-century origins. For more information or to register, visit www.jtsa.edu/event/between-the-lines-we-are-not-one/.

◆ The Yiddish Book Center will hold the online course "Shakespeare & Yiddish" on Wednesday, March 8-29, at 7 pm. The course will focus on how the Yiddish theater performed and adapted Shakespeare's works. For more information or to register, visit www.yiddish-bookcenter.org/educational-programs/adult-learners/shakespeare-yiddish-online-course.

◆ The Jewish Theological Seminary will hold the virtual program "Sephardic Food and Culture: A Culinary-Historical Perspective" with Hélène Jawhara Piñer and Dr. Benjamin Gampel as part of its "Between the Lines: Author

Conversations from The Library of JTS" on Wednesday, March 8, from 1-2 pm. Piñer and Gampel will discuss "how the mass conversion of Iberian Jews in the late 14th and 15th centuries, initially triggered by the anti-Jewish riots that swept Castile and Aragon in 1391, led to distinctive and identifiable food and eating practices among those Jews who were compelled to embrace the Christian faith." For more information or to register, visit www.jtsa.edu/event/between-the-lines-sephardic-food-and-culture/.

◆ The Jewish Initiative for Animals in conjunction with other organizations will hold "Faith in Food: Individual and Collective Responsibility in Food Practices" on Wednesday, February 1, at 3:30 pm. The program will feature clergy and leaders in the Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Unitarian Universalist spaces. The panelists will speak about their religious community and how to create "collective efforts that include community change, legislative progress, justice movement coalition building and widespread action for the greater good." For more information or to register, visit https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_AoK_QY7BQ9i_a1l1q16pCn-Q?fbclid=IwAR1d8pFfiEZd59j3fUUMbYc5Dm6Zp-fJRqZshbBO_5QgOB8kNJeeXGMaXNu8&mc_cid=f-c40b81daa&mc_eid=7a756f2f3d.

◆ Hadassah Magazine will hold a virtual book discussion "One Book, One Hadassah: "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow"" on Thursday, February 16, at 7 pm. One need not be a member of Hadassah to attend. Hadassah Magazine Executive Editor Lisa Hostein will interview Gabrielle Zevin about her novel "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow," which was a *New York Times* best-seller and named Amazon's top book of 2022. For more information or to register, visit www.hadassahmagazine.org/2022/12/20/one-book-one-hadassah-tomorrow-and-tomorrow-and-tomorrow/.

◆ Judaism UnBound will hold the course "Speaking Jewish Around the Globe: Endangered Jewish Languages from Italy to India and Beyond" on Sundays, February 5-April 30, at 1 pm. The cost to attend has a sliding-scale fee of \$299-\$499; financial aid may be available. For more infor-

mation or to register, visit <https://www.judaismunbound.com/spring23/p/jewishlanguages>.

◆ Maven will hold the virtual program "The Diary Keepers: Untold Stories of WWII in the Netherlands," a look at the story of World War II and the Holocaust through the diaries of Dutch citizens living through extraordinary times, on Tuesday, February 21, from 3-3:45 pm. For more information or to register, visit <https://maven.aju.edu/events-classes/program/the-diary-keepers-untold-stories-of-wwii-in-the-netherlands>.

◆ The Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy will hold several virtual programs in February: "The Jews of Long Island 1705-1918," a book with author Brad Kolodny on Tuesday, February 7, from 7-8:30 pm (www.nycjewish-tours.org/event-log/jews-of-li-zoom); "Seeking Sanctuary: 125 Years of Synagogues on LI," a book talk with author Brad Kolodny on Wednesday, February 15, from 7-8:15 pm (www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/seeking-sanctuary-book-talk-zoom); and "Gangsters, Goniiffs & Goons," a talk about Jewish hoods in the cinema on Wednesday, February 27, from 7-8:15 pm (<https://www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/gangsters-goniiffs-goons-zoom>).

◆ Qesher will hold the following virtual tours: "The Two Millennia Story of Moroccan Jewry" on Thursday, February 2, at 3 pm; "The Jews of Belarus: From the Pale of Settlement to the USSR and Beyond" on Sunday, February 5, at 3 pm; "The Jews of Egypt: From the Bible to the Golden Age and the Abraham Accords" on Thursday, February 9, at 3 pm; "Jewish Denmark and a Virtual Tour of Copenhagen" on Sunday, February 12, at 3 pm; "The Jews of Crimea and the story of the Karaites" on Thursday, February 16, at 3 pm; "From the Inquisition to the Caribbean: Jews of Jamaica" on Sunday, February 19, at 3 pm; "Jewish Lisbon and Portugal: a community reconnecting with its past" on Thursday, February 23, at 3 pm; "The Jews of Georgia: A Diverse and Ancient Community in the Caucasus" on Sunday, February 26, at 3 pm; and "Growing up Jewish in Uganda" on Thursday, March 2, at 3 pm. For more information or to register, visit www.qesher.com/upcoming-events/.

