

Film Fest to show “Tel Aviv on Fire”

By Reporter staff

The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of the Israeli comedy “Tel Aviv on Fire” in March. The film is in Hebrew with English subtitles. The showing is sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton in conjunction with the Ithaca Area United Jewish Community. Registration is required prior to Thursday, March 9, which is when the link will be sent out. Dora E. Polachek, an associate professor of Romance languages and literatures, will lead a virtual discussion on Sunday, March 12, at 5:30 pm. Registration is free, but donations are welcome. To register, visit www.jfgeb.org.

“Tel Aviv on Fire” tells the story of Salam, a 30-year-old Palestinian living in Jerusalem, who works as an intern at a

Palestinian soap opera, “Tel Aviv on Fire,” which is produced in Ramallah. When Salam passes through an Israeli checkpoint everyday, he meets Assi, the commander of the checkpoint, whose wife is a fan of the show. Assi gives Salam ideas for the show, which help Salam get a promotion to screenwriter. But when Assi and the show’s financial backers have different ideas about how the show should end, Salam must come up with an idea to save his career.

“After we screened this film, I knew right away that I wanted to share this little gem with others,” said Stephen Lisman, member of the Film Fest Committee. “It comprises an array of elements that tickled my funny bone, while also stirring my anger, a sometimes wild, but clever

combination of political satire, absurdity, quirky characters, drama, breakdowns of stereotypes... all in the context of the tension of the daily lives of Israelis and Palestinians.”

On Datebook: San Francisco Chronicle, David Lewis called the film “a delightfully satiric take on the Israeli-Palestinian quagmire, [that] revolves around a third-rate soap opera and a border checkpoint where creativity – and helpings of hummus – trump ethnic conflict. It’s a well-acted movie with both a funny bone and a sense of humanity.” Jordan Mintzer noted in The Hollywood Reporter that “this modest little charmer presents a lighter side of the long and ongoing crisis.” On www.indiewire.com/, David Ehrlich wrote, “‘Tel Aviv on



Salam (Kais Nashif) in “Tel Aviv on Fire.” (Photo courtesy of Cohen Media Group)

Fire’ spins a pleasant yarn about someone who’s trying to tell a credible story of an ongoing conflict without picking sides, only to find himself stuck between propaganda and naïvete.”

TBE Ithaca to hold annual “Evening of Jewish Storytelling, Poetry and Music” virtually on Feb. 26

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca will hold its 24th annual “Evening of Jewish Storytelling, Poetry and Music” virtually on Sunday, February 26, at 5:30 pm. To register in advance by Sunday, February 26, at 3 pm, visit <https://tinyurl.com/5n8pfttm>. For more information or to sign up to do a presentation, contact the temple at 273-5775 or visit www.tbeithaca.org.

“The annual ‘Evening of Jewish Storytelling, Poetry and Music’ is a

celebration of life, community and the arts,” said organizers of the event. “We’re celebrating 24 years of original stories, traditional tales, jokes, folk and contemporary poetry, and dynamic live music from around the world.”

Organizers added, “This event has become extremely popular over the years, drawing participants together for an intimate and cozy evening; a real reminder of times past. Although we are

not able to be physically together this year, we will create an opportunity to enjoy the warmth of our community and richness of our heritage. With a virtual presentation, people who live in other

locales can easily attend. There will be a mix of original poetry, personal stories and Yiddish songs. Presenters represent a cross section of our community. The event is family-friendly.”

JCC to celebrate Purim with carnival on March 5

The Jewish Community Center of Binghamton will hold its annual Purim Carnival on Sunday, March 5, from 1-3:30 pm. The cost is \$5 per child, \$1 per adult, with a \$20 maximum per family. The entire community is welcome and encouraged to attend. All proceeds will benefit the JCC Youth Department.

There will be a number of activities geared toward children, including carnival games, inflatable play areas, arts and crafts, and face painting. All games earn children points that can be traded in at the prize table. Light snacks will be

available for purchase during the event.

“On Purim, children dress up and celebrate by giving gifts and *tzedakah* (charity),” said organizers of the event. “Everyone, young and old, are encouraged to come dressed as their favorite Purim character or in any costume of their choice. The JCC Kids Connection staff, who run the event, love to create different themed costumes each year.”

For more information about the Purim Carnival, JCC Youth Programming, or the JCC, contact the JCC office at 724-2417.



Part of the crowd at the 2019 JCC Purim Carnival.

Hillel at Binghamton plans suicide prevention program

Hillel at Binghamton will hold the program “Gila’s Way: Mental Health and Suicide Awareness” on Monday, March 13, at 7 pm, in the Old Union Hall on the Binghamton University campus. Rabbi Shalom Hammer will be the speaker. The entire community is invited to attend. There is no cost and reservations are not needed.

On December 5, 2019, Hammer’s 18-year-old daughter died by suicide. He will share her story. His presentation will also address mental health awareness and the importance of removing stigmas associated with it, as well as some of the warning signs people should be aware of.

Hillel Academy celebrated Tu B’Shevat



Students from Hillel Academy of Broome County and Hebrew Day School of Syracuse celebrated Tu B’Shevat on February 6 at Schaefer’s Gardens. (See page 11 for more photos.)

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Survey: Half of Americans don't know how many Jews died in Shoah

By JNS staff

(JNS) – Only 53 percent of Americans over the age of 18 answered correctly that approximately six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust, according to an American

Jewish Committee public opinion survey released ahead of International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27.

“Lacking knowledge can open pathways to trivialization and denial of the Holocaust that can also contribute

to rising antisemitism,” said AJC CEO Ted Deutch. “As we mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, 78 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, it is imperative that See “Survey” on page 11

Opinion

George Santos' “Jew-ish” performative politics

By Bill Simons

In the newly elected 118th Congress, George Santos is the most famous freshman member of the U.S. House of Representatives. The 34-year-old Republican congressman has generated enormous publicity in print and electronic media. During his 2022 campaign, Santos revealed an impressive list of accomplishments and a compelling background: bachelor's degree from Baruch College, M.B.A. at New York University, Wall Street phenom at Goldman Sachs and Citigroup, shared ownership in a family real-estate company and founder of the Friends of Pets charity. Employed at the World Trade Center, his mother suffered – and ultimately died – from the toxins released during the 9/11 attack. Santos revealed, “I'm very much gay” and identified as a “proud American Jew.”

During the election campaign, Santos elaborated about his Jewish lineage. On his mother's side, the family name was “Zabrovsky,” common to East European Jews. His maternal grandparents escaped the Nazi genocide by immigrating to Brazil. In a campaign video, Santos employed footage of Nazi concentration camps while again asserting “my grandparents survived the Holocaust.”

Post-election investigative reporting proved that Santos' resume and biography were primarily false – outright lies. He did not graduate from Baruch, NYU or any other college or university. Nor was he employed by Wall Street titans Goldman Sachs and Citigroup. He was not part of a family real estate consortium. Santos' mother never worked at the World Trade Center and did not die from toxins released on 9/11. Since Santos was previously married to a woman, Uadla, bisexual might more accurately describe his sexual orientation than gay. Moreover, the grandparents and mother of the Catholic Santos were not Jewish. His claim to be a “proud American Jew” is without validity.

The Renaissance philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli counseled political leaders, “There is nothing more important than appearing to be religious.” It is unlikely that Santos ever read Machiavelli, but he did understand that there were a significant number of Jewish voters in New York's affluent Third Congressional District, which runs from Long Island's North Shore to the neighborhoods of northeastern Queens. Unlike businessmen, ballplayers and actors, amongst others, who changed their names to

hide their Jewish identities, Santos followed the route of Gentile boxers of the 1930s, who adopted Jewish ring names to hype the gate, and attorney Jimmy McGill, who morphed into Saul Goodman, the fictional anti-hero of the drama “Better Call Saul,” to increase his client base. The latter explained his transition from run-of-the-mill lawyer Jimmy McGill to the hard-charging attorney Saul Goodman: “My real name's McGill. The Jew thing I just do for the homeboys. They all want a pipe-hitting member of the tribe, so to speak.” The opportunistic Santos, like McGill, understood that, despite antisemitism, there are times and situations where a Jewish identity is an advantage. In 2022, New York's Third Congressional District was one of those.

Having lost his previous election for the same post in 2020, Santos knew the demographics of the Third Congressional District. The district is about 11 percent Jewish, percentages that go even higher in tabulating activists and contributors. It was a swing district within striking distance for either party, particularly since the incumbent was not seeking re-election. Three Jews were vying for the Democratic nomination, the designation ultimately garnered by Robert Zimmerman. Jews, largely liberal, overwhelmingly vote Democratic, but a Jewish Republican would find some adherents, particularly since gubernatorial candidate Lee Zeldin, a Jew, headed the 2022 New York State Republican ticket and might have coattails.

Although running behind Zeldin in the Third Congressional District, Santos defeated Zimmerman (53.8 percent, 145,824 votes, to 46.2 percent, 125,404). At a time where perceptions of surging crime were rampant, Santos' tough stance on law-and-order was the decisive factor in the election outcome.

When the story broke, post-election, about Santos' rampant falsehoods, outrage was bipartisan, roiling both sides of the aisle. Republicans were embarrassed to have him as a standard bearer, and Democrats called for Santos' resignation. It is particularly instructive to look at the Jewish response to the Santos scandal.

Jonathan Zimmerman, a University of Pennsylvania historian, minimized the significance of Santos' canards about Jewish identity: “Santos' fibs about his religious background aren't nearly as serious as his other lies. As a

Jew, I think they're more like a joke.” Most Jews, however, expressed a very different view. Santos, confronted by the truth, tried to shade his claims about Jewish identity: “I never claimed to be Jewish. I am Catholic. Because I learned my maternal family had a Jewish background, I said I was ‘Jew-ish.’” Reform Rabbi Deborah Bravo retorted sharply, “You don't just get to be Jewish and there is no such thing as being ‘Jew-ish.’”

Many Jews expressed moral indignation that Santos exploited the Shoah for political advantage. New York State Senator Anna Kaplan demanded that Santos apologize “for his reprehensible lies about his nonexistent Jewish faith and his complete false connection to the Holocaust.” Jews remain prominent in calls for Santos' removal from the House, whether by resignation or expulsion.

