

# THE REPORTER

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## Federation Chai Campaign a success

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton called its March Chai Campaign “a rousing success.” Adam Weitsman and family had said they would match up to \$7,500 of the funds raised, which will be used to improve the security of the local community. However, not only did the Campaign raise more than \$9,000, but the Weitsman family said it would match all the funds raised, netting the Federation more than \$18,000. Those funds will help provide communitywide trainings and grants for in-person security, and help establish an endowment allowing

for a long-term partnership with the Secure Community Network.

“I am so grateful for all who stepped up and made the security Chai Campaign a success,” said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. “A special thank you to Adam Weitsman and family who graciously offered the matching grant for this Campaign and who have now agreed to match the full amount that was raised.”

Hubal noted, “Sadly, security has become a priority for Jewish communities across the globe and we are no exception. The funds raised will be used for years to come and will allow

us to provide mini-grants for security guards, trainings, access to a grant writer and more.”

The Federation thanks all its donors, including the David and Virginia Eisenberg Fund and the Victor and Esther Rozen Foundation. For a complete list of those who donated, see the thank-you ad on page 5.

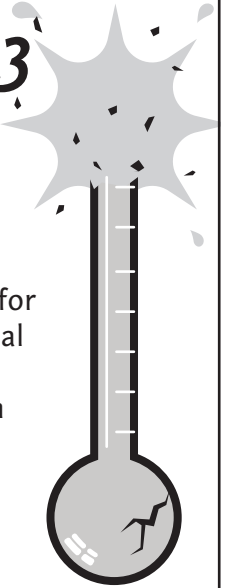
“I believe that security will remain a need for our community for the long-term,” Hubal added. “Anyone who wishes to support the security fund can do so by contacting the Federation office at 607-724-2332 or by sending a check to the Federation, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850 and earmark it for security.”

### Chai Campaign for Security Goal Surpassed

**\$9,052.13**

raised as of 4/25/24  
Goal: \$7,500

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Chai Campaign for Security. A special thank you to Adam Weitsman and family for generously providing the matching grant.



## Information for Federation calendar due May 31

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton is collecting information for its 2024-25 calendar. Dates for meetings, events and communitywide celebrations are due by Friday, May 31, and should be e-mailed to Executive Director Shelley Hubal at [director@jfgb.org](mailto:director@jfgb.org). The Federation will collate the dates and make certain there are no conflicts.

“Sima Auerbach, former Federation director, started coordinating the community calendar many years ago,” said Hubal. “We are a small, but active, community. It is important to make sure there are no conflicts so we can all enjoy the wonderful things our community has to offer us.”

The calendar can be found on the Jewish

Federation of Greater Binghamton’s website at [www.jfgb.org/community-calendar](http://www.jfgb.org/community-calendar). “The calendar is a quick and easy way to see what is happening in the community,” Hubal added. “It includes everything from lectures to board meetings. You might be surprised to see just how active our local organizations are.”

## Spotlight

# Refugees, Indiantown Gap and the Cup of Elijah

By Bill Simons

Fort Indiantown Gap is a military base about 23 miles northeast of Harrisburg, PA. Since the 1930s, the modern installation has undergone periods of Pennsylvania National Guard and United States Army presence, as well as intervals of relative abandonment. Indiantown Gap has been a training camp and a staging area for embarkment overseas. In 1975, however, it was a Vietnamese refugee camp. As I think back about the Gap, I recognize that my experience had a Jewish dimension.

For the Vietnamese, the road to Indiantown Gap had antecedents enmeshed with the twilight of European colonialism, the Cold War and American foreign policy. Embracing the “domino theory”—if the pro-Western government of South Vietnam fell, all of Southeast Asia would come under Communist control—President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent military advisors, technical support and foreign aid. As the viability of the South Vietnamese government grew more tenuous, the Kennedy administration increased aid and the number of military advisors.