See "Resources" on page 11

Financial Planning

Why a Roth IRA may be best for Millennials

(NewsUSA) - When it comes to saving, a Roth IRA may be a Millennial's best friend. Unlike traditional IRAs or even workplace 401(k) plans, Roth money is tax-free in retirement. And even as the account ideally grows fatter over the years - helped in part by compound interest - the original contributions can be withdrawn at any time, for any reason, with no taxes or penalties assessed. That's right, any time. For any reason.

"Roth contributions are made with after-tax dollars, but those in their 20s or 30s are probably in a lower tax bracket now than they will be later in life when their salaries are higher," explains Melissa Ridolfi, vice president for retirement and college leadership at Fidelity Investments. "So not only would they likely be minimizing their lifetime tax bill, but they'd also have tremendous flexibility."

In fact, it's the flexibility of Roth IRAs over the shorter term - and what that means for two of Millennials' most

pressing issues - that doesn't always get the attention it deserves:

◆ Buying a home - The homeownership rate among Millennials, age 25-34, is about 8 percent lower than that of Gen Xers and Baby Boomers at the same point in their lives, according to CNBC. And you know what being stuck renting an often exorbitantly priced apartment does for wealth accrual: bupkis. Or, as Tamara Sims, a research scientist at the Stanford Center on Longevity, told the network: "Buying a home at age 50 or 60 isn't going to do you much good in funding a 30-year retirement."


Now, remember that original Roth contributions are tax- and penalty-free? With rare exceptions - and this is one of them - that doesn't apply to any investment gains withdrawn before age 59. Yes, thanks to this carve-out, first-time home buyers (as well as those who haven't owned a home for at least two years) may also be able to

withdraw up to \$10,000 of those gains and still not pay any tax or penalty as long as they've held the account for at least five years.



◆ Education - And why aren't as many Millennials buying homes? One of the biggest reasons: crushing student-loan debt. In another of those Millennial-friendly exceptions, Roth money can be tapped to pay for qualified educational expenses like college or graduate school for yourself, your spouse, or your children. Unlike with homes, though, you'll only beat the penalty - not the tax - on any earnings you withdraw when following the same five-year rule.

There's evidence that Millennials are getting the message about Roths. Fidelity says 80 percent of Millennials' contribution dollars at the firm are going into Roths.

"One of the great things about being a Millennial," says Ridolfi, "is that they have time and the power of compound interest on their side."



Create a Jewish Legacy
Strengthen the Jewish community you care about for generations to come. Consider a gift to the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton in your estate. For further information or assistance, please contact Shelley Hubal at 724-2332 or director@jfgb.org

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Bo, Exodus 10:1-13:16

The purpose of punishment

RABBI ZEV SILBER, BETH DAVID SYNAGOGUE

Much discussion takes place in the United States regarding crime and its consequences, and about the purpose and goals of punishment. Intellectuals and philosophers attempt to understand what we are trying to achieve through the legal punishment system. Some say that the purpose of punishment is retribution; others say it is deterrence. Yet others say that the purpose should be rehabilitation.

In this week's *parasha*, we read about the last of the 10 plagues. At first glance, it seems that the purpose of the 10 plagues was retribution. Pharaoh and the Egyptians needed to suffer punishment for enslaving the Jewish people and not allowing them to leave.

However, when we examine some of Moses' statements to Pharaoh, we are forced to conclude that there is also an element of correction and rehabilitation built into these events.

When announcing the plague of blood, Moses states that the purpose is "that you shall know that I am God." (Exodus 7:17) The plague of frogs is introduced by the statement "that you shall know that there is none as great as our God." (8:6) Wild animals is explained by God saying, "In order that you shall know that there I am God in all the land." (8:18)

It says that the plague of hail is in order "that you shall know that there is none like me in all the land" (9:14) and "that you shall tell of my name in all the land." (9:16) The locusts' purpose is "that you will know that I am God." (10:2)

And the final plague, the death of the first born, has its purpose "that you shall know that God makes a difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians." (11:7)

True, the plagues were retribution, but they also were de-

signed to effect change, recognition of God and rehabilitation.