Given the weight of evidence, Santos grudgingly admits to misrepresentations: “I'm not going to make excuses for this, but a lot of people overstate in their resumes, or twist a little bit... I'm not saying I'm not guilty of that.” But he remains adamant that he did not break the law: “I'm not a criminal who defrauded the entire country and made up this fictional character and ran for Congress.” With on-going investigations by New York state and federal authorities over potential campaign and finance violations, Santos may face civil and/or criminal prosecution. Santos' transgressions run the gamut. A story has surfaced that he fleeced a disabled veteran out of funds that would have provided life-saving surgery for the veteran's dog. Former roommates claim that he stole an expensive Burberry scarf and Armani shirt from them. Moreover, Santos allegedly wrote fraudulent checks in Brazil.

Should Santos' House seat be vacated, two Jewish politicians – one Democrat, former opponent Robert Zimmerman, and one Republican, Nassau County legislator Mazi Melesa Pilip – are among those considering running for the office.

There is a Yiddish word for the Santos' phenomena: *shanda*.

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

In My Own Words

Judaic and ethnic studies

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Although specific groups in the United States may have always had an interest in ethnic studies, most formal programs only began to flourish during the late 1960s, particularly in colleges and universities. The Judaic Studies Department at Binghamton University began in 1973 as the Judaic Studies Program with only three professors. It was not until 1991 that it became a formal department. According to the history at www.binghamton.edu/judaic-studies/history/index.html, this occurred “despite opposition from faculty in some departments.”

Imagine if there were limits put on what could be discussed in Judaic studies classes. What if professors were told to talk about Jewish history without mentioning antisemitism or discuss World War II and not mention the Holocaust? So, why are some politicians demanding that American Blacks talk about Black history without mentioning slavery or Jim Crow laws or lynching or the many other ways racism has affected and still affects their lives? Think this is absurd? Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has blocked the use of a new advanced placement course on African American

studies based on the Florida Stop WOKE Act.

For those unfamiliar with the act, the basic idea is simple: it's illegal to make anyone feel guilty about acts performed by others of their kind (nationality, race, ethnicity, sex, etc.). In terms of Jewish history, that would mean not talking about the Holocaust, pogroms, the Inquisition, expulsion of Jews from countries, etc. because it might make the people of those countries feel uncomfortable and, even worse, make them feel bad about their country's past. What we are supposed to do in the United States is act as if slavery and racism are not part of United States history, or that being a slave wasn't really that bad, or other farcical ideas that are just as ridiculous.

I don't understand the desire to whitewash history. While I don't feel personally responsible for slavery, as an proud American citizen, I do take collective responsibility for what our country did in the past. That includes finding ways to ameliorate the continuing results of those actions. What occurred in the past still affects people today – both socially and physically. Researchers are documenting the continuing physical effects on those whose parents,

grandparents and great-grandparents lived through the Holocaust. How can the same not be true for those whose ancestors experienced slavery? And that doesn't include the experience of seeing those who enslaved your ancestors being celebrated. While they are not exactly the same, I wouldn't want to see my neighbor flying a Nazi flag. I can't help but wonder how someone whose ancestors experienced slavery feels seeing the Confederate flag flying on government buildings.

No one person can correct every wrong the world faces. But to say we can't talk about racism is the same as saying we can't talk about antisemitism. To say that we should forget about slavery is the same as saying we should forget about the Holocaust. Jews cherish memory – talking about events that happened “in those days at this time” is part of our liturgy. We can't solve all the world's problems, but we are commanded by the ancient rabbis to do our part. It is not up to us to finish the task, but we are required to perform that work as best we can. As Hillel once said, “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”



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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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Tea and Talk in March, April

Chabad of Binghamton, with co-sponsorship from the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, holds Tea and Talk programs, a monthly hour-long gathering for local Jewish seniors who are looking for “a meaningful conversation,” from 11 am-noon, in Chabad’s atrium lounge.

Upcoming dates are:

- ◆ March 16
- ◆ March 30
- ◆ April 20

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

Beth David Sisterhood to hold Passover Community Workshop

The Beth David Sisterhood will hold its annual Passover Community Workshop on Wednesday, March 15, at 7 pm, at the synagogue. The workshop is open to everyone in the Jewish community, men and women, whether or not they are affiliated with Beth David Sisterhood or Beth David Synagogue.

Rabbi Zev Silber, spiritual leader of Beth David, will answer questions concerning Passover. Although it is preferable if questions are submitted in advance in case they require research, he will do his best to provide answers to all queries. To send questions, e-mail him at rabbisilber@stny.rr.com.

He will also give suggestions as to how to make the seder and Passover a “more meaningful and positive experience,”

and offer tips on preparing the kitchen for Passover and how to find elusive or new Passover products.

Attendees will be encouraged to share favorite Passover recipes, tips and shortcuts, which have made cleaning or cooking easier, and other useful information.

The evening will conclude with Silber discussing the *Ma Nishtana* (the Four Questions). He will discuss their origins and purpose, and give insights into why they are included in the seder and the haggadah.

“Please remember that we collect food for CHOW at every meeting, so start cleaning out your pantry early and bring your *chametzdik* donations to our meeting,” organizers said.

BD members prepared food for luncheon

On February 11, Beth David Synagogue held its monthly after services free luncheon, which is always open to the entire Jewish community. The speaker was Professor Bill Simons, whose topic was “Jews, Dodgers, and Brooklyn: Before the Diaspora.” Judy Silber, Stacey Silber and Cathy Velenchik prepared baseball-themed food for the luncheon.



Judy Silber and Cathy Velenchik had fun while they prepared food for the Beth David February luncheon.



Stacey Silber mixed popcorn and caramel to make pareve “Cracker Jack” for the baseball-themed luncheon.



Judy Silber chopped onions for the Beth David February luncheon.



Cathy Velenchik checked instructions for making brownies for the luncheon.

New in Books

Kalaniot Books to release three new children’s books

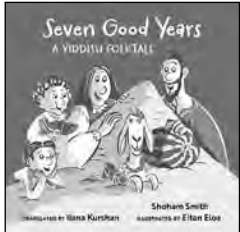
Kalaniot Books announced that it will release three new children’s picture books for spring 2023:

◆ “An Invitation to Passover” written by Rabbi Kerry Olitzky and Deborah Bodin Cohen, and illustrated by Mariia Kolker. When Hannah’s extended family isn’t able to join her for their traditional Passover seder, she invites her diverse friends to experience the holiday with her. Each guest brings a food gift that illustrates the themes of freedom, hope and thanks. An endnote tells the Passover story and a glossary defines vocabulary. (This book is available now.)



“An Invitation to Passover” (Photos used with permission of Kalaniot Press)

◆ “Seven Good Years: A Yiddish Folktale” written by Shoham Smith, illustrated by Eitan Eloa and translated by Ilana Kurshan. Based on the Yiddish tale by I. L. Peretz, it tells the story of a magician who comes to a family’s



“Seven Good Years: A Yiddish Folktale”



“Ella KVELLEphant and the Search for Bubbe’s Yiddish Treasure”

rescue, but learns the true meaning of contentment. (This book will be published in April.)

◆ “Ella KVELLEphant and the Search for Bubbe’s Yiddish Treasure” written and illustrated by Jen Kostman. It tells the story of Ella, a young elephant who searches for the Yiddish language her grandmother loves. Ella and her family travel to the beach, where Ella discovers Yiddish around her and teaches readers the Yiddish words she finds. (This book will be published in April.)



Looking for this issue’s “Jewish Resources”? Visit www.thereportergroup.org/streams/miscellaneous-features/miscellaneous-features/tag/80309? to find out what’s happening online.”



DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
March 10-23.....	March 1
March 24-April 6.....	March 15
April 7-20.....	March 29
April 21-May 4.....	April 10 (early)

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

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HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

TC to hold "Megillah Murder Mysteries" on March 4

Temple Concord will hold an adult Purim celebration, "Megillah Murder Mysteries," on Saturday, March 4, at 5:30 pm and 7 pm. The event includes a Greek-style vegetarian dinner, which will be held between the two mystery

sessions. The cost of the dinner is \$20 and reservations should be made by Wednesday, March 1.

The first session at 5:30 pm culminates with dinner and the second session follows the 7 pm dinner. Each person

will be assigned a character based on the Book of Esther. Then the group will gather to determine who actually killed Haman. Parts will be assigned for each session (maximum 20, minimum six).

To make a reservation, contact the of-

fice at 723-7355 or templeconcordaa@gmail.com. "Let us know which session you'd like to attend, and we'll send you a confirmation e-mail with more details," organizers said. "Happy Purim and happy sleuthing!"

TC to take part in hybrid "Purim Musings on the Megillah" on March 7

Temple Concord will take part in "Purim Musings on the Megillah" on Tuesday, March 7, at 7:30 pm, at the synagogue or on Zoom. Excerpts of the megillah in Hebrew and English will be interspersed with short teachings from seven small congregation rabbis to bring out the facets of the story.

Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell will teach about the 1957 Purim debut of the opera "Esther" written by Langston Hughes and Jan Meyerowitz.

"You are invited to experience an evening of study and the Book of Esther for the night of Purim," said organizers of the event. "You

can join with others in the Temple Concord building or take part in the proceedings on Zoom. 'Musings on the Megillah' was created to build on the use of virtual gatherings between different congregations. The rabbis' offerings will include teaching about serious fun, secrets and hiding, the power and urgen-

cy of now, and the theme of overturning and artistry in the megillah."

To register to view the program on Zoom, visit <https://urj.tfaforms.net/901?id=7014u000001RUbg>. The Union for Reform Judaism is sponsoring the program.

Online resources for Purim

By Reporter staff

◆ Maven will hold "Purim Mixology" on Tuesday, March 7, from 9-10 pm. Naomi Levy, award-winning bartender and founder of Maccabee Bar, will teach how "to perfectly shake a cocktail, make

a special syrup and prepare two cocktails that will take your Purim party to the next level." No previous experience is required; the ingredient list for the cocktails will be sent one week before the class begins. For more information

or to register, visit <https://maven.aju.edu/events-classes/program/aju-presents-purim-mixology>.

◆ The Blue Dove Foundation offers resources for Purim for those facing mental health issues. To access the resources, visit https://thebluedovefoundation.org/resource_category/purim/.

◆ Jewish Grandparents Network offers an interactive Purim Discovery Kit designed especially for grandparents and grandchildren (ages 3-8) to use together in person or at a distance. The downloadable kit includes background and rituals for grandparents, the Purim story, a Purim shpiel with script and puppet template, games and way to explore Jewish values. For more information or to download the kit, visit <https://jewishgrandparentsnetwork.org/purim-discovery-kit/>.