President Lyndon Johnson deployed combat troops to Southeast Asia. The Vietnam War went poorly for the United States and its allies. An unpopular war, the Vietnam conflict divided America into hawks and doves while ending the forward thrust of civil rights and social welfare reforms. The Vietnamization strategy of President Richard Nixon relied increasingly on airpower. Nonetheless, Vietnam proved an unwinnable quagmire for the U.S. More than three million Vietnamese and approximately 58,220 Americans were killed during the war. Many others suffered physical and emotional wounds.

On January 27, 1973, the Paris Peace Accords, signed by the U.S. and other combatants, brought an official end to the Vietnam War and a brief faux peace. Fighting soon resumed, but absent American ground troops and airpower. With the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, the communists completed their conquest of the South and unification of Vietnam. Panic engulfed former government, military and business leaders of South Vietnam, who feared the bloodbath that years of propaganda had foretold.

Little advance evacuation planning preceded the fall of South Vietnam. With the first wave numbering about 150,000, refugees fled by foot, aircraft and boat. Enduring danger and hardship, numerous “boat people” perished. Makeshift refugee camps sprouted in several, often inhospitable, Asian nations.

Many Americans opposed admission of Vietnamese refugees. U.S. unemployment stood at a post-war high of 9.2 percent in 1975. Stagflation, coupled with widespread disillusionment about the Vietnam War, posed barriers. To his credit, President Gerald Ford insisted on an American obligation to a people who had stood with us as allies for years. On May 23, 1975, Congress passed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act admitting the initial Vietnamese refugees under parole status. Ford personally greeted a Baby Lift and



Bill Simons and Vietnamese friends (Photo courtesy of Bill Simon)

cradled an infant in his arms. Many of the refugees were initially processed in Guam.

The Indochinese refugees, overwhelmingly Vietnamese, were confined to four facilities: Camp Pendleton (CA), Eglin Air Force Base (FL), Fort Chaffee (AR) and Fort Indiantown Gap (PA). In most cases, the Vietnamese could not leave the camps until they had a sponsor willing to take responsibility for their basic needs until the

attainment of self-sufficiency.

I spent much of summer 1975 and part of the fall at Indiantown Gap. Through the Pittsburgh YMCA, I volunteered to teach about life in America and to assist youth recreation programs. With experience as a teacher, camp counselor, playground director and coach, I felt that I could contribute. My graduate training at Carnegie Mellon University provided a framework for engaging immigration and ethnicity. And as the grandson of Russian Jewish immigrants, I felt that assisting Vietnamese refugees was something that I should do.

The first Indochinese refugees arrived at Indiantown Gap in late May 1975 and the last left the camp in late December. At its peak, Indiantown Gap domiciled nearly 20,000 Indochinese, primarily Vietnamese. There were also a few hundred Cambodians. I did not encounter Laotians. Amongst the Vietnamese, family units from the educated urban Catholic elite predominated, but there were substantial numbers of single men formerly in the military, peasant farmers, fishermen and Buddhists. The refugees were housed in barracks that held about 100

See “Refugees” on page 8

## Federation board meeting open to community

The Jewish Federation will hold a full board meeting on Wednesday, May 15, at 7:30 pm, in person at the JCC. The community is invited to attend. Those interested in attending should make a reservation by calling the Federation at 724-2332 so that enough materials will be available.

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## Opinion

## One Perspective from Israel

## "Your son gave his life for my son," I said

JEREMY STAIMAN

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

While my older son Avi guarded the border, his younger brother Arky was called into Gaza recently, for a mission which he described as the most important assignment his unit has received in its entire history. "Every single one of us was ready to put our lives on the line for this mission," he told us upon his return.

My son's job is not an enviable one, and it's not for most people. It's a largely unknown unit called "Yasar," an acronym for Yechidat Srika, loosely translated as the scanning unit. He is involved in recovering bodies and body parts, sometimes even on an active battlefield. Think of a combination of ZAKA and the Chevra Kadisha doing their work, all while under enemy fire.

He explains his job to his young children: "Abba's job is to make sure that all our *chayalim* come home." Only when they get older will they learn the chilling meaning of that innocuous description.

I won't go into the details of what transpired during his days in Gaza. If they turn out to be momentous, we will doubtless hear about them on the news in due time. Their mission, by military standards, was a complete success.

