

THE REPORTER

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April 25-May 8, 2025
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BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Hillel Academy to hold community Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration on April 27

Hillel Academy of Broome County will hold a community Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration on Sunday, April 27, from noon-3 pm, at Temple Israel, 4737 Deerfield Place, Vestal. The celebration will include Israeli food for sale, bounce houses, music, face painting, carnival games and activity booths for all

ages. An admission fee of \$5 per person or max \$20 per family will be charged to help cover expenses. For more information or to RSVP, see the ad on page 12 or visit https://form.jotform.com/Hillel_Academy/BlueAndWhite.

"This year, Israel is celebrating its 77th

birthday," said organizers of the event. "'Party in Blue and White' with us. We will have something for everyone, so come for the food or the games or the friends! We will start the event off with a community singing of 'Hatikvah,' the Israeli national anthem, and all children will be invited to lead the song."

Organizers added, "Thank you to PJ Library and Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, and the David and Virginia Eisenberg Fund, for their generous support. We hope everyone will put on their favorite blue and white outfit and join the celebration!"

Yiddish Folklife Festival in Ithaca April 25-27

The Yiddish Folklife Festival of the Finger Lakes, an arts and cultural festival, will take place the weekend of April 25-27 at the Lifelong Community Center, in downtown Ithaca, and other venues. Featuring live klezmer music, folk dancing, a community potluck, cooking and cultural workshops, a nature walk, an academic lecture, an open mic and other community events, the intergenerational, all-ages festival is open to the public, including those new to Yiddish music and culture. More information and tickets can be accessed through the festival's linktree at linktr.ee/yfff.

In partnership with Jewish Studies at Cornell University, Jessica Kirzane will

offer a talk on her work recovering and translating Yiddish women's literature on Friday, April 25, at 4:30 pm. This will be followed by a dinnertime Community Potluck and Instrumental Klezmer Jam at Lifelong. Musicians of all levels and non-musicians are invited to partake in the community event.

On Saturday, April 26, there will be a Yiddish Nature Walk at 10:30 am at Stewart Park led by Yiddish language professor Dovid Forman and ecologist Sorke Schneider. No previous Yiddish language knowledge is required. That afternoon, at 2 pm, the festival will continue at Lifelong with the Ashkenazi cooking workshop

"Dough: Sweet and Savory," which will be led by community chef Aron Gutman and Jewish food maven Sorke Schneider. Participants will make from scratch knishes and rugelach, two traditional Eastern European Jewish foods.

At 4:30 pm, there will be a Yiddish Song Workshop, where participants will learn a variety of folk songs, art songs, protest songs and contemporary Yiddish songs, led by Abi Gezunt, a local Yiddish singing group that meets weekly in the home of Deborah Berman. No Yiddish or singing experience necessary. The night will end with a community Open Mic at 7 pm where poetry, songs, skits, comedy

and other material will be welcome in any language.

On Sunday, April 27, there will be a Jewish Crafts Workshop where participants will learn the traditional art of Jewish paper cutting taught by artist and puppet maker Edith McCrae at 11 am at Lifelong. The final event will take place at 2 pm in the Library Place Community Room where dance leader Avia Moore will teach a Yiddish Folk Dance Workshop backed by the Klezmer Ensemble of Cornell University. After the class, there will be a Klezmer Dance Party to close the festival. All abilities and ages are welcome and physical accommodations will be made for any who may need it.

Inter-Sisterhood event to be held on May 28

This year's Inter-Sisterhood event will be held on Wednesday, May 28, at 7 pm, at Beth David Synagogue, 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. The event will feature two performances from Present Arts Productions. The charge for the event will be \$7 per person and can be paid at the door. RSVPs are requested by Wednesday, May 21, to Temple Concord at 607-723-7355; Beth David at 607-722-1793; or Temple Israel at 607-723-7461.



Bonnie DeForest as Sophie Lyons (Photo by Judith Present)

particular experiences in the Holocaust. The second will feature the true story of Sophie Lyons, a Jewish pickpocket from many years ago who "lit the criminal world on fire with her wily con-woman ways."

"The performances will be interspersed with some lively, pre-recorded klezmer music," said organizers of the event. "Of course, there will be a wonderful assortment of refreshments and lots of schmoozing, as well."

Present Arts Productions will present two performances written and directed by Judith Present. The first will be a dramatic reading of "Four Ways to Hide," which depicts four different characters and their

Attendees will have the chance to participate in a raffle that will include gift certificates to local restaurants, two tickets to a Binghamton Black Bears Hockey team game, gift certificates for

Midway Lanes bowling alley and more.

"A big thank you goes out to all the local businesses that have donated for the raffle!" organizers added. "A very special thank-you to Michael Wright and the Eisenberg Foundation for the generous

grant to help fund this event."

Organizers of this year's Inter-Sisterhood event are Eileen Miller from Beth David Synagogue, Brooke Little from Temple Israel and Helene Philips from Temple Concord.

TC/TI adult ed. program on Yiddish Bund on April 27

The Adult Education Committee of Temple Concord and Temple Israel will hold a program, "The Yiddish Bund and Bundism: The Politics of Here-ness, Then and Now," and light brunch on Sunday, April 27, from 10 am-noon, at Temple Concord, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. Gina Glasman, lecturer in Judaic studies at Binghamton University, will be joined by some members of Binghamton University's "New Jewish Bund" in a panel discussion about Bundism, its history and current relevance.



Gina Glasman

The entire community is welcome to attend. There is a suggested donation of between \$5-20 per person. For more information and to RSVP, contact Temple Israel at 607-723-7461 or office@templeisraelvestal.org, or Temple Concord at 607-723-7355 by Wednesday, April 23, so enough refreshments can be prepared.

In Poland before World War II, a Jewish political party known as the Bund campaigned in local and national elections with a one-word slogan, "Here!" or "Do!" in Yiddish. The slogan was designed as a

challenge to competing Jewish electoral parties that had an agenda of "there," or a Zionist-informed ticket. Often, both these opposing parties were rooted in similar socialist positions, but differed on this key question: namely, to align Jewish politics with a "Diasporist" or "Zionist" orientation. At the time, these were competitive alternatives at the ballot box. Today, a contemporary generation of students both in America and beyond, has turned to Bundism as a way to channel their Jewish political identity. The program will feature examples of the phenomenon.

Glasman teaches Yiddish language, Yiddish culture and the history of Jewish New York, to name just some of the many courses she has taught in the Judaic Studies Department at Binghamton University. With degrees from University of Cambridge, Jewish Theological Seminary and Columbia University, her interest in the study of Yiddish society and its urban culture has roots in her own biography as the grandchild of Yiddish speaking immigrants to London. See "Bund" on page 4

JLI course in May to feature "Colorful Profiles"

Registration is being accepted for "Colorful Profiles," the new Rohr JLI spring course. The course will run for four consecutive Mondays beginning Monday, May 5, at 7 pm. It is open to adults of all ages and is geared toward every level of knowledge, including those who have no background in Hebrew or Judaism. Participants need not be affiliated with a synagogue to attend.

Participants can attend in person or online. The course cost, which includes the textbook, is \$79 or \$150 for a couple. That includes one book; an additional copy for a registered couple is available for \$20. Visit Jewishbu.com/JLIBING to register.

For answers to questions, contact Ruth Shea at Chabad at rshea@Jewishbu.com or 607-797-0015.

The four-session course will delve into 12 personalities that include "high-profile hostages, savvy businesswomen, unlikely converts and more." The course facilitators hope participants will gain a "richer understanding of some of the historical challenges that people faced in living a Jewish life and how their stories resulted in enduring, impactful legacies."

"These stories are not defined by tragedy and suffering, but by what it means to be a proud, resilient Jew," says Slonim. "It somehow seems very apropos for our times."

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Jewish Baseball Players

Jewish ballplayers: their top 25 seasons

BILL SIMONS

Various sportswriters, including yours truly, have published all-time, Jewish All-Star team selections. But this is the first print ranking of the 25 top seasons of Jewish ballplayers from the beginnings of the major league game to the present. The #1 designates the best and then the list moves down. We are a contentious people, whether talking Talmud, politics or baseball, so disputation is expected and welcome.

1. Hank Greenberg 1938. With U.S. antisemitism at its peak and Detroit – home to Henry Ford and Father Charles Coughlin – its American epicenter, the big Tiger first baseman slugged 58 home runs, just short of the then most cherished mark in sports, Babe Ruth's 60. For good measure, he hit .315, knocked in 147 runs and scored another 143.

2. Sandy Koufax 1965. After another Cy Young Award season (26 wins-8 losses, 2.04 ERA, 8 shutouts, 382 strikeouts – and the fourth no hitter of his career, a perfect game), the L.A. Dodgers lefty declined to pitch game one

of the World Series due to Yom Kippur. He then came back to shut out the Minnesota Twins in games five and seven, the final triumph after only two days rest.

3. Sandy Koufax 1963. Recipient of Cy Young and MVP awards, Koufax was nearly invincible, registering 25 wins against five losses, 1.88 ERA, 11 shutouts, 306 strikeouts.

4. Al Rosen 1953. In perhaps the greatest season ever by a third baseman, the muscular Cleveland Indians slugger just missed the Triple Crown by a fraction of a point on his batting average. His .336 BA, 43 HRs, 145 RBIs made him the unanimous AL MVP.

5. Hank Greenberg 1940. Winning his second MVP after making the switch from first base to left field, Greenberg (.340 BA, 41 HRs, 50 2Bs, 150 RBIs) paced the Tigers to another pennant.

6. Sandy Koufax 1966. Battling excruciating arm pain with an elbow that swelled to the size of a cantaloupe, Koufax finished his career with the best final season in MLB history (27 wins-9 losses, 1.73 ERA, 317 strikeouts)

while notching a third Cy Young Award.

7. Hank Greenberg 1935. This marked the first time that a Jew won a Most Valuable Player Award. Greenberg, the Tigers' power hitter (.328 BA, 203 Hs, 46 2Bs, 16 3Bs, 36 HRs, 168 RBIs, 120 Rs), led the team to a repeat pennant.

8. Steve Stone 1980. On the basis of a 25-7 won-lost record and .781 winning percentage, the Baltimore Orioles rightly won the AL Cy Young Award.

9. Hank Greenberg 1937. Greenberg recorded another milestone campaign (.337 BA, 200 Hs, 49 2Bs, 14 3Bs, 40 HRs, 137 Rs). The future Hall of Famer's 184 RBIs remains one short of Lou Gehrig's 185 AL single-season record.

10. Ryan Braun 2011. The All-Star Milwaukee Brewers left fielder's MVP season (.332 BA, 33 HRs, 111 RBIs, 109 Rs) was tainted by use of PEDs.

11. Ryan Braun 2012. His power-hitting peaked with 41 HRs in another All-Star season (.319 BA, 191 H, 112 RBIs, 108 Rs).

See "Top" on page 4

Opinion

One Perspective from Israel

It wasn't his fault... (part 1)

JEREMY M. STAIMAN

This article originally appeared in the Times of Israel and is being reprinted with permission.

It wasn't his fault. He was adopted shortly after birth by a family with good intentions. But good intentions don't always translate into positive results.

He was a handful. He was too much for them from the start, and they should have known better. Many households are a mess. This one was a train wreck.

Around the time he was seven, the adoptive parents put him in the back seat of their car, drove to the streets of Jerusalem, and let him out to fend for himself – to forage for food. To find shelter from the elements.

He was no longer their problem.

I don't know how long he wandered the winding streets and alleys, looking for scraps of food and a roof over his head. His handsome body drew gaunt from hunger, his face pained from neglect.

Eventually, he was picked up by the authorities, and

taken to a place where he would live with others like him: the local animal shelter.

This purebred Labrador, whose original name was unknown, was fed and sheltered there, while he awaited a new family. His seven dog years, or one human year, had been traumatic. Life in the shelter was not all that much better. The animals competed for the food rations that were thrown over the fences, and they fought like cats and dogs, largely because that's what they were.

If the animals were ever washed, it was probably by the rains, which meant that they were also strolling around in the mud at the same time, so any cleanliness achieved was quickly negated.

There he spent the next seven of his years/one of ours, where he scared away any potential family looking to take him home.

My son Arky and his wife Gayil were in search of a Labrador. While living up north as undergrads, they had

taken part in a program run by an organization which trains guide dogs for the sight-impaired. They had been volunteer mentors, taking several dogs into their small apartment over the years and, with the guidance of the non-profit, teaching the dogs a series of behaviors in real-life situations, which they would need when they were eventually placed with a blind person.

They would need to go together to the grocery, take the bus, sit through classes, cross streets, play in the park and any other imaginable scenario. Each time that their training phase concluded, there was an ache in their hearts as they had to give one of these beautiful, loving companions back to the experts for more advanced training.

They didn't always pass the rigorous course, and one of them, Ketem (Spot, in English), ended up moving to the U.S., becoming Arky's aunt and uncle's beloved sidekick.

See "Fault" on page 4

In My Own Words

What is the right path?