◆ Numerous websites offer information about Purim: www.chabad.org/holidays/purim/article_cdo/aid/645309/jewish/What-Is-Purim.htm; <https://reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/purim>; www.ou.org/holidays/category/purim/; www.rabbinicalassembly.org/jewish-law/holidays/purim; www.myjewishlearning.com/article/purim-101/; www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/purim; and www.jewfaq.org/purim.

◆ The website www.kosher.com offers recipes for Purim not only from the Ashkenazic worlds, but from Iraq, Syria, Italy, Morocco, Greece and more. To see the recipes, visit <https://www.kosher.com/lifestyle/purim-foods-from-around-the-world-easy-recipes-1946>.

◆ Aish.com also offers Purim recipes, including ones from Russia, Rhodes, Bulgaria, Libya and more. The recipes can be found at https://aish.com/purim_foods_around_the_world/.

Wedding and engagement photos wanted

The Reporter is looking for photos of couples who became engaged or married in 2022 for the annual Wedding, Prom and Party Guide issue (coming March 10).

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 28. 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.



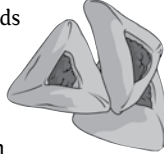
JFS Accepting Purim Donations



Jewish Family Service will once again be collecting funds to fulfill the Purim mitzvah of *matanot l'evyonim* (gifts for the poor). These donations will be distributed to more than 16 local Jewish families who are experiencing extreme financial difficulties. In order to assure a timely distribution of these gifts, please be sure your contribution reaches our offices by February 28, 2023.

Thank you for your support of your neighbors in need.

Please mail or bring your donation to Jewish Family Service, 500 Clubhouse Road, Vestal, NY 13850. Contact Rose Shea, JFS Director, at 724-2332, ext. 339, with any questions.



PASSOVER 2023 Greetings

March 24 (Deadline: March 16) Personal Greetings and Health Care Greetings

Passover is traditionally a time for sharing with family, friends and strangers. While your seder table may not be large enough to fit all these people, you can share the warmth of this holiday with the entire local Jewish community by placing a Passover greeting in *The Reporter*. You may choose from the designs, messages and sizes shown here - more are available. You may also choose your own message, as long as it fits into the space of the greeting you select. (Custom designs available upon request.) The price of the small greeting is \$20 (styles I & J), the medium one is \$38 (styles G & H), and the next sizes are not shown. The next actual size is 3.22" x 2.958" and is \$57. The largest size is 3.22" x 3.95" and is \$76. To ensure that your greeting is published, simply fill out the form below and choose a design that you would like to accompany your greeting, or contact Kathy Brown at 607-724-2360, ext. 244; or e-mail advertising@thereporter.org. Checks can be made payable to *The Reporter* and sent to: The Reporter, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

Wishing you and your family peace, health and happiness this Pesach



Your Name(s)

Style G • \$38 Actual Size: 3.22" x 1.975"



Passover Blessings

Your Name(s)

Style H • \$38 Actual Size: 3.22" x 1.975"

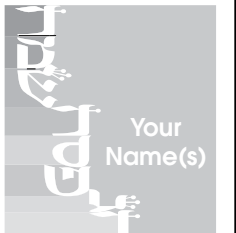
PASSOVER 2023 Greetings THE REPORTER

March 24 (Deadline: March 16) Personal Greetings and Health Care Greetings

Name _____
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 City _____
 State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____
 Greeting Style _____
 Message _____

 How you would like it signed _____

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Celebrating Jewish Literature



Making Esther come alive

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Biblical commentaries offer us new ways to look at the Torah text. However, there are limitations to using words – even wise words – for those unable to visualize the text as a dramatic story unfolding before their eyes. However, it is not only those who prefer graphics who will benefit from “The Koren Tanakh Graphic Novel: Esther (The Magerman Edition)” with illustrations by Jordan B. Gorfinkel and Yael Nathan (Koren). The work offers something to all readers.

“Esther” has some unusual features that distinguish it from traditional graphic novels. The work contains the complete Hebrew text in large, easy-to-read print, usually opposite the pages with graphics. The drawings illustrate the story, adding details that make it come alive. What is particularly interesting is the English descriptions and dialogue used with the graphics are a direct translation of the Hebrew. Nothing is added; it is the drawings that add depth.

For example, after Achashverosh decides he needs a new wife, the text explains what happens to his potential brides when they are shown to the king: “She would enter in the evening... and... in the morning she would return to the royal harem... passing into the charge of Shaashgaz, the king’s eunuch, keeper of the concubines.” These words are divided over four panels, which gives readers

time to pause and think about what really happened to the women. Esther’s Jewishness is shown in gestures, as are examples of her kindness. Other scenes – such as when Esther is first brought before Achashverosh – allow the illustrators to show the king’s expression and those of his courtiers: they gasp open mouthed at Esther’s beauty and grace. It also allows them to fill in some gaps in the text, for example, showing how Mordechai kept in touch with Esther by silently passing messages to a palace servant.

The illustrations also offer commentary on the text. Haman is portrayed as having a Hitler mustache. Other references compare his deeds to the Nazis, one example being when he is convincing Achashverosh that the Jews are a danger to the kingdom. The caricatures of the Jews that appear in his descriptions could have been taken directly from Nazi propaganda. When noting that Haman is an Agagite, the illustrators offer a glimpse of the biblical battle between his ancestors and the Israelites; Moses is shown holding his staff in the air, being aided by Aaron and Hur who hold his arms skyward.

There are some anachronisms, although they do not detract from the story. The six-pointed star of David is used to represent Jews, something that was not true in that time period. There’s also a beautiful drawing of Es-

ther that makes her look like a superhero: her headdress flies behind her like a cape and her Jewish star necklace is enlarged to serve as a symbol on her chest. At the end of the work, when talking about how Purim continues to be celebrated, the last few pages move into contemporary times to portray a celebration, including a woman dressed as Esther for the holiday.

There are some interesting components in the English translation of “Esther” that show the book is meant for adults. Rather than referring to the men in the harem as ministers as do many translations, they are called eunuchs, which is probably more accurate. The text uses the word virgins, rather than maidens, for those who might be the king’s new wife; that translation also makes sense since that would have been a requirement for a potential new bride for the king.

The drawings in “Esther” are colorful and beautiful, and do an excellent job portraying the emotions of the characters. The Hebrew text is easy to follow for those looking to use the book during synagogue readings. To make Haman’s name stand out, it appears in red print in both Hebrew and English. “Esther” is not only entertaining, but offers a new way to explore the biblical text. Lovers of graphic novels will also appreciate this beautiful and meaningful work.



Pages from the “The Koren Tanakh Graphic Novel: Esther (The Magerman Edition).” (Photos used with the permission of Koren Publishers Jerusalem Ltd.)

WHAT OBJECTS CAN TEACH US ABOUT THE PAST

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

When discussing what might be learned about the past from found objects, our first reaction might be to think of archeological sites. Scholars study the remains of former cultures to learn how people behaved and to hypothesize what life might have been like during that time period. Richard Rabinowitz focuses on a different era in his non-fiction work “Objects of Love and Regret” (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press): after his mother, Sarah, died in 2015 in her 100th year, he wanted to better understand her life and did so using common household items as a starting point.

Rabinowitz has a poetic approach to viewing the past. In his introduction, he writes, “Our lives are a dance with history. Most of us dance first as family, later as a couple, or as a town or nation. Often we follow the choreography of others, sometimes we add a step or two of our own. History – the experience of those who came before us – is within us and around us, inescapable. Remembered, recorded or not, forgotten, retrieved or not, we rent rooms in History’s house for a time, and then we are gone.” Rabinowitz uses ordinary items – a bottle opener, a cigar box, a perfume bottle, scissors, etc. – to spark reflections about his mother, in addition to writing about the life of his father, Dave, and both sets of his grandparents. But it is his mother who is the true focus of his book. Working with his older sister, Beverly, who has a more vivid memory of the early years of her life, he comes to better understand his mother and his parents’ relationship.

The author is relatively clear-eyed about his relatives’ flaws, although he is more forgiving of his mother’s. He notes that his grandfather on his paternal side was so disliked that Dave didn’t invite him to his wedding. In fact, Rabinowitz only learned his grandfather was alive when someone informed Dave of his father’s final illness. On the maternal side, Sarah was extremely close to her own mother, Shenka, as shown in the first chapter when she buys her mother a bottle opener – one that has remained in the family – in order to make her life easier. Rabinowitz explores the use of the time-saving device during a period when there were few. He also posits that although his mother

was glad to work to help her parents with their finances, she also felt guilty about not being able to help her mother prepare for Shabbat dinner.

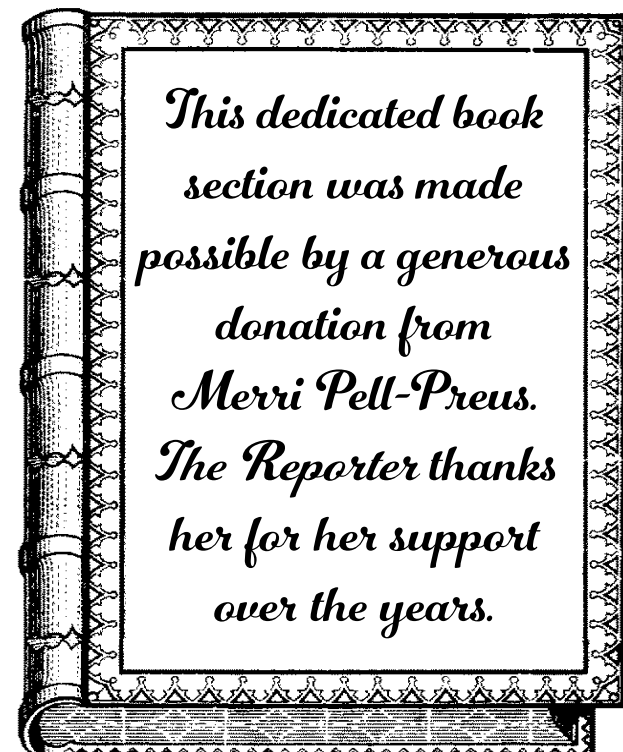
His parents’ marriage was far from perfect: Sarah sought to have a peaceful household. Dave, on the other hand, was volatile, partly because of the difficulty he had making a living. Dave did love Sarah’s family and the acceptance he found there must have helped the two become a couple. Both came from families that struggled to make ends meet, something that continued once Dave and Sarah were married. Dave was a not completely successful salesman, although he did finally own a jewelry store. Even though the store was successful for a period of time, economics played a role in making his business no longer viable. Outside financial and social forces – fraud, red lining, etc. – caused them to move from the home they loved – now no longer in a safe neighborhood – and created additional problems for the sales business Dave developed after the store closed.