Understanding that there is a rehabilitation aspect to the plagues helps me understand why the rabbis felt obligated to stress that Moses gave an approximate time for the last plague (at about midnight) rather than the exact time. Quoting the rabbis, Rashi says that Moses did not want to chance that the Egyptian magicians would incorrectly calculate the time and, seeing that the plague did not occur exactly at midnight, would accuse Moses of being a liar and a charlatan.

Moses knew that this was the last plague and therefore the last opportunity to accomplish the goal of rehabilitation. He could not take a chance that, because of human frailty and doubt, or stubbornness, the mission of the Egyptians See "Purpose" on page 11

Congregational Notes

Beth David Synagogue

Affiliation: Orthodox Union
Rabbi: Zev Silber
Address: 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905
Phone: 722-1793, Rabbi's Office: 722-7514, Fax: 722-7121
Office hours: Mon. closed; Tues. 10 am-1 pm; Wed. closed; Thurs. 9 am-1 pm; Fri. 10 am-1 pm
Beth David e-mail address: bethdavid@stny.rr.com
Rabbi's e-mail: rabbisilber@stny.rr.com
Website: www.bethdavid.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/bethdavidbinghamton

Temple Israel

Orientation: Conservative
Rabbi: Geoffrey Brown
Address: 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: 723-7461 and 231-3746
Office hours: Mon.-Thurs., 8:30 am-3:30 pm; Fri., 8 am-3 pm
E-mail: titammy@stny.twbc.com
Website: www.templeisraelvestal.org
Service schedule: Tues., 5:30 pm; Fri., 5:30 pm; Sat., 9:30 am

On Fridays and Tuesdays at 5:30 pm, services will be led by Rabbi Geoffrey Brown via Zoom and in-person (masks are required).

On Saturday, January 27, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required). The Torah portion is Exodus 10:1-13:16 and the haftarah is Jeremiah 46:13-28:13 and 29:22-23. At 6:30 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom.

There will be no Torah study on Wednesday, February 1.

Scout Shabbat will be held on Friday, February 3, at 5:30 pm.

On Saturday, February 4, at 9:30 am, Shacharit services will be held via Zoom and in-person (masks are required). The Torah portion is Exodus 13:17-17:16 and the haftarah is Judges 4:4-5:31. At 6:30 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom.

There will be an Executive Board meeting on Tuesday, February 7, at 7 pm, on Zoom.

On Wednesday, February 8, Torah study will be held from 4-5 pm on Zoom.

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rabbi: Rachel Safman
Rabbi Emeritus: Scott L. Glass
Address: 402 North Tioga St. (the corner of Court and Tioga streets), Ithaca, NY 14850-4292
Phone: 273-5775
E-mail: rabbi-safman@tbeithaca.org, secretary@tbeithaca.org
Website: www.tbeithaca.org

Presidents: David Weiner and Linda Aigen

Sisterhood President: Gail Zussman

Director of Education: Rabbi Suzanne Brody

Services: Fri. 8 pm; Sat. 10 am, unless otherwise announced. Weekday morning minyan 7:30 am (9 am on Sun. and legal holidays).

Religious School/Education: September-May: Classes meet on Sunday, 9 am-12:30 pm and Wednesday, 3:45-5:45 pm. The Midrashah (eighth grade and high school) classes will meet at times designated by their respective teachers. Adult Ed.: Numerous weekly courses, several semester-long courses and a variety of mini-courses and lectures are offered throughout the year. Call the temple office for more details.

For upcoming services and events on Zoom, visit www.tinyurl.com/HappeningAtTBE.

Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive
Rabbi: David Regenspan
Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815
Phone: 334-2691
E-mail: fertigj@roadrunner.com

Contact: Guilia Greenberg, 373-5087

Purpose: To maintain a Jewish identity and meet the needs of the Jewish community in the area.

Adult Ed.: Shabbat study sessions are held on designated Saturday mornings at 10 am. Call ahead, text or e-mail to confirm dates.

Synagogues limit face-to-face gatherings

For specific information regarding services (including online services), meetings and classes at any of the area synagogues, contact them by phone or e-mail.

Rohr Chabad Center

Affiliation: Chabad-Lubavitch
Rabbi Aaron and Rivkah Slonim, Directors
E-mail: rslonim@binghamton.edu
rslonim@chabadofbinghamton.com

Address: 420 Murray Hill Rd., Vestal, NY 13850

Phone: 797-0015, Fax: 797-0095

Website: www.Chabadofbinghamton.com

Rabbi Zalman and Rochel Chein, Education

E-mail: zchein@Jewishbu.com, rchein@Jewishbu.com

Rabbi Levi and Hadasa Slonim, Downtown and Development

Chabad Downtown Center: 60 Henry St., Binghamton

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.