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

"That's exactly why the Jews didn't leave Germany." That comment was made by a friend who is so upset with the political situation in our country that she is planning ways to leave the United States, including looking for employment that would allow her to work completely remotely so she could apply for a work visa and move to Europe. She made the above comment after I noted how difficult it would be for me – an older single woman – to move from the United States. I didn't mention how my hearing impairment would create difficulties (I have enough trouble understanding English, let alone a new language), the difficulty of learning that new language or the idea of being completely alone and isolated in a foreign country.

The fact that we had this discussion the week before Passover struck me as ironic when I read Marge Piercy's poem "Maggid" during one of the seders I attended. That poem celebrates those Jews who were willing to move from the homes and graves of loved ones into an unknown future. But I see our current situation as far more complex than does my friend.

First, we need to clarify what happened in Germany: according to the Holocaust Encyclopedia, around 282,000

Jews did leave Germany. Unfortunately, many of them went to other European countries that were then conquered by Nazi Germany during World War II. Many of the Jews who died in the Holocaust were not actually German, but citizens of lands across Europe – from France to the Soviet Union and south to Mediterranean Sea. Yes, my friend is correct, though, that not everyone left. Some thought the madness would stop.

If we follow my friend's line of reasoning about the dangers we may face, then why does she think U.S. companies will be allowed to employ those who no longer live within our borders? If the current administration wants to change our economy so U.S. citizens will have to buy all American products, why will it be willing to allow American currencies to be sent to other countries? If that happens, she will not only not have a job, but will lose her work visa, leaving her as much a refugee as those Jews who left Germany. Plus, what would stop the government from forbidding those who live elsewhere to receive bank funds, pensions and Social Security? If her nightmare version of our future is true, then she needs to think about what else could happen, especially if enough people leave the country.

However, when thinking about her comment, I realized my reason for not wanting to leave included something greater than what I listed above: I am not ready to give up on the Great American Experiment. Perhaps it's because I am older and have seen demonstrations and marches for the Civil Rights Movement and protests against the Vietnam War. I grew up reading books given to me by my father about the Labor Movement and the fight for an eight-hour work day and decent working conditions. I know the U.S. is far from perfect, but I dream that maybe someday our country will live up to its ideals. I am no Pollyanna or utopianist: the U.S. will never be perfect. We will always have to fight for our rights; we can never let our guard down. But if we don't fight, then we are letting that dream die.

That means I am willing to risk my future for that dream. Maybe that's easier for me to do because I'm older than my friend. Maybe it's easier because I have less to lose. But this country has sheltered my relatives for three generations and I owe it something, as imperfect and awful as it can and has been at its worst. I have no problem with those whose choice is to leave, but I hope they'll understand why I won't.



Jewish Federation
of Greater Binghamton

Shelley Hubal, Executive Director

607-724-2332 ~ www.jfgeb.org

The Reporter Editorial Committee

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HOW TO REACH THE REPORTER

Mail ~ The Reporter, 500 Clubhouse Rd. Vestal, NY 13850

E-mail ~ TRReporter@aol.com

Phone ~ 607-724-2360 or 800-779-7896

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BINGHAMTON, NY

OPINIONS

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

LETTERS

The Reporter welcomes letters on subjects of interest to the Jewish community. All letters must be signed and include a phone number; names may be withheld upon request.

ADS

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

DEADLINE

Regular deadline is noon, Wednesday, for the following week's newspaper (see deadline dates on page 3). All articles should be e-mailed to TRReporter@aol.com.

Executive Editor Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Layout Editor Diana Sochor

Advertising Kathy Brown

Bookkeeper Kathy Brown

Production Associate Julie Weber

Columnist Bill Simons

Proofreaders

Barbara Bank, Fran Ferentinos,

Rebecca Goldstein Kahn, Merri Pell-Preus,

Ilene Pinsker

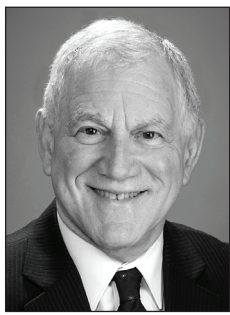


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www.thereporter.org

BD dinner to honor Richard Lewis on May 4

Beth David Synagogue's Annual Dinner will take place on Sunday, May 4, with the Jack and Mary Ferber Award being given to attorney and community member Richard C. Lewis. The catered event will begin at 3 pm at the synagogue with a cocktail and hors d'oeuvres hour, followed by a catered sit-down dinner at 4 pm. The cost per person is \$65 and sponsorships are available. Invitations will be sent out in April, as well as raffle tickets for purchase for cash prizes at the event. Those wanting further information can contact the synagogue at 607-722-1793 or bethdavid@stny.rr.com.



Richard Lewis (Photo courtesy of Hinman, Howard & Kattell, LLP)

said organizers of the event. "He has worked tirelessly to support local institutions, including Beth David Synagogue, Temple Israel, the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, the Jewish Community Center and, of course, Hillel Academy of Broome County, where Emily and Anna completed kindergarten through eighth grade before going on to and graduating from Binghamton High School and colleges in upstate New York. He has also had many leadership roles in the general community."

Organizers added, "Everyone who knows Dick will tell you what a gem of a human being he is; his impact on the community is beyond measure." Beth David President Saba Wiesner recounted her experience when she asked Lewis if he would be the synagogue's attorney if they needed legal

advice. "Before I could finish my sentence," she recalled, "he said, 'Of course!'"

See "Lewis" on page 11

"Together with his devoted wife, Lori A. Lewis, and their daughters, Emily and Anna Lewis, Dick Lewis has been a proud member of Binghamton's Jewish community for more than 50 years,"

Interfaith event on May 4 at TC

The Children of Abraham has changed its name to Interfaith Broome County. This new name reflects the group's interest in representing the full diversity of faiths in the area. IBC will host its first event, "Meet Greet and Eat," on Sunday, May 4, from 3-4:30 pm, at Temple Concord, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton.

Interfaith Broome County strives to build mutual trust and respect in Broome County across religious traditions through interfaith conversation and education. In addition to learning of the hopes for the organization, participants will have an opportunity to get to know each other, share

oneg-style kosher snacks and engage in interfaith dialogue. The IBC Steering Committee members note that they hope to get input from attendees on future events.

Visit www.interfaithbroomecounty.org for more information and contact information. Those planning to attend are asked to RSVP on the website, or call the Temple Concord office at 607-753-7355.

The organizers look forward to reconnecting with old friends and making some new ones, and ask that attendees bring a food item for CHOW to help the hungry in the community, if they are able.

Beth David Sisterhood to hold donor event May 14

Beth David Sisterhood will hold its donor event on Wednesday, May 14, at 7 pm, at the home of Nancy Basmann. A minimum donation of \$25 is requested from those who attend the fund-raising event. The meeting will be open to everyone: members, non-members and men. Since a variety of desserts and noshes will be served at the meeting, an RSVP by Friday, May 9, would be appreciated, and can be made by contacting Beth David Synagogue at 607-722-1793 to leave a message, or e-mail bethdavid@stny.rr.com. For the address of the event, also contact the synagogue office.



Nancy Basmann (Photo courtesy of Nancy Basmann)

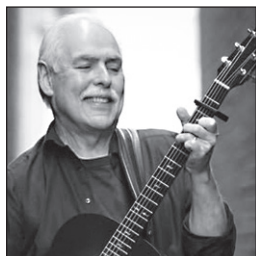
Professional Photographers of America. During the meeting she will show how she photographs and creates images using examples of Jewish subjects.

Her photographs have appeared in art books and hang in several local businesses. Currently, one of her images appears in an exhibit of the American Society of Photographers that is touring Texas galleries. Attendees will be able to look through her picture book "The Village of Endicott, IBM and the Rust Belt" (2022), which sold out at the Roberson Museum.

"Please do not hesitate to attend the meeting even if you neglected to notify us in advance," said organizers of the event. "We always plan a little extra food just in case."

Basmann is a certified professional photographer and a master of photography under the auspices of

TC Sisterhood donor program in May to feature Greg Neff



Greg Neff (Photo by RedMar Photography)

The Temple Concord Sisterhood will hold this year's donor program on Sunday, May 18, at 3 pm, in the Kilmer Mansion, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. Greg Neff, a singer/songwriter/guitarist who specializes in music from the 1960s and '70s, will provide the entertainment. A variety of hors d'oeuvres and beverages will be served. Reservations should be made by contacting

Roz Antoun at 607-644-0107 or rantoun77@stny.rr.com by Thursday, May 15.

Sisterhood members who paid their donor donation when they paid their 2024-25 dues are welcome to attend. The donor fee is \$25 or \$36 if one wants to bring a guest. Sisterhood members who are not sure if they paid their dues, or made a donor donation, should contact Helene Philips at hphilips@stny.rr.com. "It is not too late to pay your dues or make a donor donation," said organizers of the event.

Sisterhood programming chairwomen who are organizing the event are Roz Antoun, Deb Daniels and Phyllis Kellenberger.

KARYN WIONS SMITH

Karyn Wions Smith (nee Orgel), of Owings Mills, MD, formerly of Binghamton, NY, passed away on Tuesday, April 8th, 2025, at the age of 79. She is survived by her loving children, Steven (Michelle) Wions and Stacey (Aleck) Johnson; cherished grandchildren, Samantha Wions, Emma Wions, Amanda Johnson, and Robin Johnson; sister-in-law, Carole Orgel; and many adored and loved nieces and nephews. Karyn was predeceased by her beloved husband, Dr. Ronald Smith; devoted siblings, Douglas Orgel and Sheila Myers; and dear brother-in-law, Mickey Myers.

Services at Judean Memorial Gardens, 16225 Batchellors Forest Road, Olney, MD, on Wednesday, April 9th, 2025, at 12:00 pm. Please omit flowers. Contributions in her memory may be sent to Friends of the IDF, PO Box 4224, New York, NY 10163 or Alzheimer's Association, 225 N. Michigan Avenue, Floor 17, Chicago, IL 60601. Please see Levinson's website for shiva details, www.sollevinson.com.

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

Marsha Grass

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

Karyn Wions Smith

DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
May 9-22.....	April 30
May 23-June 12.....	May 14
June 13-26.....	June 4
June 27-July 10.....	June 18

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

Binghamton Philharmonic

She's Got Soul, featuring Capathia Jenkins
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PEANUTS

A HALLOWEEN CELEBRATION
SATURDAY, APRIL 26th
GATES OPEN 12 PM
FIRST PITCH 1:05 PM
PREGAME TRICK OR TREAT EVENT
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM

TRICK OR TREAT BUCKET GIVEAWAY (1ST 1,000 FANS)
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GATES OPEN 12 PM
FIRST PITCH 1:05 PM
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Mrs. & Mr. Met Appearance
POSTGAME FIREWORKS

SUNDAY, APRIL 27th
GATES OPEN 12 PM
FIRST PITCH 1:05 PM
AGRICULTURE APPRECIATION DAY
MARSHALL MACHINERY, Inc.
BUS DRIVER APPRECIATION DAY

607.722.FUNN www.BINGRP.COM

TC Sisterhood Sabbath and installation

The Temple Concord Sisterhood Sabbath and the installation of the Sisterhood board for 2025-26 will be held on Friday, May 16, at 7:30 pm, at Temple Concord, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton.

Services will be conducted by Sisterhood members; Carol Herz will be the installing officer. The 2025-26 Sisterhood board and

all members of Sisterhood are encouraged to attend.

Officers to be installed are Barbara Thomas, president; Lani Dunthorn, past president; Nancy Dorfman, treasurer; Robin Hass, financial secretary; Marty Eisenstadt, recording secretary; Sandy Foreman, corresponding secretary; Marsha Luks, Babs

Putzel-Bischoff, Linda Lisman and Bernice Zelman, directors 2024-26; Helene Philips and Deb Williams, directors 2025-27; and a Nominating Committee chairwoman TBA.

Additional Sisterhood positions include Putzel-Bischoff, publicity chairwoman; Putzel-Bischoff, Rosh Hashanah *Kiddush* chairwoman; Tracy Putzel-Bischoff, Barbara Dickman, Luks and Gayle Klein, Rosh Hashanah *Kiddush* Committee; Ani Loew, Whale of a Sale chairwoman; Pam Burgman and another rummage sale co-chairwoman TBA; Herz, Robin Hazen and Susan High, Judaica Shop co-chairwomen; Williams, Artisan Marketplace chairwoman; Philips,

Artisan Marketplace Committee; Stephanie Tarlowe, Sisterhood Sabbath chairwoman; and Philips, Intersisterhood.

Committee members include Jesse Parker, cradle roll; Deb Daniels, Phyllis Kellenberger and Roz Antoun, adult ed. programming, donor and women's seder; Sylvia Diamond and Eisenstadt, Friday night *onegs*; Jean Hecht, scholar-in-residence *oneg* chairwoman; Herz, Dunthorn and Byers, membership co-chairwomen; Foreman and Eisenstadt, Hospitality Committee; Foreman, Robin Haas and Byers, nominating committee; and Jean Hecht, Sisterhood funds.

Bund Continued from page 1

As a recipient of BU's Provost's Award for Excellence in Teaching, Glasman's work often seeks to bind together forms of personal engagement with scholarly research, and

she encourages students to do the same – whether they are learning Yiddish language, or immersing themselves in the history of this distinctive diasporic minority.

