

THE REPORTER

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BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Federation holds Chai Campaign in March

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold a Chai Campaign during the month of March. Adam Weitsman and family will match up to \$7,500 of the funds raised. "This Campaign's focus is on raising money for security," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "There is an urgent need to improve the security of our community. Monies raised will help us to provide communitywide trainings and grants for in-person security. We are also looking to establish an endowment that will enable us to partner long-term with Secure Community Network, a national organization that provides crisis management, intelligence sharing and facilities assessments. (See related article on page 9.) When you give

Federation safety and security measures

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton has worked to improve the community's safety and security:

- ◆ In 2023, it held two communitywide, in-person security training courses.
- ◆ It provided grant-writing resources to assist local organizations in obtaining security funding.
- ◆ It purchased and distributed 15 Stop the Bleed kits to seven local Jewish organizations, including synagogues in Norwich and Oneonta.
- ◆ It acted as a clearinghouse for security resources, assisting local leadership in improving their security protocols, accessing virtual training courses and providing real-time access to a security professional to mitigate threats.
- ◆ It procured funding for a critical infrastructure project at a local synagogue.
- ◆ It provided mini-grants to help cover the cost of in-person security for the High Holidays.



to the Chai Campaign, you will be making life safer for all of us."

Hubal added, "We chose *chai* (the

Hebrew word for life) because security enhances all of our lives. This is a collective effort. We are asking everyone to just give

a little '*chai*.' Your dollars will be doubled and have an impact for years to come."

Donations for the Campaign can be made in several ways:

- ◆ Checks can be made payable to Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, with Chai Campaign on the subject line, and mailed to the Federation at 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.
- ◆ Online donations can be made by visiting www.jfgeb.org.
- ◆ To make a verbal pledge, contact the Federation at 607-724-2332 or e-mail Hubal at director@jfgeb.org.
- ◆ "It's up to us to help keep our community safe," Hubal noted. "Your donation will help make that happen. Our thanks to Adam and his family for their generous matching grant."

Seeking sponsors for the event

JCC to hold Community Purim Carnival on March 17

The Jewish Community Center will hold its annual Community Purim Carnival on Sunday, March 17, from 1-3:30 pm, at 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal. It will feature activities for children of all ages, including bounce houses, games, face painting, food, hamantashen and prizes.

"We are excited for this annual event, which brings together people of all ages and backgrounds from throughout the area," said

organizers of the event. "It always draws a big, diverse crowd and we take pride in the fact that we use the carnival to bring Jewish traditions and values to the community, all while having fun! As a nonprofit agency, we depend on the generosity of local businesses, foundations and individuals to help us run programs for everyone regardless of age, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or ability to pay. The money raised will go

toward helping fund youth programming at the JCC."

Different sponsorship categories are available. All donations are tax deductible as allowable by law. Each sponsor will be recognized on a placard at the event with at business logo or family name:

- ◆ Hamantashen Sponsorship \$50
- ◆ Gragger Sponsorship \$100
- ◆ Mishloach Manot Sponsorship \$150

- ◆ Queen Esther Sponsorship \$200
- Anyone able to help should contact the Jewish Community Center office at 607-724-2417 or by e-mail at Harryc@binghamtonjcc.org no later than Thursday, March 2, with their name, phone number, sponsorship level, logo (if a business) or family name to be placed on the placard. The JCC mailing address is 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

IAUJC to hold dinner and reception on March 25

The Ithaca Area United Jewish Community will hold a community dinner and reception to express its gratitude to its donors for their support for its programs in Ithaca and around the world. Dr. Roald Hoffmann will be honored at the event, which will take place on Monday, March 25, at 6 pm, at the Biotechnology Building on the Cornell University campus. The keynote speaker will be Menachem Rosensaft, an adjunct professor at Cornell Law School, founding chairman of the International Network of Children

of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, and general counsel emeritus of the World Jewish Congress.

Reservations and ticket purchases are encouraged. The deadline for reservations is Monday, March 11. Tickets to the event and tribute gifts in honor of Hoffman may be made at <https://iaujc.org/tickets> or mailed to IAUJC, PO Box 4214, Ithaca, NY 14852. Questions may be directed to info@iaujc.org. The cost of tickets is \$75 for adults and \$36 for students.

"We will be highlighting some of our

regular programs, such as the PJ Library, Global Spotlight grants, Humanitarian Aid to Israel and support for Jewish summer campers," said organizers of the event. "We will also be honoring a beloved member of our community, Roald Hoffmann. We are so grateful for Dr. Hoffmann's contributions and look forward to honoring him."

Hoffmann is a child Holocaust survivor who arrived in the U.S. in 1949 at age 11. He came to Ithaca in 1965 from Harvard University to teach chemistry at Cornell

University, primarily to undergraduates and first year chemistry students. He has had a long and distinguished career in research and teaching, and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry (with Kenichi Fukui) in 1981. Hoffmann has participated in many Holocaust education presentations to adults and children. In 2017, he was the presenter at the IAUJC community commemoration, and he is an ongoing member of the IAUJC Speakers Bureau, traveling each spring to middle and high schools in the area.

Save the date

Federation "Stop the Bleed" program on March 27

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold a "Stop the Bleed" program on Wednesday, March 27, from 6:30-8 pm, at Temple Concord, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. Additional details about the program and how to register will be available in the next issue of *The Reporter*.

The "Stop the Bleed" program, which will be presented by United Health Services Trauma Services, is designed to enable trained bystanders to take life-saving action if needed until professional help can arrive following an accident, mass shooting or other acts of violence. Instructors focus on training people in all walks of life to become immediate responders.

"Sometimes people are not able to escape

a dangerous situation and may be injured," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "It takes time for the police to

secure a scene and the medical personnel can't enter until that happens. If someone is injured, then those who are with them are

the only ones who can offer medical care. This program will give people some basic skills to do that."

Federation Alert

Mishloach manot for IDF lone soldiers

The Jewish Federation of Central New York is adopting a unit of lone soldiers (soldiers who do not have family in Israel) in conjunction with Connections Israel – an organization dedicated to fostering meaningful connections to Israel through personal connections with soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces – to deliver *mishloach manot* (gifts of food)

to be delivered to these soldiers for Purim. Individuals can support the project in two ways: by contributing \$18 for each Purim package and/or by sending an e-mail from adults, children or families that will be included in the package. E-mails should be sent to bdavis@jewishfederationcnyc.org; donations can be made at <https://jewishfederationcnyc.org/donate/>, then select "Shalach

Manot for IDF" from the "designate your gift" drop down menu.

"We thought this was a wonderful way to support Israeli soldiers during this difficult time," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton. "Help us help the Syracuse Federation with this great project."

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Film Fest

The Greater Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of "March '68" in March.Page 3

Talks around town

Lori Tuberman will discuss her experiences on a mission to Israel at the next BD luncheon; more.Pages 3, 9

After Oct. 7

A poll finds most U.S. Jews feel less safe; new archive for "collective memory" of Hamas' attack.Page 12

Special Sections

Celebrating Jewish Literature5-8
Financial Planning 9
Congregational Notes 10
Classifieds 12

Opinion

How to talk about Israel with someone you disagree with

By Rabbi Elliot Cosgrove

This story originally appeared in the Forward. To get the Forward's free e-mail newsletters delivered to your inbox, visit forward.com/newsletter-signup.

In the four months since Hamas' inhumane October 7 attack on Israel, I have developed more – not less – moral clarity.

No matter what is being said in the newspapers, on social media, on college campuses, in the International Court of Justice or on city streets, my moral compass is steady. I stand by the Israel Defense Forces' campaign to root out Hamas, free the captives and secure Israel's future.

I recall the atrocities committed that Black Shabbat. I remember the sights and smells when I visited the burnt-out communities in Israel's south and listened to the testimony of survivors. I think of the more than 100 hostages still in captivity – no contact or communication with the outside world and, based on testimony from the hostages who have been released, subject to unspeakable acts of physical, psychological and sexual violence.

I piece together the ongoing rocket fire from Gaza and from Hezbollah in the north, as well as the attacks from the Houthis in Yemen, and I reject any David/Goliath, oppressed/oppressor, liberator/colonialist narrative. The actions of Iran and its proxies make clear that it is the destruction of Israel, not the liberation of the Palestinians, that is their goal.

I am heartbroken at the Palestinian lives disrupted, destroyed and displaced, just as I mourn the loss of every Israeli civilian and soldier. Every life is created equally and in the infinite dignity of a God of all creation, who I believe is shedding tears for all God's children in this dark hour.

The displays of smug celebration by IDF soldiers in the face of human suffering, as reported by *The New York Times* recently, are obscene and should be shut down without delay. To not be heartbroken is to be inhuman.

These are my views – clear, unequivocal and steadfast. The challenge we face is how to relate to those for whom the truths that I hold to be self-evident are not self-evident at all. Those whose views, sympathies and histories differ from our own.

The grandchild of Holocaust survivors who was on a hunger strike at Brown University in solidarity with Palestinian suffering. The Jewish employees of Jewish nonprofits who signed a petition calling for a ceasefire. The Jewish social justice activist who believes they have not only the right, but the obligation to call out perceived wrongs committed in the name of the Jewish state.

I know where I stand. But how do we stand with those members of the wider community who stand for something else? Are there rules of engagement on responding to that squirm-inducing moment when encountering a view different from one's own?

Rule No. 1: Judge generously.

You may be breathing the same air as the person in front of you, but you inhabit different worlds. Maybe you came of age under the shadow of the Shoah or the 1967 War. Remember that millennials and members of Gen Z know nothing of the history of Arab rejectionism – only a strong Abraham Accord, “startup nation” Israel that is in control of who gets what access to what piece of land.

In the digital era, the sources informing that person's reality are also different. Their news is not your news; their social media feed is not yours. Their views need not reflect evil, ill-will or self-hate; they believe what they believe because they believe it to be so.

Rule No. 2: Reject thought police.

As every parent knows, sometimes the hardest and most important thing to do is... absolutely nothing. Coming down hard on a developing mind risks having the opposite effect than intended. Not every idea is worthy of airing. But within some guardrails – let's say, the goal of a secure,

democratic and Jewish state – there is more than one way to get there.

There are questions that can and should be debated: Should Israel's primary goal be to topple Hamas or free the hostages? How many lives lost are too many for either goal? Can one support Israel's right to self-determination and still object to its government?

Such questions are not betrayals. They are being debated in real time by Israelis who are sending their children into harm's way. And we American Jews also have a stake in their outcome.

Counterintuitive as it sounds, it is especially at this moment that left-leaning Jewish organizations play an important role. With many on the left branding anyone who supports any version of a Jewish nation-state a sellout, Jewish groups with proven credentials in progressive circles are the only ones who have a fighting chance to find allies for the Jewish people.

Now is positively not the time to scold someone for expressing a different view of Israel and the resolution of its conflict with the Palestinians. We have real enemies to fight – let's waste no energy picking someone off from within our own ranks.

Rule No. 3: Ask a good question.

A well-placed question can prompt another person to interrogate their position and emerge from the tired and toxic slogans that dominate their social media feed. It can help you figure out the person's intent, and build dialogue and trust.

Here are a few to start with:

◆ I hear your calls for a ceasefire, and I want peace as much as you. But don't you think that if your demands for a ceasefire were preceded by a demand for the hostages to be released, those demands would be practically and morally stronger?

See “Talk” on page 4

In My Own Words

Thinking about disability during Jewish Disability Month

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

I remember the first time I accepted the label “disabled.” When I had what I now think of as my final drop in hearing, I continued to search for a medical solution. What I did not yet realize – or maybe was just unwilling to admit – was that I had a permanent disability – one for which there was no known medical cure. My acceptance occurred after a counselor at VESID (AKA the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities) suggested I apply for Social Security Disability Insurance. Several people immediately recommended lawyers I could contact when my application was turned down. Surprise! Rather than a letter rejecting my request, a check with my first SSDI payment arrived in the mail. My brain finally said, “Wow, you must really have a disability.”

I'd been thinking about this since I read Julia Watts Belser's “Loving Our Own Bones: Disability Wisdom and the Spiritual Subversiveness of Knowing Ourselves Whole” and reviewed it for my annual Temple Concord Sisterhood book review. Belser is not the first disability activist I've read and not the first with whom I've had some disagreement. I understand her rejection of medical solutions: she wants the world to offer complete acceptance of those with disabilities and to focus on making this world safer and easier for them. To me, that's fine as long as there are no medical solutions. However, if there was a safe way to cure my hearing problem, I would have taken it. In fact, I tried medical solutions until I faced one that I thought was too dangerous.

But then she offered a story about a deaf boy as an example. Someone tells him that he will be able to hear

in heaven. The boy replies that God will be able to sign. It's a wonderful story and I hate it. If there is a heaven, I want to be able to hear. I know what I'm missing and I want it back. Sure, I've learned to live without normal hearing, but that's because I was forced to in order to find work and support myself.