Congregation Tikkun v'Or

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Address: PO Box 3981, Ithaca, NY 14852; 2550 Triphammer Rd. (corner of Triphammer and Burdick Hill), Lansing, NY
Phone: 607-256-1471
Website: www.tikkunvor.org

E-mail: info@tikkunvor.org

Rabbi: Shifrah Tobacman, rabbishifrah@tikkunvor.org

Presidents: Sue Merkel and Laurie Willick, presidents_22@tikkunvor.org

Education Director/Administrative Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky

Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator: Michael Margolin

Services: All services currently on Zoom. E-mail info@tikkunvor.org for the times and links. Contemplative morning services every Tuesday from 8:30-9:30 am. Saturday mornings, Gan Shabbat and other special services at least once a month. Call for the weekly schedule.

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.

Temple Beth El of Oneonta

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Rabbi: Amelia F. Wolf

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.

Penn-York Jewish Community

President-Treasurer-Secretary: Harvey Chernosky, 570-265-3869

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.

Friday, January 27, light candles before..... 4:53 pm

Shabbat ends Saturday, January 28 5:55 pm

Friday, February 3, light candles before..... 5:02 pm

Shabbat ends Saturday, February 4 6:04 pm

Friday, February 10, light candles before..... 5:11 pm

Shabbat ends Saturday, February 11 6:13 pm

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism

Rabbi: Barbara Goldman-Wartell

Address: 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905

Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm

Phone: 723-7355

Fax: 723-0785

Office e-mail: TempleConcordbinghamton@gmail.com

Website: www.templeconcord.com

Regular service times: Fri., 7:30 pm; Sat., 10:35 am, when religious school is in session.

Hebrew school: Hebrew school meets at 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm on Tues. and Thurs. during the school year unless otherwise noted.

Some services and programs are online only.

Friday, January 27: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell. Masks are optional for those attending in person. Join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y>, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Saturday, January 14: At 9 am, Shabbat school; 9:15 am, Torah study (join via Zoom at <http://bit.ly/3XDnVRE>, meeting ID 825 1226 2831 and passcode 743892); 10:35 am, Shabbat family service; and 7 pm, "Havdalah with a Bonus" via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3e8mZsy>, meeting ID 833 9654 6578 and passcode 333740, or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Sunday, January 29: At 11 am, Temple Concord Sisterhood's "Annual Book Talk" by Rabbi Rachel Esserman. Brunch will be served; there is no cost to attend. The snow date is February 5. For more information, see the article on page 5.

Wednesday, February 1: At 10:30 am, TC Book Club: "How to Find Your Way in the Dark" by Derek B. Miller in person or on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3CXVd9b>, meeting ID 881 6469 4206 and passcode 653272. For more information, contact Merri Pell-Preus at merrypell.preus@gmail.com.

Friday, February 3: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service. Masks are optional for those attending in person. Join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y>, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Saturday, February 4: At 9 am, Shabbat school; 9:15 am, Torah study (join via Zoom at <http://bit.ly/3XDnVRE>, meeting ID 825 1226 2831 and passcode 743892); and 10:35 am, Shabbat family service.

Sunday, February 5: From 10 am-2 pm, Sisterhood Rummage Sale in synagogue's basement.

Temple Brith Sholom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated

Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045

Phone: 607-756-7181

President: Carol Levine, 315-696-5744

Cemetery Committee: 315-696-5744

Website: templebrithsholomcortland.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Temple-Brith-Sholom-114006981962930/>

Service leaders: Lay leadership

Shabbat services: Either Friday evening at 7:30 pm or Saturday at 10 am from Rosh Hashanah to Shavuot. Holiday services are also held. 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 egalitarian 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," while the Saturday morning siddur is "Gates of Prayer." The community extends a warm welcome to the Jewish student population of SUNY Cortland, as well as the residents of local adult residences.

Services and programs are held by Zoom on the first and second Fridays of the month.

Lessons from Colleyville, TX: How to survive a hostage situation

By Faygie Holt

(JNS) – Recounting his experiences on January 15, 2022, when an ordinary Shabbat service turned into an 11-hour hostage situation at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, TX, Jeff Cohen said it was ongoing training that helped him and the others at the synagogue that day know what to do.

“Our survival was not a miracle, and it’s a little frustrating when people say that,” said Cohen, who now serves as the synagogue president. “Our escape was due to training, planning and actually executing some of the things we had prepared for.”

He spoke during a 90-minute webinar on surviving hostage situations, which was offered by the Secure Community Network in collaboration with Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Leading the discussion of just what to do should you find yourself in such a situation were Shawn Brokos, director of community security at the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, and Beth LaManna, regional security adviser for Jewish Nevada. Both women are certified crisis negotiators and former FBI agents who have worked in actual hostage situations.