Rabinowitz notes that his parents identified deeply as Jewish. Shabbat and holidays were important, but, even when they belonged to a synagogue, religion itself did not play a major role in their lives. The true center of Sarah’s Judaism was in her kitchen. This included carefully cleaning for Passover and preparing all the traditional foods. Although she tried to fit into America, there was one exception: Sarah’s cooking reflected that of her mother and their Eastern European past. For all her love of peace in her household, she also saw Jewish-style discussions – what others might call arguing – as important. Listening patiently was considered a sign of not caring: jumping in to argue a point was.

Sarah’s character became clearer to Rabinowitz as he also reviewed the discussions he had with her when she was alive. Looking back on an interview he did with her when she was living in Florida, he notes his mother always “avoided consolatory phrases. She never said things like ‘it will all work out,’ ‘it was all for the best,’ ‘you’ll be fine,’ or ‘it was meant to happen.’ As I learned more about her early life, I noticed that she always conveyed a painful, unresolved undercurrent to her stories. Anti-semitic pogroms, the stigma of being a newcomer [to the U.S.],

unemployment, helplessness in the face of illness – all of these were always close to the surface. When she complained that young people today have such a hard time making ends meet, the strain of her own household in East New York in 1937 was obviously on her mind. Even stories that should have been tinged with triumph could have a sad ending.”

“Objects of Love and Regret” works best when offering a view of Jewish American life that no longer exists. Sarah is not exactly an every woman, but much of what she experienced would have been familiar to other Jews living in the greater New York City area of her time. It also serves as a way for readers – particularly young readers who never knew this generation – to understand the choices they made, and how those choices still affect their children and grandchildren.





Celebrating Jewish Literature



Archeological, historical and literary views of the Bible

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Scholarly works about the Bible can approach the text in a variety of ways. Some are interested in when the work, as we know it, came into being. Others are fascinated by the various strands they see in the text and attribute them to different authors. Two recent works offer different approaches. In “The Origins of Judaism: An Archeological-Historical Reappraisal” (Yale University Press), Yonatan Adler is not interested in the origin of the text, but rather when the actual practice of Judaism began. Ronald L. Eisenberg, on the other hand, does focus on the text, but offers a different slant: “In the Beginning: Parallels between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Accounts” (KTAV Publishing House) compares religious/civil legal writings from other Near Eastern cultures of the time to see what influence they might have had on the biblical text.

Adler, an associate professor in the department of Land of Israel Studies and Archeology at Ariel University in Israel, is interested in the practice of Judaism, rather than the text that describes those practices. He notes that “the aim of the present book is to investigate when and how the ancestors of today’s Jews first came to know about the regulations of the Torah, to regard these rules as authoritative law, and to put these laws into actual practice. My interest here is to investigate when and why adherence to the Torah became the way of life of the Jewish population at large: the farmers and craftsmen, the men, the women, and the children.” What he does not explore is when these laws were gathered and written down: rather it’s the practice of rituals and laws that interests him. He calls his work a “social history, focused on the behavior of a society at large.”

“The Origins of Judaism” discusses a variety of Jewish practices, including dietary restrictions, ritual purity laws, rulings against figurative art and the development of the synagogue as an institution, among others. Although Adler mentions what the biblical text says, he explores when Judaism developed as a religion through the use of archeological evidence in order to determine when specific behaviors became widespread. The author does note that a lack of evidence doesn’t mean that a specific behavior wasn’t practiced; it just means it’s impossible to claim it was accepted behavior. Adler also believes that there was never universal adherence to any of these practices. What he is looking for is widespread practice, meaning a large section of the population followed specific behaviors.

To determine when Jewish practice as mentioned in the Bible developed, Adler begins in the first century C.E., when there is historical evidence of these practices, and then looks back in time to find the earliest archeological evidence of widespread adherence to the practice. The author notes that written texts cannot necessarily be trusted: when writing about the past, writers were attempting to offer plausible descriptions, ones their readers will accept. That does not mean they are accurate ones. Adler also believes that later explanations of phenomena does not mean those explanations were the original reason for a practice. Additional meanings could – and probably

were – added later. He sees this as particularly true of rabbinic writings, such as the Mishnah and the Talmud. The author notes that one should not use the rabbinic discussions to define what practices took place before the rise of the rabbinic class.

The detailed evidence Adler uncovers makes it difficult to summarize his findings, but they include pinpointing the beginning of several practices. For example, he suggested the biblical dietary restrictions were in place in the early first century B.C.E. and possibly in the second century B.C.E. However, there exists no physical evidence prior to that of the restrictions. He sees something similar when looking for evidence of the practice of ritual purity: no evidence exists suggesting those rules were practiced before the second century B.C.E. When discussing pictorial art on coins, Adler notes that during the fourth century B.C.E., Judean coins featured images of humans and animals. It was only during the late second century B.C.E. that those depictions lessened.

The discussion of the Sabbath is particularly interesting: Adler notes that until the second century B.C.E., there is no evidence that the seven-day week was observed by anyone, let alone there being a specific day of rest. In fact, he believes a universal observance of a Sabbath most likely did not take place during biblical or rabbinic times. He writes, “While the authors of certain late biblical texts clearly advocated observance of Sabbath prohibitions (weekly or otherwise), their own writings together with anecdotal evidence from Elephantine and Babylonia suggest that the masses were not heeding their call. In fact, there is little reason to suspect that the general populace was even aware that anybody was sounding such a call in the first place.”

Adler offers a general summary of his findings that suggests that Judaism as we think of it may have emerged during the second century B.C.E. during the time of the Hasmoneans. It’s impossible in a short review to do justice to the details of his theory, but he posits that Hasmonean leadership “legitimized their sponsorship of the Pentateuch as the authoritative law... by fashioning themselves as the ‘restorers’ of an ancient system of divine law.” In simpler terms, revolutionaries pretended they were not doing something new, but rather restoring something from the communal past that had been ignored.

“The Origins of Judaism” is fascinating, even though Adler’s writing is dry and to the point. He tries to be extremely careful in suggesting what occurred, basing his thoughts on the archeological evidence that is available, rather than what authors who wrote centuries later believed. Adler’s work belongs on the shelves of anyone interested in the history and development of early Judaism.

While Adler’s work focuses on archeological evidence and ritual practice, Eisenberg explores the connections between the Bible and other written texts from the ancient Near East. He writes, “There are numerous examples of parallels between the Bible and pre-biblical ancient Near Eastern narratives, laws, and customs. Did the Bible

consciously ‘borrow’ from these ancient Near Eastern traditions? Or were these traditions simply part of a shared culture of the Fertile Crescent, which stretched from Egypt to Mesopotamia, one the Israelites could understand?” Eisenberg recognizes that parallels between the texts do not necessarily mean that there was a direct connection/influence. However, he believes looking at these parallels can give one a greater appreciation of the Hebrew Bible.

In addition to exploring the biblical text (with an emphasis on the books of Genesis and Exodus), Eisenberg writes about religious practice, theology and law. He sees parallels in the creation story found in the biblical text and the Babylonian creation myth in “Enuma Elish.” In both creation stories, there are divisions between higher and lower spheres. Both see humans as being the final step of creation, although there are differences in why humans were created. The biblical text portrays humans as being “the culmination of Creation. Human beings were created to fill the earth and rule over it.” In the Babylonian tale, “the great gods, weary of the task of furnishing their own sustenance, initially force the lesser gods to labor for them, but the lesser gods rebel and humankind are created to relieve them of their labors.”

Some parts of the Bible do seem to have direct parallels in other groups’ cultural practices. For example, the Israelites were not the only ones to have portable shrines. There is an Egyptian bas-relief that shows an object similar to the Tabernacle described in the Exodus. Eisenberg notes that the Hebrew word *keren*, which is used to describe Moses’ appearance after receiving the Tablets of Law, has been translated as “a ray of light” or “a horn.” The author wonders if horns might actually be the correct translation since “in Mesopotamia and Canaan, horns were associated with the gods, who were often portrayed with horned helmets... There also was a connection between ‘radiant’ and ‘horned’ in the Sumerian and Akkadian prayers to the moon, which was portrayed as shining and crescent-shaped like the horns of an ox.”

The similarities between the laws in each culture were the most interesting section, particularly the discussion on how the biblical law of an “eye for eye” may have actually been a cultural advancement. Babylonian law offered a variation that allowed punishment for someone’s family. For example, if a man killed a second man’s son, the second man was allowed to kill the son of the first man. Babylonian law also featured differing punishments based on a person’s social status and the class to which an injured person belonged. The biblical text treats all equally under the law.

Readers of “In the Beginning” may argue about whether Eisenberg takes his parallels too far, but the author admits that the texts did not always influence each other. Still, it’s interesting to compare the stories and laws of the different cultures. The prose is generally easy to read and is filled with quotes from a variety of ancient sources. Those interested in literature and history of ancient times should find much of interest.

Family, friends and other connections

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

The phrase “a woman’s novel” is considered an insult in many literary circles, as if the deeds of daily life can be easily dismissed and are of interest only to women. For me, a woman’s novel encompasses a wide range of basic and important human behaviors that underline our society: home, family and friendship, to name just a few. Two wonderful recent novels – “The Matchmaker’s Gift” by Lynda Cohen Loigman (St. Martin’s Press) and “The Dressmakers of Prospect Heights” by Kitty Zeldis (Harper) – qualify as women’s novels: they offer insights into the connections and disconnections that form families and communities without which society would disappear.

“The Matchmaker’s Gift” tells the story of two women: Sara Glikman and Sara’s granddaughter, Abby. Sara emigrated to the United States with her parents and siblings during the early part of the 20th century. Even as a child, she has the gift of knowing when two people belong together. Unfortunately, in the Lower East Side at that time, it’s considered inappropriate for women, particularly unmarried women, to be matchmakers. The male matchmakers see her as a threat to their livelihood and band together to try to prevent her from making matches. But nothing can stop her gift, even when it brings her heartache.

Abby’s story begins after her grandmother’s death in 1994. A successful divorce lawyer, she chose that profession because of her parents’ difficult marriage and divorce. Sara leaves Abby journals that contain the details of all the matches she made in her professional life. Sara always felt that Abby had the makings of a matchmaker, if only she opened herself to the powers she has, the powers she’s hidden deep inside in order to protect herself from the

sorrow of her parents’ split.