Fault Continued from page 2

Fast forward a few years, and Arky and Gayil now lived in a lovely *yishuv* (settlement) in the Jerusalem area. It was time for a dog of their own. They knew how trainable, beautiful and lovable Labradors were, so that breed was high on their list.

They saw a cute picture of the Labrador on the shelter's website. The shelter had named him Benjy. And Benjy looked oh so much like the dogs they had cared for and trained. They made an appointment.

At the shelter, they surveyed the surroundings, trying to look beyond the less-than-stellar physical conditions. And there he was.

Benjy was well aware that you only get one chance to make a lasting first impression, and as Gayil began petting him, he marked his territory... on her leg.

Arky and Gayil asked to take Benjy for a walk, and quickly understood why no one in that long year had agreed to take him home. His troubled upbringing was obvious from the start. As they strolled through the grounds of the shelter, Benjy proved to be stubborn and strong-willed, always wanting to go his way. He pounced at every cat along the way, and there were many. Walking him was little less than a wrestling match.

Maybe Benjy was too much for them, they feared. But they saw something special beyond his filthy fur. And they had an idea. They went to the office of the shelter to discuss it with the manager. Benjy, seemingly intent on cementing his first impression as a difficult case, decided to again relieve himself, this time on the office floor.

Thinking outside of the puddle, they asked for permission to take him off the grounds, and walk him through the surrounding neighborhood, away from his animal competitors, distant from his usual turf wars.

Offsite, Benjy was a different animal. He strolled along with them peacefully, block after block. Discarding their initial skepticism, it was love at second sight. They decided to take Benjy home.

They also decided that the name "Benjy" was no fit for this dog (besides, Rabbi Benjy Staiman is already a respected teacher in Jerusalem, so the name hardly seemed appropriate!). Following due consideration, they decided to dub him "Scooby."

The training they had learned up north was employed on Scooby. He developed into a calm, obedient house pet. Unless he saw a cat, of course.

Part two will appear in a future issue of The Reporter.

Tea and Talk

Chabad of Binghamton, with co-sponsorship from the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, holds Tea and Talk programs, an 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:

- ◆ May 8
- ◆ May 22 - special musical performance
- ◆ June 5
- ◆ June 19

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

Top Continued from page 2

12. Shawn Green 1999. Green had a tremendous all-around year for the Toronto Blue Jays, making only one error in RF and dominating offensively (.309 BA, 45 2Bs, 42 HRs, 123 RBIs, 20 SBs).

13. Shawn Green 2001. The 6'4" right fielder had one of the greatest seasons in Brooklyn or L.A. Dodgers history (.297 BA, 49 HRs, 125 RBIs, 121 Rs, 20 SBs). Observation of Yom Kippur may have kept him from reaching the coveted 50 HR milestone.

14. Alex Bregman 2019. Based on outstanding defensive play at third base and shortstop, and a monster year at the plate (.296 BA, 41 HRs, 112 RBIs), augmented by illicit sign stealing, the fiery Houston Astro finished second in the MVP vote and socked three World Series home runs.

15. Hank Greenberg 1934. Hammerin' Hank, emergent as the Tigers' pre-eminent slugger (.339, 201 H, 26 HRs, 139 RBIs), contributing mightily to the first of 4 pennants Detroit would win during his tenure. Greenberg's 63 doubles are still the fourth highest season total in MLB history. He hit two HRs on Rosh Hashanah, but chose synagogue over ballpark on Yom Kippur.

16. Alex Bregman 2018. With a fifth-place finish in the MVP vote, the prime of Bregman (.286, 51 2Bs, 31 HRs, 103 RBIs) announced itself.

17. Hank Greenberg 1946. Due to World War II service, Greenberg had not played a complete season since 1940. Even though he could no longer hit for high average (.277), he bested Ted Williams for the AL HR (44) and RBI (127) crowns.

18. Ken Holtzman 1973. Grounded by a 2.97 ERA, the Oakland A's All-Star righthander notched 21 of the wins, against 13 losses, that made him the Jewish leader in career victories (174). Holtzman also

won 2 1973 World Series games.

19. Sandy Koufax 1964. Due to injury, Koufax's season ended on August 16. Despite the abbreviated campaign, the southpaw was brilliant (19 wins-5 losses, 1.74 ERA, seven shoutouts, 223 strikeouts).

20. Kevin Youkilis 2008. Stellar defense by the versatile infielder at first and third base, and a potent bat (.312 BA, 43 2Bs, 29 HRs, 115 RBIs) earned the burly Red Sox All-Star third place in MVP voting.

21. Sid Gordon 1948. The New York Giants All-Star led third baseman in fielding percentage, hit well (.299 BA, 30 HRs, 107 RBIs), and finished fourth NL MVP rankings.

22. Lip Pike 1871. Hitting .377 and leading the league in home runs, the Troy Haymaker right fielder gave Jews a presence in the 1871 debut season of the National Association, baseball's first major league.

23. Max Fried 2022. Like his hero Koufax, Fried is prone to injury. Nonetheless, he pitched well enough (14 wins-seven losses, .667 winning percentage, 2.48 ERA) to place second in Cy Young Award voting. For good measure, he won a Golden Glove.

24. Ian Kinsler 2011. Despite a batting average (.255) well below his career mark, the Texas Ranger second baseman joined that elite company of ballplayers to hit 30-plus home runs (32) and steal 30-plus bases (30) in the same season. He scored 121 runs and turned 103 double plays, tops at the keystone.

25. Erskine Mayer 1915. The year before, the Philadelphia Phillies rightly became the first Jewish MLB pitcher to top 20 victories in a season, but in 1915, he came back with an even more dominant campaign (21 wins-15 losses, 2.36 ERA, 20 complete games). Let the arguments begin!



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Celebrating Jewish Literature



Books for the younger crowd

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

“Finn and Ezra’s Bar Mitzvah Time Loop”

Time loops have become a popular literary device, one that allows writers to explore how their characters would react if forced to live the same day or weekend or week over and over and over again. This is the premise behind “Finn and Ezra’s Bar Mitzvah Time Loop” by Joshua S. Levy (Katherine Tegen Books), during which Finn and Ezra relive their bar mitzvah weekends a mind-numbing number of times.

However, just as in his previous novel “The Jake Show,” Levy is also interested in the differences between secular and religious families. (To read *The Reporter* review of “The Jake Show,” visit <https://www.thereportergroup.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-great-gifts-for-hanukkah-books-for-tweensteens>.) Ezra, whose family is Orthodox, feels lost and unseen as the middle child of five children. The Shabbat of his bar mitzvah is filled with family fights and unpleasant events, including a grumpy member of the synagogue who complains about his voice each and every repeat of the weekend. The time loop lasts until Sunday afternoon when the party celebrating his bar mitzvah is being held, after which Ezra once again returns to Friday morning. He despairs of finding a way out – that is, until, during the party, Finn signals him that they need to meet.

Finn, whose family is secular, is also stuck in the same time loop. An only child, Finn loves his parents, but sometimes their strong focus on him feels overwhelming. It doesn’t help that he has few friends, with those who attend his party noting they were only there because their parents made them come. When Finn and Ezra meet and realize that they are stuck in the same time loop, they look for ways to restore order in the world, which is not as easy as they expect. However, that doesn’t stop them from trying every method they can think of to stop the endless repeat of time.

“Finn and Ezra’s Bar Mitzvah Time Loop” does an excellent job combining humor and serious topics. At first, Finn and Ezra almost speak different languages with Ezra being completely unfamiliar with Finn’s references to contemporary American culture. Finn, on the other hand, has little knowledge of the Orthodox Jewish customs that limit Ezra’s life. Underlying the story are the lessons that both need to learn. Levy has produced another excellent work for tween readers, one adults may also enjoy.

“Right Back at You”

Another literary device is the epistolary novel, a novel told completely in letters. However, Carolyn Mackler adds an additional twist in her “Right Back at You” (Scholastic Press): the letters Mason writes in 2023 and places in his closet in New York City magically appear in the closet of

a girl named Talia, who lives in Pennsylvania in 1987. The two characters face some similar problems: Mason’s parents seem to be splitting up and his mood is not helped by being bullied at school. Talia, who is Jewish, faces antisemitism that is ignored by her teachers and her former friend.

Mason wrote his first letter to the late Albert Einstein as part of an exercise suggested by his therapist and thinks Talia’s answer is a hoax, although he can’t figure out how anyone could get into his closet. However, these two lonely teens continue to write to each other and bond. There are funny moments when Mason speaks about computers, Google and cell phones, things that make no sense to Talia. There are also moving moments as the two realize the adults who should be helping them aren’t always willing to step out of their own comfort zones, and that sometimes bullies will remain bullies. The novel’s ending is wonderful and will leave readers happy and teary at the same time.

“Neshama”

An increasing number of novels for tweens are being written as prose poetry. When used properly, it can add mood and meaning to a story. That is true for Marcella Pixley’s sweet and moving “Neshama” (Candlewick Press). Anna is an unusual tween: she sees and can speak to ghosts. That makes her stand out at the school: other students make fun of the way she seems to live in her own world. Anna also wonders why her father doesn’t want to celebrate Shabbat: they only observe the day when her grandmother comes to visit. It’s not because her mother is Lutheran because she loves “the flavors” of Judaism and would be happy for them to note the day.

After Anna’s father burns the journal where she wrote about her contact with ghosts, Anna begins to spend weekends with her grandmother. There she learns about her late Aunt Ruthie, who also saw spirits and ghosts. Ruthie’s death changed Anna’s father, who wants nothing to do with ghosts or his religion. However, meeting Ruthie’s ghost helps Anna not only understand her father’s pain, but that of the children at school who make fun of her.

Readers don’t have to believe in ghosts to appreciate the beautiful writing offered in “Neshama” and the way Anna comes to understand the joy and pain the world offers. The prose poetry is easy to read and readers may find themselves pausing at times to admire a beautiful turn of phrase. Anna is a wonderful character and it was a pleasure to watch her not only grow in understanding, but discover the true meaning of compassion.

“Mendel the Mess-Up”

What is poor Mendel, the main character in Terry LaBan’s graphic novel “Mendel The Mess-Up” (Holiday House), to do? He was cursed before birth so that everything he

does comes out wrong. Normally that just means crashing into people and objects, or causing a fire when he tries to set the dinner table. His curse takes a darker tune when Cossacks threaten the Jewish village in which he lives. His attempts to save the village backfire and the opening scene shows him being threatened by wolves, which would be bad enough, except for the Cossack who is trying to use him to discover where the other villagers are hidden.

While this might make the novel sound very serious, it’s actually a funny work that contains a convoluted plot featuring the reason behind Mendel’s curse and his attempts to escape the Cossacks. Parts of it are decidedly silly and may remind readers of stories about Chelm, although most of the villagers are not Chelm-like. The Cossacks are menacing, but not as scary as real life ones. By the graphic novel’s end, Mendel learns that messing up sometimes does not mean that one will mess up all the time. In fact, he even helped save his village, although by some unusual means.

“Elsa’s Chessboard”

Jenny Andrus seeks to honor her grandmother in the picture book “Elsa’s Chessboard” with illustrations by Julie Downing (Neal Porter Books). In the early part of the 20th century, Elsa watched her brothers play chess and soon became enamored with the game, receiving her own chess set when she was 10. Elsa even met her husband through their mutual interest in chess. They carried the chess set with them when they and their children escaped from Europe during the 1930s. Years later, Elsa’s grandchildren showed no interest in learning chess and the chess set was misplaced. It is her great-grandson who accidentally finds the set and asks her to teach him the game.

“Elsa’s Chessboard” is a charming story that clearly was a labor of love for the author. The book ends with more information about Elsa’s life and includes guidance for those interested in learning more about chess.

“More Than Enough”

Teaching children about the concept of *tzedakah* can be difficult because its meaning does not conform to the English word charity. “More Than Enough: Inspired by Maimonides’s Golden Ladder of Giving,” written by Richard Michelson and illustrated by Joe Cepeda (Peachtree), helps children understand the true meaning of the word. That includes learning not to judge others by how they look and that helping someone now may mean that later they might become self-supporting. The book also emphasizes how giving should be done for its own sake, rather than expecting thanks.

Parents will want to discuss what the main character learns with their children in order to help them develop a better understanding of *tzedakah*. The work concludes with a discussion of the “Golden Ladder of Giving” for those unfamiliar with the concept.

“Shabbat Shalom”

Parents looking to introduce their toddler to the idea of Shabbat should find Suzy Ultman’s board book “Shabbat Shalom: Let’s Rest and Reset” (Rise + Penguin’s Workshop) extremely helpful. The text is simple, but well done, noting the ways that “doing” during the week differs from just “being” on Shabbat. It also introduces such concepts as togetherness with family, friends and community during the day, while also reminding readers (parents and children) that sometimes being alone is the rest one needs. The sweet drawing compliment the text, showing, for example, the different foods and rituals of the day. This would be an excellent baby gift for new parents or a great gift for the children of a relative or friend.