The rededication ceremony at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, TX, on April 10, 2022, four months after a hostage standoff there. (Photo courtesy of Twitter)

LaManna noted that surviving isn’t just about being physically safe it’s about hostages being able to “return [to] their best and most productive lives.”

There are two types of hostage situations, according to LaManna. First, there is a “non-hostage crisis,” in which the hostage-taker has a relationship of some kind with the person he has taken hostage, such as in a workplace incident or domestic situation.

Second, and much rarer, is a true hostage situation such as that which occurred at Beth Israel. Such attacks, said LaManna, are “goal-oriented”; the hostage-taker wants something from law enforcement and uses the hostages to try to get it.

Brokos explained that there are three unique phases of a hostage situation: the initial phase, middle phase and resolution phase. Each one, she said, comes with unique fears and concerns.

During the initial phase, which can run up to 45 minutes after an incident begins, there is a great deal of “panic and confusion for everyone.” It is important at this time to stay calm, which, Brokos said, sounds simple but is easier said than done. “We recommend slow and deep breathing,” as that can help you think rationally and lead to better decision-making.

“Calm is contagious,” she said.

At this point it is important to recognize that the hostage-taker is in control. Don’t threaten or challenge him, said Brokos. “Don’t act belligerent...don’t stand out. Be vanilla and meld into the background.”

She also advised against cowering or whining too much as that aggravates the situation, as well.

The middle phase is the “meat and potatoes” period where most of the work is being done and negotiations handled between the hostage-taker and law enforcement officials. While the hostages want a quick resolution, the

crisis negotiator’s goal is to slow things down and buy time.

During this phase, hostages should, as much as possible, humanize themselves to the attacker. Engage the attacker if possible, tell him your name and use his name, the security experts advised. If the hostage-taker is willing to talk, encourage him to do so. The more he’s talking, “the less time he has to hurt you or anyone else.”

At the same time, it is vital at this stage that you are “situationally aware.” Study what the attacker looks like, what the weapon or weapons look like. Make a mental note of where the hostages are. Are they all together or in separate areas?

Also, you should be looking around and considering what you can use as a weapon to defend yourself if things “deteriorate.”

As for the final phase, the resolution, there are three possible outcomes: a release and surrender by the hostage-taker; escape by the hostages; and “tactical intervention.”

Each possible resolution comes with inherent risks and, in all cases, hostages are advised to have their hands up and open to show that they don’t have any weapons on them. Law enforcement officials will have just a second to figure out if you are “friend or foe” before acting.

Overall, said LaManna, it is of “critical importance” that you develop a “survival mindset” so that you can get out alive.

Cohen said by keeping yourself sane as much as you can during the incident, “no matter how hard your heart is beating... you can keep yourself alive and safe.”

Purpose. . . Continued from page 10

recognizing the power of God should be allowed to fail. Accomplishing that mission – helping the world recognize the greatness and truth of God – was more important than accurately quoting God’s statement. Helping the violator correct his entire approach to life and to God is the greatest good deed that a human being can perform.

Did it work? Did Pharaoh learn and accept the greatness of God? The *midrash* states that, although Pharaoh was a first born, he did not die in the plague. The *midrash* further states that he also survived the splitting of the sea, and then left Egypt to proclaim the greatness and glory of God to other people and nations of the world.

The rabbis are attempting to teach us this exact lesson. The best outcome of a punishment is rehabilitation. Sometimes all attempts fail; often it may take multiple punishments; sometimes the result will only be possible if God himself does it; sometimes a Moses is needed to accomplish this goal.

However, we, though we are not as skilled as Moses, are not absolved from trying to accomplish this with all our strength and with all the methods and resources at our disposal. The greatest criminal, Pharaoh of Egypt, managed to become rehabilitated. We must attempt to accomplish the same in all our dealings with evil.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Jordanian court orders Israel to pay \$500K to shooting victim

A Jordanian court ordered Israel’s embassy in Amman to pay \$500,000 in compensation to a Jordanian citizen injured by an embassy security guard on July 23, 2017. The court accepted the claim of the plaintiff, Maher Fares Ibrahim, that he was 80 percent disabled and couldn’t support himself, according to Jordanian media. Ibrahim, a furniture mover, was accidentally injured by Israeli security guard Ziv Moyal. Moyal was defending himself from an attack by Mohammad Jawawdeh, 17. Jawawdeh, who was there to install furniture, came up behind Moyal and attacked him with a screwdriver. Moyal was stabbed three times, once in the chest and twice in the back. Moyal also accidentally shot and killed Bashar al-Hamarna, who owned the apartment where the attack took place. The incident heightened tensions between the countries. Jordan initially demanded to interrogate the guard. Israel refused, citing Moyal’s diplomatic immunity. Jordan allowed the guard, the Israeli ambassador and embassy staff to return to Israel a day after the incident. In 2018, Israel agreed to pay \$5 million in compensation to the Jordanian government for the families of the two persons who were shot dead as well as a Jordanian judge killed in a separate incident in 2014.