My mother, on the other hand, would have spent her life taking me to doctor's offices to find a cure for my hearing loss. But after I refused to take a medicine I felt was dangerous, I decided to focus on learning to accept my limitations and move on because this is the only life I'm going to get. That meant not spending time trying for impossible results and instead focusing on all the good things I did have in my life. The results have been mixed. I laughed at some of the misunderstandings between what was said and what I heard. (Some of them have been really funny.) I cried when realizing there was something I would have loved to have done, but didn't have enough hearing. Attending would have been a nightmare and I was trying desperately to avoid situations that would have left me feeling depressed.

Life has been easier since the cochlear implant, but I still don't have normal hearing. I never will. I've learned to live with that, as I once learned to live with the various health problems that brought me back to Endwell after graduating from college. I had also never planned to return to this area after rabbinical school, but I am a prime example of the Yiddish saying, man plans and God laughs. Plan B? Ha! I think I'm on plan H, I or J. There have been too many to keep count.

But the idea has always been to follow the saying on a poster given to me by a friend when I returned home after college: it said, “Bloom where you are planted.” The same friend recently gave me a wonderful compliment. Her daughter has health problems and my friend reminds me of my mother in her determination to help her daughter. (Yes, she is seeking a medical solution, something I mentioned before that disability activists don't always see as necessary.) In a recent e-mail, she wrote that her daughter views me as a role model proving that you can still have a good life, even if you have a disability. I was incredibly touched because most days I don't feel like a role model. It's just me taking one step at a time, making things up as I go along. But that's what life is like when you have a disability: you never know what you might have to deal with. But, sometimes, I think many of us are just taking life one step at a time and making things up as we go along.

In some ways, my disability affects almost every decision I make. Is that good or bad? I don't think there is a good or bad choice, only a way to live the best life we can with what we are given. Yes, we should make life as easy as possible for those with disabilities – from ramps to elevators to microphones, etc. – but, ultimately the person with the disability has to determine their own life focus. Do I rail against the world because I have a disability? Do I seek medical solutions? If those don't work, do I accept that and move on? One of the best gifts we can give ourselves is the freedom to choose. There is no one right answer for everyone.



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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.

ADS

The Reporter does not necessarily endorse any advertised products and services. In addition, the paper is not responsible for the kashruth of any advertiser's product or establishment.

DEADLINE

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Film Fest virtual showing of "March '68" in March

By Reporter staff

The Greater Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of "March '68" in March. A virtual discussion of the film will be moderated by Ben Kasper, professor emeritus at SUNY Broome, on Sunday, March 17, at 5 pm. The link to the film will be sent to those who register by 5 pm on Thursday, March 14. People can register for the film and the discussion at www.jfjb.org/film-fest. Donations are appreciated; the suggested donation is \$10.

The film tells the story of two young students – Hania (Vanessa Aleksander) and Janek (Ignacy Liss) – who meet and fall in love in 1960s Warsaw, which was a time of social turmoil and Jewish discrimination. Although Hania and Janek are not interested in politics, governmental edicts affect them: Hania's father and mother lose their jobs due to the antisemitic purge and are forced to emigrate. Since Hania does not want to leave Janek, the two participate in a protest rally at the university during which they learn freedom can come at a high price.

The film won the Audience Award for Best Narrative at the Washington, DC, JxJ Film Festival in 2023, the Audience Award for Best Feature at the Palm Beach Jewish Film Festival in 2023, the Audience Award for Best Narrative at the Jewish International Film Festival Australia in 2022 and Honorable Mention – International Jury Competition at the Jerusalem Jewish Film Festival in 2022.

On the website <https://culturalmining.com>, Daniel



Students marching in protest in "March '68." (Photo courtesy of TVP Theatrical Distribution)

Garber wrote that the film "is an excellent romantic drama set in Warsaw during that dark, tumultuous and repressive time." Nora Lee Mandel wrote on her website, Mandel Maven's Nest Lilith Watch: Guide to Jewish Women in Film, that "integrating archival footage and recordings into both sides of the involving romantic story, [Director Krzysztof] Lang, with co-writer Andrzej Golda, intensely builds up how anti-Zionism and antisemitism were fomented to make Jews scapegoats for the political power plays within the Communist government... While Lang lost childhood friends in March 1968, this poignant film is also a sober lesson on what happens again and again,

with different victims."

"Join us for this film, which is a wonderful conclusion to this year's excellent Film Fest series," said Shelley Hubal, Federation executive director. "I found this film very engaging. Although it takes place in 1968, its message is still relevant today."

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to Aaron Alweis on the death of his father,
Edward Alweis

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

BD Luncheon on March 9 to feature Lori Tuberman

Beth David Synagogue will feature Lori Tuberman as its Shabbat luncheon speaker on March 9. The subject of Tuberman's talk is "Showing Support: My Mission Trip to Israel," which will be about the trip Tuberman and her husband, Brian, took in December. She will share their experiences, answer questions and will provide information about the various ways others can get involved, based on their interests. People are encouraged to attend the morning service, which will begin at 9:30 am. There is no charge for the luncheon.



Lori Tuberman (Courtesy of Lori Tuberman)

the synagogue to which her brother belongs. According to Azancot, "The main purpose of this trip is to tell the Israelis that we are one nation. We are with you. We support you. We stand with you. We're coming here to help you and we're coming here to tell you that we are with you."

In additions to donations, Tuberman took along letters and cards made by Hillel Academy children. Describing one part of the trip, Tuberman said, "We went to an air force base one morning and met some amazing people. We handed out some of the cards that the Hillel kids made and the soldiers there loved them! They were so, so happy! Some of them gave me their patches with their names on them, right off of their uniforms! I was like, 'no!' And they insisted, so we took them. I See "BD" on page 9

After the October 7 Hamas attack, Tuberman heard an Israeli government spokesman indicate that the best way for Diaspora Jews to help Israel now is to come to Israel as a tourist, a volunteer, or as part of a solidarity mission. The trip the Tubermans took was organized by Rabbi Yehuda Azancot of Beth Torah,

REPORTER DEADLINES

The following are deadlines for all articles and photos for upcoming issues of the biweekly REPORTER.

ISSUE	DEADLINE
March 8-21	February 28
March 22-April 4	March 13
April 5-18	March 27
April 19-May 2	April 10

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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TI/TC Joint Adult Ed. Group to present program on March 10

The Temple Israel/Temple Concord Joint Adult Education Group will present the hybrid program "Great Jewish Short Stories read live" on Sunday, March 10, at Temple Concord, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. The program will feature a brunch and begin at 10 am. Liz Rosenberg, Deb Williams and Steve Gilbert will be the readers. For those unable to attend in person, the program will be streamed over Zoom at <https://bit.ly/4aDvnJp>, meeting ID: 884 9233 9659 and passcode 564599. A voluntary contribution between \$5-\$20 is welcome for in-person attendees of the brunch, and reservations are appreciated and can be made by calling Temple Concord at 607-723-7355 or Temple Israel at 607-723-7461.



Steve Gilbert (Photo courtesy of Steve Gilbert)



Liz Rosenberg (Photo courtesy of Liz Rosenberg)



Deb Williams (Photo courtesy of Deb Williams)

Gilbert is a professor emeritus of psychology at SUNY Oneonta, a past president of Temple Israel, a frequent

davener at TI and an amateur performer known as Ukulele Steve by residents of several local senior living facilities. Rosenberg is the author of numerous award-winning books See "Adult" on page 9

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On the silver screen

Fourth *yahrzeit*: memories of Izzy

BILL SIMONS

Time passes and it's Izzy's fourth *yahrzeit*. The son of poor, Jewish immigrants, he achieved renown as movie star, breaker of the Blacklist, philanthropist, World War II veteran, undefeated wrestler, political activist, author and champion of Israel. And he was the most famous native of Amsterdam, NY.

Names are central to identity. His birth name was Issur Danielovitch. When he was in grade school, his parents changed their surname. He grew up as Isadore Demsky, know as Izzy to friends. As customary for actors in those days, he adopted an Anglicized stage name, Kirk Douglas. That name change signifies Izzy's long search for identity.

Actors hide behind the names of the characters and personas they portray. On the screen, Issur/Izzy/Kirk morphed into Spartacus, Odysseus, Doc Holliday, George Patton, Vincent van Gogh, Midge Kelly, Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde, Mickey Marcus, Hans Muller, Colonel Dax, Jiggs Casey, Matthew Harrison Brady and countless others. Memorable, cinematic portrayals of Roman slave turned revolutionary, hero of Greek mythology, Viking raider, Israeli general, American and French colonels, detectives,

Western gunmen, lovers, tortured artist, cornetist, juggler, reporter, producer, boxer, psychopath and attorney did not reveal the authentic Izzy. He long searched for who he really was.

In the years since his death, I have made several trips to Amsterdam in search of Izzy and to gather materials for annual *yahrzeit* columns. My thanks to the keepers of Amsterdam history and lore who assisted me, amongst them Bob Cudmore, Jerry Snyder, John and Linda Naple, and Ann Peconie. During past visits, I paid my respects at the physically distant graves of Izzy's parents (Herschel/Harry and Bryna/Bertha), Kirk Douglas Park, the porch of the English teacher (Louise Livingston) who introduced him to serious literature and more intimate matters, the high school and his Eagle Street neighborhood.

Although I wanted to go inside the house at 46 Eagle St., where so many of Izzy's formative experiences took place, that long eluded me. It is a private residence, unmarked, not open to the public. I felt entry into the house would heighten my understanding of Izzy's genesis years. Once again, John Naple, a former Peace



Bill Simon outside Issur Danielovitch's home. (Photo by John Naple)

Corps volunteer, retired science teacher and angel to the local library, emerged as my benefactor.

Back in the day, the Naple family resided close by the Demskys on Eagle Street. Retired from General Electric after nearly four decades, Eddie Gegzno, the current owner and resident of the old Demsky home, is a friend of John's. Through John's intercession, Eddie allowed me to spend some time inside 46 Eagle St. on a Saturday afternoon, May 20, 2023. Although Eddie never met the Demskys and the house was extensively remodeled since the Demsky family moved out, spending time in the interior of the structure heightened Izzy's descriptions of his life there.

The house on 46 Eagle St. figures prominently Izzy's first and most revealing memoir, "The Ragman's Son." He described his life within the house as a place of poverty, loneliness and thwarted dreams. Moreover, the address 46 Eagle St. is referenced as home by Izzy's pugilist protagonist in his breakthrough movie, "Champion."

From the old Demsky home, I looked at the nearby steel fence that marked the street's end. Residing in the last house on this dead-end street, the Demskys lived close to the former carpet factories, the railroad tracks and the Mohawk River that lay just beyond the fence. I thought of the noise and human congestion that accompanied shift changes. According to Izzy, his father, as a Jew, was blackballed from working in the carpet factories. So, Harry the ragman roamed the streets of Amsterdam in his wagon, pulled by a horse named Bill, selling and trading used metals, cloths and other disposables.

Although young Izzy endured beatings by antisemitic gangs, he also had good friends in the neighborhood. But the house on Eagle Street offered little refuge to the

boy. Only later did he come to appreciate his mother and sisters. Izzy yearned for the larger world outside the house, his father's domain. And he wanted his father's attention and approval, both of which proved elusive.

Once Izzy ran excitedly to the horse-drawn wagon when he saw his father coming and hoisted himself up to sit beside Harry, who offered the boy nothing more than a terse hello. And so it went. Evenings, Harry, the toughest Jew in Amsterdam, would flee the house for his favorite bar and a night of drinking and sometimes brawling. Left at Eagle Street with his mother and six sisters, Izzy felt emotionally suffocated by the seven women. With Harry squandering his meager earnings, the family left behind at 46 Eagle St. frequently knew hunger and want. They used Bill's manure for fertilizer and to insulate the house in winter.

Izzy loved Bill, considering the horse his best friend. Bill lived out back in the barn. In the dark of night, antisemites, seeking vengeance for a beating Harry gave them, set fire to the barn. Hearing terrible sounds of fear, Izzy tried to run into the barn, but was restrained by Harry. Bill burned to death. Izzy never forgot Bill or stopped mourning him. Decades later, Izzy would say that his main inheritance from Amsterdam was an anger that drove him to escape his beginnings. During my time at 46 Eagle St., I imagined the emotions that swept through young Izzy and wrote the script for the man, Kirk Douglas, he would become.

At age 92, Kirk Douglas finally got to play himself in a one-man autobiographical play, "Before I Forget." Given his age, Douglas' performance was astonishing and brutally honest. Izzy and Kirk finally understood one another. When Douglas recounted young Izzy's anguished relationship with his father Harry, he confided, "I don't think I can forgive him." In response, Douglas' own son, Michael, rose from the audience and said, "If you forgive him, I will forgive you."