The novel also offers some excellent wisdom and advice. To someone who wants to wait until he is finished with a year of mourning for his mother before meeting someone, Sara notes, “The heart of a mourner is like a woman’s womb... it can expand to hold whatever is asked of it. The heart is big enough to hold both grief and love,” but that love may not wait forever. Abby remembers Sara’s advice on the way to know that you have met your own match: “‘When you weep,’ her grandmother said, ‘the one you are meant for tastes the salt of your tears.’” Literally or figuratively, that is a good sign.

“The Matchmaker’s Gift” is a sweet, warm, delightful novel. Those words – which have also been used disparagingly – are meant as great compliments. Loigman’s work will touch readers’ hearts and make them eager to share this novel with their friends.

While Loigman’s work centers on two characters. “The Dressmakers of Prospect Heights” offers the story of three women: Beatrice, who moves from New Orleans to Brooklyn in 1924; her teenage ward Alice, with whom she starts a dress shop; and the seemingly unrelated Catherine, a newly married woman who longs for a child. Of course, there is a connection between Beatrice and Catherine, which drives the plot and affects the course of all three lives. However, of greatest interest to Jewish readers will be Beatrice’s early life.

Beatrice is a Russian Jew who was to travel to the United States with her mother after the horrific death of her father. Unfortunately, her mother died before they left. Even worse, the relative who was supposed to help her also passed away before she arrives in New Orleans. As a

young woman, she finds work as a nanny and even meets a man who loves her. However, her life spirals out of her control and she finds herself looking for work in the less pleasant part of town. Beatrice’s choices – which were limited – return to haunt her in Brooklyn.

The result of Beatrice’s time in Russia affects her even in the United States. She notes that “back in Russia, it had been dangerous to live openly as a Jew. Even the memory of her father... could bring it all back. Still, in America – and especially in New York – being a Jew seemed less perilous. Yet, that fear, which had seeped into her at a formative time, was still there, sediment that remained.” Even Alice doesn’t realize that Beatrice is Jewish.

Most readers will guess the connection between Beatrice and Catherine, the result of which also affects Alice, an orphan whom Beatrice has tried to protect. But the differing desires of the women create conflict and set the plot into motion. Beatrice comes to see their choices as an integral part of human nature: “Maybe everyone clung to the precarious place she had carved out for herself, clung to it tightly, resisting – and resenting – anyone who could be seen as a threat. The human heart was resilient as rubber, durable as stone, and breakable as the most delicate, handblown glass.”

At first, “The Dressmakers of Prospect Heights” seemed of less interest than “The Matchmaker’s Gift,” but then its plot took some unexpected turns and the novel also turned into a heart-warming story. All the characters – even the less admirable ones – want to feel safe and loved in their small corner of the world. The relationships between the three main characters help readers understand their trials and joys, and makes this work worth reading.



Celebrating Jewish Literature



Exploring emotions and the past

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

◆ *Making jGirls voices heard*

Adults often look back at their youth through rose-colored glasses. But life is not always easy for the teenagers, something that becomes clear in the poems, stories, essays and artwork by Jewish teens that appear in “Salt and Honey: Jewish Teens on Feminism, Creativity, and Tradition” edited by Elizabeth Mandel with jGirls Magazine (Behrman House/jGirls Magazine.) The preface notes that the teens, ages 13-19, are “self-identifying Jewish girls, young women, and nonbinary teens.” The magazine jGirl gave them the space to explore different aspects of their lives, including difficult subjects and joyous ones. The work is titled “Salt and Honey” because the writers “embrace the salt and the honey, the sting and the sweetness” of their lives.

It’s difficult to pick out specific works to talk about because they all offer something of interest, but a few that stood out include:

◆ “Seeing Beyond” by Leah Bogatie that speaks about the author’s disabled sister, whose example taught her to acknowledge everyone’s humanity.

◆ The painful and moving “Dad” by Denae (whose last name was not given), who is unable to make peace with her feelings about her father and forgive him his sins.

◆ Audrey Honig’s two wonderful poems, “Almost Thir-

teen” and “Seventeen,” about antisemitism and the joys of being Jewish.

◆ An excellent and beautiful prayer/poem “21st Century Amidah” by Jamie Klinger.

◆ Elena Eisenstadt’s “My Jewish-Themed Bat Mitzvah” that captures the true meaning of the ceremony.

◆ The moving “My Version of Practicing Judaism,” in which Lauren Alexander writes of how her illness impacts her Jewish practice.

◆ Lily Pazner’s poem “You Have Not Walked the Same Streets As Me,” which talks about how women are not safe from harm, even when simply walking down the street.

◆ A class visit to the Holocaust Museum that caused Samara Haynes to ponder the reactions of her classmates in “What You See.”

◆ Sarah Young’s poem “Kyke Dyke,” where she writes of discovering other Jewish lesbians who helped reaffirm her identity.

Although “Salt and Honey” was written by teens for teens, this work will also resonate with adults. Parents of teenagers may want to read this book and discuss it with them in order to better understand how they view the world. The work includes artist statement’s about the drawings and paintings featured, and questions to stimulate discussion. jGirls is to be commended for publishing the thoughts of these Jewish teens.

◆ *Poetry by Merle Feld*

Many readers first encounter Merle Feld’s poetry in Reform and Conservative prayer books where it serves as part of the liturgy. However, while her latest book of poetry, “Longing: poems of a life” (Reform Judaism Publishing/CCAR Press), does feature some poems with religious themes, Feld also explores the course of her life from childhood to the difficulties she experiences while aging.

A poem that manages to be personal and political, “Let my people go that we may serve you,” opens the collection and is dedicated to two women rabbis: Sally Priesand and Lisa Feld. She notes the desire women feel to be part of the religious community as full members: “The lust, the longing, to learn,/ to *leyn*, to lead, to *bensch*, to be counted, to be/ called, to locate our wisdom, to inhabit our power/ and our tenderness, to build holy communities,/ fully and richly as ourselves, as Jewish women/ as rabbis – *I won’t let you go till you bless me*” – which echoes the biblical Jacob’s desire to be blessed after wrestling with an angel. This beautiful poem also serves as a thank you to those who struggled over the decades for equal inclusion of women in Judaism.

In many of the poems, Feld writes about her abusive father, who beat her older brother, and how she was unable to protect him, something that still affects her profoundly. She notes that the many sins she’s committed over the decades don’t bother her as much that “single first sin repeated over and over” when her father beat her brother with a leather belt. She mourns not having the courage to try to stop him – something readers know would have been impossible – saying that “instead I lay in my bed, shivering, under cover,/ soaking in the animals cries/ secretly grateful to be/ a small child, a girl, unworthy of notice.”

Feld also writes of her marriage to a rabbi, a far more successful relationship than the one she had with her father. She cries in appreciation at their first “Shabbos together,” telling God that “finally, for the first time in my life,/ you gave me something I wanted./ This man, whose soul is the soul of Ein Gedi.” She writes of their moves, the way they built a life together. She also tells of the loss of her parents and friends. Her poem “His many foreign lands,” which is dedicated “to our teacher, Reb Zalman, 1924-2014,” will make readers wish they had both known him as she did and that he had revealed more about the mysteries of the life he left behind in Europe.

There is also a wonderful, moving poem, “Stay with me a little longer please” whose subtitle “*sitting again with the yahrzeit candle*,” tells of the great sorrow she feels at the loss of her mother. It also acknowledges her mother’s limitations, even as Feld recognizes the gifts her mother gave her: “Our world was a treacherous place and you couldn’t even protect me/ in our tiny apartment. Nevertheless, you loved me, and that/ was enough. It gave me the strength to keep getting up, to go out,/ to go on. It’s one of your mysteries I am still unraveling.”

Those already familiar with Feld’s writings will definitely want to add this collection to their bookshelf. Poetry lovers unfamiliar with her work will want to read a copy to discover the delights and sorrows Feld so skillfully reveals.

In Germany before the war

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Novels that take place in Germany when the Nazis began to control the country, but before World War II and the Holocaust occurred, can offer a different perspective on the feelings of German Jews. Two recent works – “Reunion” by Fred Uhlman (Everyman’s Library) and “The Oppermanns” by Leon Feuchtwanger (McNally Editions) – focus on the relationships between their Jewish characters, who consider themselves fully German, and Christian Germans, who don’t always agree. Both novels are reprints of works by authors who lived in Germany during this time: “Reunion” first appeared in the 1970s, while “The Oppermanns” was published in 1933, years before World War II began in 1939.

“Reunion” is a slender work; the actual text is only a little over 70 pages, although this version includes an introduction by Ali Smith and a chronology of Uhlman’s life, including his escape from Germany. The story is deceptively simple: it tells of two 16-year-old boys – Jewish Hans Schwarz and Christian Count Konradin von Hohenfels – who become best friends. Hans has a very old-fashioned and romantic idea of friendship: before Konradin arrived, there was no one Hans “really admired, for whom I would have been willing to die and who would have understood my demand for complete trust, loyalty and self-sacrifice.” Even 30 years later, the time in which Hans is writing these words, he notes that it still “was no exaggeration and that I would have been ready to die for a friend – almost glad.”

At first, their friendship remains on the school grounds and during their walks home. Hans finally invites Konradin to his home and Han’s parents try to make the young man feel welcome. However, a return invitation is not offered at first, something that bothers Hans. When he is finally invited to Konradin’s house, it’s only when his friend’s parents aren’t home. It soon becomes clear that at least one of Konradin’s parents would prefer him not to be friends with a Jew.

When the Nazis take over the country, Hans notes that his family has lived in Germany for more than 200 years. He and his parents – particularly his father, who fought for Germany in World War I – feel as German as they do Jewish, if not more. Han’s father is anti-Zionist, arguing that “I want to be identified with Germany. I would certainly favour the complete absorption of the Jews by Germans if I could be convinced it would be of lasting profit to Germany, but I have some doubts. It seems to me that the Jews, by not completely integrating themselves, still act as catalysts, enriching and fertilizing the German culture as they have done in the past.”

To reveal more of “Reunion” would spoil the plot, but anyone who knows the events of the 1930s won’t be surprised by much of what occurs. However, there are a few surprises – happy and sad – that made this wonderful story of friendship well worth reading.