The Bible and its scribes

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

William M. Schniedewind thinks scholars and contemporary readers often ask the wrong questions when looking at the development of the biblical text. In his “Who Really Wrote the Bible: The Story of the Scribes” (Princeton University Press), Schniedewind, a professor of biblical studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, focuses on the “various scribal communities that wrote and collected biblical literature and how these communities and their literature made their way to Jerusalem where this literature could be preserved, compiled, edited, and eventually canonized into our Bible.”

If readers learn one thing from Schniedewind’s work, it’s that a focus on the individual authors of the text is the wrong approach. He notes that “the idea of biblical authors is anachronistic. It transports modern views of writing and authorship back into the past.... producing and distributing literature in antiquity relied heavily on scribal communities and social infrastructure. A scribe could not just sit and write and then distribute their work. Writing and literature as well as their distribution and dissemination relied on communities.”

Schniedewind notes that scribes were connected to a variety of occupations, for example, writing letters and proclamations for rulers, keeping track of business transactions, writing religious documents, etc. Since there were no schools as we think of them in contemporary times, scribes were either the natural children of scribes (with the occupation passed down through the family) or apprentices who learned to write as part of their training. These apprentices were often considered part of the family, noted by the fact the word *ben* (son) was often used to describe their connection to the scribal family.

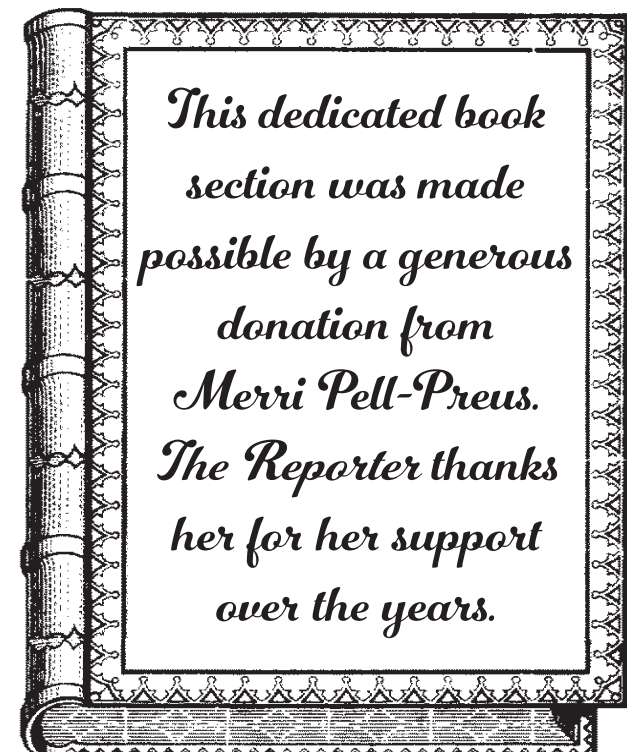
The author believes that, after the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel, many northern priestly scribes moved to the area around Jerusalem and brought the stories of the northern kingdom with them. The author also

writes of those scribes found in rural areas of the southern kingdom of Judah, who did not work for the temple proper. He sees these two groups as coming together at some point to write an authoritative text that would become the scroll of the Torah.

Using archeological evidence and references from the biblical text, Schniedewind offers a far more complex version of what occurred than can be explained in a short review. He includes details about the history of the two kingdoms and what occurred when they were conquered and/or destroyed. The author also notes how the use of Aramaic spread, meaning that Hebrew was now only used by a limited group of people. It became the specialty of the priestly scribes who copied and recopied the documents that had been passed down. Hebrew became a literary language, rather than a spoken one.

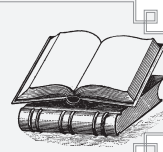
It was only later that these scrolls became venerated. Schniedewind feels this began during the Persian period. He quotes from biblical texts to show the scrolls containing these stories now being read to the public, rather than just being known to the scribal community. The author also outlines the relationship between Judean scribes and Samaritan ones, describing when the two groups began to split and noting how that affected the writings they passed down to the next generation.

“Who Really Wrote the Bible” is a scholarly work and can be difficult to read for those unfamiliar with this era of history. Lovers of archeology will enjoy the illustrations and discussions about the development of writing throughout this period. Those who are interested in specifics of the writing of the biblical text may find less information than they might have wished. That’s because Schniedewind recognizes the impossibility of identifying authors as we now know them. However, that explain his clever title: he is less interested in who wrote (authored) the text than he is with those who physically placed words on seals, buildings, stones, papyrus and parchment.





Celebrating Jewish Literature



Secrets, political and personal

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Missing facts: what someone doesn't know can have a profound effect on their lives. Learning the truth can not only change how a person feels about the past, but the ongoing directions of their lives. Two recent novels show the way characters process secrets. While "The Sound of a Thousand Stars" by Rachel Robbins (Alcove Press) focuses on how political and personal secrets can create divisions between two characters, learning the truth about the past changes the personal and professional life of the main character in "Klara's Truth" by Susan Weissback Friedman (She Writes Press).

"The Sound of a Thousand Stars" focuses on two Jewish characters who find themselves working at Los Alamos in 1944. Neither Alice Kath, a physicist who struggles to be taken seriously by her fellow scientists, nor Caleb Blum, who works for the explosives division, knows the purpose of their research. Alice, who comes from a rich, upper class, secular Jewish family, believes in the beauty of pure science and feels that J. Robert Oppenheimer, who had been her professor, would never be on the wrong side

of history. Caleb, who belongs to a poor Orthodox family, agreed to work at Los Alamos so he can send money to his parents who are at risk of losing their home. While Caleb is no longer a believer in God, he struggles with his ingrained Jewish practice, including eating the non-kosher food available. Although Caleb loves science and wants to get an advanced degree, he doesn't believe he will ever be able to afford it.

Any reader who knows history will know the final focus of their research. When they do discover the truth, both are greatly distressed because they know they could be unleashing the end of the world. Although Alice and Caleb are attracted to each other, they have difficulty connecting because neither is completely open about their past. Caleb doesn't tell Alice how poor he is and how every penny of his salary is sent to his parents; Alice doesn't discuss her fiancé, to whom she became engaged to please her parents. There is no real love in that relationship, especially since her fiancé denigrates her work, something her parents also don't take seriously.

As a counterpoint to the novel's personal aspects (including real-life characters who wander through its pages), it features chapters called "T-Minus" that begin in 1996 and move backward in time. They focus on Haruki Sato, who survived the bombing of Hiroshima. These sections add great depth as readers learn how one person's life was affected by the research facilitated by Alice and Caleb.

These counterpoints make "The Sound of a Thousand Stars" a powerful, moving story. Robbins notes that her grandparents worked at Los Alamos, but never discussed that part of their lives. Whether or not she accurately portrays their history, Robbins has written a gripping work that raises more questions than it answers. That, however, makes it perfect for book clubs and discussion groups.

While Robbins' novel offers insights into several characters, "Klara's Truth" focuses on archeology professor

Klara Lieberman who, in 2014, learns a family secret that makes her completely re-evaluate her life. This occurs when Klara's mother tells her that Klara's father had not deserted the family, but died in a train accident on the way to a job interview in another city. Over the years, her mother had refused to discuss him, making Klara feel unloved and neglected. Klara learned that her mother refused to pay for his burial, leaving his sister in Poland to bring him back to the country he escaped before World War II. The reason behind the revelation is that Klara's mother is now seeking reparation money from Poland and wants Klara to do the same.

Klara, instead, becomes intrigued by her family history. Long interested in the history of other cultures, she now wants to know more about her Jewish past. Arranging for a semester's sabbatical, Klara travels to Poland. However, not all the members of her father's family welcome her. While her aunt is overjoyed to meet her niece, Klara's cousin does not trust her, especially since their attempts to contact Klara over the years failed. She worries that Klara is only interested in the money owed them.

Klara learns about two different aspects of the past: about her father from reading the letters he wrote to his sister noting his love for his daughter, and about how the Polish Jewish community has changed since World War II. Her research includes visiting almost-forgotten Jewish cemeteries across the country. When visiting her father's grave, she meets Filip, who first learned of his Jewish heritage when his mother was on her deathbed. Klara and Filip are attracted to each other, but Klara has trust issues that have prevented her in the past from fully opening herself up to another human being.

The writing in "Klara's Truth" is plain and blunt. Its pleasures are Klara's story and its discussion of the Jewish community in Poland. Although parts of the plot are not completely resolved, that makes the novel's ending feel realistic and satisfying.

Humorous history

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

A humorous history of the Jewish people? Seriously? Well, yes, actually, Jewish humor and Jewish history both have a dark side to them. But Jews have always had the ability to laugh – and complain – about our troubles. After all, our holidays have been described as "they tried to kill us, we won, let's eat," which combines the best of Judaism: celebration and food. This is just a long way to say that Rob Kutner's "The Jews: 5,000 Years and Counting" (Wicked Son) looks for the humor – laugh-out-loud and so-lame-it-makes-you-groan humor – from biblical to contemporary times.

The humor begins with the book's dedication, which reads, "To all the Jews/ Who, if history is any guide,/ Could probably use a laugh right now." But it's the epigraph that really lets readers know what's coming: "No Jews were harmed in the making of this book. But that doesn't mean they won't complain."

Some chapters are written from Kutner's point of view, while, in others, the pretense is that someone from the past wrote it. For example, the story of creation is told from the snake's point of view. (Well, in the biblical text, the snake does talk to Eve so there is a logical sense to this.) The snake has an interesting perspective about life in the Garden of Eden, which explains why he tempted Eve to eat of the fruit: "If I'm being honest, living in a place of complete, wall-to-wall perfection is *boring as sin*."

Moses discusses his time as leader of the Israelites in another funny section. After writing about the people's constant complaining, even after the miracles God has done for them, Moses does note that there is a positive side to this: "the Jews are finally starting to develop a cohesive national identity: the people who kvetch about food."

Kutner writes that, after the destruction of the Second Temple, it became clear what will be "one of the Jewish people's favorite all time things: *words*." These words appear in the numerous pages that comprise the Mishnah, the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, and collections of *midrash*. The author then offers a selection of "Rabbi Action Cards," featuring Hillel ("The Oralizer" who is credited with co-creating the Oral Law), Yochanan ben Zakai (known for his "Sneakery" since he escaped Jerusalem disguised as a corpse), Yehuda HaLevi (known for his "Power Poetry") and more.

There is a wonderful section called "Fiddlers on the Run" that tells of Tevye and his family in the United States and features new variations of the lyrics from "Fiddler on the Roof" songs. Readers may find themselves singing along. There are Jews with which many readers won't be familiar, from pirates to Chinese clan leaders. The formation of the state of Israel and its later leaders also receive their own chapters. One chapter, though, has a serious tone: "The Holocaust: The Jokes Write Themselves." The only humor are the editor's notes spread through the straight discussion of what occurred – notes that suggest ways the author could try to make this chapter funny.

"The Jews: 5,000 Years and Counting" is easy and fun to read. While obviously not a textbook, using it in addition to a history text might make that history go down smoother. It would also be a good *b'nai mitzvah* present, in addition to an excellent one for any adult Jew with a sense of humor.

Before and after

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Reviewing a book by a political activist with one by a rabbi is not something I would normally contemplate: they obviously have different approaches to life. However, the latest works by Israeli author and political activist David Grossman and a French religious leader, Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur, speak to the Hamas massacre of October 7, 2023. Most of Grossman's essays in "The Thinking Heart: Essays on Israel and Palestine" (Vintage International) were written before October 2023, which makes them heartbreakingly prophetic. Horvilleur's "How Isn't It Going?" (Europe Editions) deals directly with how she and others in France felt in the weeks after the October 7 attacks. Reading these two works together was a reminder of just how precarious life can be for Jewish people across the world.

Grossman is a controversial figure because he has long advocated for peace and opposes the current right-wing government of Israel. Yet, Grossman has paid his dues: his 20-year-old son, Uri, died in Lebanon in 2006 during his army service. Plus, it's clear that Grossman loves Israel and cares deeply about its future. As he notes in the preface to his work, he feels "a certain outrage" whenever a U.S. president announces that he supports Israel's right to exist. Grossman writes "the statement is well-meaning, but could we imagine a president making a similar declaration about France's right to exist? Or Italy's, Holland's. Egypt's, India's? Of all the countries in the world, Israel alone finds itself in this absurd predicament."

What disturbs Grossman is that the current Israeli government believed it could ignore the dissatisfaction Palestinians living in the territories felt about the restrictions they dealt with on a daily basis. What October 7 proved is that there can be no peace unless that problem is squarely faced. However, Grossman does not believe more war and bombs will solve the problem. For the author, if Israel is to continue to exist, the focus must be on achieving peace with its neighbors, rather than expanding settlements or gaining more territory. Only peace will ensure the country's survival, but there will only be endless war unless these underlying issues are solved.

Grossman is also clear that nothing the Israeli government did over the years excuses the Hamas attack. But he talks about previous Israeli responses to events that have helped create a continuing cycle of violence, just as has the oppression of the Arab population in Gaza and the West Bank. Grossman mourns the never-ending cycle of violence that causes death on both sides. Although a secular Jew, he wants his very Jewish country to live up to Jewish ideals and is concerned with "the fusing of religion with messianism, of faith with zealotry, of the national with the nationistic and fascistic."