After I emerged from my visit to Izzy's old home, John and I walked the length of Eagle Street. John greeted some old acquaintances. When we reached 29 Eagle St., John's friend Emil Suda came out to join us. At the end of Eagle Street, the three of us turned left on East Main Street to see the former site of Harry's favorite bar and the lodging house where he lived, courtesy of Kirk's rent money, after Bryna left him. Then, our discussion switched to Kirk's films. I never met anyone who knew more about the plots, characters and dialogues of Kirk Douglas films or spoke more enthusiastically of them than Emil.

Perhaps Izzy and Kirk never truly escaped Eagle Street, but they came to terms with it. And Izzy and Kirk left quite a legacy not just for Jews, but for all aspirants of the American Dream.

Wedding/engagement photos wanted

The Reporter is looking for photos of couples who became engaged or married in 2023 for the annual Wedding, Prom and Party Guide issue (coming March 8).

Please e-mail these photos with the names of all those in the photo (including maiden names), date of wedding and photographer. Please do so by Tuesday, February 27. Photos can be e-mailed, in TIF or JPG format, to TReporter@aol.com; please note in the subject line that a wedding/engagement photo for The Reporter is attached and include the necessary information in the message.



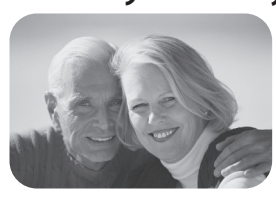
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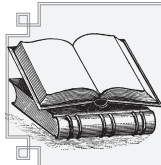
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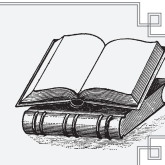
Talk Continued from page 2

I understand your outrage over proportionality. But how do you explain the fact that the same people accusing Israel of war crimes cannot bring themselves to name the atrocities of October 7? I hear you chanting for Palestinian liberation. I also believe in a two-state solution. But when I hear, "from the river to the sea," I'm concerned about the line blurring between championing Palestinian self-determination and calling for the destruction of the Jewish state. It is not clear to me. Is it clear to you? As with so many things, more important than what you say is how you say it. The exchange itself may not change anyone's mind, but it will be part of their experience as they post their next post, attend their next rally or engage with a friend whose views are even farther from yours. And whatever

er they say in response to your questions should likewise animate your next public statement, action or conversation. At the very least, you should have situated that person's views in their humanity, and they should have situated your views in your humanity. I know what I believe. In many cases, those who hold views different than my own are mishpacha, family. And family is family. We make room for each other's views, ask each other good questions, and listen to each other's answers. Elliot Cosgrove is senior rabbi at Park Avenue Synagogue in Manhattan in New York City. The views and opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Forward. Discover more perspectives in Opinion.



Celebrating Jewish Literature



Converts, returnees and the Inquisition

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

When most people think of the Inquisition, they think of the Spanish Inquisition, which was established by King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile in 1478. However, the Inquisition began more than 200 years before and understanding its development is important to understanding Jewish history of that time period. That's one of the reasons behind Paola Tartakoff's "Between Christian and Jew: Conversion and Inquisition in the Crown of Aragon, 1250-1391" (University of Pennsylvania Press). Tartakoff – a professor of history and Jewish studies at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey – picked 1391 as her end date because the lives of the Jewish population changed greatly that year: the Massacre of 1391, one of the worst antisemitic attacks to take place during the Middle Ages, occurred then. It's estimated that 100,000 of Jews were murdered and another 100,000 forced to convert. Framed by a case of a convert who sought to return to Judaism in 1341, her work focuses on Jewish apostates, the attempts to re-Judaize them and how they were treated by both Christians and Jews.

The Inquisition was originally set up in 1231 to fight against Christian heretics. During that time period, the Jews of Aragon were considered the king's personal property – "his treasure" – and could be punished by no one else. However, that protection changed when a Jew converted to Christianity. Conversions were considered a prize by the Church, which saw converts as the proof its religion had supplanted Juda-

ism. It was, therefore, considered worse for a former Jew to return to Judaism than for a "cradle" Christian to convert.

However, conversion did not mean automatic acceptance by the convert's Christian neighbors. First, many were suspicious of the person's motivation. Tartakoff shows how many Jews left the Jewish community because they were in *herem* (banned from the community) or sought to escape other punishments. She writes, "The realities of Jewish conversions fell short of Christian ideals. Many Jews who sought baptism were marginalized individuals who hoped, first and foremost, to extricate themselves from personal difficulties. They were baptized in haste and possessed only superficial knowledge of Christianity." These converts often kept in touch with their families and did business with other Jews, which made Christians suspicious as to whether they were still following Jewish customs and performing Jewish rituals.

An additional problem was that many Christians saw Judaism as more than a religion. They believed Jews were a people, meaning that their Jewishness was part of their essential nature and could be passed to the next generation. The author notes, "Christians [who believed this] must have wondered whether conversion could truly trump ethnicity and whether Jewishness could really be left behind." This often meant that these converts were not welcomed by Christians and even the second generation of those who had converted were sometimes looked at with suspicion. Not being accepted by Christian communities

may have left converts wondering if they should return to Judaism. However, the Jewish community was also not fond of these converts. They didn't trust them and often made their lives difficult.

Tartakoff notes this left several options for converts moving forward with their lives. Some became wandering beggars; their poverty was considered proof that they had given up Judaism, because they no longer owned any worldly goods. Others became preachers and tried to convince other Jews that they, too, should convert. Some sought ways to harm the Jewish community. One final option was returning to Judaism, although that put them in danger with the Inquisition because they would now be considered heretics for leaving the Christian faith.

The author notes similarities between the rituals used to convert someone to Christianity or to return them to Judaism. Both include washing or immersing in water. (For Christians, it was baptism. For Jews, it was use of the *mikvah*, the ritual bath.) Jewish names were changed to Christian ones and changed back if someone returned to Judaism. New Christians were given new clothes as part of their conversion. Re-Judaizing meant returning to clothing worn by members of the Jewish community.

"Between Christian and Jew" offers a fascinating look at the borderline between Judaism and Christianity at the time. Tartakoff suggests that there is more work to be done, but her book is an excellent beginning. Anyone interested in Jewish history will find it well worth reading.

Novels about the war and its aftermath

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

I've written before about the times I've thrown up my hands and said, "That's it! No more books about World War II, the Holocaust or their aftermath." At one point, I even crossed off two of the books featured in this review from my "to ask for" list. Yet, when I hear good things about a book, it becomes difficult not to ask for a review copy, if only to see if it offers something new or interesting. Sometimes, that doesn't happen and it feels as if I've wasted precious reading time on mediocre works. Fortunately, that did not happen with the novels in this review. All offer something to challenge or move their readers.

◆ "The Enemy Beside Me"

Sometimes the Holocaust can feel like a family business, one passed on through the generations. That's true for Milia Gottstein, whose grandfather and father ran the Survivor Campaign, an organization that seeks to bring Nazi war criminals to justice. Milia certainly had not planned on running the organization after her father's death. However, she changed her mind when she learned what happened to her grandfather's family in Lithuania during the war. In Naomi Ragen's "The Enemy Beside Me" (St. Martin's Griffin), Milia is given an amazing opportunity. Although she's been declared a Public Enemy of Lithuania, a country that continues to deny its responsibility for the many Jewish deaths within its borders, she's asked to speak at a Holocaust conference in that country by Dr. Darius Valus.

Darius has an ulterior motive for asking Milia to take part in the conference. He's in the midst of researching a family story passed down to him from his grandmother: according to family lore, his grandfather rescued a Jewish family and received a beautiful necklace in gratitude for his help. Darius wants people to know about his relative's heroism. However, not everyone is happy that he invited Milia; they're afraid she will use this opportunity to condemn their country. Darius' career is on the line, but he is confident that they will be successful in not only speaking to students across the country, but at the concluding symposium.

To complicate matters, Milia's personal life is falling apart: her surgeon husband has left her for another woman. She knows he's resented the effort she's put into her work. Her efforts to bring Nazis to justice speaks to her on many levels – in part because she was named for an aunt who perished during the war. As for her trip to Lithuania, Milia distrusts Darius because she's not exactly sure what he's trying to accomplish. But as the two set out on their tour, they start to bond, especially when Darius begins to understand the true story of what occurred during the war. But speaking the truth in Lithuania is not easy and there may be a large price to pay.

"The Enemy Beside Me" works well on many levels. Ragen has created interesting, believable characters whom readers will come to care about. Yet, what really kept the pages turning is the novel's compelling plot. I kept reading – finding it difficult to put the book down – because I wanted to know what would happen in both main characters' personal and professional lives. The novel also explores varying ways of understanding history, including offering testimony about how poorly the Lithuanians were treated by the Soviet Union. However, it's the testimony about the Jews of Lithuania during World War II, which is based

on true incidents, that is truly heartrending. Those words can be difficult to read, but, as the characters in the book note, the only way to create a better future is to have a clear understanding of the past.

◆ "The Little Liar"

At the conclusion of his new novel "A Little Liar" (Harper), Mitch Albom notes that he wanted to write a work about the Holocaust for years, but waited to find a story he felt was new and different. The result was worth the wait: his novel is a wonderful, moving work, not only because Albom wrote about what happened to the Jews of Salonika, Greece, but because his story feels fresh and original.

The reason for this difference is partially due to Albom's unusual narrator: the Angel of Truth who, in rabbinic tales, told God not to create humans because they would fill the world with lies. As punishment, the Angel of Truth is thrown from heaven to earth – forced to roam the world with those whose lies Truth can clearly see. However, Truth learns that there are the rare humans who never lie, even when they know they will be punished for telling the truth. That's true of 11-year-old Nico Krispis, who is tricked by Udo Graf, a Nazi officer, into telling the Jews of his city that it's safe to get on the train taking them to a concentration camp. When Nico learns of the lie, he vows never to speak the truth again. He is also determined to follow that train and free his family from the camp.

The narrator doesn't just tell the story of Nico, though. What makes the novel work is the way readers learn about the lives of three other characters, in addition to Nico: Udo (Albom does an excellent job showing how Udo justifies his service to the Nazis); Sebastian, Nico's brother who has sworn to punish his brother for that one lie; and Fannie, a Jewish girl loved by both brothers. Readers learn of Sebastian's time in the concentration camp, Fannie's life in hiding and what happens to the four characters after the war. The dramatic conclusion of the novel was simply amazing, even though I'd partially guessed what was going to happen. My reaction after finishing was to write a single word in my notes: "Wow!"

"The Little Liar" was one of the books I'd crossed off my books-to-ask-for list. I am so glad I changed my mind. The pages of the novel simply flew by. The Jewish parables Truth periodically offers feature interesting commentary on the action that enhance what is already an amazing work.

◆ "We Must Not Think of Ourselves"

Lauren Grodstein's "We Must Not Think of Ourselves" (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill) was another book I'd originally crossed off my list, filing it under "even I can't read everything." However, after seeing a lot of good press – and noting that it was a Read with Jenna pick – I decided to ask for a copy and I'm glad I did. Grodstein's novel offers an unusual view of life in the Warsaw Ghetto during the 1940s that was different from other books I've read about that time period.

Adam Paskow, who narrates the novel, is not a religious Jew. In fact, he and Anna, his late non-Jewish wife, practiced no religion. Even as the Nazis narrowed his world, Adam spent a great deal of time thinking about his relationship with Anna and the fact that they were never able to have children. That doesn't change when he is forced to move into the ghetto. His life there expands when he is asked

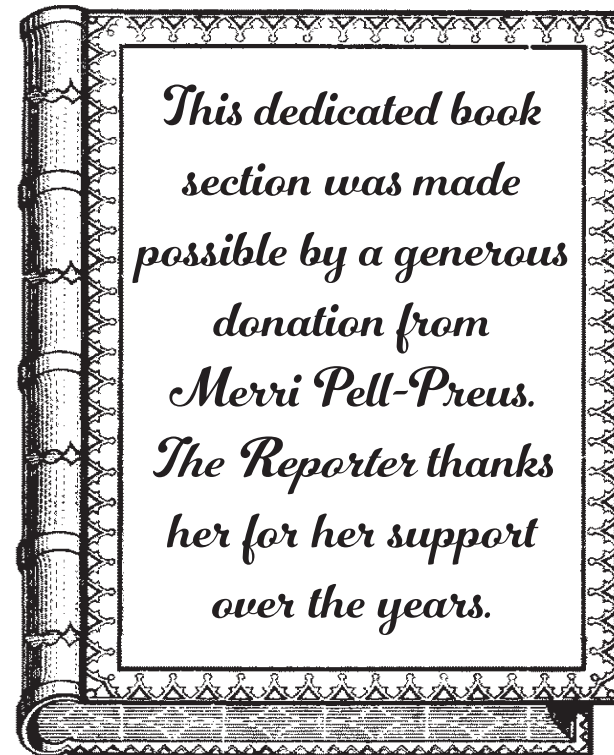
to be part of the Oneg Shabbat project: its members are asked to interview their friends and neighbors about their life before the war. The reason? The group is documenting the Jewish world that is currently disappearing. Adam interviews not only his flatmates, but the students to whom he teaches English in an unused basement in the ghetto. These interviews are interspersed with Adam's narration of his daily life – a life that doesn't feel quite real to him.