Resources. Continued from page 9

◆ The Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion will offer a Spring 2023 Library Lecture Series. Some of the lectures will be available on Zoom, including “A New Look at an Old Book: Rethinking the Purpose of Pirke Avot” on Wednesday, February 15, at 5 pm; “Good Samaritans? Jewish-Samaritan Relations in the Roman World” on Monday, March 13, at 7 pm; “‘He Showed Him the Likeness of the Tabernacle’: The Biblical Tabernacle in Samaritan Literature and Art” on Tuesday, March 14, at noon; “Tzafun: The Behind the Scenes Work of Repairing the 1526 Prague Haggadah” on Monday, April 10, at 11 am; and “The Histories of the Hebrew Language and its Script” on Wednesday, May 10, at 1 pm. For more information or to register, visit <http://huc.edu/libraryseries/spring>.

◆ The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research will hold the virtual book talk “Summer Camp and Jewish Culture in Postwar America” on Monday February 27, at 1 pm. Sandra Fox will discuss her new book, “The Jews of Summer: Summer Camp and Jewish Culture in Postwar America,” which explores “how a cultural crisis birthed a rite of passage that remains a significant influence in American Jewish life.” For more information or to register, visit www.yivo.org/Summer-Camp.

◆ Pardes will hold the three-part virtual class “The Great Beyond: Death and The Afterlife” with Rabbi Jon Leener on Thursday, February 9-23, at 12:30 pm. Leener will explore “Jewish ideas around death, the soul, and the afterlife using traditional Jewish sources.” For more information or to register, visit https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMvde-prjkuGdHOyK-7cXG_xVB7OETiDzTi.

◆ The Jewish Theological Seminary will hold two classes: “The Kabbalah of Tzefat” on Wednesdays, February 8-March 15; from 1:15-2:30 pm, the cost to attend is \$180

(www.jtsa.edu/event/the-kabbalah-of-tzefat/); and “Mitzvot: Obligation in Jewish Thought” on Mondays, March 13-April 3, from 7-8:30 pm, the cost to attend is \$120 (www.jtsa.edu/event/mitzvot-obligation-in-jewish-thought/).

◆ The Jewish Book Council will hold “Virtual Unpacking the Book: Escaping the Holocaust with Jonathan Freedland and Weina Dai Randel” on Wednesday, February 15, from 7-8 pm. Jonathan Freedland, author of “The Escape Artist: The Man Who Broke Out of Auschwitz to Warn the World,” and Weina Dai Randel, author of “Night Angels,” will hold “a conversation about the stories we know and tell about escaping the Holocaust – fact, fiction, and the sometimes blurred line between them.” For more information or to register, visit www.jewishbookcouncil.org/events/virtual-unpacking-the-book-escaping-the-holocaust-with-jonathan-freedland-and-weina-dai.

◆ The Biblical Archaeology Society will hold the virtual “Spring Bible and Archaeology Fest 2023” from April 22-23. Scholars in the field from around the world will speak on archaeology of the Bible, Bible lands, and Bible peoples. There is a cost to attend. For more information or to register, visit www.biblicalarchaeology.org/travel-study/spring-bible-archaeology-fest-2023/.

◆ The Blue Dove Foundation offers free mental health resources for Tu B’Shevat at https://thebluedovefoundation.org/resource_category/tu-bshvat/. Resources include “Planting a Gratitude Tree,” “Mental Health and Climate Change,” “Tu B’Shvat: Gratitude as Self-Care” and “Mental Health Tu B’Shvat Seder.”

For additional resources, see previous issues of The Reporter on its website, www.thereporter.org/streams/miscellaneous-features/miscellaneous-features/tag/80309?