While “Reunion” was written years after the events it portrays took place, “The Oppermanns” was written as changes were taking place in Germany. Its almost 370 pages focus on a far wider variety of characters, although most of its main characters are members of the Oppermann family, who own a chain of successful furniture stores in Germany. The family sees itself as an authentic part of German culture. In fact, Gustav Oppermann at first refuses to accept the idea that they are anything but German. Unfortunately, while he sees all the wonderful things that

are authentically German, he also comes to accept that the National Socialists in their brown uniforms are also Germany. That means the German culture he adores may be disappearing.

Gustav’s nephew Berthold also sees himself as German, in fact “German in a more profound sense than most of his companions. His head is full of German music, German words, German thought, German scenery.” Unfortunately, a new teacher at the school sees him as a foreign influence who should be expelled from the school. The school’s principal, who is a friend of Gustav’s, tries to ameliorate the situation, but the new teacher is not interested in the truth, only in National Socialist propaganda, something he wants his other students to accept without question.

Gustav’s other brothers also face problems: Martin, who runs the business, is trying to protect the family’s assets, but people are starting to protest against Jewish-run businesses. Edgar, a professor and doctor who is doing ground-breaking research, is accused of using Germans for experiments, even though he treats these patients without charge. Their brother-in-law, who was not born in Germany, is far more realistic about what is happening and pushes them to better understand how to protect themselves.

These are only a few of the characters who are trying to continue their daily lives while profound changes are occurring in the world and culture around them. Although Feuchtwanger’s writing style is dense and the characters’ See “War” on page 8

The Prague Ghetto and Chelm

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

When writing Jewish fiction, one important consideration is the general tone of the work. Of course, that decision may be partly based on when a particular story or novel was written. Take, for example, Siegfried Kapper’s “Tales of the Prague Ghetto” (Karolinum Press) and Izzy Abrahamson’s “The Village Twins” (Light Publications): The tone of the former book is very dark, while the latter offers humor with a touch of seriousness. This could be attributed to the fact that the latter book appeared more than 150 years after the former.

The reason for the darkness in Kapper’s work is easy to understand: his stories originally appeared in the 1840s, when Jewish life was far more difficult than today. According to the short biography included, Kapper worked for Jewish emancipation and to advance Jewish culture. While his short works (the three stories are only 60 pages combined) are fiction, he based them on the reality of Jewish life in his time.

“Genenda: From Prague Ghetto’s Olden Days” is the opposite of a fairy tale: all the characters live unhappily ever after. At first, though, it seems a wonderful love story: Genenda is the only child of Rabbi Baruch, a cantor who brings joy to others with his singing. When David approaches Rabbi Baruch to learn his music, it seems like the rabbi and his daughter have found someone to make both their lives better. But appearances are deceiving and the result brings harm to all three characters.

“The Strange Guest” is not any cheerier: in it, readers learn the unhappy story of why a man chose to spend his life as caretaker of a cemetery. A supernatural element occurs in “Glowing Coals,” which is another deadly love

story. Its end also condemns the characters to either death or mourning.

Kapper is an excellent writer if one can tolerate the dismal outlook of “Tales of the Prague Ghetto.” The stories are worth reading, though, for the author’s literary skill and his view of Jewish life and folk tales of the 19th century.

While the tone of “Tales of the Prague Ghetto” is grim, the opposite is true of “The Village Twins,” which is a novel about the village of Chelm, where things are often done backwards. Although it seemed odd that a Chelm story – which are usually short – could fill 400 pages of text, Abrahamson manages to pull it off. The novel includes humor, an interesting – if a bit unusual – plot and characters to cheer for.

The village twins Abraham and Adam – the sons of Rebecca and Jacob Schlemiel – are impossible for most people to tell apart, including their parents. They often pretend to be each other in order to play jokes on their family, friends and teachers, although this does create problems as they get older. It’s also the cause of many adventures, including dealings with a deadly gang of robbers. One wonderful character is the town’s rabbi – Rabbi Kibbitz – who has some of the best lines in the book, although they are best appreciated in context. Things do get a bit more serious when it comes to the twins’ love lives – and when the Russian army comes calling looking for soldiers. While the characters border on caricature, they never cross the line.

“The Village Twins” is easy to read: there are few descriptions and a great deal of dialogue. The tangles and twists of the story may not always be completely believable, but they are certainly a great deal of fun.



Celebrating Jewish Literature



Exploring biblical personalities

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Is it really possible to analyze a biblical character? The text itself offers limited information, which means that these analytical works often either focus on a specific aspect of the story or use additional, non-biblical material to supplement and expand what is offered. Two new books explore the text in different ways: Ilana Pardes examines differing views of Ruth—Jewish and non-Jewish—that have occurred over the centuries in “Ruth: A Migrant’s Tale” (Yale University Press), while Samuel J. Levine offers a close look at the biblical story of Joseph in “Was Yosef on the Spectrum? Understanding Joseph Through Torah, Midrash, and Classical Jewish Sources” (Urim Publications) with the help of traditional Jewish texts.

While Pardes notes that the story of Ruth is the most elaborate tale about a woman in the Bible, it still doesn’t offer a great deal of detail about Ruth’s life. The date of the book is under debate: although, according to the Bible, the story takes place in the time of judges, some scholars believe its language suggests it was written down in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Other scholars offer the possibility that earlier variations circulated during the time of King David or before. Pardes notes that the work has been seen as a polemic against those forbidding intermarriage since King David descended from Ruth, who is a Moabite. However, the author doesn’t believe that adequately explains the story: she sees Ruth as an example of *chesed*, something she defines as meaning “kindness, loving kindness, benevolence, generosity, loyalty, duty [or] justice,” something readers should admire and emulate.

Although Pardes focuses on Ruth’s life as a migrant, both on what that means in the biblical story and contemporary times, the majority of her book discusses how readers have viewed Ruth over the centuries. These chapters offer information about the ancient rabbis’ attempts to domesticate Ruth, later rabbinical mystical traditions based on her story, French pastoral paintings that focused on her life as a gleaner in the fields, the Zionist pioneer versions of Ruth and more recent Israeli and American adaptations of her tale.

For Jewish readers, the chapters looking at how Ruth is treated in rabbinic texts will be of the greatest interest. Pardes explains that the ancient rabbis declared that Ruth converted to Judaism, something not mentioned in the

biblical text. She writes that “within the biblical world, the concept of conversion did not exist. The term *ger*... refers to strangers, or sojourners who have become part of the Jewish community... For the rabbis, however, the biblical demarcations between Israelites and foreign residents were too fluid. They sought to draw clearer distinctions between Jews and non-Jews and to regulate the entrance of newcomers.” This was particularly true as the popularity of Christianity increased. The rabbis saw Ruth as agreeing to not only follow the Jewish God, but to be part of the Jewish community, something that they considered an essential part of conversion.

For Jewish mystics, Ruth became the embodiment of the Shechinah, the feminine aspect of God in exile. Pardes suggests that during medieval times, when the Christian cult of Mary as the mother of the divine Jesus became popular, “we can imagine that in rethinking Ruth’s roles as the foremother of the Messiah, the Kabbalists were eager to upgrade her position and turn her into a deified messianic mother. But they did it their way. They wanted a messianic heavenly mother who would have compassion for an entire community, mourn their dire condition in exile, and intervene on their behalf in the upper worlds.” Ruth became a redeemer, something that connects her to her great-grandson, King David, one of whose descendants the rabbis believed would be the messiah.

Pardes also writes of how French painters from the 1600-1800s offered versions of Ruth that were either pastoral views of Europe or oriental envisionings of the Middle East. Early Zionists saw Ruth as an immigrant, something relevant to their movement, which was encouraging people to return to Palestine. Later, *kibbutzim*, with their emphasis on farming, connected her return to the holiday of Shavuot. Modern feminist writers have looked at the story from a variety of angles, include offering the possibility that Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi are the true love interests in the story. Some American writers have seen Ruth as a Moabite outcast who didn’t fit into the world of the Israelites of the time.

“Ruth” is an excellent work for anyone looking to see how a biblical character can be recreated over time. Readers should note that this is not a traditional commentary: Pardes does some textural analysis, but her main intent is to show how others have viewed the text.

While Pardes doesn’t offer a detailed analysis of the text, Levine offers a careful and close reading in an attempt to explain what he sees as Joseph’s troubling behavior. He believes “the biblical text paints a portrait of Yosef [Joseph] consistent with an individual on the autism spectrum.” Whether or not one agrees with Levine’s premise, his work offers a thought provoking look at Joseph’s behavior.

Levine notes that Joseph exhibits childish behavior and is unable to read social clues. He insists on the literal truth, unable to see how it might not be best to always correct others. Joseph also seems unaware how his behavior affects his brothers and father. In fact, his actions and words annoy his brothers so much that they begin to hate him. When being sent to look for them, Joseph doesn’t realize they might not want to be found, and his doing so angers them so much they are, at first, ready to kill him.

Joseph is still unable to read social clues after his arrival in Egypt, something that lands him in prison when he is unable to protect himself against Potiphar’s wife. When called before Pharaoh, Joseph finally finds someone able to understand him and work around his imperfections. Levine feels that Joseph was willing to speak the truth that Pharaoh’s other dream interpreters refused to present: to give Pharaoh the bad news about the upcoming famine. The author believes that Pharaoh exploited Joseph’s abilities for his own use, something that worked out well for both of them. It also allows Pharaoh to place an Israelite over his servants, something that otherwise might not have been accepted.

Levine believes Joseph expected his brothers to travel to Egypt and planned an elaborate subterfuge as a way of showing that he had become as successful as he once predicted. At times, it seems to Levine as if the brothers have switched places with Joseph more successfully navigating the world, while his brothers are unable to adjust to the changes in their lives. However, the author does not see Joseph as being cured, rather, as having been able to adapt to new circumstances.

“Was Yosef on the Spectrum?” also offers interpretations of the text by numerous classical Jewish commentators, which Levine analyzes and uses to support his contentions. This would be an excellent work for study groups that enjoy focusing on in-depth looks at biblical stories. Whether or not they ultimately agree with Levine, his ideas will stimulate discussion.

Work, family, comedy and deep feelings

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

When looking at novels for review, I’m sometimes unable to tell if they feature Jewish characters. If I am really interested in a book, I’ve been known to go to great lengths—from making numerous web searches for the “title/author + Jewish,” to writing to an author through his/her website—to find out if any of the characters are Jewish. I was delighted to discover that both “Bookish People” by Susan Coll (Harper Muse) and “Small World” by Laura Zigman (Ecco) have Jewish main characters because the former sounded like fun and I’m a big fan of the latter.