The members of the Oneg Shabbat project meet periodically and their leader shares news from the outside world. However, the news is rarely good: their dream that the United States will join the war effort and defeat the Germans begins to seem unrealistic. While Adam appreciates the project, he comes to a different understanding – that the real hope for their community is not to record the past, but to stay alive. He wonders if they have already condemned themselves, believing that no one will remain with whom they can share their stories.

While at first, Adam seems almost dispassionate – as if he's unable to realize what is happening around him – the reality of the situation becomes real to him in the last 100 pages of the book. The novel then went in a different direction than I expected, one that offered a moral dilemma that will break readers' hearts and made this a moving, wonderful work. As with "The Little Liar," I was grateful that I changed my mind and asked for a review copy.

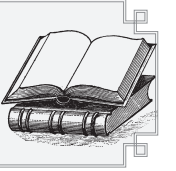
◆ "The Boy with the Star Tattoo"

A common plot device in novels about World War II is to offer plot lines that take place in more than one time period. In that way, the author is able to show not only what happened during or just after the war, but how what occurred reverberated throughout the decades. The device can be very effective, as shown in Talia Carner's new **See War" on page 7**





Celebrating Jewish Literature



THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

The Hebrew word used in the Bible for the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which was found in the Garden of Eden, is *peri*, a generic word meaning any kind of fruit. Yet, when most people think of the story, they visualize that fruit as an apple. As Azzan Yadin-Israel notes in “Temptation Transformed: The Story of How the Forbidden Fruit Become an Apple” (The University of Chicago Press), that was a relatively new development since there was little to no mention of the apple in this context before the 12th century. In his short work, Yadin-Israel, a professor of Jewish studies and classics at Rutgers University, uses written texts and visual imagery to determine when and why that change occurred.

Ancient written commentaries do not agree on any specific type of fruit: among those suggested are grapes, figs, pomegranates, wheat shafts and dates. Although a few texts mention apples, these were very limited. There were also commentaries that suggested the fruit was an unknown type only found in the Garden of Eden. As for pictorial images from that time period, the fruits that usually appeared were figs, pomegranates or grapes. Other images just show an unidentifiable fruit that doesn’t have the characteristic of any specific plant.

Yadin-Israel believes the apple tradition began in 12th century France and then moved to other areas, including Germany, England and Northern Italy. He suggests the shift occurred for linguistic reasons. His discussion is based on the fact that the original Latin word to describe the forbidden fruit was *pom* (singular) or *pomum* (plural). To oversimplify his very detailed explanation, when biblical works appeared in Old French, the meaning of the Latin word *pom* was narrowed to mean not all fruits, but only apple. Yadin-Israel writes, “What is clear is that once ‘apple’ became the dominant sense of *pom*, the various Old French accounts of the Fall of Man communicated a clear and simple lesson: Adam and Eve were tempted by an apple.”

It was during this time that paintings of the Garden of Eden began to more consistently use the apple to represent the forbidden fruit. As Yadin-Israel notes, “[Artists] knew Scripture from vernacular sources: sermons, plans, and for the literate, vernacular Bible translations and adaptations. Consequently, Old French-speaking artists adopted the apple while contemporary Latin commentators did not.” For those who read and understood Latin, there was another word – *malum* – that meant apple, while *pom* remained a generic word for fruit in general.

Yadin-Israel notes that French painting and culture

greatly influenced the change in English and German references to the forbidden fruit, although this did not take place overnight. Spanish commentators and painters did not make the same change because vernacular translations of the biblical text were discouraged. That meant that Spanish commentaries were written in Latin and used the word *pom* as referring to fruits in general. There were similar linguistic reasons for why Northern Italy adopted the apple as the forbidden fruit, while Southern Italy did not, often portraying the forbidden fruit as a fig. Later, illustrated books pictured the forbidden fruit as an apple, which helped the idea become more firmly established in people’s minds.

“Temptation Transformed” is a beautifully designed work: it offers black-and-white photos and color plates to show the different images of the forbidden fruit that have appeared over the centuries. Yadin-Israel does an excellent job analyzing the different texts he discusses. While his subject matter may seem to have a narrow focus, his sources are not: he offers an interdisciplinary and wide-eyed view of the topic – using Jewish and Christian written and visual sources. Anyone interested in how cultural and linguistic changes can influence our interpretations of the biblical text will find “Temptation Transformed” to be of great interest.

Essays about the disappearing Yiddish culture

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Isaac Bashevis Singer wrote so many essays for the *Forward* newspaper that many were published under pseudonyms. David Stromberg, who translated and edited “Isaac Bashevis Singer Writings on Yiddish and Yiddishkayt: The War Years, 1939-1945” (White Goat Press)*, writes that Singer was not known in the U.S. as a novelist/short story writer during this period. His writing focused on Yiddishkayt, including many musings on European Jewish/Yiddish customs and communities. Stromberg notes that Singer was trying to accomplish a massive task: “He wanted to get it all on record – not only the customs but also the immediacy of the loss that he realized was taking place at that very moment... [the knowledge of what was happening] was crushing for Singer. It also drove him to put pen to paper and write.”

Stromberg introduces each of the 25 essays with a short note placing it in context. Older readers might find them difficult to read due to the very small size of the print, but they are worth the effort. One thing that stood out was that Singer offers no ethical commentary when talking about Jewish religious customs. For example, when writing about the *agunah* (a wife whose husband has either decided not to give her a divorce or who has disappeared), he notes the problem – especially in Europe where the marriage

age could be very young – but accepts the rulings, rather than asking for a change in the way marriage/divorce was accomplished. Singer sees the problem as a fact of life. His purpose is instead to teach his readers about the world in which he grew up: he wants to remember what that world was like, warts and all.

All the essays offer something of interest, but the following stood out:

◆ Singer addressed the question of “What Is a Dybbuk?” while suggesting that, rather than being inhabited by a dybbuk, most sufferers were not possessed by a malicious spirit, but simply experiencing a type of hysteria. Unfortunately, he also sees the sufferers as acting out a part, even if they don’t realize they are doing so. The idea of a real mental illness as we know it today didn’t seem to occur to him.

◆ In “The Yiddish That We Spoke in the Old Country Is Being Forgotten,” Singer mourns the loss of true Yiddish. He sees Jewish immigrants to the U.S. losing the ability to speak a true Yiddish: that would mean creating new words and formulating new ideas through the use of that language. He also mourns the loss of many Yiddish books in Europe and wishes the collections of books had been better protected.

◆ A wonderful celebration of the city of Warsaw is offered in the essay “Each Jewish Street in Warsaw Was Like a

Town of Its Own.” Although Singer struggles with the destruction that was occurring, his tribute to the city offers an insiders’ view of a soon-to-be-lost world.

◆ In “Why Movies Aren’t Made about Jewish Life,” Singer complains that films of almost every time period and ethnicity appeared on American movie screens, but none were being made about Jews and Jewish history. He also suggests that “there is no medium more suitable for the job [of fighting antisemitism] than a good Jewish film. It certainly won’t be made in Hollywood.” Films made decades later would prove him wrong.

Other essays speak to Jewish identity and the difficulties of being Jewish in the United States. He also writes about Jewish history and concepts in order to educate his audience. The essays are consistently interesting and offer readers not only a look into Singer’s ideas, but the time period about which he is writing. Study groups looking to understand Jewish life in early 1940s should find much to discuss about each essay – whether they agree or disagree with Singer’s ideas.

*This is not the first book of Singer’s essays Stromberg has edited, but that work – “Old Truths and New Clichés” – contains essays written in the 1960s-70s. *The Reporter’s* review can be found at www.thereporter.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-oz-and-singer-discuss-writing-and-life?entry=415690.

Yearning for real connections

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Americans are facing an epidemic of loneliness, at least according to newspaper articles. These reports note that people feel they have few friends and even fewer people they can count on in times of need. Rabbi Sharon Brous recognizes this desire for connections – to have people stand by you when you need strength and who allow you to lend them your strength when they are in need. Finding ways to accomplish this is the impetus behind her book “The Amen Effect: Ancient Wisdom to Mend Our Broken Hearts and World” (Avery). Brous offers stories portraying what she calls sacred companionship and shows how people can become a part of those communities. Underlying this effort is “the power of saying ‘Amen’ to one another’s grief and joy, sorrow and celebration with our very presence. Of bearing witness to profound suffering and protesting injustice with our very presence. Of comforting and consoling, surviving and thriving with our very presence.”

Brous calls this desire for connection the Amen Effect, much as how saying amen after a prayer means the person agrees with the essence of those words. To show how this works in practice, she offers wisdom from Jewish stories, although readers should note that her book does not feature in-depth study of these texts. The periodic stories/examples from Jewish writings are used as a segue into the stories of real-life people from her religious community – she is the spiritual leader of IKAR in Los Angeles – and others whom she has met in the course of her rabbinate.

The story that sets the tone for her work is from the Mishnah and discusses what occurred when pilgrims heading to the Temple in Jerusalem entered the Temple courtyard. The majority of the pilgrims would turn to the right and make a counterclockwise circuit around the area.

However, anyone who was suffering, those whom the author calls “the grieving, the lonely, the sick – *someone to whom something awful had happened*,” would turn to the left and make a clockwise circuit. Those moving in the counterclockwise direction were to stop and ask what had happened, and offer comfort. Brous notes that, at some point in our lives, almost everyone would need to walk clockwise. The story also makes clear that the community – those who were not directly dealing with sorrow – were required to lessen their suffering.

The problem is many people are at loss at how to put this idea into action. A major component of Brous’ book is the specific examples she offers on how to accomplish this. They are all based on a very simple idea: showing up for joyous occasions and for sad ones. It means sitting with someone even if you don’t know the right words to say. It means offering to others the same aid you’ve received during times of sorrow. It means acknowledging someone’s suffering, even if you don’t understand what they are going through. Brous notes that the greatest words of comfort are simply, “I see you... You are not alone.”

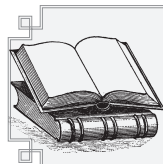
Being a member of a religious community is also something she sees as important. Brous writes, “We now know that walking together, singing together, seeing and being seen by each other – all these things enhance our emotional health and deepen our sense of connectedness. They alter the physical and psychological landscape of a group and the people in it.” This is the impetus behind IKAR and something she believes should be the driving force of every synagogue community.

Brous illustrates the importance of comfort by offering a story from her own life. After receiving news of a family death when she was alone at a retreat center, she experienced physical pain, pain so bad that she

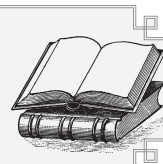
wondered if she had damaged a nerve. But a healer, who was also at the center, noticed her pain and asked Brous if someone she knew had died. The healer also suggested that Brous was carrying years of pain and grief in her muscles. Even those who normally are the strong ones – the ones people lean on – need to recognize when they need help. They need to admit to themselves that someday they “will walk in the direction of the bereaved and broken-hearted. And to trust that when we do, there will be someone to hold us, to tenderly release the grief frozen in our bodies, to bring us raspberries and weep with us, too.” She notes that this ability to let others offer help will lead us to “be[ing] revitalized not only with greater humility, but with deeper compassion – for ourselves and with those we love.”

Brous concludes her book with a section called “Practices” that offers practical suggestions on how readers can incorporate the Amen Effect into their lives. They include simple things like “Go to the Funeral” and “Meet Your Neighbors.” Others may be more difficult to implement – for example, “Honor the Divine Image” and “Take a Joy-Break.” However, the author believes following these practices will bring people together and create space for the joys and sorrows that will inevitably come to every life.

Brous writes well, which, on the one hand, makes the “The Amen Effect” easy to read. However, it contains many tales of grief and sorrow that might trigger emotional responses in those who have suffered similar experiences. But that is the point of her work: teaching us how to reach out to those in grief to help them and us heal. Brous sees these meetings as sacred encounters, leading all involved to a deeper understanding and recognition of each other’s humanity.



Celebrating Jewish Literature



Adjusting to different worlds

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Jewish history is filled with fascinating tales. Sometimes, though, it takes fiction to make these stories come alive: a novel can fill in thoughts and emotions to which historians rarely have access. That's shown in two recent novels; "Our Little Histories" by Janice Weizman (The Toby Press) offers both a personal and public view of more than a century of Jewish history, while "Ravage and Son" by Jerome Charyn (Bellevue Literary Press) focuses on the emotions and actions of those living in New York City at the turn of the 20th century.

"Our Little Histories" tells its story in reverse chronological order. Beginning in Chicago in 2015 and ending in 1850s Propoisk, Belarus, it portrays the different directions that Jewish lives have taken through the story of three brothers who were separated early in life. The reason for that separation is not revealed until the final section of the novel. The previous chapters move backward in time, telling the stories of different branches of the family: one group in the United States, a second in Israel and the third that remained in Europe and did not survive World War II. Each section focuses on a different character and forces readers to piece together the family connections. (An extended family tree proved very helpful in this.)