➡ Visit us on the web at www.thereporter.org

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NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

European Jewish group honors Adidas for dropping Kanye West

Meeting at the recent European Jewish Association conference in Prague and the Theresienstadt Ghetto/Camp in the Czech Republic, legislators and senior European government officials declared war on antisemitic fake news and committed to encouraging educational programs against hatred. During the conference, the EJA presented Adidas with the King David Award for its decision to cut all commercial ties with musician Ye, aka Kanye West, following his antisemitic remarks. Ahead of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which falls on Jan. 27, more than 100 members of parliament, government officials, ambassadors and European Jewish leaders gathered to discuss how to deal with fake news and conspiracy theories against Jews in the media and social networks, and rising antisemitism in universities across the continent. According to EJA Chairman Rabbi Menachem Margolin: "Even today, fake news poses a tangible danger to the well-being of Jews throughout Europe, a tool of hatred that is unfortunately strengthened by social networks and mixes conspiracy theories against Jews. ... The dozens of European leaders who responded to our call to come to Terezin pledged to fight against fake news that encourages antisemitism and implement educational programs to eradicate it."

Netanyahu meets King Abdullah in Jordan

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made an unannounced trip to Jordan on Jan. 24 to meet with King Abdullah II. The two leaders discussed regional issues, in particular strategic, security and economic cooperation between Israel and Jordan. They praised the long-standing friendship and partnership between the countries, which contributes to stability in the Middle East. Ties between Israel and Jordan have been strained over the years. Most recently, Amman reacted furiously when earlier in January Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City. Jordan denounced Ben-Gvir "in the severest of terms [for] the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and violation of its sanctity," despite the Israeli minister not having approached the mosque. Abdullah said in December that he was ready for a conflict should Israel's new government violate "red lines" by changing the dynamics governing relations at Jerusalem's holy sites. "We have to be concerned about [the] next intifada [Palestinian terror war]," Abdullah said in an interview with CNN, adding, "If that happens, that's a complete breakdown of law and order and one that neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians will benefit from. I think there is a lot of concern from all of us in the region, including those in Israel that are on our side on this issue, to make sure that doesn't happen." Jordan has since long had the status of custodian of Muslim and Christian holy sites in the Israeli capital, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Tensions were raised again the week of Jan. 20 when Jordanian Ambassador to Israel Ghassan Majali was delayed while attempting to ascend the Temple Mount. According to police, Majali showed up at the site without prior coordination and was not immediately recognized by officers, causing a "very small" delay while authorities looked into the matter. He subsequently walked off angrily, before returning to visit the holy site later in the day. Jordan summoned Israeli Ambassador to Amman Eitan Surkis over the incident.

Report: 2022 saw fewer antisemitic incidents worldwide for first time in a decade

The number of antisemitic incidents has been "curbed" for the first time in a decade, a report released by the Department for Combatting Antisemitism of the World Zionist Organization on Jan. 24 shows. Nevertheless, there were 10 antisemitic incidents a day worldwide in 2022, and a rise in the number of antisemitic events on social networks. The researchers view the situation as still concerning. "Antisemitism on social media is increasing at an alarming rate. ... We raise a clear black flag in view of the increase in incitement on the networks and call on the heads of state to raise the fight against antisemitism to the top of the list of priorities," World Zionist Organization Chairman

Yaakov Hagoel said in a statement. Among the report's findings was a sharp increase in antisemitism in the United States in recent years, with a 61 percent jump "in the number of cases of violence or planning of violence against Jewish institutions." It also noted a rise in Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions (or BDS) activity on U.S. campuses. "One out of three students in the USA testified that they experienced antisemitism during the school year, with almost 80 percent of students experiencing it more than once," the report states. "The constant increase in antisemitic trends in the last decade is a matter of concern, while the significant reduction in the number of incidents this year is not a sigh of relief either," said Raheli Baratz Rix, who heads the Department for Combatting Antisemitism. "Antisemitism is everywhere, at any point in time and space, and we must not be silent and indifferent about this phenomenon. I call for a joint integration of efforts to deal with areas of awareness and information in order to provide a broad response to this disturbing trend," she said. The findings were based on local and international reports, reports of research bodies, local police, Jewish communities and other sources.