Except.

"Every single one of us was ready to put our lives on the line for this mission." They all did put their lives on the line, and two among them fell.

Two of our brave Givati heroes were killed while protecting the Yasar unit. The recovery work Yasar does requires focus and calm. The area of Gaza they worked in had not yet been secured, so calm was in short supply. Nevertheless, the troops who encircled and protected them

fought continuously to assure that their crew could do their holy, vital work.

Tanks fired rounds overhead. Bullets whizzed by. But my son's unit was confident that the troops around them had their backs, and that they could remain laser-focused on their objectives. Fear was not on the table.

Only when they returned safely back on their base did the Yasar unit learn that two soldiers had been killed in action.

\*\*\*\*\*

Almost 80 years ago, in a town now found on the map by the name of Oswiecim, but back then was commonly known as Auschwitz, lived a 21-year-old by the name of Harry Bush.

Harry Bush, aged around 21, was a tall, strapping young man prior to the war. His muscular physique was a huge asset throughout his time in TerezinStadt. When he was then deported to Auschwitz, he was assigned to the Sonderkommando, a group of prisoners that worked in the crematoria. Part of his job was to remove Jewish remains from the facility so they could then be disposed of in disgrace.

In his wildest dreams, little could Harry have imagined that, 78 years later, he would have grandsons serving in a Jewish army.

In a state called Israel.

And that his grandson Arky's job would be to remove Jewish remains during war, not for ignominious disposal, but to be returned home for loving burial in the sanctified earth of the holy land.

\*\*\*\*\*

Back to the present.

"Abba, will you come with me to the *shiva* of Oriya Goshen, one of the soldiers who was killed? I want to represent our unit in thanking his family for their sacrifice on our behalf."

In Israel, *shiva* visits often take place in an outdoor tent, which can better accommodate larger crowds. Arky and I met outside of the *shiva* tent of the Goshen family. Yehuda, a friend, joined us to record some video, which could be sent to the Yasar unit (most of whom were still on duty), so they would know that their condolences and

gratitude had been conveyed.

I was unsure what to expect from an Ethiopian *shiva*, but what I found was very familiar. What I was less prepared for was the strength of this family. From the conversations, it was clear that they knew that their sacrifice was part of this nation's continued struggle to fulfill its purpose.

"Even if you, or someone else had fallen in place of my son, it would have been the same for me. The pain would have been the same, because they are all my children," the father told us.

"They went in with great faith," the mother continued, "with a sense of responsibility to protect one to another in *Am Yisrael*. My son, and all of them, are there with solid core values of *Am Yisrael*, *Torat Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael*. This is a bright light for us as a family."

Arky told the family how their son Oriya and his comrades provided shelter among the storm of bullets and artillery which raged around them. How the Yasar members had no fear, because they knew that the Givati unit was there for them. He thanked them for their sacrifice, and for the fact that Oriyah enabled him and his unit to come home safely.

This very special family, the Goshens, were visibly moved to hear from someone who been in battle with their son during his final moments on earth.

Although I was unsure if it was my place to speak, I added but a brief thought during the next lull in the conversation. "Both as the father of this *chayal*, and on behalf of all the parents of *chayalim*, I want to tell you how much we appreciate what you have sacrificed. All I can say is 'thank you.'"

Because your son Oriya gave his life, my son, and so many other sons, are back home safely.

*Jeremy Staiman and his wife Chana made aliyah from Baltimore, MD, in 2010 to Ramat Beit Shemesh. A graphic designer by trade, Jeremy is a music lover and produces music on a regular basis – one album every 40 years. He likes to spend time with his kids and grandkids slightly more often than that. His late father, Shalom Staiman, wrote the Shin Sin column for The Reporter.*



Looking for this issue's "Jewish Resources"?  
Visit [www.thereporter.org/jewish-online-resources](http://www.thereporter.org/jewish-online-resources) to find out what's happening online."