In the opening section, Jennifer creates Living Installations for museums: for a short period of time, real people live in recreations from the past and are watched by an ever changing audience. She's already created Greek, Roman, Inca and Native American installations. Now she's offered the chance to create one showing what Jewish life in Belarus was like in the 19th century. Jennifer is intrigued with the prospect because her ancestors originally came from that area and she's never visited. To create the installation, she reconnects with distant Israeli cousins who are now religious and willing to live as their ancestors did – at least, while the public is watching. Watching the installation in Belarus has an unexpected effect on Jennifer and her teenage daughter.

Readers learn of the Israeli branch of the family when Jennifer's mother visits them during the 1960s. The first member of the family to immigrate to Palestine tells of living on a *kibbutz* in 1946, noting how many people don't feel at home in the land because they've come from different countries. The upcoming storm – World War II and the Holocaust – is noted in a section where some people still

War.Continued from page 5
novel "The Boy with the Star Tattoo" (William Morrow). The story focuses on three characters: Claudette Pelletier (in the early 1940s), Uzi Yarden (in 1946) and Sharon Bloomenthal (in 1968).

Claudette, a French seamstress, believes she will never find love due to a physical disability that makes it difficult for her to walk. She's grateful to the duchess who has given her a safe haven and protects her from the Germans who've taken over France. The chateau where they live also offers protection to those seeking shelter from the Nazis. That includes a Jewish man with whom Claudette falls in love. When her lover must flee in order to avoid capture by the Nazis, he promises to come for her after the war. The result of their affair, though, is that Claudette is pregnant. When the duchess is forced to flee France, Claudette decides to travel with her, but that means leaving her child behind.

Uzi, an Israeli, travels to Europe in order to search for hidden Jewish children so he can bring them to Palestine as part of the real-life Youth Aliyah. His mission is to find older children who will be smuggled into the country since the British have forbidden Jewish immigration. However, one younger child captures his heart and he finds it difficult to abandon him.

Several decades later, Sharon travels to France as part of a secret Israeli naval operation. She is mourning the loss of her fiancé who died in a downed submarine, a sub which has not yet been recovered. However, she is intrigued when approached by Daniel Yarden, who believes she has the skills he needs for the naval operation. An orphan whose parents died when she was a young baby, Sharon wonders if perhaps she can learn more about her mother, who came from France as part of the Youth Aliyah. When she learns that Danny came to Israel the same way, although he was much younger than her mother, she agrees to join the mission so she can find out more about both of them.

The three sections of "The Boy with the Star Tattoo" come together at its conclusion, which contains a great many unbelievable coincidences. However, readers won't complain because that made the ending extremely satisfying. Carner's book has generated some controversy on social media due to its very positive portrait of Israel. As a first-generation Israeli, Carner notes that she is proud of her country. Those who read her work will understand and appreciate her feelings.

believe that Hitler is an aberration and life will soon return to normal. It also shows how difficult it is for those with money to understand the despair poverty brings. The desire of second generation American immigrants to assimilate is made clear in a story that takes place in Chicago in 1938. A meeting of three cousins in 1896 Belarus clearly shows the different directions the family will take as they question whether they should remain in Europe, emigrate to Palestine or move to the United States.

It is, however, the final story, which takes place in Belarus in 1850, that will tug on readers' heartstrings as they learn the reason why the three brothers – triplets – were separated. The heartrending choice their mother makes will make readers re-evaluate the other sections of the work, particularly the first section, since it reveals what is missing from Jennifer's installation: the fear always present in Jewish lives. "Our Little Histories" gains in power since the sum of its small histories are greater than the individuals parts.

While "Our Little Histories" looks at life on three different continents, "Ravage and Son" has a much narrower focus: the Lower East Side of New York City. Although its prologue takes place in 1882, the majority of the work occurs in the 1920s. The novel deals with the messy, complex world of slum landlords, the Yiddish theater, gangsters who preyed on ignorant immigrants and wealthy uptown Jews who were embarrassed by their poorer brethren. It contains a wide variety of characters – some real and some fictional – to create a panorama of the times.

What plot there is centers on Ben Ravage, an unacknowledged illegitimate son of one of the Lower East

Side's slum lords, Lionel Ravage. After being rescued as a young boy by Abraham Cahan, the real-life editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, Ben attends Harvard Law School, but doesn't practice because his heart belongs to the streets in which he grew up. He takes a job as a detective for the Jewish Kehilla, which helps police the Lower East Side. However, when Ben tries to protect the innocent from the corrupt New York City police force and court system, he makes some serious and powerful enemies who threaten his life. That doesn't stop him: although Ben knows he can't change the world, he seeks to help as many individual souls as possible.

But Ben is not the only character featured. Readers learn about the Lower East Side through the eyes of several others. For example, Cahan tries to use the *Forward* to help the citizens of the Lower East Side. Although he wishes he could rid the area of corruption, he often finds himself focusing on the smaller troubles of its citizens, helping them adjust to America or offering advice for their personal problems. There's a Yiddish actress who finds fame and is desired by rich and powerful men, but longs for one poor suitor only. The lesbian daughter of one of the rich Jewish financiers causes problems for her family when she prefers slumming and drugs to her father's social world. All these characters and more have serious flaws, as does the system in which they live. "Ravage and Son" does not offer a pleasant, rosy-eyed view of immigrant life, but it does make readers feel the despair its characters do. In the end, the novel shows people fighting a battle they ultimately can't win, even as they continue to try to save their world and those living within it.

Finding your life path

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Some novels are difficult to define because they combine elements of several genres. For example, "A Shot in the Dark" by Victoria Lee (Dell) and "The Breakaway" by Jennifer Weiner (Atria Books) are definitely not rom-coms, although their plots contain a heavy dose of romance. The main characters in each are at a crossroad that forces them to make serious choices that will affect the course of their personal and professional lives. This is more than finding a partner: rather, they are looking to build meaningful lives, even if by doing so they remain single.

The two characters in "A Shot in the Dark" – Elisheva Cohen and Wyatt Cole – are both wounded and trying to rebuild their lives. Ely, who grew up as a Chasidic Jew in Brooklyn, returns to New York City from California with a scholarship for an arts program that she sees as the next step for her mixed-media artistic career. Her life has not been easy: thrown out by her family as a teenager, she's struggled with drug and alcohol addiction. But she found a path to recovery through her art and is looking forward to classes with Wyatt, a noted and reclusive artist. Her first night in New York with her new roommates ends with her going home with a very hot stranger – a trans male – for the best sex in her life.

Unfortunately, when she attends class the next day, it turns out that her hot date is none other than Wyatt, who says that not only can't they continue their relationship, but she can't take his class for ethical reasons. While, at first, this sounds like the perfect set-up for a rom-com, the novel takes a more serious note since Ely is not the only one trying to overcome her addictions. Wyatt, too, used drugs and alcohol to blunt the pain of being disowned by his father once he wanted to transition from female to male. Wyatt has slowly built his now-successful career, but has also avoided the limelight to protect himself.

In addition its other pleasures, "A Shot in the Dark" offers some fascinating thoughts about the process of making art. Wyatt sees art as "a form of telepathy, really. You have an idea, or a feeling, and you try to get someone else – someone totally different from you, with different wants and fears and interests – to share you emotions, even if just for a moment. It doesn't always work. But when it does, it's the best experience in the entire world." He also tells Ely, who is afraid of critical judgment, that "all the best art is like bleeding in front of strangers. It's terrifying. 'Vulnerable' is a good word for it. Someone could slip in when you're raw and aching and twist a knife right where it hurts the most."

"A Shot in the Dark" does a wonderful job creating characters who feel real and vulnerable. Readers should note that there are explicit descriptions of sex and the author offers the trigger warning that "this book contains vivid scenes of substance abuse." But readers will also come away caring deeply for Ely and Wyatt, and rooting for them to find their artistic and personal paths.

While "A Shot in the Dark" deals with drug and alcohol addiction, "The Breakaway" focuses on health and body

image. Although readers hear the voices of several characters, 33-year-old Abby Stern is the novel's main focus. Unlike her successful siblings, Abby has not yet found her life path. She has jobs, rather than a career. She's almost made her peace with her plus-size body, although her mother frequently encourages her to lose weight, even though Abby is healthy. Her real love is bicycling, so much so that she agrees to lead a 12-day cycling trip when its leader drops out. What prompted her decision is her relationship with her boyfriend, Mark Medoff. The two met at a weight loss camp as teenagers and then lost touch. When Abby and Mark met again, he was no longer overweight: in fact, he now eats very little and runs for miles every day to keep his weight down. However, he doesn't cycle and has no interest in learning.

Mark is ready for them to take the next step, but Abby finds herself resisting leaving her apartment and moving in with him. She knows he loves her, but she's a bit uncomfortable with his attitude about food, including whether he would feel comfortable with her keeping treats like ice cream in their shared housing. While she loves Mark, she also can't help remember a night of passion that occurred just after they met and before they were seriously dating. That night in New York City remains vivid in her mind.

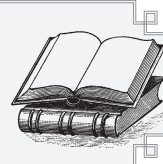
The opening day of the bike ride reads like a rom-com since Sebastian, her one-night stand, is one of the participants. Although the novel explores their feelings, that's not the main focus of the trip. Sebastian, whose life has been a series of one-night stands, finds himself a social media sensation, but not in a good way. After a group of women post that all but one of them had slept with Sebastian, the post gains momentum as other women who slept with him chime in. That leaves Sebastian wondering about the course his life has taken, including how his parents' troubling relationship might have affected him.

The group of riders begins to bond, but then a problem arises: the teenage girl on the ride has a secret, one she wants to keep from her mother who has accompanied her. Can she find someone to aid her and keep her secret? This mother/daughter dynamic is echoed in another part of the plot since Abby's mother showed up for the trip without any notice, claiming she wants to spend time with her daughter.

While the ending of "The Breakaway" might seem a bit too good to be true, the author does an excellent job portraying the different emotions her characters feel and their struggles to find their way in the world. There is a wonderful description of what it means to truly love someone: Sebastian notes that "she would have his heart in her hands, every day. He would give her the power to wound him, to hurt him, to make him not want to live. To leach all the color from the world; to steal all the savor from food; to turn minutes into hours and hours into days and the rest of his life into a painfully slow slog to its inevitable end." Although that may sound a bit excessive, in the context of the novel, it works and is just one example of how the author makes readers care about her characters and root for their happiness.



Celebrating Jewish Literature



A mystery, a rom-com and a generational saga

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

◆ A mystery

There's nothing like a good murder to bring three generations together. OK, not everyone would agree with that statement. In fact, in "Mother-Daughter Murder Night" by Nina Simon (William Morrow), Beth wishes her mother, Lena, would concentrate on her recovery from cancer and let the police solve the murder of Ricardo Cruz, a naturalist with ties to a local land trust, whose body was found in the salt march near their home. But Lena refuses to back down. The high-powered real estate agent is not only bored not working: she hates living in the country with her daughter, rather than in exciting Los Angeles. She also worries the police think that Jack, her granddaughter and Beth's daughter, may be responsible for the death.

Disagreements between Lena and Beth are not new: there were years the two didn't speak and their peace is an uneasy one. Beth resents how Lena subtly – and not so subtly – criticizes her life. That includes everything from the purchase of household items Beth does not want to suggestions on whom Beth should date. Jack is often caught between the two, but she loves helping her grandmother research why the murder might have occurred. But tracking a murderer can be dangerous, even if you're not weak from chemo and have no appetite. That doesn't stop Lena, who fearlessly marches into danger.

Simon has written an excellent murder mystery with enough red herrings that readers may not guess "whodunit" until the end of the novel. However, it is the relationships between the three women that makes "Mother-Daughter Murder Night" more than your average murder mystery. Readers will alternately delight in Lena and be horrified when she acts like an obnoxious witch. It's fun to see Beth maintain her independence in light of her mother's heavy-handedness and her attempts to be less critical of her own daughter. The intergenerational disagreements make this a great novel for book clubs, although some discussions might get heated if two generations of the same family attend.

◆ A rom-com

There are several clichéd ways for folks to meet in rom-coms. That doesn't mean that writers shouldn't use these clichés. In fact, it's great fun to read a book where the two people destined to fall in love hate each other at first sight. That's because readers get to sit back and enjoy watching the two duke it out before they fall madly in love.

It's also what made "Keep This Off the Record" by Arden Joy (Rising Action) such a delight to read. Well, that and one of the best casts of secondary characters found in any rom-com.