"The Thinking Heart" offers much food for thought as Grossman balances his love of country with his despair at the path it has been taking. Reading essays that in many ways predict the violence that occurred proves startling

and disturbing. Anyone who cares about Israel should read this work, whether or not they think they agree with Grossman's approach to events.

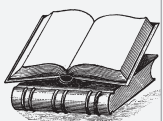
While Grossman focuses on Israel, Horvilleur concentrates on Jewish life in France. This leads her to have imaginary conversations with her deceased grandparents, along with real conversations with her children and friends. Her shock and horror at the October 7 attacks makes her question how her ideas about being Jewish. She keeps being reminded of a Yiddish phrase that echoed through her childhood: "*oy a broch!*" ("What a curse!") It's exact meaning depends on the context. Horvilleur notes that the phrase "designates that very Jewish capacity of knowing how to complain *with humor*. It carries the power of a sob that explodes into laughter." However, she, unfortunately, is so distressed that she can't find any humor in the current situation. Instead, it reminds her of how Jews are often blamed for the evil done to them. Even those seeking to be a perfect citizen of their country may be in danger.

Horvilleur discusses the antisemitism she sees, some of which is disguised as anti-Zionism, although she is greatly disturbed by those who say they are only against Israelis, not Jews. However, she also notes the relationship antisemites have with Jews: "Full of hate [the antisemite] sees himself as the victim of a terrible inequality. He is deprived of something, it has been taken from him, usurped. He has been cheated by life or by a neighbour, by his wife's lover, by his banker or by God, it doesn't matter which. But he knows very well where all this started. While the racist has a superiority complex, the antisemite sees himself diminished, amputated."

What is also disturbing is how little sympathy some people feel for the victims of October 7 or those affected by the increasing antisemitism that is occurring in France. Horvilleur notes there are those who refuse to go to demonstrations against antisemitism because they believe there will also be racists present. She writes about how "hatred against Jews is paradoxically fueled by so-called antiracism. A brilliant shorthand is at work: let's be in the side of the weak, the victims, the vulnerable. The problem is that while the list of victims is long, the Jews don't appear on it. Strange. Even when they're assassinated, defenestrated, burned, tortured, raped or kidnapped: nothing renders them vulnerable enough to be worthy of protection."

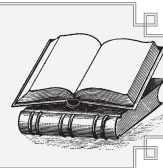
Horvilleur doesn't have any real answers, but knows that the questions she discusses are important. She, like Grossman, longs for peace – a fair peace for everyone. Her work opens with a quote from a poem by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and ends with a quote from one by Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai. Horvilleur notes that there are no words of hate in their poems, only a longing for a normal life of peace. "How Isn't It Going?" offers some solace to readers, while forcing them to look squarely at the difficulties of being Jewish in today's world.

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





Celebrating Jewish Literature



Jewish wisdom for a better life

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

The self-help trend is a popular one. It's estimated that, in 2024, Americans spent more than \$800 million on self-help books, with more than \$45.7 billion being spent worldwide. That means many people are dissatisfied with all or part of their lives. Can Judaism play a role in helping them? Rabbi Shira Stutman certainly believes that Jews and non-Jews can live more meaningful and purposeful lives by following Jewish principles and practices. Her work "The Jewish Way to a Good Life: Find Happiness, Build Community, and Embrace Lovingkindness" (The Experiment) offers easy-to-read chapters filled with suggestions and practical advice on exactly how to do that. It also serves as an excellent review of Jewish principles.

Stutman notes that, while every religious, cultural or spiritual practice has something to offer, Judaism is the one that resonates with her. Its practice also underlies all aspects of her life: "Judaism was never meant to be lived in the home or synagogue only – it was meant to be lived with every single breath you take. On the street, in the store,

in your place of work, each of these locations are prime places to put what you learn in this book into action. If you take the sparks from most faith traditions – I happen to know Judaism, it happens to be mine – they can help elevate all your daily acts, from the way you commute in the morning to how you treat the people you see while you're waiting at the bus stop, from whether to compost or recycle to the way you behave in the office or in your business." While the author acknowledges that Judaism is not perfect, she chooses to focus on its positive aspects.

The 10 chapters of "The Jewish Way to a Good Life" focus on a variety of Jewish concepts. Many of the Hebrew terms used don't have a simple, direct translation to an English word, but Stutman uses examples to better explain their meaning. Chapters focus on celebration, the body, money, education, community, justice, resting and more. Her discussions of these concepts will resonate differently depending on the reader, but some that stood out for me include the following:

◆ When explaining *chesed* (acts of lovingkindness),

Stutman notes that every act we do is important, even when we can't guarantee the results will be positive. She mentions that while a person might not be able to change the world, they can affect the life of a particular individual, something Judaism considers important. Also under discussion is whether an action only counts if it is completely selfless. Stutman suggests that all our actions – selfish and selfless – are part of a larger ecosystem: "As Judaism understands it, when we do an act of [lovingkindness] the *energy generated by that act* will make the world better in a way that will benefit us. You generate a 'credit,' not just for you but for the whole world."

◆ The author sees *ahava* (love) as an action verb, meaning that love needs not just to be felt, but acted upon. She also notes that, in order to be able to love others, we first must learn to love ourselves. Stutman then discusses a wide variety of types of love, including platonic, romantic and erotic love, in addition to addressing the biblical commandment to love the stranger.

◆ When discussing the concept of happiness, she summarizes the quest for happiness by writing, "Happiness is the result of a life meaningfully lived... It is not happiness that leads to a meaningful life, it is a meaningful life that leads to happiness."

◆ Her discussion of community is one of the most challenging parts of her book. She noted that a community must come together for a common goal and periodically meet in person, meaning online communities will not serve. Diversity is important: many kinds of people must be made welcome. There should be no financial requirements that prevent people from participating. (The author does note the need for financial contributions for organizations, but those should not be used to prevent people who can't afford them from joining.) Perhaps the most difficult idea is that, when part of a community, people must support even the members they don't like.

◆ Stutman notes five steps that are necessary for the pursuit of justice and offers a discussion of each. They include the idea that justice "centers the good of society over the individual good," "is in service of the active and ongoing pursuit of justice," "is based on facts, not hearsay or half-truths," "demands compassion not only for your allies but also your adversaries," and "is done as part of a community."

The author recognizes that following this path is not always easy, but she sees it as worthwhile. Readers looking to create more meaning in their lives will find "The Jewish Way to a Good Life" helpful, even if they are not Jewish. However, the Jewish concepts may resonate more with those raised in the Jewish tradition. The book could serve as a text for a synagogue class or for groups seeking to better incorporate Judaism into their lives.

Family, music and fantasy

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman
"Going Home"

How to define a family is just one of the questions raised by Tom Lamont's "Going Home" (Alfred A. Knopf). When 30-something Téó Erskine volunteers to babysit Joel, a toddler who is the son of his friend and former crush Lia, he doesn't expect to be left guardian of the child. After all, he is only there for a duty visit to see his father, Vic, and spend time with a school friend, Ben Mossam, before returning to London, the place he now sees as home. He deliberately left his former community and has no desire to permanently return. But now Téó must decide what will happen to Joel, and everyone from Vic to the community's new rabbi, Sybil Challis, has an idea about what should be done.

The story is told from the point of view of four characters: Téó, Vic, Ben and Sybil. Readers not only learn about their connections to Joel and his mother, but to the local Jewish community. Even though he comes to care for Joel, Téó doesn't see himself as a permanent guardian for the child. Vic, who experienced foster care when young, so very much wants Joel to remain with him that he doesn't always think carefully about his actions. Ben resists helping, because he's never thought about anyone beyond himself. He also has a secret that could change the course of his life. Sybil, whose position at the synagogue is probationary, had befriended Lia and wants to make certain that Joel receives the love and care he deserves.

One of the most interesting characters in the novel, though, is the one whose thoughts are never heard. Joel is too young to articulate his feelings and it's not clear how much he understands what's happened. He does know his world has changed, but his future will be decided by forces beyond his control.

What ultimately makes "Going Home" a moving work – both sweet and sad at the same time – is that all those involved are trying to do their best, but their best is not always good enough. Book clubs that enjoy discussing family life will find "Going Home" an excellent choice.

"The Last Dekrepitzer"

So many Jewish-themed books are released every year that is impossible to read and/or review all of them. That means that sometimes I pass on a book, that is until it's again brought to my attention. I had originally decided not to ask for a review copy of "The Last Dekrepitzer" by Howard Langer, filing it under "not even I can read everything." However, when I learned that it won the 2024 Miller Family Book Club Award at the National Jewish Book Awards, I changed my mind.

The novel's prologue was intriguing and drew me into the action: a young man hears a fiddler playing in the New York City subway and recognizes the tune from his musical studies. He approaches the fiddler and asks if he is member of the Dekrepitzer Chasidim, a group whose members were thought to have been murdered during World War II. After a short discussion, the young man realizes that he is standing before the last Dekrepitzer alive, Reb Shmuel Meir Lichtbencher, who now calls himself Sam Lightup. How Shmuel/Sam survived the war and came to the United States is the subject of the rest of the book.

But first readers learn how fiddle music came to the Dekrepitzers, an isolated group of Chasidim, and how it changed the way they prayed. It was Shmuel's grandfather who first learned to play the fiddle and, after playing the *niggunim*, songs chanted without words, that were long part of his community, he began to create his own melodies, ones that served as a way for him to pour out his heart to God. Shmuel followed in his grandfather and father's paths, studying to be a rabbi, while also learning how to use

music as a form of praying. It was his fiddling ability that saved Shmuel's life: a Soviet official heard him play and brought him to Moscow so he could enter a conservatory. However, the war intervened, which prevented Shmuel from returning to his village and left him without family or community.

Traveling after the war, Shmuel found himself in Naples, Italy, where he met several Black American soldiers playing music. When they heard him play his fiddle, the soldiers befriended him and smuggled him into the U.S. Living in the South and playing his fiddle with members of the Black community in rural Mississippi, Shmuel, now called Sam, learns that not everyone in his new home is tolerant, but, in this case, the main prejudice is against the Black community. Sam is forced to leave Mississippi and moves to New York City. Yet, his only true home is the music he plays.

"The Last Dekrepitzer" is a melancholy, moving portrayal of one man's longing for home and community. By the end of his life, Sam can't pray in words because there aren't words enough to explain just how angry he is with God. Instead, Sam speaks to God through his music, music readers will wish they could hear. However, it is unlikely that any melody could live up to the sound readers imagine. While the work won the 2024 Miller Family award for best book club book, it didn't strike me as an easy one to discuss. However, it is one worth reading.

"A Dark and Drowning Tide"

When reading the open chapters of Allison Saft's fantasy "A Dark and Drowning Tide" (Del Ray), I wondered if I'd made a mistake in asking for a review copy. The main character, Lorelei Kaskel, immediately grabbed my interest and the plot seemed intriguing. My problem? I wondered if there was any Jewish content. Then it suddenly became clear: although Lorelei is called a Yevani, that term refers to a group that qualifies as Jewish in everything but name.

The Yevani are forced to live in a ghetto-like section of the city; they observe Shabbat and *kashrut* (dietary laws) and debate Yevani law in a way that would make a talmudic scholar proud. They are also hated by the general public and used as scapegoats by the king. Lorelei, who become a folklorist under the guidance of her non-Yevani mentor Professor Ziegler, is about to embark with Ziegler on an important mission for the king. The other scholars included in the trip dislike Lorelei, especially the beautiful and beloved Sylvia von Wolff, who irritates Lorelei in more ways than she can list.

Problems begin almost immediately after the expedition begins when Ziegler is found murdered. Lorelei is technically the next in command, but the other scholars treat her with disdain not only because she is a Yevani, but because she did not grow up as part of their exclusive group. Lorelei is determined to learn who killed Ziegler and to continue their mission, if only not to be blamed by the king and executed in the real murderer's place.

The plot moved quickly and was filled with unexpected twists and turns. One of the work's greatest pleasures is watching the development of the relationship between Lorelei and Sylvia. The two spar and get on each other's nerves, mostly because the oblivious Lorelei has no idea the true reason they are unable to connect.

"A Dark and Drowning Tide" is an excellent novel. Underlying its adventure are several serious questions: is there anything – including the peace of a kingdom – for which it is worth sacrificing the innocent? How do you balance the needs of the many against the truth that might spell disaster? These questions add depth and substance, making this work far more than an ordinary fantasy.

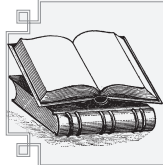
Revealing their true selves

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

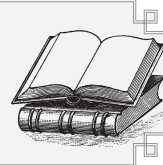
Years ago, an author told me that she enjoyed seeing her novel "in dialogue" with a second book. I'd never phrased it that way before, but, when two books inform each other, it is usually far more interesting to read and review them together. This was true of two recent novels I read that take place during World War II: "The Sunflower House" by Adriana Allegri (St. Martin's Press) and "The Girls of the Glimmer Factory" by Jennifer Coburn (Sourcebooks) offer the perspectives of characters who face similar dilemmas, but behave in different ways, ways that reveal their true nature.