Blinken to visit Israel for meetings on Palestinians, Iran

U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken will visit Israel and the Palestinian territories the week of Jan. 30, where he will meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian Authority head Mahmoud Abbas and other high-ranking officials. The meetings are expected to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Iranian nuclear threat. Netanyahu met on Jan. 19 in Jerusalem with U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, the highest-level Biden administration official to visit Israel since the Nov. 1 Knesset election. The two men discussed Iran's nuclear program and ways to broaden the Trump administration-brokered Abraham Accords, which normalized relations between the Jewish state and four Arab countries. An emphasis was placed on expanding relations with Saudi Arabia. Netanyahu expressed gratitude for U.S. President Joe Biden's commitment to stopping Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, and stressed that the latest Palestinian moves in the international arena constituted an attack on Israel that demanded a response. The U.N. General Assembly in late December approved a resolution at the behest of the Palestinian Authority calling on the International Court of Justice to "render urgently an advisory opinion" on Israel's "prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of Palestinian territory." In response to the P.A.'s ongoing "political and legal war" against the Jewish state, the Israeli Security Cabinet decided, among other measures, to withhold tax and tariff revenue collected on behalf of and transferred to the P.A., in an amount equal to that which Ramallah paid to terrorists and their families in 2022 under its "pay-for-slay" policy. Blinken's visit will also aim to "coordinate expectations" between the Biden and Netanyahu administrations, as well as to prepare the ground for a visit by Netanyahu to the United States, which is likely to take place this year. The Biden administration has formulated a working plan to deal with the new Israeli government, based on the principle that Netanyahu will be held fully accountable by Washington for his government's actions. In December, Blinken said during his keynote address to the J Street National Conference that policies, and not the people implementing them, will define the relationship between Washington and Jerusalem.

Activists held "Day of Rage" in NYC calling for release of Palestinian terrorists

Two Anti-Israel groups organized a "Day of Rage" protest in New York City's Grand Central Station on Jan. 21 to demand that Israel release Palestinian terrorist Ahmad Sa'adat. Sa'adat, the leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a U.S.-designated terrorist group, is currently serving a 30-year prison term in Israel for planning the 2001 murder of Israeli Cabinet member Rehavam Ze'evi. The organizations, Samidoun and Within Our Lifetime, are also calling for the release of Ahmad Manasra, a Palestinian teenager currently serving a prison term in Israel for the attempted murder of an Israeli youth, according to the Middle East Media Research Institute. According to MEMRI, protesters shouted, "Free them all; Zionism must fall! With our spirit and our blood, we will redeem you, oh Palestine! We don't want no two states; we want all of it!" as well as "Five, six, seven, eight, crush the settler Zionist State!" and "Globalize the Intifada!" In November, a top Samidoun representative called for the United States, Canada and the European Union to be conquered. "Defeating Israel means defeating the United States. Defeating Israel means defeating Canada. These settlements [that] exist on the back of the indigenous people and the black people," said Mohammed Khatib, the organization's E.U. coordinator. Samidoun was designated a terrorist organization by Israel due to its ties to the PFLP, whose members founded it in 2012.

Controversial iPhone app lets you "talk" to historical figures, including Hitler

A controversial new AI chatbot named "Historical Figures" lets people "talk" to historical figures from beyond the grave. Developed by 25-year-old Amazon software engineer Sidhant Chaddha, the iPhone app gives access to 20,000 historical figures, who can interact with users as if they were still alive. "I was able to chat with some historical figures and I was like, why don't I make this an app so that other people can have this experience as well?" Chaddha told Motherboard. The software engineer's inspiration came from playing around with the latest open AI large language model, GPT-3, where he realized the program had a knack for language and providing historical facts. There are currently 20,000 historical figures represented in the app, whose notability were chosen by ranking their popularity when they were alive, according to Chaddha. To speak with Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler costs 500 coins (or approximately \$15.99), while users can talk to Hitler's henchman Joseph Goebbels for free. "I think from an educational standpoint this would be really useful, particularly for young students," Chaddha said. "I'm thinking like elementary and middle school students." However, Twitter users have been confused by some of the bizarre responses that AI versions of historical figures have produced. Examples include Goebbels claiming to feel guilty about the "persecution of the Jews" and notable antisemite Henry Ford denying that he ever hated Jewish people, saying: "I have always believed in equality for everyone regardless of their religious backgrounds and beliefs." Each chat begins with a disclaimer, which reads: "I may not be historically accurate, please verify factual information." Chaddha went on to justify his app's inaccuracies. "We don't want to spread things that are hateful and harmful for society," said Chaddha. "So it detects if it's saying things that are racist or hateful, these sorts of things - I don't want to show that to a user. That could be harmful to students, especially if they're saying things that are harmful and hateful to the person they're talking to."

Israeli delegation in UAE to prep for Negev Forum parley

Israeli officials recently visited the United Arab Emirates for three days of meetings to prepare for the next installment of the Negev Forum, slated for the spring in Morocco. The forum held its first major event last March in Sde Boker in Israel's Negev Desert, which was attended by the foreign ministers of the UAE, Morocco, Bahrain, Egypt and the United States. Since then, members of the forum's steering committee have met in Bahrain in July and convened over Zoom in October. Now they will meet in Abu Dhabi. The Negev Forum aims to build on the successes of the Abraham Accords, which normalized Israel's relations with several Arab countries.

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