Abigail (Abby) Mayer and Freya Jonsson hated each other at first sight in high school. During a reunion held 10 years later, it didn't take five minutes in proximity to each other for tempers to flare. Unfortunately for the two of them, their closest friends – Naomi, whom Abby has known since high school, and Will, Freya's producer and friend – fall in love. Since Abby and Naomi were part of a close-knit group, it's inevitable that Abby and Freya will cross paths. Although they both wish the best for their friends, they can't stop insulting each other: all it takes is the sight of the other to bring back memories from high school. To add to the complications, the Jewish Abby is gay and a therapist, while the non-Jewish Freya keeps almost everyone at arm's length to protect her career as newscaster. Of course, readers know that even though the two have little in common, sparks are going to fly at some point.

The cast of secondary characters adds to the pleasure. There's Naomi, who neglects to tell Will she's been married before because she wanted to start anew (even though her ex-husband is a stalker who refuses to admit their relationship is over). Abby's younger sister, Becca, seems to love her husband, although she can't stop cheating on him with almost every man she meets. When he learns she hasn't been faithful, she tries some very unusual ways to save her marriage. However, the ultimate fun character is Riley: Riley, who uses the pronoun they, seems to dance through life, offering comic relief and delightful commentary on the action. They are filled with joy and a love of craziness that may make readers wish they had their own Riley for a friend.

The pages of "Keep This Off the Record" turned quickly and kept me interested from the first word to the last. The PR material offered an e-mail address for the novel's film and TV rights: some smart producer should snap them up right now. It would be awesome to see Abby and Freya spar out on the big or small screen.

◆ A multi-generational saga

Four generations of a Sephardic Jewish family: that's the premise behind Ruth Behar's "Across So Many Seas" (Nancy Paulson Books). Although it's aimed at younger readers, anyone who enjoys generational sagas will appreciate the novel. Behar looks at the life of a 12-year-old

girl in 1492 Spain, in 1923 Turkey, in 1961 Cuba and in 2003 Miami. The impetus for the plot in the first three sections are political upheavals that change the lives of the countries' citizens.

Most older readers will recognize the year 1492 as the year that the Jews of Spain were offered two options: convert or leave the country. Those remaining who did not convert would be put to death. Benvenida's family delayed abandoning their home until almost the last minute. Although her aunts try to convince her father to convert like they have done, he refuses and says he will not abandon his God and his faith. Benvenida chronicles the difficulty of leaving the place where their family has lived for generations, the problems they face during their journey on land and the terrors of traveling by ship for the first time in their lives. Although the family departs the ship to stay with family in Naples, it's clear they will soon be leaving for a safer land, that of Turkey.

Reina is thrilled to be celebrating after the Turkish War of Independence in 1923. What she mistakenly believes is that change will also offer more freedom to young women. One wrong decision leads to her father disowning her and sending her with a relative to Cuba, where an arranged marriage awaits her. It is in Cuba in 1961 that Reina's daughter, Alegra, hopes to serve the Castro Revolution. Alegra chooses to work as a brigadista, someone who travels to the Cuban countryside to teach those who have never had a chance to attend school to learn to read. However, life works out differently than she planned.

In Miami in 2003, Alegra's daughter, Paloma, ponders the stories she's learned of her family's history. Are they Spanish because they consider themselves Sephardic, even though they have not lived in Spain for centuries? Since Turkish Jewish customs have also been passed down through the generations, are they really Turkish? How much have the years in Cuba affected her heritage since, while her mother is a Sephardic Jew, her father is African-Cuban? Paloma is hoping that an upcoming trip to Spain with her parents and her grandmother Reina will answer some of these questions.

"Across So Many Seas" would be perfect for book clubs containing teens and adults. Parents will want to read it with their children, focusing on how choices parents make can affect their children in unexpected ways. Adult book groups that enjoy reading multi-generational sagas will also find much to discuss.

Jewish food from across the world

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Confession: I frequently anthropomorphize objects from stuffed animals to mechanical devices. Yes, I can assign almost any inanimate object a personality. However, I normally don't do that with the food I eat – that is, unless the food is offered in a book format. This is a long way of saying I loved the delightful drawings in the children's board book "P is for Pastrami: The ABCs of Jewish Food" by Alan Silberberg (Viking), which offered humanized versions of different Jewish cuisines. Even better, it features some Jewish delicacies with which I was not familiar. That means that parents reading this work to their children might just learn something, too.

Much of the food will be familiar to most readers. Even though the letter P is used for pastrami, Silberberg still managed to include one of my favorite foods: the letter D "is for DILL pickle," which the Dill Pickle himself notes is "Delicious." A CHALLAH (for the letter C) wearing a kippah wishes readers a "Shabbat shalom," while a LATKE offers a "CHHAPPY CHHANUKAH" with the drawing of the letter L also serving as a menorah. A Kosher Hot Dog (for the letter K), which looks a bit like a superhero, notes it's "ALL BEEF! ALL THE TIME."

There are several Israeli foods featured: the picture of "F is for FALAFEL" features three cute, smiling falafel balls. The eggs in SHAKSHUKA (for the letter S) shout out the name of the dish. A T-shaped grinder turns sesame seeds into TAHINI for the letter T. Some foods are referred to by a name I've never heard before: "Y is for YAPRAH," with the two yaprah shown noting they are also known as grape leaves. Did you know a QUAJADO (for the letter Q) is a

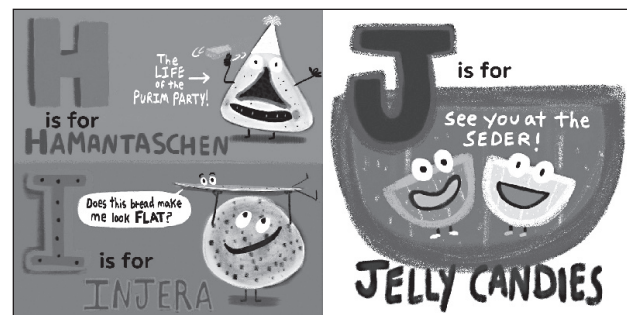
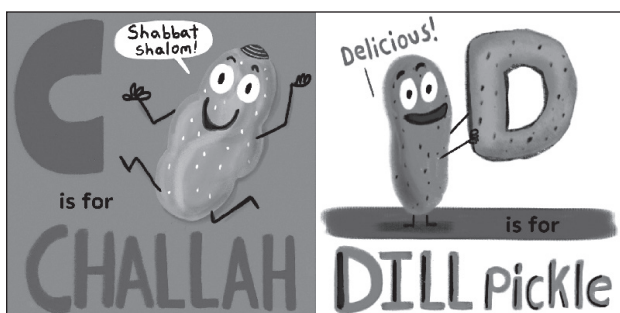
type of frittata made from eggs, cheese and vegetables? Well, I didn't until I looked up this Jewish dish that is said to have been prepared in Spain before the Spanish Inquisition. (I found that information online when I looked up the origin of the dish.) The word ZHUG (for the letter Z) sounded familiar, but I wouldn't have been able to define it as Yemeni hot sauce without the smiling, dancing bowl filled with zhug letting me know.

Although I wouldn't mind writing about every letter of the alphabet offered since every drawing is adorable, I think you get the idea. Know anyone with a young child? This would make a great gift for them. If the parents are foodies, then they'll love it, too. Actually, if you are

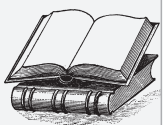
looking for a fun book for a foodie friend, this would be a perfectly silly gift for them, too. Yes, I know they don't need to learn the alphabet, but the pictures are such fun, they bear repeat viewing, something that parents ("read me that again!") know all about.



Above, below and at right: Pages from "P is for Pastrami: The ABCs of Jewish Food" by Alan Silberberg. (Photos used with the permission of Penguin/Random House)



Rabbi Rachel Esserman's previous book reviews can be found on *The Reporter's* website under "Features" at: www.thereporter-group.org/book-reviews.



Rochester Federation and the SCN announce partnership to bolster community safety and security

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton is part of the security cooperative with the Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester on the security needs to the local community.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester and the Secure Community Network, the official safety and security organization for the Jewish community in North America, announced a partnership to incorporate Rochester's community security program

into SCN's national network, ensuring enhanced safety and security for all those who participate in synagogues, day schools, camps, museums, service organizations and other centers of Jewish life in and around the Rochester area.

The security initiative is made possible by Federations, SCN, local donors, community partners and national donors through the LiveSecure Campaign, which will yield \$130 million of new funding invested in security

programs—the largest philanthropic initiative in history to establish a standards-based collective security framework for every Jewish community across North America.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester joins the growing network of Jewish Federations and communities that have partnered with SCN to launch or build upon existing communitywide security programs designed around an “all threats, all hazards” approach to preparedness, safety, security

and resiliency. Each program is connected to SCN's national operations, providing direct access to SCN's National Jewish Security Operations Command Center and Duty Desk, as well as best practice security resources and support related to policies, procedures, physical security, facility assessments, training, and incident response. SCN and the Federation are currently in the process of hiring a security professional to direct this program.

Mark Henderson, the Federation's security director since 2019, will be maintaining his role, now with SCN, as the regional security advisor in Rochester. Henderson brings a wealth of experience from his 33-year career with the Brighton Police Department, where he held the position of police chief for nine years. Throughout his career, Henderson has managed various high-profile security incidents, such as shootings and hate crimes, including the handling of bomb threats at the Louis S. Wolk Jewish Community Center of Greater Rochester in 2017.

Chabad's Women's League offers shalach manot service

The Women's League for Chabad is currently accepting orders for its annual shalach manot service in which Binghamton residents can send packages of food and holiday greetings to local friends and acquaintances on Purim, which will be celebrated this year on Sunday, March 24. Anyone who has not received a complete information packet and order form, or who is seeking additional details, should call the Chabad Center at 607-797-0015.

“It's Purim made easy,” says Ilene Pin-

sker, project chairwoman. “It's a stress-free, very reasonably priced way to fulfill the mitzvah of mishloach manot, sending gifts of food on Purim, and a wonderful way to show your friendship and care. We do all the work for you and your friends get fabulous packages from you!”

For individuals who want to say Happy Purim to their friends outside of the community, Women's League offers Purim greeting cards that can be sent anywhere in the continental U.S.A. for a charge of \$4.

All orders must be received no later than Sunday, March 10.

The Women's League is also in need of volunteers to assist in assembling the packages and in their delivery on Purim day. Anyone able to help with the project should contact the Chabad office.

BD Sisterhood to tour BU Art Museum on March 13

The Beth David Sisterhood will offer a tour of the Binghamton University Art Museum on Wednesday, March 13, at 1:30 pm. The event is open to non-Sisterhood members of the community, both male and female. The tour will feature works of Jewish interest that relate in some way to the Jewish experience or which were created by Jewish artists. Some of the better-known Jewish artists whose works will be included are Marc Chagall, Moshe Castel and Max Liebermann.

The tour will be held in the Lindsay Room (room 179) in the Fine Arts Building on the Binghamton University Campus. The location of the building is listed as FA on campus maps, which are available online. Seating will

be available. There is a paid parking garage for guests that charges \$1 an hour located next to the Fine Arts Building. Visitors are encouraged to park on the upper level of the parking garage to avoid having to climb stairs.

Anyone wishing to come early or stay later to further enjoy the museum may do so. The museum is open from noon-4 pm. Special accommodations, if needed, can be made if the museum is notified in advance by calling 607-777-3968.

Additional information may be obtained by leaving a message on the Beth David office answering machine at 607-722-1793 or by e-mailing bethdavid@stny.rr.com. Messages are typically retrieved before noon on Tuesdays.

AdultContinued from page 3

for both adults and children, including poetry, novels, non-fiction and biography. She is a professor of literature and creative writing at Binghamton University, where she has won the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. Williams and her husband, Gil, have been

selling used books online for more than 25 years. She is an amateur actor and directs Temple Concord's Purim spiel each year, as well as organizing the synagogue's annual November Artisan Marketplace. She is a member of Binghamton's Shakespeare Dramatic Club.

BDContinued from page 3

literally could not hold back my tears... These soldiers protecting us are so young, they're like babies. We are so grateful for all of them. And they were so grateful that we were there. I kept hugging those kids. And they were smiling all over the place. They were so happy!”

“This was a whirlwind trip for the Tubermans,” said organizers of the luncheon. “In the short time they were in Israel, they were greeted by heads of the World Zionist Organization, visited army bases, cooked and shared meals with soldiers, went to hospitals and met with families of hostages, as well as bereaved parents who had lost their children on October 7. They also visited Kibbutz Beeri, Kibbutz Kfar Azza and the site of the Nova festival massacres.”

“I can't get over how inspiring this trip was,” said Tuberman. “There is great camaraderie and a sense of purpose among all the volunteers, and the Israelis all are so appreciative of people coming from outside to help in whatever way they can. It's the first mission trip we've ever taken, though I've wanted to do this for many

years. The most important takeaway for me is the sense of gratitude that soldiers and everyone we met felt because we had come to Israel. We need to support Israel in any way that we can right now and always! Show them support from America, with your words and your heart. They need your *chizuk*, they need your strength! Show them your love!”