## In My Own Words

## Music and noise

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

I have a music rotation on Youtube that I listen to while I'm working. For most people, that wouldn't sound like anything special, but as someone who couldn't listen to music for 15 years, it feels amazing. But I'm not always successful in hearing music as music: for example, when I'm in certain aisles in my local grocery store, I hear music that is so irritating that I want yell at them to turn that awful noise off. OK, sometimes even the music I'm listening to on my computer or CD player sounds like awful noise and I switch it off. One reason for that is that sometimes I need to know what song I am listening to before I can hear it as a real melody, not just noise. Other times, I can tell something is music, but I can't hear the melody so it sounds unpleasant. Once in awhile, though, I pause to listen to a song that feels like the equivalent of pure joy. Then music feels like an unbelievable blessing. Those songs touch my heart/soul/mind in ways that really can't be put into words.

The sense of gratitude I have for the technology – for my cochlear implant – that allows me to hear music feels so immense that it can still bring tears to my eyes. But there is another aspect to the joys of technology I haven't written about. That's because the problem is generally under

control. This past year, I had a flare-up after taking some medicine when the damaged nerve in my back/leg was irritated. (That nerve problem was caused by a herniated disc years ago and by the time the doctors discovered what was wrong, the damage was permanent.)

I have tinnitus. That's a fancy name for ear ringing, also known as auditory hallucinations. It means you hear sounds that don't exist outside your brain. Hearing aids and my CI keep generally keep that under control. When they are off – when I can't hear sound from the world around me – my world is not silent. Rather, it is filled with irritating, awful noise. At times, I've heard three or more different sounds/pitches together, fighting with each other to be the most prominent. Sometimes the sounds resemble speech, but just unclear enough for me not to be able to make out the words. Other times, they are like a recording that's stuck: the same few sounds repeat over and over and over again.

My experience with tinnitus began in 1973, my first year of college. During those early years, I found it difficult to cope with the noise. Just think of a sound that irritates you and imagine never being able to escape it. I've read that some people die by suicide just to stop the noise. I can understand that: I remember once calling my mother

during those first years and crying because I felt unable to get through the day. Fortunately, soon after that I went to a doctor who put me on my first restrictive diet, one that helped, although it did not stop the ear ringing.

What did make a difference was the hearing aids I received when I could no longer hear speech. (Note, with two hearing aids I could only hear sounds, but not understand them. I was still dependent on lip reading to know what someone was saying. Well, there are times I still depend on lip reading even with my CI.) If it gets too quiet (meaning there is no sound around me), I sometimes still hear the ear ringing, even when I'm wearing my devices. But after reading a book about relaxing into the noise, rather than fighting it, things became easier. It was not a perfect solution, but it's been a help.

Many people take their hearing for granted until (like many friends my age are now discovering) being able to hear well is no longer guaranteed. I try to appreciate on a regular basis what I've regained: the fact I can hear sounds that were beyond my grasp for so many long years. While I still can't listen to all the music I once did, I am so grateful for the songs that bring me joy. It's my hope that I never take this blessing for granted.



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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.

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

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**DEADLINE**

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[www.thereporter.org](http://www.thereporter.org)

# Benny Kellman to speak at BD Sisterhood Donor

The Beth David Sisterhood will hold its annual donor meeting on Wednesday May 8, at 7 pm. The featured speaker will be Benny Kellman, who will discuss how the terror attacks on Israel by Hamas on October 7 and the resultant war in Gaza has affected the lives of Jewish and Israeli students on the Binghamton University campus.

A donation of \$25 or more is requested from those who attend the fund-raising meeting, which will be held at the home of Alan and Julie Piaker. To receive their address or make a reservation, e-mail Beth David Synagogue at

Bethdavid@stny.rr.com or call 607-722-1793 and leave a message. An RSVP by Thursday, May 2, is appreciated so that organizers can be certain to provide an appropriate amount of desserts. Those who have not made reservations are still invited to attend.

Kellman has been the  *mashgiach*  at the Kosher Korner at Binghamton University for five years. During that time, he has earned a masters degree and begun working on his Ph.D. in American history and modern Jewish history. He plans to write his dissertation as a comparative study of

small-city Jewish communities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century United States. "These two positions, both on the Binghamton University's campus, have given Benny a rounded perspective on students' feelings and situations," said organizers of the event. "His wife, Rivka, worked for the Hillel at Binghamton office on campus where she has counseled Jewish students who have had difficulty handling the stress of campus life during this past year.