Allina Straus, the main focus of "The Sunflower House," lives with her aunt and uncle in a small village in Germany. Her parents died when she was too young to really remember them, but she has always felt loved and safe. However, events connected to the National Socialism Movement in 1939 greatly change her life: Allina finds out her mother was Jewish, meaning that her life is in danger, and Nazi soldiers raid her village because of its ties to those resisting Hitler. It's then that she's forced to move to a Lebensborn house, which is a state-run house for married and single pregnant women who are charged with producing children for the Germany. Allina has no choice but to work as a nurse with the children, many of whom will be adopted by families that support the Nazi regime. Interaction between German soldiers and the nurses is encouraged so that the nurses will also produce children.

It is there that Allina meets Karl, a high ranking Nazi official, who is interested in children who seem to have gone missing from the Lebensborn house. Something questionable may be happening to them. At the risk of her life, Allina agrees to work with Karl who develops feelings for her. However, Allina is so traumatized by the events that occurred in her village that she is unable to respond. See "True" on page 8



Celebrating Jewish Literature



Biblical mothers and barren women

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Writing a review of a book that turns out to be very different from what you expected can be difficult. For example, I mistakenly thought “Conceived in Hope: The Struggles of Biblical Mothers in the Tapestry of Redemption” by Chana Tannenbaum (Maggid Books) was going to be a feminist discussion of mothers’ place in the biblical text. What I discovered is that, while Tannenbaum does re-evaluate women’s contributions to the Jewish national story, she does so from a very traditional Orthodox point-of-view. Her discussion of the text focuses on *midrash* (rabbinic stories) and Orthodox rabbinic commentaries that are decidedly not feminist. While not what I was expecting, Tannenbaum does do an excellent job using those texts to explore biblical women’s stories in the context of traditional Jewish thought, while also explaining the important role these women played in Jewish history and theology.

When seeking to explain why most of the matriarchs were originally unable to conceive, Tannenbaum quotes from the Talmud, suggesting that this is because God desires the prayers of the righteous. Realizing that people may wonder why God needs their prayers, she writes that “man’s fundamental purpose in this world is to recognize God and glorify His name. Prayer is the ultimate expression of this goal. Through his supplication, man increases the manifestation of God’s presence in this world. That is what is meant by the statement God ‘desires’ prayer: through the supplicant’s sincere prayer, God’s immanence is affirmed and magnified. Sincere prayer is based on man’s intense recognition that all we have is but a gift from God.”

This idea is clearly shown in her discussion of the Shunamite woman and Elisha. Readers never learn the Shunamite woman’s name even after she builds a room for the prophet Elisha. The Shunamite woman has no children and never asks Elisha to use his powers so she may conceive. Instead, on his own, Elisha declares a miracle will take place and the woman will give birth. While that does occur, unfortunately, the baby dies when Elisha is out of town. He ultimately does return and restore the child to life. However, Tannenbaum is concerned with why the baby died in the first place since she believes every story in the Bible can teach us an important lesson.

Tannenbaum offers several commentaries, each blaming a different person for what occurred. (It is important to note that all the commentaries quoted assume that someone is to blame since their underlying assumption

is that there has to be a reason for the baby’s death.) One claims the death was the fault of the Shunamite woman, explaining that she never showed proper appreciation of the miracle done for her. She had not called out to God telling of her pain (although it’s not clear from the text that she was in pain) and was therefore unworthy of the miracle that occurred. Another blames Elisha since he performed a miracle without asking God’s aid first, thereby usurping God’s place in the world. A third commentary also finds Elisha at fault since he should have asked the Shunamite woman whether she wanted a child and helped her prepare for what the commentary calls her special child.

Many of the explanations Tannenbaum offers are intriguing, although she often tries to explain away the simple meaning of the text, something that is common in rabbinic commentary. For example, when discussing the way Rebecca has Jacob pretend to be Esau and trick his father, the author writes of one commentator who believes that Rebecca wasn’t really trying to have Jacob steal the blessing, but rather show Isaac how easily he could be tricked. Why she didn’t stop Isaac from giving the blessing is not discussed. Another commentator notes that what is at stake is which child is the best one to lead the nation, something about which Rebecca and Isaac disagree. Tannenbaum notes that “on her own initiative, [Rebecca] boldly intervenes to ensure the right succession of the covenant. She makes a decision that changes the course of Jewish history and the Jewish religion for good.”

It’s interesting that, although many contemporary feminist writers feel sympathy for Lot’s wife, who left behind two married daughters to die in Sodom, Tannenbaum feels that her punishment – being turned into a pillar of salt – is just: “She was punished for violating the angels’ clear injunction and not being able to sever herself from the evil society she was fleeing. While the possibility exists that she turned to see whether her married daughters were following behind, the fact that she was subjected to such a severe punishment suggests that it was more likely that she still felt connected to her hometown and its lifestyle.” The author then offers a comment from *midrash* about how it was her fault that the townsfolk knew the family had visitors, which serves as yet another reason for her punishment.

When discussing some questionable actions taken by biblical women, Tannenbaum does note that there are times when this behavior may have the correct result and

even be rewarded. For example, this is what occurs when Tamar sleeps with Judah after he refuses to let her marry his third son. It’s her actions that lead to the line of King David, a lineage from which the messiah is said to come. The author writes that, at times, “humanity does its part, and God, in a parallel world, does his.”

The author also discusses the idea of Zion, meaning the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. She compares Zion to a barren woman, noting “the only way to comprehend and appreciate Israel’s national suffering is by comparing it to the agony that these exceptional [barren] women endured.” That highlights for her how central these tales are to the Jewish story.

“Conceived in Hope” assumes its readers are familiar with Jewish texts and concepts. There is no glossary for Hebrew terms and the retelling of the biblical stories are truncated since Tannenbaum expects readers to be able to fill in the blanks. The author does an impressive job explaining her ideas, something that even those who disagree with her interpretations should be able to admire. However, her commentary will resonate best with those who agree with her theological approach to the biblical text.

True •Continued from page 7

Plus, Karl has his own secrets, ones that could put both their lives in danger.

“The Sunflower House” is a wonderful novel. It grabs readers from the first page with its beautiful writing and its well-rounded and interesting characters. This was a hard book to put down, one filled with surprises and meaningful moments. Its focus on a different aspect of Nazi Germany shows how Nazi propaganda infiltrated even the most mundane aspects of German life.

While the majority of “The Sunflower House” focuses on one character, “The Girls of the Glimmer Factory” offers the points of view of two characters: the Jewish Hannah and the German Hilde. Although once friends, they lost touch when Hannah and her family (parents, grandparents and brother), moved to Prague to escape Nazi Germany. While some members of Hannah’s family were then able to escape to Palestine, Hannah and her grandfather were left behind and taken to Theresienstadt, a concentration camp that was used as propaganda to show the Red Cross that the German Jews were being well treated. Of course, that was not the reality for those imprisoned at the camp. Some of the prisoners join the resistance, but Hannah worries their actions will only create more problems. She soon finds herself debating, though, whether doing something – anything – to oppose the regime (even at the risk of one’s life) is better than passively hoping the worst won’t occur.

Hilde truly believes in the Nazi cause because it’s given meaning and purpose to her life. It makes her feel special, even when others dismiss her and her actions. That leaves her willing to use any means she can to succeed, even when that action originally disgusted her. That’s why she wants to help with the filming taking place at Theresienstadt, a film that will show to the world just how wonderfully the Nazis are treating the Jews. It’s there Hilde sees Hannah again for the first time in years. Hilde believes her former friend will help her succeed, even as she treats Hannah poorly in front of those with whom she works.

“The Glimmer Factory” is well done, although more difficult to read than “The Sunflower House” because Hilde is such an unpleasant and difficult person. This is the second novel by Coburn to feature Hilde and those who have read about earlier parts of her life (which are briefly mentioned in this novel) might have more sympathy for her. Hannah and her grandfather are so unrealistic about what is happening that those sections may dismay readers, although they are likely an accurate portrayal of what many people believed at the time.

What makes reading these two novels together interesting is the differences between their characters. For example, while Hannah remained passive for most of the book, Allina was willing to risk her life to help the children born at the Lebensborn house. While she knows that if her connection to Judaism is found out, her life would be in extreme danger, that does not stop her doing what she thinks is right. While Hilde and Karl were both once believers in the Nazi cause, Karl has realized how wrong he was to support the regime. His current actions are a way of repenting for that sin, even though he knows he is risking his life. Hilde, on the other hand, can’t see beyond her own dreams and needs. Even when she finally tries to do something good, the reason behind her action is still basically selfish.

“The Sunflower House” and “The Girls of the Glimmer Factory” would offer book club members a great deal to discuss, although the former does not have much Jewish content. Both are based on real life events, although their main characters are fictional. Readers interested in novels about World War II should find both works of interest.

Female role models

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

An increasing number of books are offering female role models for Jewish teens and teens to emulate. However, that doesn’t mean that adults won’t also find much to enjoy in “Chutzpah Girls: 100 Tales of Daring Jewish Women” by Julie Esther Silverstein and Tami Schlossberg Pruwer (Toby Press). The work not only features one-page biographies of each woman, but artistic interpretations of each woman’s achievements.

The authors’ definition of chutzpah helps explain their choices: They write that chutzpah is “a Jewish superpower: the daring to speak when silenced, to take action when others won’t, to try when they say it’s impossible, to persevere in times of doubt, to be yourself when it’s easier to conform, to stand tall when made to feel small, to believe when all feels hopeless, to shine your light in the face of darkness.” In their preface, they note their book contains “one hundred real-life tales of proud Jewish women who shaped history, rewrote the future, and helped create a better world.”

The women chosen range from the well-known to those with whom reader may not be familiar. Some might wonder if the information about the biblical women (including the matriarchs) is historically accurate, but those women have served as role models over the centuries. The authors do include women from every major time period, showing that even when women had fewer rights, they were still able to make a difference in the world. Among the better known women are Anne Frank, Deborah Lipstadt, Emma Lazarus, Golda Meir, Henrietta Szold, Mayim Bialik and Ruth Bader Ginsburg. However, it is the unfamiliar women that may intrigue readers. There are too many interesting women to list here, but a few that stood out are:

◆ Beatie Deutsch, born in 1989, an Orthodox woman who runs marathons. Her career proves that athletic prowess and modest dress can co-exist. Deutsch notes that “there are a lot of messages out there telling runners to look and dress a certain way... The focus should not be on how your body looks when you run.”

◆ The philanthropist Benvenida Abravanel, born in 1473, who used her money and influence to save more than a thousand Jews from slavery after the Spanish Inquisition.

She also encouraged the use of the printing press in order to help preserve Jewish texts and culture after the expulsion from Spain.

◆ Edith Eger, born in 1927, who combined unusual careers. Eger was a gymnast and dancer in Hungary until she was expelled from the Olympic team because she was Jewish. Eger and her family were taken to Auschwitz, where she was forced to dance for the infamous doctor, Josef Mengele. After the war, she became a psychologist so she could help others who had suffered during the war. When sharing the story of her life with audiences, she “[ends] every talk with her signature ballet high kick.”

◆ Canadian Judith Feld Carr, born in 1939, who, after the Six-Day War, worked to rescue Jews from Syria. These Jews were forbidden to leave Syria, even though it was no longer safe for them there. Even after the death of her husband, which left her a single mother, Carr didn’t stop working to save those in danger. In the end, she was able to save more than 3,000 Syrian Jews.

◆ Meera Jacobs Mahadevan, born in India in 1930, who proves that an unexpected sound can help one discover one’s life path. When walking by a construction site in India, Mahadevan heard the cry of a baby. She soon discovered this was not the only child at many work sites throughout India, where no childcare was available for women who were working to feed their families. Meera helped open hundreds of childcare centers at construction sites across India.

◆ The astronomer Vera Rubin, born in 1928, who had difficulty pursuing her chosen career. Rejection didn’t stop her, and neither did astronomy observatories that didn’t offer women’s restrooms. (Vera handled that problem by “cut[ting] out a paper skirt and tap[ing] it to the figure of the man on the bathroom door sign, making it a women’s room!”) She also championed equal rights for women and mentored others interested in astronomy.

Readers will discover their own favorites, and younger readers may be inspired to follow their dreams or, at least, be introduced to new possibilities for the future. Parents may want to read “Chutzpah Girls” with their children so they can discuss both the difficulties these women faced and the way they successfully overcame them.

Hillel Academy celebrated Passover



At left, right and below: Hillel Academy of Broome County celebrated Passover. Rabbi Moshe Shmaryahu (at left) led the event. (Names of students held on request)



Passover celebrated at TC Religious School



Temple Concord Religious School students learned about Passover and participated in a model seder.



Temple Concord's Tot Shabbat families gathered to celebrate Passover through stories and crafts, decorating their own matzah bags to take home.