Beth David's Luncheon Speaker Series takes place the second Saturday of the month. Since the 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.

Tea and Talk

Chabad of Binghamton, with co-sponsorship from the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, holds Tea and Talk programs, a bi-weekly hour-long gathering for local Jewish seniors who are looking for “a meaningful conversation,” from 11 am-noon, in Chabad's atrium on the second floor. The program is open to all and free of charge.

Upcoming dates are:

- ◆ March 7
- ◆ March 21
- ◆ April 4
- ◆ April 18
- ◆ May 2
- ◆ May 16

To RSVP or for more information, visit www.JewishBU.com/Tea or call 607-797-0015.

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Tetzaveh, Exodus 27:20-30:10

The priestly garments

RABBI ZEV SILBER, BETH DAVID SYNAGOGUE

There is a common phrase – “clothing makes the man.” This week’s *parasha* is primarily about clothing, specifically the special garments that the *Kohanim*, the priests, wore, and the additional garments that the high priest wore. Moses is commanded to fashion holy garments for them “for honor, dignity, splendor and beauty.”

Clothing has two purposes. One is protection from the elements. Animals do not wear clothes because they are naturally protected. But humans do not have fur or other natural protection, so we wear clothing. The other purpose is that clothing seems to demonstrate how we feel about ourselves, getting a good feeling or making a statement. We don’t feel very good when we wear dirty, unattractive or poorly fitted clothes. We feel comfortable in casual clothing; we feel dignified in formal wear.

It seems that the purpose of the clothes of the *Kohen* is to make a statement. As Ibn Ezra says, no one else in Israel wears clothing like these. They are special and they set the *Kohanim* apart. They add dignity to the service and to the person so that everyone will realize that the *Kohanim* are special.

Generally, the Torah does not describe how people looked or what they wore. We never have a description of Moses and there is no reason to assume anything about his clothing. The few times in the book of Bereshit when clothing is mentioned, it doesn’t seem like they are mentioned in a complimentary way. Just the opposite is true. We get negative association with the clothing described.

Jacob dresses in his brother’s best clothes in order to trick his father. The coat of many colors that Jacob gave

to Joseph caused his brothers to be jealous of him, and is subsequently dipped into goat’s blood in order to deceive Jacob into thinking that Joseph was attacked by a wild animal. Tamar takes off her “widow garments” and wears the clothes of a temple prostitute, covering her face with a veil in order to hide her identity from Judah. Joseph, when seduced by Potifar’s wife, drops his clothes and leaves them in her hands when he flees, but she uses them to bring about Joseph’s incarceration. Finally, when Joseph interprets Pharaoh’s dreams and is appointed second-in-command over Egypt, he is dressed in special robes of royalty, which carries the insignia of office, but he is able to use them to hide his identity from his brothers.

And the very first appearance of clothing, after man and See “Garments” on page 11

Congregational Notes

Temple Israel

Orientation: Conservative
Rabbi: Micah Friedman
Address: 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: 607-723-7461 and 607-231-3746
Office hours: Mon.-Thurs., 8:30 am-3:30 pm; Fri., 8 am-3 pm
E-mail: office@templeisraelvestal.org
Website: www.templeisraelvestal.org

Service schedule: Tues., 5:30 pm; Fri., 5:30 pm; Sat., 9:30 am
On Fridays and Tuesdays at 5:30 pm, services will be led by Rabbi Micah Friedman via Zoom and in-person (masks are required for unvaccinated participants).

On Saturday, February 24, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required for unvaccinated participants). The Torah portion is Exodus 27:20-30:10 and the haftarah is Ezekiel 43:10-27. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 6:30 pm.

On Saturday, March 2, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required for unvaccinated participants). The Torah portion is Exodus 30:11-34:35 and the haftarah is I Kings 18:1-39. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 6:45 pm.

There will be an Executive Board meeting on Tuesday, March 5, at 7 pm.

Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive
Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815
Phone: 334-2691
E-mail: fertigi@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.

Temple Beth El of Oneonta

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Cantor: David Green
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.

Temple Brith Sholom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated
Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045
Phone: 607-756-7181
President: Nick Martelli
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 equalitarian congregation serving the greater Cortland community. Congregants span the gamut of observance and services are largely dependent on the service leader. The Friday night siddur is “Likrat Shabbat,” 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.

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.

Beth David Synagogue

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

Rohr Chabad Center

Affiliation: Chabad-Lubavitch
Rabbi Aaron and Rivkah Slonim, Directors
E-mail: aslonim@binghamton.edu
rslonim@chabadofbinghamton.com
Address: 420 Murray Hill Rd., Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: 607-797-0015, Fax: 607-797-0095
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.

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rabbi: TBA
Rabbi Emeritus: Scott L. Glass
Address: 402 North Tioga St. (the corner of Court and Tioga streets), Ithaca, NY 14850-4292
Phone: 607-273-5775
E-mail: president@tbeithaca.org, secretary@tbeithaca.org
Website: www.tbeithaca.org
Presidents: Melanie Kalman and Alexis Siemon
Sisterhood President: Gail Zussman
Director of Education: TBA
Services: Friday 8 pm; Saturday 10 am, unless otherwise announced. Weekday morning minyan 7:30 am (9 am on Sundays and legal holidays).
Religious School/Education: September-May: Classes meet on Sunday, 9 am-12:30 pm and Wednesday afternoons, 3:45-5:45 pm. The teen No’ar program meets twice per month (every other Sunday from 5-7 pm) and is designed with the flexibility to accommodate busy student schedules.
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.

Friday, February 23, light candles before..... 5:27 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, February 24 6:29 pm
Friday, March 1, light candles before..... 5:36 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, March 2 6:38 pm
Friday, March 8, light candles before..... 5:44 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, March 9 6:46 pm

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Rabbi: TBA
Address: 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905
Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm
Phone: 607-723-7355
Fax: 607-723-0785
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, February 23: Vegetarian/dairy Shabbat potluck dinner at 6 pm with candle lighting, Kiddush and the Mourner’s Kaddish. There will not be a full service following the dinner.

Saturday, February 24: At 9 am, Shabbat school; at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom (<http://bit.ly/3XDnVRE>, meeting ID 825 1226 2831 and passcode 743892); and at 10:35 am, Shabbat family class service.

Friday, March 1: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Rachel Esserman, Robin Hazen and Suzanne Holwitt. 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, March 2: At 9 am, Shabbat school; at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom (<http://bit.ly/3XDnVRE>, meeting ID 825 1226 2831 and passcode 743892); and at 10:35 am, Shabbat family class service.

Sunday, March 3: From 10 am-2 pm, Sisterhood Rummage Sale. Shoppers are asked to use the Oak Street entrance. Masks are optional, but encouraged.

Tuesday, March 5: At 10:30 am, Tuesday Morning Book Club. For more information, contact Merri Pell-Preus at 607-222-2875 or merrypell.preus@gmail.com. To join via Zoom, log on to <https://bit.ly/3CXVd9b>, meeting ID 881 6469 4206 and passcode 653272.

Wednesday, March 6: At 7 pm, Sisterhood board meeting in person in the Temple Concord library. Contact Barb Thomas at 607-759-2573 for questions about the meetings. Anyone interested in joining Sisterhood should contact Carol Herz at 607-222-7144.

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.

Congregation Tikun 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.tikunvor.org, E-mail: info@tikunvor.org
Rabbi: Shifrah Tobacman, rabbishifrah@tikunvor.org
Presidents: Sue Merkel and Laurie Willick, presidents_22@tikunvor.org
Education Director/Administrative Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky
Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator: Michael Margolin
Services: All services currently on Zoom. E-mail info@tikunvor.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.

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.

◆ The Yiddish Book Center will hold the virtual program “Traces of a Jewish Artist: The Lost Life and Work of Rahel Szalit” with Kerry Wallach on Thursday, May 30, from 7-8 pm. The program will look at the work of graphic artist, illustrator, painter and cartoonist Rahel Szalit (1888-1942) who was among the best-known Jewish women artists in Weimar Berlin, but who died in the Holocaust. For more information or to register, visit https://support.yiddishbookcenter.org/site/Ticketing?view=Tickets&id=10601&s_src=Event&s_subsrc=szalit.

◆ The Jewish Book Council will hold the virtual conversation “The Heart of the Matter: Two Rabbis Discuss Love in the Jewish Tradition” on Thursday, May 16, from 6-7 pm. Rabbi Sharon Brous and Rabbi Shai Held will discuss “love as the core of the Jewish tradition: how to show up for each other in times of joy and struggle, and how we can use Judaism as a lens to help us approach life’s great matters.” For more information or to register, visit www.jewishbookcouncil.org/events/the-heart-of-the-matter-two-rabbis-discuss-love-in-the-jewish-tradition.

◆ Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History is holding the virtual lecture series “Jews and the University: Antisemitism, Admissions, Academic Freedom.” Lectures include “Campus Free Speech After October 7” with Sigal Ben-Porath on Tuesday, February 27, at noon; and “Antisemitism in Elite College Admission: A Brief History” on Thursday, March 14, at 4 pm. For more information or to register, visit <https://theweitzman.org/events/jews-and-the-university-antisemitism-admissions-academic-freedom>.

◆ The Yiddish Book Center will hold the hybrid 2024 Melinda Rosenblatt Lecture, “Rohkl Auerbach’s Warsaw Testament” with Samuel Kassow on Sunday, May 5, from 2-3 pm. Kassow will deliver his speech to coincide with the publication of his translation of Rohkl Auerbach’s Warsaw Testament (White Goat Press). For more information or to register, visit https://support.yiddishbookcenter.org/site/Ticketing?view=Tickets&id=10582&s_src=Event&s_subsrc=2024MRLSK.

◆ The Jewish Grandparents Network will hold the virtual series “Why the Jews? Understanding Antisemitism” on Wednesdays, March 27 and April 3, from 7-8 pm. The fee to attend both sessions is \$50 per family. Educator and historian Brendan Murphy will offer a multimedia introduction to the roots of antisemitism from the development of Christian anti-Judaism to modern antisemitism. The program is appropriate for children over the age of 15. For more information or to register, visit https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/_ZiAUM3YoRdj7wweEdZnKA.

◆ The Jewish Telegraphic Agency is offering “The Nightingale of Iran,” a documentary podcast series by Danielle Dardashti and Galeet Dardashti. The sisters look at the mystery of why their family had to leave Iran. For more information or to listen to the podcast, visit www.nightingaleofiran.com/.

◆ Uri L’Tzedek will hold the virtual program “Bearing Witness and the Cost of Indifference” with Rabba Sara Hurwitz on Wednesday, March 13, at noon. The cost to attend is \$18. The class will look at whether “we have a religious obligation to witness tragedy, and if so, what is our obligation once we see and know?” For information or to register, visit https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_KAuctAjwTfu6iil6I9HKtg#/registration.

◆ Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life is offering four different scholarships for college students. For more information on the scholarships and how to apply, visit www.hillel.org/scholarships-2/.

◆ The American Jewish University will hold its classes in the series “Planning for Peace of Mind”: “Embracing End-of-Life Conversations” on Tuesday, April 16, from 3-3:45 pm (<https://open.aju.edu/event/planning-for-peace-of-mind-embracing-end-of-life-conversations-2/>); “Feel Empowered with Advance Directives” on Wednesday, May 22, from 3-3:45 pm (<https://open.aju.edu/event/planning-for-peace-of-mind-feel-empowered-with-advance-directives/>); and “The Mitzvah of Crafting Your Ethical Will” on Tuesday, June 4, from 3:35 pm (<https://open.aju.edu/event/planning-for-peace-of-mind-the-mitzvah-of-crafting-your-ethical-will-2/>).

◆ Roundtable at the 92nd Street Y will hold the virtual class “The Russian-Ukrainian War and the Jews of Ukraine” on Thursday, March 14, from 6-7:20 pm. The cost to attend is \$44. The class will offer “an examination of the history of Jews in Ukraine, their influence on the nation over the last millennium, and how Ukrainian Jews have contributed to Ukrainian military, social and cultural resistance.” For more information or to register, visit <https://roundtable.org/live-courses/history-of-the-russian-ukrainian-war-and-the-jews-of-ukraine>.

◆ The Orthodox Union announced that its “OU Guide to Passover 2024/5784” is available. The cost is \$3.50 per copy plus shipping and handling. The maximum order is 25 copies. For more information or to order the guide, visit www.ou.org/passover/guide/.

◆ JIMENA is offering a “A Sephardi and Mizrahi Education Toolkit” that offers “a compendium of recommendations, strategies, and resources to help educators learn about Sephardi and Mizrahi heritage and shape inclusive school environments.” For more information or access the material, visit <https://sepharditoolkit.org/>.