Readers and lovers of independent bookstores will automatically be drawn to “Bookish People.” Jewish Sophie Bernstein, who owns the bookstore, “sometimes thinks the world divides into two types of people, those who think books are for reading when there’s nothing else to do, and those who avoid other things to do in order to read books.” Although she normally finds herself in the latter category, she now admits to being “a little bit sick of books.” That’s understandable: Sophie’s husband died recently and her college graduate son has no practical plans for the future. On top of this, the store’s manager is moving from D.C. and Sophie worries no one will be able to replace him. All these problems help explain why she’s considering moving into a small room in the store that’s hidden by a secret door—a room no one else knows about.

Her life is not made easier by the fact that the person who bought the parking lot that the store uses keeps call-

ing, calls she doesn’t want to answer. Plus, several events scheduled for the store are causing some controversy: everything from a protest against a reading by an author whose book claims cats are destroying the bird population to potential violent threats against Raymond Chaucer, a brilliant poet whom some people believe drove his wife to suicide. Sophie wants Clemi, who runs the events, to cancel Raymond’s appearance, but Clemi has reasons of her own for wanting him to appear. She knows he had an affair with her mother, an agent who once worked with him, and may be her father. The protests, the problems with the store’s vacuum cleaner (which plays a larger role than one might imagine), a lawsuit for an absurd reason, electrical problems and wonderful end-of-day e-mail reports offer a great blend of comedy that is almost slapstick at times.

The novel does have undertones of seriousness. The action takes place just after the racist march in Charlottesville, VA: the chants of “Jews shall not replace us” don’t help Sophie’s frame of mind. She is confused by the mixed feelings she has about the store since working there was originally a labor of love. Anyone “who avoid[s] other things to do in order to read books” will enjoy “Bookish People,” especially its ending, which successfully brings together its many plot strands.

While “Bookish People” contains a great deal of humor, “Small World” is far more serious. When taking a quick peek at its plot online, I only noted that it was the story of two divorced sisters, Joyce and Lydia, who moved in together after living on different coasts for almost 30 years. What I had not realized is that they once had another sister, Eleanor, who had cerebral palsy, a seizure disorder and developmental problems. Until her death at the age of 10, Eleanor was the main focus of their mother Louise’s life. Even after she died, Louise dedicated her life to helping the families of those with disabilities, while, at the same time, ignoring her other daughters. Now that their mother

is gone, Joyce hopes she and Lydia can become the friends she always wanted them to be.

Unfortunately, the two sisters seem unable to connect, particularly after new neighbors move in upstairs. The noise they create disturbs Joyce who works from home archiving other people’s family photos and videos. Lydia comes to appreciate the neighbors, something that creates an additional division between the sisters. Some of these sections are actually quite funny, particularly when one or the other sister is unable to appreciate the humor of their misunderstandings. What really divides the two sisters, though, are secrets—secrets not only from their childhood, but about their current situation. These prevent them from truly understanding each other. When revealed, they change not only the sisters’ relationship, but the way they view their family history.

Parts of their family history is heart-wrenching. For example, Zigman writes about the guilt that Louise felt about what happened to Eleanor, even though she clearly did the best she could. The author also notes how this made her other daughter feel. Joyce clearly believes that she and Lydia mattered less to Louise than did Eleanor, and thinks, “You will also know in some fundamental way that you are unable to articulate but that feels as natural and as constant as breathing, that whatever you and Lydia do or say or accomplish or become in life will never feel like it matters as much” as what happened to Eleanor.

“Small World” is a beautiful, moving work about family and love. The author’s portrayal of the sisters’ conflicting emotions about Eleanor—love, embarrassment and concern, while still wishing to just have their parents to themselves at times—are extremely well done because all those emotions can occur at the same time. On a personal note, I understood what Joyce and Lydia were experiencing. However, the novel also made me extremely grateful for my parents, who never made me feel as if my life didn’t matter. Zigman has produced another wonderful novel.

War. Continued from page 7

emotions don’t always register, “The Oppermanns” is an impressive work due to the author’s ability to write about these events in real time in a way that will resonate with contemporary readers.

“Reunion” and “The Oppermanns” succeed in showing the reality that German Jews faced and the love they felt for a country that was betraying them. Their characters feel real because the authors were once the Jews about whom they are writing. Both authors fortunately managed to leave Germany before the worst began, which must have made it easier for them to focus on the years before the war and the Holocaust. The reprints of these works are a welcome addition to novels about the Jews of Germany.



Rabbi Rachel Esserman’s previous book reviews can be found on *The Reporter’s* website under “Features” at: <https://www.thereporter.org/past-articles/feature-book-review/feature-book-review-stream/book-review-stream>.



JNFA held seminar about Israel

By Ben Kasper

The Jewish Federation of North America presented a webinar, "The Future of Religion and State in Israel," on February 9. The presenters suggested that the proposed changes of the new government were of "high interest." The platform and negotiations involve numerous sensitive issues.

The speaker was concerned about the potential threat to liberal Judaism and democracy. One of the issues raised is the growing influence of the ultra-Orthodox/Haredim and their many demands as partners in the new government. According to the presenter, approximately 50 percent of ultra-Orthodox men are in the labor force, a growing number of women are also employed and there has been an increase in these young men serving in the

army. The new government would halt or reverse those trends. The political party would request more financial resources for religious schools and demand that young men be exempt from military service to study Torah.

Another issue raised during the discussion was the impact of Jews in the Diaspora and the legitimacy of Conservative and Reform Judaism.

The speakers noted that one of the most critical proposals is the attempt to reduce the judicial role of the Supreme Court. The court would no longer serve as a check on political power. (According to a recent poll reported in *The New York Times*, the country is evenly divided with around 42 percent in favor of court reform and around 41 percent opposed to judicial change.)

Finally, a speaker offered a glimmer of hope. Some of the more extreme demands, involving the Temple Mount and the West Bank, might be postponed. Voting on the

new budget, the allocation of scarce resources could trigger a political crisis.

The outcome of many of these changes may be known before the High Holidays.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

"Liberated ethnic studies" curricula target Jews, Israel

A recently released report from the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (or CAMERA) takes aim at the push to introduce an ethnic studies curriculum, which paints Jews and Israel in a negative light. American schools have long taught history and the accomplishments of minority peoples to bring students together, the report authors note. Yet, "a nationwide movement called 'liberated ethnic studies' seeks to introduce a divisive politicized project into the nation's K-12 curriculum that disavows this central tenet of education fostering national unity and cohesion," they report. "The movement's teacher-activists aim to indoctrinate teachers, encouraging them to enlist students into an effort they claim is necessary to address systemic racism in America," according to the report. Further, many of the leaders of the liberated ethnic studies movement are also prominent supporters of the BDS movement. They "profess their allegiance to anti-Israel activism and have shaped the movement's content and direction sharply towards their views," the report states, adding that their goal "is to inject anti-Israel propaganda into American schools at all grade levels." CAMERA plans a series of such reports on the liberated ethnic studies movement.

Jewish pop. in Judea and Samaria tops half a million

The Jewish population in Judea and Samaria has surpassed half a million people, according to a report compiled by former MK Ya'akov Katz. There were 502,991 Jews living in Judea and Samaria as of Jan. 1, according to the document, which culled data from the Israeli Interior Ministry's Population Registry.

Demands Concerning Haredi and Orthodox Communities	Demands Concerning the Public Sphere and Education	Demands that Also Concern Diaspora Jewry
Kashrut reform annulment	Talmud studies in (non-religious) public schools	Grandchild clause, Law of Return
Substantial increase in subsidies for Yeshiva students and related institutions	Hospitals can decide on "no chametz" policy during Passover (contrary to Court's ruling)	Overriding the Court's recognition of Reform & Conservative conversions (in Israel & abroad)
Foundation of new institutions for Haredi school drop-outs and at-risk youth	Government-funded 'ground burial' (<i>Kvurat sadeh</i>) despite limited available land	Annulment of the Progressive Judaism Dep. & related budget in the Diaspora Affairs Ministry
Decisions concerning the election for Chief Rabbi and Chief Rabbinate Council.	Stopping public works on Shabbat (transportation, electricity manufacturing)	Reducing / Freezing religious and ceremonial rights of Women and non-Orthodox Jews at the Western Wall
Constitutional status to Torah study (substitute for Army service)	Govt. intervention in NGOs public schools can invite in	Foundation of national MASA programs to Israel for Haredi diaspora jews
Increasing authority & benefits of Rabbinical Courts	Increasing gender separation in the public sphere	

A chart from the Israel Democracy Institute that was used during the webinar. It was created for the purpose of clarifying differences and offers only a rough division of what is happening in Israel. (Used with the permission of the Israel Democracy Institute)



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Weekly Parasha

Terumah, Exodus 25:1-27:19

Goblets of light

RABBI ZALMAN CHEIN, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND RITUAL, CHABAD OF BINGHAMTON

“And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst.” (Exodus 25:8)

Parashat Terumah begins a series of Torah portions discussing God’s instructions to the Jewish people to make a dwelling place and home for God in this world. This was first the *Mishkan*, the Tabernacle, in the desert and, later, the *Beit Hamikdash*, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

One of the vessels of the sanctuary was the menorah, the seven branched candelabra that was kindled each evening. The Torah gives a very specific description of its design: “And you shall make a menorah of pure gold. The menorah shall be made of hammered work; its base and its stem, its

goblets, its knobs and its flowers shall [all] be [one piece] with it.” (Exodus 25:31)

When one pictures the many golden goblets decorating the branches of the menorah, the natural assumption would be that the goblets were upright. However, in his work of Jewish law, Maimonides, the great Jewish legal scholar and philosopher, drew a diagram of the menorah showing the requirements for its design. In his illustration, the goblets are upside down. One may wonder why this is so. Isn’t the purpose of a goblet to receive and hold? How can upside-down goblets fulfill these functions?

Our sages explain that the Tabernacle (and later the Temple,) was not meant to be merely a holy place where

Godliness was revealed, but rather, a center, from which Godliness would dissipate to the rest of the world. The menorah was not there to illuminate the Tabernacle; instead, its purpose was to spread the light of the Tabernacle outward. The late Lubavitcher Rebbe teaches us that the goblets were in the pouring position to symbolize the outpouring of holiness from the Tabernacle to the world.