"Members and friends of Beth David's Sisterhood are invited to show their support for the organization by attending the annual donor meeting," organizers added. "Both Jewish and Israeli students and their Palestinian and Arab counterparts have at times felt threatened and traumatized, and have often found it difficult to have meaningful communication. We anticipate a lively discussion after Benny's speech. Please do not hesitate to attend the meeting even if you neglected to notify us in advance. We always plan a little extra food just in case!"

## CJS held talk on "In the Shadow of October 7"



Approximately 20 community members attended the College of Jewish Studies lecture on April 18 at the Jewish Community Center to discuss the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel and its aftermath with (l-r) Randy Friedman, Shay Rabineau, Allan Arkush and Jon Karp, members of Binghamton University's Judaic Studies Department and Israel Studies Institute.

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to the family of **Moira Shirvan**

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to **Gil Williams** on the death of his sister, **Jean Williams**

### JCC Friendship Club

The JCC Friendship Club met on April 17. After saying the Pledge of Allegiance and singing "Hatikvah," the guest speaker was introduced. Hadassah Mativetsky, who is a member of the Binghamton City Council, spoke about her early years growing up in Binghamton. She talked about her memories in preschool at the JCC. She would argue with a classmate about who would wear a pink cap that they found. They are still friends. She attended a private school, Susquehanna School, and was the only Jewish student there. She remembered when Chabad was a small organization and had activities at the JCC. She told about one activity on how to make a *shofar*. She also remembers when Morty Hofstein had a kosher deli at the JCC. She loved his tongue sandwiches. She also liked the food at Wagner's Bakery, which was kosher. Neither the deli nor the bakery exist anymore. She told about her friends and the cultural differences between her Jewish and non-Jewish friends.

Some of us talked about the areas where we grew up:

Bernice said she grew up in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, Sylvia said she grew up in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, and Bruce said he grew up in Long Island. When Hadassah got older she became active in NCSY, an Orthodox youth group. She attended Shabbatons, when people from different cities would join them. We also discussed a Birthright trip to Israel. Now the Jewish community is much smaller. We enjoyed listening to Hadassah talk about her past and present experiences at City Council meetings.

The next meeting of the JCC Friendship Club will be Wednesday, May 15, at the JCC at 1:30 pm. The speaker will be Robin Greenblott. She is a pharmacist and will talk about vaccines, medications and more. Come join us.

Sylvia Diamond  
President

### NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

#### EasyJet axes all flights to Israel

British budget airline EasyJet on April 16 canceled all flights to Israel until Oct. 27, citing the security situation in the Middle East. Customers booked to fly to the Jewish state are being offered a range of options, including a full refund. EasyJet had resumed flights to Israel in March after suspending them in the wake of Hamas' Oct. 7 invasion. Israel's Ben-Gurion Airport reopened the morning of April 14 after being shuttered for seven hours overnight due to the Iranian missile and drone attack on the Jewish state. The unprecedented Iranian attack forced national carrier El Al to cancel more than two dozen flights and reschedule others, while some foreign airlines scrapped flights altogether on April 14.

### Tea and Talk

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

Upcoming date is:

◆ May 16

To RSVP or for more information, visit [www.JewishBU.com/Tea](http://www.JewishBU.com/Tea) or call 607-797-0015.

### DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
May 17-30	May 8
May 31-June 13	May 22
June 14-27	June 5
June 28-July 11	June 19

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

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12

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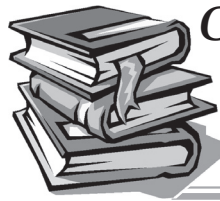
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Off the Shelf

# Legal fictions and loopholes

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Whether to impose strict interpretations of biblical laws or create loopholes to ease Jewish life so the population would not discard those laws as too onerous: that summarizes one of the difficulties the ancient rabbis faced when discussing rabbinic law. The many legal fictions the rabbis created – from the *eruv* to selling *chametz* before Passover – serve as part of the discussion offered in “Circumventing the Law: Rabbinic Perspectives on Loopholes and Legal Integrity” by Elana Stein Hain (University of Pennsylvania Press). Hain, rosh beit midrash and senior fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America, offers a close look at rabbinic rulings found in the Mishnah and the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds to discuss possible reasons behind the acceptance or rejection of specific loopholes.