◆ Lilith magazine and Savor: A Sephardic Music and Food Experience will hold the virtual event “Savor Sundays: Purim” on Sunday, March 10, from 1-2:30 pm. The cost to attend is \$18. It will explore Sephardic holiday traditions and food from Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Iraq and more through music, cooking demonstrations and conversations. For more information or to register, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/savor-sundays-purim-tickets-830503216477?aff=oddtcreator>.

◆ Kosher-ADHD will hold the Purim Workshop “Thriving with Children on Purim” on Sunday, March 10, at 9 am. The workshop is designed to help families navigate the challenges of Purim when dealing with children who have ADHD. For more information or to register, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/kosher-adhd-pu->

rim-workshop-thriving-with-children-on-purim-tickets-826817311837?aff=erellivmlt.

◆ Uri L’Tzedek will hold the virtual program “Public Shaming (The Deposing of Rabban Gamliel)” with Rabbanit Bracha Jaffe on Tuesday, March 5, at 11 am. The cost to attend is \$18. For more information or to register, visit https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_FUtd9ZWAR4OmjdlaZR81ow#/registration.

◆ The Qesher Book Club will offer two discussions in March: “Stranger in the Desert – A Family Story” on Tuesday, March 12, at 4 pm, with Jordan Salama discussing his quest to learn about his family history (www.qesher.com/stranger-in-the-desert/); and “Across So Many Seas” on Tuesday, March 26, at 4 pm, with Ruth Behar discussing her novel about four girls from different generations of a Jewish family (www.qesher.com/across-so-many-seas/).

◆ Hadassah Magazine will hold a book discussion of “Henrietta Szold’s Zionist Dream” by Francine Klagsbrun on Thursday, March 21, at 7 pm. Hadassah Magazine Executive Editor Lisa Hostein interviews Klagsbrun about her new biography. For more information or to register, visit www.hadassahmagazine.org/2024/01/07/magazine-discussion-henrietta-szold-s-zionist-dream/,

◆ Roundtable at the 92nd Street Y will hold the five-session virtual class “Jewish American Writers of the 1960s” on Thursdays, March 14-April 11, from 11 am-12:15 pm. The cost to attend is \$220. The class will look at works by Isaac Bashevis Singer, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Arthur Miller and Philip Roth. For more information or to register, visit <https://roundtable.org/live-courses/literature/jewish-american-writers-of-the-1960s>.

◆ The Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History will hold the virtual talk “Unpacking the Link Between Conspiracies and Antisemitism” on Monday, March 4, at 7 pm. Dr. Jacob S. Lewis will present “exploratory experimental research designed to tease out the causal pathways between conspiracy beliefs and antisemitism.” For more information or to register, visit <https://theweitzman.org/events/conspiracies-and-antisemitism/>.

For additional resources, see previous issues of *The Reporter* on its website, www.thereportergroup.org/jewish-online-resources.

Garments Continued from page 10

woman ate from the Tree of Knowledge and they made coverings from fig leaves, was a clear sign of the first great betrayal, the first breaking of a divine commandment.

Perhaps in the view of the Torah, clothing is not such a positive concept. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for clothing – *b’gadim*, comes from the same root as the word *boged*, which means “traitor,” “betrayal.” Clothing is used to hide the true self, to appear as something that we are not, to fool others into believing something about us that is not true.

Those who dress like kings may have the heart of slaves, fearful, resentful and vindictive. Those who wear the robes of holy people may be corrupt. How one dresses on the outside is absolutely no indication of what is truly going on inside.

So why does the Torah give these special clothes to Aaron and his sons?

The answer may be found in Nachmanides’ second interpretation of the phrase “for honor and beauty,” that these clothes were designed and worn by the *Kohen* during his service to God in order to give honor and glory to God. Not to make the *Kohen* stand out, rather to dignify God in the eyes of the people.

From a Torah perspective, the clothing that people wear should not define the characteristics of the person nor should we look at them at defining what the person is all about. The prophets did not wear special garb. The great rabbis did not adorn themselves with costly uniforms. How did we know who was a prophet? How do we know who is a great rabbi? What defined the leader was his charisma and ability to motivate others. We understand the greatness of an individual when we experience his compassion, his caring, his devotion and his scholarship. When we are not encumbered and deceived by the outer appearances, we can clearly see and experience what is going on inside the heart and the mind.

The *Kohen* need not be a great scholar. He need not have the attributes of leadership. The clothes that he wears

when performing the service are mandated in order to hide his true personality so that we will become motivated to honor, respect and glorify God. The *Kohen* is only our representative, not necessarily our leader. The clothes he wears are intended to give glory to God. Perhaps that is why a *Kohen* cannot be appointed; rather, the office is inherited. No one can choose to become a *Kohen* in order to teach us that the dignity and honor of the service is God’s alone.

We don’t necessarily look up to the *Kohen*. Through the *Kohen* we look up to God. And through their actions and compassion, we know who are our true leaders, teachers and prophets. The man makes the position; the clothes do not make the man.

Moving any time soon?

Whether you’re moving across town or across the country, please let *The Reporter* know so you can stay up to date on community news! E-mail treporter@aol.com with “Reporter Address change” in the subject line, or call 607-724-2360, ext. 254, to let *The Reporter* know about your new address.



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Ad Deadline: February 29

THE REPORTER

Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton



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AJC poll: Three-quarters of U.S. Jews feel less safe after Oct. 7

By Andrew Bernard

(JNS) – More than three-quarters of U.S. Jews report feeling less safe as Jews in the United States after Hamas' October 7 terrorist attacks in southern Israel, according to the American Jewish Committee's 2023 survey of antisemitism in America.

The AJC began polling American Jews on October 5, but after October 7, the nonprofit opted to pause its questionnaire. It relaunched on October 17, conducting surveys until November 21.

The AJC released the survey, which it has conducted of Jews since 2019, and of Jews and the general public in parallel since 2020. It released the latest survey of 1,528 Jewish American adults on February 13.

Of those surveyed after October 7, a whopping 98 percent self-reported being aware of the attack. Among those who were aware, some 20 percent feel a "great deal" less safe as Jews because of the attack. Nearly a quarter (23 percent) feel a "fair amount" less safe and 34 percent "a little" less safe, according to the survey.

The poll found sharp increases in the number of Jews who said that in the past year, they have felt less safe or changed their behavior out of fear of Jew-hatred. Nearly

two-thirds of American Jews (63 percent) told the AJC that the status of Jews in the United States is less secure than it was a year ago, compared with just 31 percent of Jews who reported that two years prior. (In 2022, 41 percent said the country was less secure for Jews than the prior year.)

Nearly half of American Jews (46 percent) said they have either avoided identifying themselves as Jews in online posts or by their clothing choices or have forgone places or events out of concern for their safety or comfort as Jews. That's up from 38 percent who said in 2022 that they did at least one of those things.

A quarter of American Jews also reported having been the target of an antisemitic remark, vandalism or physical attack in the past year, which is "virtually identical" to AJC's findings from 2022, the nonprofit said.

Ted Deutch, AJC's CEO, told JNS in a statement that the new findings should alarm all Americans, as well as spur action from Congress and the White House. "No one should be fearful of being targeted or harassed for being Jewish when walking down the street, going to school or being at work," Deutch stated. "We've seen that

antisemitism has been increasing – even before the horrific October 7 Hamas terrorist attack against Israel. This isn't a new problem, but the explosion of antisemitism since October 7 demands that we take collective action now."

The AJC also released a companion poll that it conducted from October 17-24. In the second poll, the AJC surveyed the general public of American adults about their opinions on antisemitism. Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of respondents reported believing that Jew-hatred is a problem in the United States today, compared with 60 percent who held that view in 2021. That's in sharp contrast to the 93 percent of American Jews who believe that antisemitism is a problem in the country today. More than half of U.S. Jews (53 percent) said antisemitism today is a "very serious" issue.

Like other recent polling, the AJC general public survey also suggests that younger American adults, aged 18-29, have concerning attitudes toward Jews and antisemitism. Americans under 30 are less likely (65 percent) than older Americans (75 percent) to consider antisemitism to be a problem today. Those aged 18-29 are

also considerably less likely (40 percent) than over-30s (60 percent) to believe that antisemitism in the United States has increased in the past five years. Younger Jews are both likelier than their older peers to say that they have experienced antisemitism in the past year (36 percent to 22 percent) and to believe that antisemitism is not a "very serious" problem in the United States (44 percent to 55 percent).

The AJC found differences in which American Jews reported being victims of antisemitism. Those who self-identified as Orthodox were more than twice as likely (39 percent) to have been the target of antisemitism in the past year than those who are secular (19 percent). Those who identified with other Jewish denominations reported being the target of Jew-hatred at a rate of 26 percent.

Deutch said that the findings show the need to implement the Biden administration's national strategy to combat antisemitism. "Now that we have this road map, we need to be sure to use it," he stated. "The strategy can no longer be seen as a recommendation, but rather a requirement that will help protect the American Jewish community."

National Library of Israel preserving "collective memory" of Oct. 7

By Gil Tanenbaum

(JNS) – The National Library of Israel has embarked on a project to collect and archive all published materials about the October 7 massacre, both the good and the bad.

While scholars and the curious public explore the new library building in Jerusalem and its Israel, Judaica, Humanities, Islam and Gershom Scholem collections, Chaim Neria is quietly gathering more recent – and sometimes painful – printed and digital items associated with the murder by Hamas of some 1,200 people.

"The significance of this project to Israel and the Jewish people globally stems from its role in preserving and documenting our history, culture and the diverse experiences of Jewish communities. It's a crucial endeavor for understanding our collective identity and ensuring that future generations have access to our history and heritage," said Neria, curator of the library's Haim and Hanna Solomon Judaica Collection, of the Bearing Witness project.

"By contributing to this work, I feel connected to a larger purpose that tran-

sends my individual role, contributing to the preservation of our collective memory," Neria added.

As is almost everyone in Israel, he is personally connected to an October 7 victim. His 31-year-old cousin, David Meir, a member of Israel Defense Forces' elite General Staff Reconnaissance (Sayeret Matkal) unit, was killed trying to rescue Israelis at Kibbutz Be'eri on October 7, where Hamas terrorists killed 130 Israelis.

This makes the project personal for Neria, which could be sensed as he presented examples of the myriad types of materials the project has collected to date. Four months since that dark day, he is visibly uncomfortable even looking directly at items involving any form of graphically violent content.

"Such materials require a careful approach to ensure they are handled sensitively and ethically," he said. "But sometimes one little story captures your imagination."

The content of these materials is not relevant to the project, Neria noted. They could be news bulletins, advertisements for events, special prayers or religious materials written in the wake of the attack, or political statements of some sort. From a single synagogue located in a remote corner of the world to a major non-Jewish organization or government body – if someone printed any material about what happened on October 7, 2023, the National Library wants it.

The only criterion for adding something to the National Library's collection is that the item has to do with October 7. And the goal is to save everything.

Such documentation was collected after the Holocaust, but no one thought to collect all such materials while it was happening, and certainly not going back to before the Nazis took power in Germany, Neria explained.

Indeed, the October 7 attack has been compared by many to the Holocaust because, like the Nazis, Hamas intended to murder as many Jews as possible.

Much of this material is available in digital formats. In fact, most of what Neria has collected was found online, from websites and social media outlets. Unfortunately, much of the negative content, including videos posted by the terrorists, was deleted before it could be copied and saved.

"Different materials, printed materials, at least survived for some time," he explained. "So even if you don't act immediately, you can act later, go and collect. Today, if it's online anywhere, social media, any kind,



Dr. Chaim Neria, a curator at the National Library of Israel, is archiving material associated with Hamas's October 7 attack. (Photo by Elad Zagman/TPS)

websites, you can get it. But if it's already down..."

Neria spoke about how the terrorists themselves provided much of the evidence of their atrocities. This is because they wore body cameras and filmed their attacks. They even live-streamed some of what they did on social media. "We know that the terrorists started by going live on Facebook," he explained. "Then they realized that it wasn't good for their image or whatever, so they... tried to take off these materials. It was actually citizens that helped the [Israel military] and the government, via initiatives that came from them as citizens, and they were using many high-tech companies. First to download the videos, then using all kinds of algorithms to understand where each video was taken, identify faces, helping the IDF to get information. And maybe in the future, it will be information that can be used in legal procedures."

More than 100 organizations around the world are now actively searching for materials to provide to the project, such as the Shoah Foundation of the University of Southern California, which is also collecting the testimonies of Israeli survivors of Hamas's October 7 massacres. The foundation is best known for its videos recording the testimonies of more than 3,000 Holocaust survivors and its association with Academy Award-winning director Steven Spielberg.

"We will be the house not just for the oral testimonies, but for all other materials. So eventually we will create here an archive that will include oral testimonies, videos, printed materials, prayers, pictures" and more, said Neria.

The library estimates the project will last at least five years, a time frame which Neria said "reflects the depth and breadth of the work required to comprehensively document and analyze the relevant events and their impact on Israel and Jewish communities globally."

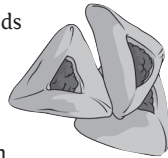
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