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Shemini, Leviticus 9:1-11:47

Holiness in the everyday

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

This week's Torah portion is *parashat* Shemini. The word Shemini means "the eighth," and the portion opens with the verse, "And it was on the eighth day, that Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel." (Leviticus 9:1)

For seven days prior, Moses had been preparing Aaron and his sons to serve in the *Mishkan*, the Tabernacle. On this eighth day, Aaron finally stepped into his role as *kohen gadol* (high priest). It was a monumental occasion – the day when the Divine Presence, the *Shechinah*, would rest among the people. God's presence would be revealed in the Holy of Holies, marking a new level of closeness between the Israelites and their Creator.

But then, just a few chapters later – in Chapter 12 – the Torah shifts dramatically. Suddenly, we're reading detailed laws about kosher animals. We learn that land animals must chew their cud and have split hooves. Fish

must have fins and scales. And a list is given of birds that are not kosher.

It seems like quite a contrast: from discussing the glory of God's presence descending upon the Tabernacle... to a list of dietary laws?

So what's the connection? Why would the Torah place these two very different topics in the same portion?

The answer may lie in one powerful verse: "And Moses said, 'This is the thing the Lord has commanded; do it, and the glory of the Lord will appear to you.'" (Leviticus 9:6)

This verse offers a deep insight: The path to experiencing God's presence isn't necessarily found in grand spiritual experiences or lofty meditations. It comes through doing what God commands.

Whether it's lighting Shabbat candles, being kind to others, or checking if an animal is kosher, the holiness is found in the doing. It's not about what we think is spiritual,

but about faithfully living by God's instructions.

Spirituality is important. But true holiness – the kind that brings about divine revelation – is achieved through *mitzvot*. Through the details. Even the ones that seem mundane.

That's why the Torah places these two themes together. To remind us that the same Divine Presence that filled the *mishkan* is accessible to us: in our kitchens, our workplaces and our daily choices, when we live according to God's will.

So the question I try to ask myself each day is this: "What does God want of me today?"

If we each ask that question, and act on it, we bring a bit more light, a bit more holiness into the world – and we bring ourselves closer to the ultimate redemption.

May our efforts to live a life of *mitzvot* and holiness bring about the coming of Moshiach – may it be speedily and may it be now.

Congregational Notes

Temple Israel

Orientation: Conservative
Rabbi: Micah Friedman
Address: 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: 607-723-7461 and 607-231-3746
Office hours: Mon.-Thurs., 8:30 am-3:30 pm; Fri., 8 am-3 pm
E-mail: office@templeisraelvestal.org
Website: www.templeisraelvestal.org
Service schedule: Tues., 5:30 pm; Fri., 5:30 pm; Sat., 9:30 am

On Fridays and Tuesdays at 5:30 pm, services will be led by Rabbi Micah Friedman via Zoom and in-person.

On Saturday, April 26, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Leviticus 9:1-11:47 and the haftarah is II Samuel 6:1-7:17. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 8:45 pm.

On Sunday, April 27, at 10 am, TI/TC adult ed. program at Temple Concord. (For more information, see the article on page 1.)

On Saturday, May 3, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Leviticus 12:1-15:33 and the haftarah is II Kings 7:3-20. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 9 pm.

On Tuesday, May 6, at 7 pm, there will be an Executive Board meeting.

Temple Beth El of Oneonta

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

Penn-York Jewish Community

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

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rabbi: Caleb Brommer
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: president@tbeithaca.org, secretary@tbeithaca.org
Website: www.tbeithaca.org
Presidents: Melanie Kalman and Alexis Siemon
Sisterhood President: Gail Zussman
Director of Education: Calle Schueler
Services: Friday 8 pm; Saturday 10 am, unless otherwise announced. Weekday morning minyan 7:30 am (9 am on Sundays and legal holidays).
Religious School/Education: September-May: Classes meet on Sunday, 9 am-12:30 pm and Wednesday afternoons, 3:45-5:45 pm. The teen No'ar program meets twice per month (every other Sunday from 5-7 pm) and is designed with the flexibility to accommodate busy student schedules.
Adult Ed.: Numerous weekly courses, several semester-long courses and a variety of mini-courses and lectures are offered throughout the year. Call the temple office for more details.
For upcoming services and events on Zoom, visit www.tinyurl.com/HappeningAtTBE.

Synagogues limit face-to-face gatherings

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

Beth David Synagogue

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

Rohr Chabad Center

Affiliation: Chabad-Lubavitch
Rabbi Aaron and Rivkah Slonim, Directors
E-mail: aslonim@binghamton.edu
rslonim@chabadofbinghamton.com
Address: 420 Murray Hill Rd., Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: 607-797-0015, Fax: 607-797-0095
Website: www.Chabadofbinghamton.com
Rabbi Zalman and Rochel Chein, Education
E-mail: zchein@Jewishbu.com, rchein@Jewishbu.com
Rabbi Levi and Hadasa Slonim, Downtown and Development
Chabad Downtown Center: 60 Henry St., Binghamton
E-mail: lslonim@Jewishbu.com, hslonim@Jewishbu.com
Rabbi Yisroel and Goldie Ohana, Programming
E-mail: yohana@Jewishbu.com, gohana@Jewishbu.com
Regular service times: Daily 7:30 am, Friday evening 6 pm, Shabbat morning 9:30 am, Maariv and Havdalah one hour after candle-lighting time, Sundays 9:30 am.
To join the mailing list, for up-to-date information on adult education offerings or to arrange for a private tutorial, for details concerning the Judaica shop and resource center, or for assistance through the Piaker Free Loan Society or Raff Maasim Tovim Foundation, call Chabad's office at 797-0015.

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

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
Presidents: Martha Armstrong and Mitch Grossman, presidents_22@tikkunvor.org
Education Director/Admin. 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.

Friday, April 25, light candles before..... 7:38 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, April 26 8:39 pm
Friday, May 2, light candles before..... 7:46 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, May 3 8:47 pm
Friday, May 9, light candles before..... 7:53 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, May 10 8:55 pm

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism (this header block updates the current one.)
Rabbi: Leah Moser
Address: 9 Riverside Dr, Binghamton NY 13905
Office hours: Tues-Fri, 10 am-2 pm
Phone: (607) 723-7355
Office e-mail: TempleConcordBinghamton@gmail.com
Website: www.TempleConcord.com
Please contact Temple Concord for Zoom links.

Some services and programs are online only.
Fridays, April 25 and May 2: At 7:30 pm, Friday Shabbat services are in person, on Zoom and Facebook.com.
Saturdays, April 26 and May 3: At 9:15 am, Torah study is in person and on Zoom, and at 10:30 am, Shabbat service, in person only.

Tuesday-Thursday, April 29-May 1 and May 6-8: At 5:30 pm, evening prayers in person only.

Wednesdays, April 30 and May 7: At 6 pm, "Jewish Mysticism" class in person and on Zoom.

Other events:
Sunday, April 27: At 10 am, adult ed. program, "The Yiddish Bund and Bundism." For more information, see the article on page 1.

Sunday, May 4: From 10 am-2 pm, rummage sale in the synagogue basement. Shoppers are asked to use the Oak Street entrance.

Tuesday, May 6: At 10:30 am, Tuesday Morning Book Club: "In the Shadow of the Greenbrier" by Emily Matchar, followed by the annual book selection meeting. For more information, contact Merri Pell-Preus at 607-222-2875 or merrypell.preus@gmail.com. To join via Zoom: <https://bit.ly/3CXVd9b>, meeting ID 881 6469 4206 and passcode 653272.

Wednesday, May 7: At 7 pm, Sisterhood meeting in the synagogue library. Contact Barb Thomas at 607-759-2573 for answers to questions. Anyone interested in joining should contact Carol Herz at 607-222-7144.

Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive
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.: Call ahead, text or e-mail to confirm dates.

Temple Brith Sholom

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

Jewish online resources

By Reporter staff

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

◆ The Museum of Jewish Heritage will hold the “Virtual Walking Tour: Warsaw Ghetto Uprising” on Wednesday, April 30, at 11 am. The cost to attend is \$25. The tour “will explore the history of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the context in which it took place.” For more information or to register, visit <https://mjhnyc.org/events/warsaw-virtual-tour/>.

◆ Ritualwell will hold the virtual course “Mussar for This Moment” on Tuesdays, May 13-27 and June 10, from noon-1:30 pm. The cost to attend is \$180. Rabbi Joshua Boettiger will explore the Mussar tradition – studying *middot* (precepts) and practices from the Mussar masters. For more information or to register, visit <https://ritualwell.org/event/mussar-for-this-moment/2025-05-13/>.

◆ The Jewish Women’s Archive will hold “Jewish Women Writing Our Lives,” a four-session online interactive writing and reflection course on Thursdays, May 1-22, from noon-1:15 pm. For more information or to register, visit <https://jwa.org/events>.

◆ Roundtable will hold the virtual course “The Everyday Life of Jews in the Ancient World” on Thursdays, May 8-22, from noon-1 pm. The cost to attend is \$132. Historian Karen B. Stern will explore the evidence and artifacts of ancient Jewish history to show how the life of Jews in the ancient world existed at the intersection of empires of Mesopotamia, Persia, Greece and Rome. For more information or to register, visit <https://roundtable.org/live-courses/history/the-everyday-life-of-jews-in-the-ancient-world>.

◆ The Museum of Jewish Heritage will hold the hybrid event “The Missing Link in Holocaust Education: Maccabi Hatzair & Israel – The Dream of Terezín Ghetto Youth” on Wednesday, May 7, at 7 pm. “Holocaust researcher Pavel Batel will address the pivotal role of the Terezín Ghetto and Concentration camp during the Nazi occupation of World War II.” For more information or to register, visit <https://mjhnyc.org/events/missing-link-holocaust-edu>.

◆ Siegal Lifelong Learning will hold several virtual courses: “Creating Life after Loss: A Jewish Approach to Continuing the Legacy of Fallen Israeli Soldiers” on Thursday, May 1, from 7-8:30 pm (<https://case.edu/lifelonglearning/lectures/creating-life-after-loss-jewish-approach-continuing-legacy-fallen-israeli-soldiers-remote>); “From Ruins to Glory: New Findings

from the Old City of Jerusalem” on Monday, May 5, from 1:30-3 pm (<https://case.edu/lifelonglearning/lectures/ruins-glory-new-findings-old-city-jerusalem-remote>); “David, Goliath, and the Mystery of the Weaver’s Beam” on Monday, May 12, from 1:30-3 pm (<https://case.edu/lifelonglearning/lectures/david-goliath-and-mystery-weavers-beam-remote>); and “The Tabernacle in the Desert, the Cult Place in Shiloh and Solomon’s Temple” on Monday, May 19, from 10:30 am-noon (<https://case.edu/lifelonglearning/lectures/tabernacle-desert-cult-place-shiloh-and-solomons-temple-remote>). The cost to attend each lecture is \$10.

◆ Roundtable will hold the virtual course “Teddy Roosevelt and the Jews” on Thursdays, June 12 and 26, from 2-3 pm. The cost to attend is \$88. Professor Andrew Porwancher will discuss how Teddy Roosevelt developed a bond with Jewish immigrants to the U.S., how he shaped their lives and how they shaped his legacy. For more information or to register, visit <https://roundtable.org/live-courses/history/teddy-roosevelt-and-the-jews>.

◆ The Museum of Jewish Heritage will hold the virtual program “Stories Survive: ‘Hidden in Plain Sight’ Book Talk” on Monday, May 12, at 7 pm. A donation of \$10 is requested. Julie Brill will discuss her quest to learn about her father’s experiences during the war. For more information or to register, visit <https://mjhnyc.org/events/stories-survive>.

◆ Ritualwell will hold the virtual course “Discover Your Torah: Preparing for Shavuot with Meditation and Poetry” on Wednesdays, May 7, 14 and 21, from 1-2:30 pm. The cost to attend is \$150. The course will offer mindfulness meditation, poetry and generative writing practices to explore themes related to Shavuot. For more information or to register, visit <https://ritualwell.org/event/discovery-our-torah/2025-05-07>.

◆ The Yiddish Book Center will hold the hybrid program “Louis Mayer and Irving Thalberg and the making of Jewish identity in Hollywood” with Kenneth Turan on Sunday, May 11, from 2-3 pm. Turan traces these men’s relationship and discuss the history of Jewish identity in Hollywood. For more information or to register, visit www.yiddishbookcenter.org/events/upcoming-public-programs/louis-mayer-and-irving-thalberg-and-making-jewish-identity.

◆ The Museum of Jewish Heritage will hold the hybrid book talk about “A Calculated Restraint: What Allied Leaders Said About the Holocaust” on Sunday, June 22, at 3 pm. A donation of \$10 is requested. Richard Breitman discusses his book, which sheds new light on the

relationship between World War II and the Holocaust. For more information or to register, visit <https://mjhnyc.org/events/a-calculated-restraint-what-allied-leaders-said-about-the-holocaust-book-talk>.

◆ Roundtable will hold “Reading Amos Oz’s ‘A Tale of Love and Darkness’” on Thursdays, May 8-June 5, from 4-5 pm. The cost to attend is \$220. Shalom Goldman will discuss Oz’s autobiography and what it says about the founding of the state of Israel. For more information or to register, visit <https://roundtable.org/live-courses/literature/reading-amos-oz-a-tale-of-love-and-darkness>.