Each of us has a unique set of talents and abilities, our own light. Our mission in life is to illuminate our lives with this light and to spread our light to our surroundings, making our corner of the world a better and brighter place. When we each act as a menorah, collectively we can illuminate the entire world with goodness and kindness. Try it!

Congregational Notes

Beth David Synagogue

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

Temple Israel

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

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

On Saturday, February 25, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required). The Torah portion is Exodus 25:1-27:19 and the haftarah is I Kings 5:26-6:13. At 7 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom.

On Wednesday, March 1, Torah study will be held from 4-5 pm on Zoom.

On Saturday, March 4, at 9:30 am, Shacharit services will be held via Zoom and in-person (masks are required). The Torah portion is Exodus 27:20-30:10 and the haftarah is I Samuel 15:2-34. At 7:15 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom.

On Tuesday March 7, an Executive Board meeting will be held at 7 pm.

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

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

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

Presidents: David Weiner and Linda Aigen
Sisterhood President: Gail Zussman
Director of Education: Rabbi Suzanne Brody
Services: Fri. 8 pm; Sat. 10 am, unless otherwise announced. Weekday morning minyan 7:30 am (9 am on Sun. and legal holidays).

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

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

Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive
Rabbi: David Regenspan
Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815
Phone: 334-2691
E-mail: fertigj@roadrunner.com
Contact: Guilia Greenberg, 373-5087
Purpose: To maintain a Jewish identity and meet the needs of the Jewish community in the area.
Adult Ed.: Shabbat study sessions are held on designated Saturday mornings at 10 am. Call ahead, text or e-mail to confirm dates.

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

Rohr Chabad Center

Affiliation: Chabad-Lubavitch
Rabbi Aaron and Rivkah Slonim, Directors
E-mail: aslonim@binghamton.edu
rslonim@chabadofbinghamton.com
Address: 420 Murray Hill Rd., Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: 797-0015, Fax: 797-0095
Website: www.Chabadofbinghamton.com
Rabbi Zalman and Rochel Chein, Education
E-mail: zchein@Jewishbu.com, rchein@Jewishbu.com
Rabbi Levi and Hadasa Slonim, Downtown and Development
Chabad Downtown Center: 60 Henry St., Binghamton
E-mail: lslonim@Jewishbu.com, hslonim@Jewishbu.com
Rabbi Yisroel and Goldie Ohana, Programming
E-mail: yohana@Jewishbu.com, gohana@Jewishbu.com
Regular service times: Daily 7:30 am, Friday evening 6 pm, Shabbat morning 9:30 am, Maariv and Havdalah one hour after candle-lighting time, Sundays 9:30 am.
To join the mailing list, for up-to-date information on adult education offerings or to arrange for a private tutorial, for details concerning the Judaica shop and resource center, or for assistance through the Piaker Free Loan Society or Raff Maasim Tovim Foundation, call Chabad's office at 797-0015.

Chabad will be holding pre-Shabbat virtual programs. For more information, visit www.JewishBU.com/S2020Partnership.

Congregation Tikkun v'Or

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Address: PO Box 3981, Ithaca, NY 14852; 2550 Triphammer Rd. (corner of Triphammer and Burdick Hill), Lansing, NY
Phone: 607-256-1471
Website: www.tikkunvor.org
E-mail: info@tikkunvor.org
Rabbi: Shifrah Tobacman, rabbishifrah@tikkunvor.org
Presidents: Sue Merkel and Laurie Willick, presidents_22@tikkunvor.org
Education Director/Administrative Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky
Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator: Michael Margolin
Services: All services currently on Zoom. E-mail info@tikkunvor.org for the times and links. Contemplative morning services every Tuesday from 8:30-9:30 am. Saturday mornings, Gan Shabbat and other special services at least once a month. Call for the weekly schedule.

Jewish Learning Experiences (JLE) for second through seventh grade classes meet on Sunday mornings. Sixth and seventh grades also meet on Wednesday afternoons. Family programs for kindergarten and first grade held monthly. Adult Education: Offered regularly throughout the year. Check the website for details.

Temple Beth El of Oneonta

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

Penn-York Jewish Community

President-Treasurer-Secretary: Harvey Chernosky, 570-265-3869
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Purpose: To promote Jewish identity through religious, cultural, educational and social activities in the Southern Tier of New York and the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania, including Waverly, NY; Sayre, Athens and Towanda, PA, and surrounding communities.

Friday, February 24, light candles before..... 5:29 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, February 25 6:31 pm
Friday, March 3, light candles before..... 5:37 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, March 4 6:39 pm
Friday, March 10, light candles before..... 5:46 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, March 11 6:47 pm

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Rabbi: Barbara Goldman-Wartell
Address: 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905
Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm
Phone: 723-7355
Fax: 723-0785
Office e-mail: TempleConcordbinghamton@gmail.com
Website: www.templeconcord.com
Regular service times: Fri., 7:30 pm; Sat., 10:35 am, when religious school is in session.
Hebrew school: Hebrew school meets at 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm on Tues. and Thurs. during the school year unless otherwise noted.

Some services and programs are online only.
Friday, February 24: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell. Masks are optional for those attending in person. Join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y>, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Saturday, February 25: At 9 am, Shabbat school; 9:15 am, Torah study (join via Zoom at <http://bit.ly/3XDnVRE>, meeting ID 825 1226 2831 and passcode 743892); and 10:35 am, Shabbat family service.

Wednesday, March 1: At 10:30 am, the Morning Book Club at Temple Concord will discuss “The City Beautiful” by Aden Polydoros. For information, contact Merri Pell-Preus at merrypell.preus@gmail.com. The book club meetings are held in the Temple Concord library and on Zoom.

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

Saturday, March 4: At 9 am, Shabbat school; 9:15 am, Torah study (join via Zoom at <http://bit.ly/3XDnVRE>, meeting ID 825 1226 2831 and passcode 743892); and 10:35 am, Shabbat and Purim family service. At 5:30 pm and 7 pm, Temple Concord’s adult Purim celebration, “Who’s the Hangman? A Megillah Mystery,” will be held. For more information, see the article on page 4.

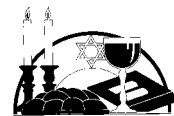
Sunday, March 5: From 10 am-2 pm, Sisterhood rummage sale.

Tuesday, March 7: At 7:30 pm, “Purim Musings on the Megillah,” including a presentation including Rabbi Goldman-Wartell. For more information, see the article on page 4.

Temple Brith Sholom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated
Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045
Phone: 607-756-7181
President: Carol Levine, 315-696-5744
Cemetery Committee: 315-696-5744
Website: templebrithsholomcortland.org
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Temple-Brith-Sholom-114006981962930/>
Service leaders: Lay leadership
Shabbat services: Either Friday evening at 7:30 pm or Saturday at 10 am from Rosh Hashanah to Shavuot. Holiday services are also held. Check the Facebook page or weekly e-mail for upcoming services. Contact the president to get on the e-mail list.
Religious School: Students are educated on an individual basis. Temple Brith Sholom is a small 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.



Hillel Academy celebrated Tu B'Shevat

Hillel Academy of Broome County celebrated Tu B'Shevat on February 6 with the Hebrew Day School of Syracuse at Schaefer's Gardens in Chenango Forks. About 70 children from grades kin-

dergarten through sixth grade visited the nursery. Also attending were parents, grandparents and guests. The students recited excerpts from the Mishnah, the Talmud, about trees and nature in Hebrew and English. They also sang songs about nature and the land of Israel.

"The celebrations were the culmination of activity and learning almost everything about the trees and their contribution to humanity," said organizers of the program. "We want to thank the staff of both schools and the staff at Schaefer's Gardens nursery for making this wonderful event possible. We also appreciated WBNG-TV for its coverage of the event."



Students from Hillel Academy of Broome County and Hebrew Day School of Syracuse celebrated Tu B'Shevat on February 6 at Schaefer's Gardens. (Names of students held on request.)



Students received a close-up view of the plants at Schaefer's Gardens.



Students shared a meal featuring food that grows on trees and vines.



Students explored the greenhouse at Schaefer's Gardens.



Students, parents and guests took part in the meal.

Survey..... Continued from page 2

Americans continue to learn about the most documented, planned genocide in modern history—the Nazi extermination of one-third of the Jewish people."

Twenty percent of respondents to the AJC survey explicitly said they were not sure how many Jews died in the Shoah, 2 percent said fewer than one million, 13 percent chose approximately three million and 11 percent said more than 12 million.

About three-fourths (76 percent) of respondents knew that the Holocaust occurred between 1930 and 1950. Ten percent were unsure of the time period, while 1 percent said it was between 1890 and 1910. Ten percent chose between 1910 and 1930, while 2 percent said it took place between 1950 and 1970.

When asked how Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany, 39 percent correctly said it was through a democratic political process, but 24 percent chose not sure. Thirty-four percent said he came to power by violently overthrowing the German government, 1 percent said it was through hereditary succession and 2 percent said it was by agreements with neighboring countries.

The great majority of respondents (85 percent) accurately described Auschwitz as a concentration and death camp for Jews. Twelve percent were not sure about its character, and 1 percent each said it was a school to train Germans in Nazi ideology, a political campaign designed by the Nazis, and a Jewish ghetto.

Only 26 percent of survey respondents answered all four questions correctly, while 30 percent got three correct and 25 percent had two correct.

According to the AJC, education is a key factor in Americans' knowledge of the Holocaust. "Broadly, those who have completed higher levels of education (some college, college graduates, or more) are more knowledgeable than those who have

a high school education or less," the AJC found. "Overall, 34 percent of those with a college degree and 28 percent of those who have completed some college answered all four questions correctly, compared with just 17 percent of those who have a high school degree or less education."

On the question of how many Jews were killed, 42 percent of those with a high school degree or less education correctly answered approximately six million, compared with 62 percent of those who have completed at least some college and 59 percent of college graduates. Additionally, 76 percent of those who have a high school degree or less education correctly answered the question on Auschwitz, compared with 89 percent of those who completed some college, and 91 percent of college graduates.

The survey was conducted by the SSRS non-partisan public opinion research firm on a nationally representative sample of 1,004 general population adults ages 18 or older. It was included as part of a larger national AJC survey of the general U.S. population on antisemitism. This survey—alongside an AJC poll of American Jews—will be available in February as part of the AJC's State of Antisemitism in America 2022 report.



Jewish twins were kept alive to be used in Dr. Josef Mengele's medical experiments. These children from Auschwitz were liberated by the Red Army in January 1945. (Photo courtesy of USHMM/Belarusian State Archive of Documentary Film and Photography)

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