◆ The Jewish Theological Seminary will hold the virtual conversation “A Vision for Storytelling” on Sunday, May 4, from 2:30-3:30 pm. Jonathan Safran Foer will interview program director Etgar Keret about the new MFA in Creative Writing program at JTS. For more information or to register, visit www.jtsa.edu/event/vision-storytelling.

◆ The Yiddish Book Center will hold the hybrid Melinda Rosenblatt Lecture “The Yiddish Book Center at 45” with Aaron Lansky on Sunday, June 8, at 2 pm. Lansky, president and founder of the Yiddish Book Center, will share reflections and predictions for the Center’s future ahead of his retirement. For more information or to register, visit www.yiddishbookcenter.org/events/upcoming-public-programs/melinda-rosenblatt-lecture-yiddish-book-center-45-aaron-lansky.

◆ The Jewish Book Council will hold the virtual program “Who Will Rescue Us?: The Story of the Jewish Children Who Fled to France and America During the Holocaust” on Wednesday, May 28, from noon-1:15 pm. Author Laura Hobson Faure will discuss her new book, which is the first account of Jewish children’s flight from Nazi Germany to France and their subsequent escape to America. For more information or to register, visit www.jewishbookcouncil.org/events/who-will-rescue-us-the-story-of-the-jewish-children-who-fled-to-france-and-america-during.

◆ Ritualwell will hold the virtual course “Being with Grief: Jewish Wisdom for Supporting Mourners” on Thursdays, May 29 and June 5 and 12, from noon-1:30 pm. The cost to attend is \$154. The class will discuss “how grief tests the limits of language, explore models for understanding loss, and study Jewish practices that create meaningful containers for grief.” For more information or to register, visit <https://ritualwell.org/event/being-with-grief-jewish-wisdom-for-supporting-mourners>.

◆ The Center for Jewish History will hold the hybrid symposium “The End of an Era? Jews and Elite Universities” on Sunday, May 18, at 10 am. “The panelists will explore the complex history of Jews and American universities, analyze the factors contributing to the current crisis, and venture solutions for the future.” For more information or to register, visit <https://programs.cjh.org/stream-tickets/era-2025-05-18>.

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

Lewis Continued from page 3

Over the decades that he has lived in Binghamton, Lewis’s leadership skills have taken many forms. Beginning in 2002, he served for eight years as president of Hillel Academy of Broome County. He is also a past president of Temple Israel. At the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, he has served as chairman of the Editorial Board of *The Reporter*, and was a member of the Federation’s Executive Committee, in addition to its Endowment Committee.

“We marvel at Dick’s boundless energy and passion, in all that he does for the community,” organizers said, “given the important and time-intensive role he plays in his legal career.” A graduate of Ithaca College and University of Illinois Chicago/John Marshall Law School, Lewis is an attorney at Hinman, Howard and Kattell, focusing on litigation and all aspects of business law.

He is the immediate past president of the 80,000-member New York State Bar Association, elected to serve for the 2023-24 term. With the beginning of his 12-month term on June 1, 2023, Lewis spearheaded what has been

called “groundbreaking initiatives.” In that first month, he served as Executive Committee liaison on a task force he created on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Asian Hate. The House of Delegates passed the approximately 50-page report in January 2024. As the featured guest at Beth David’s September 2024 Luncheon Speaker Series, Lewis provided a copy of the report to everyone who attended. In addition, he worked with former Secretary of State Loretta Lynch and former Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson to put out a nationally recognized work on advancing diversity. Both have been adopted as policy by numerous bar associations, including the American Bar Association.

“Dick is so deserving of this honor,” says Rabbi Zev Silber, spiritual leader of Beth David. “Whether we need him to make a minyan or use his legal expertise, he doesn’t know how to say ‘no.’ The Federation and every agency I can think of have benefited from his skills and sincere love of our community. We encourage everyone to be part of a celebration that is sure to be as special as he is!”

Quick Reference Guide to Planned Giving

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

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

If Your Goal is to:	Then You Can:	Your Benefits May Include:
Make a quick and easy gift	Simply write a check now or use a credit card	An income tax deduction and immediate charitable impact
Avoid tax on capital gains	Contribute long-term appreciated stock or other securities	A charitable deduction plus no capital gains tax
Defer a gift until after your death	Put a bequest in your will (gifts of cash or a share or the residue of your estate)	Exemption from federal estate tax on donations
Receive guaranteed fixed income that is partially tax-free	Create a charitable gift annuity	Current and future savings on income taxes plus fixed stable payments
Avoid the two-fold taxation on IRA or other employee benefit plans	Name a charity as the beneficiary of the remainder of the retirement assets after your lifetime	Tax relief to your family on inherited assets
Make a large gift with little cost to you	Contribute a life insurance policy you no longer need or purchase a new one and designate a charity as the owner	Current and possible future income tax deductions
Reduce taxable income from IRA Required Minimum Distributions	Make a qualified charitable donation directly from your IRA (after age 70½)	Reducing taxable income



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Pew: Percentage of U.S. adults who see Israel unfavorably doubled in past year

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – More than 500 days after the Hamas-led terror attacks on October 7, 2023, most Americans view Israel unfavorably, according to new data from the Pew Research Center.

Some 53 percent of Americans see the Jewish state in a negative light, up 11 percentage points from 2022, when 42 percent had unfavorable views, and in 2025, about double the number of U.S. adults say that they see Israel very unfavorably: 19 percent compared to 10 percent.

Democrats and those who lean left (69 percent) were much likelier than Republicans and those who lean right (37 percent) to see Israel unfavorably. That view rose for both Democrats (16 percentage points) and Republicans (10 percentage points).

Younger Americans tended to see Israel less favorably. Among those 18-49, 71 percent of Democrats and those who lean left see Israel unfavorably (up from 62 percent in 2022), and 50 percent of Republicans and those who lean right (up from 35 percent in 2022) see the Jewish state unfavorably. For those over 50, 66 percent of Democrats (up from 43 percent) and 23 percent of Republicans (up from 19 percent) see Israel unfavorably.

Pew surveyed 3,605 American adults between March 24 and 30, prior to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent visit to Washington. Some 32 percent of respondents said they have at least some confidence in Netanyahu.

Jewish Americans were the group that most favored Israel, 73 percent to 27 percent, followed by white evangelical Protestants, 72 percent to 26 percent.

The negativity is driven by Muslim Americans (81 percent negative and 19 percent positive) and those who are unaffiliated with any religion (69 percent negative and 28 percent positive). Catholics also leaned negative, 53 percent to 45 percent.

Republicans (50 percent) were much likelier than Dem-

ocrats (15 percent) to be confident in Netanyahu. About 17 percent of Republicans, and those who lean Republican, had a lot of confidence in the Israeli prime minister and 37 percent of Democrats, and those who lean Democrat, said they had no confidence at all.

About the same percentage of American Jews (53 percent) lacked confidence in Netanyahu as did the overall U.S. adult population (52 percent), although 45 percent of American Jews had at least some confidence in the Israeli prime minister, compared to 32 percent of American adults. Only 8 percent of Muslim Americans expressed confidence, while 87 percent said they had no confidence.

Most Americans (54 percent) told pollsters that the war against Hamas is at least somewhat important to them – down from 65 percent who said the same in January 2024, shortly after October 7.

Republicans and those leaning right (55 percent) and Democrats and those leaning left (56 percent) reported that the war matters to them in similar numbers. Republicans (69 percent) and Democrats (61 percent) over the age of 50 were likelier than Republicans (41 percent) and Democrats (51 percent) between 18 and 49 to say that the war matters to them. Some two-thirds (66 percent) of all respondents said the war was at least somewhat important to U.S. interests.

Jews were the likeliest (93 percent) to say the war mattered to them personally, followed by Muslims (68 percent), white evangelical Protestants (66 percent), Protestants and non-evangelical white Protestants (58 percent each), Catholics (56 percent) and those who are religiously unaffiliated (47 percent). Just 4 percent of Jews said that the war wasn't personally important to them, compared to 25 percent of Muslims.

Last year, 75 percent of adults said the war against Hamas was at least somewhat important for U.S. national interests. That number dropped to 66 percent in January.

Some 92 percent of Jewish Americans and 66 percent of Muslim Americans said that the war was important for U.S. interests.

Nearly a third (31 percent) of U.S. adults said that U.S. President Donald Trump favors Israel too much. Just 13 percent of Republicans and those who lean right and 50 percent of Democrats and those who lean left agreed that Trump supports the Jewish state too much. Only 3 percent thought Trump was favoring the Palestinians too much, with similar numbers across the aisle.

Pew found division in the Jewish community on the question. Jews were likelier (36 percent) than Americans overall to say that Trump favors Israel too much. Some 43 percent said he was striking the right balance – something 29 percent of the general public said. About 2 percent said he favors the Palestinians too much and 17 percent were unsure. (Among Americans broadly, 37 percent were unsure.)

“By comparison, in February 2024, when we asked about former President Joe Biden's approach, Jewish adults were less likely to say Biden was favoring Israelis too much (13 percent vs. 36 percent for Trump) and more likely to say he was favoring Palestinians too much (18 percent vs. 2 percent for Trump),” Pew stated. “Jewish Americans were about as likely to say Biden was striking the right balance as they are to say that about Trump (45 percent vs. 43 percent).”

Pew found that about the same number of Muslim Americans (70 percent) said that Trump and Biden favored Israel too much.

Less than half (46 percent) of American adults think a two-state solution is possible, down from 52 percent in late 2023. Those who at least lean left (56 percent) were much likelier to think a two-state solution is possible than those who at least lean right (36 percent).

The survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 1.9 percentage points.

How to celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month without schlepping anywhere

By Mel Wacks

May is Jewish American Heritage Month, as declared by every president since George W. Bush. It's a good opportunity to visit your local Jewish museum. But what if you don't have a nearby Jewish museum, or what if you don't want to schlepp your family there? Fortunately, you can celebrate from your home – or anywhere for that matter – simply by visiting the Jewish Museum in Cyberspace on your computer or smart phone. This award-winning website features the Jewish-American Hall of Fame (at www.amuseum.org/jahf). Here you will find more than 50 sculpted plaques of the honorees, along with brief biographies. And most bios include short videos or music.

Read the bios and you will learn that “It was not Queen Isabella's jewelry, but Spanish Jewry that made Columbus' historical trip of discovery possible... Actually it was Luis de Santangel, whose grandfather had converted from Judaism to Christianity under pressure of Spanish persecutions, who lent nearly 5 million maravedis to pay for the voyage.” You will learn how “As the Titanic was sinking, 67-year-old Isidor Straus (wealthy owner of Macy's) urged his wife Ida to board a lifeboat, but she declined, saying,

“We have been living together for many years, and where you go, I go.”

Among these fascinating stories, you can watch Lt. Col. Robert “Rosie” Rosenthal tell how he won 16 decorations, including the Distinguished Service Cross for “extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against the enemy,” the Silver Star (with cluster) for “gallantry in action,” the Distinguished Flying Cross (with cluster) for “heroism or extraordinary achievement during aerial flight,” and the French Croix de Guerre. You might have seen “Rosie” portrayed in the television series “Masters of the Air.” And movie star Hedy Lamarr's biography reveals how her patent describing spread spectrum technology contributed to the development of GPS, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi. At www.amuseum.org/jahf, you and your family can also watch Irving Berlin sing his “God Bless America,” George Gershwin play “I Got Rhythm,” and Molly Picon perform “Abi Gezunt” (As Long as You're Healthy) from the 1938 Yiddish film “Mamele.”

In addition to finding icons such as Albert Einstein, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Jonas Salk, you will be able to read that “Elvis Presley was Jewish the old-fashioned way – through maternal descent” (his mother's tombstone features a Star of David in honor of Elvis' Jewish heritage); and you can see Marilyn Monroe's Certificate of Conversion to Judaism when she married playwright Artur Miller.

But the Jewish-American Hall of Fame website has much more. It contains quizzes about all of the honorees – and if you get enough correct answers, you will be declared “An Einstein.” And in the “Entertainment” area, you can try to solve the Jewish crossword puzzles and test your knowledge of Jewish baseball players. Youngsters will enjoy playing “Hide and Seek” by figuring out how many children can be found in the designs of Jewish-American Hall of Fame medals.

Just as there are interesting exhibits in the nooks and crannies of museums, visitors to www.amuseum.org/jahf will find an exhibit of the Harry Flower Collection of Medals and Coins honoring Albert Einstein and a virtual memorial to the victims of Kristallnacht created by child survivor Marika Somogyi. You can also take a tour of the Jewish-American Hall of Fame plaques at the Virginia Holocaust Museum, conducted by their Executive Director Sam Asher.

Mel Wacks is the director of the Jewish-American Hall of Fame. The Jewish-American Hall of Fame was founded in 1968 at the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Berkeley, and it has been a division of the American Jewish Historical Society since 2001. The Jewish-American Hall of Fame plaques went on permanent display at the Virginia Holocaust Museum in 2010. The Jewish-American Hall of Fame has raised over \$300,000 to fight antisemitism.

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