One studies more than reads “Circumventing the Law” because of the author’s inclusion and discussion of mishnaic and talmudic passages. That makes the work difficult to write about because the specifics are complex, even though Hain does an excellent job explaining them. However, she notes that there seem to be some general principles when it comes to the modification of biblical laws: to prevent people from sinning, to circumvent the severity of transgressions and to prevent financial loss. Hain notes that not everything is open to debate: “Some laws are too weighty to evade, such as those written explicitly in the Bible; sometimes a circumvention hollows out the action too much.”

One example is the discussion of the quantity of food that can be cooked on a holiday. The underlying rule is that one can only cook on a holiday for food that is to be consumed that day. However, if more food is prepared than can be eaten, then one is allowed to eat that on the following day, as long as the food was not deliberately cooked for that purpose. This becomes a problem when the day after the holiday is Shabbat, when one may not cook at all. However, even when the next day is not Shabbat, there is a debate about whether one can claim they are cooking for guests who might come and share a meal (even though there is no guarantee they will) or if that is just an excuse to

cook for the following day. There is also a discussion if one can salt meat that one is not planning to eat on a holiday. One opinion says that a person should just salt the meat used for the holiday. The other says all the meat can be salted for two reasons: “First, there is the value of not losing money while trying to celebrate the holiday. And second, perhaps requiring the meat to spoil will prevent people from fulfilling their obligation to eat festive meals in the future to celebrate the holiday. If one must leave the extra meat to spoil, one might choose not to eat meat on the festival at all, which would result in a lackluster celebration.”

A discussion of rabbinical courts offers a fascinating view of rabbinic ideas of justice. What occurs is very different from the trials in the civil, Roman law to which the author compares it. Hain notes that the rabbis acted more like lawyers arguing before God than they did like judges. Instead, it was God who was considered the ultimate judge. Rather than strict, Divine justice, the rabbis sought to have God take mercy on the Jewish people: “Rabbis were not just jurists or legislators; they were lawyers as well, with the Jewish people as their clients before God as the judge. This accords... with later portrayals of advocates in the

heavenly court who twisted laws for their clients.” However, there were limits to the changes they argued for: they did not want to disrespect the law (which would encourage people not to practice). Instead, they were trying to uphold the integrity of the law. The difficulty was in trying to decide which loopholes would uphold the law and which would undermine it.

There were two basic positions taken about whether the use of a loophole was appropriate: the intent of a person or the performance of a particular action. Hain notes that the Palestinian Talmud seems more concerned about specific actions, while the Babylonian Talmud focuses on one’s inner intention. She sees this as a difference between a person’s *kavanah* (their intention and mental process) vs. their *machshuvah* (their plan/action), although she notes that the rabbis themselves are not always clear about the specifics of each case. An additional concern is that of *mar’it ayin*, which Hain defines as “the appearance of sin.” Loopholes were more accepted if the action took place in private so it didn’t look as if a person were deliberately flaunting the law (having the appearance of *mar’it ayin*). If done in public, others might feel the behavior was acceptable in all cases and accidentally sin.

Hain believes the ancient rabbis were trying to balance “the conflicts between God’s laws and human concerns... to hold both reverence of God’s word and appreciation for human concerns as part and parcel of a healthy legal system. And yet the rabbis show deep reverence for the authority of Jewish law, setting boundaries where they thought that reverence might be undermined by” loopholes. This was a difficult balance to maintain. It also meant there is not one right answer as to whether there should be exceptions to a particular law. This is the reason some rabbinic debates on these topics are still being argued.

This review barely touches the material offered in “Circumventing the Law.” Those who love *halachic* (legal), *midrashic* and *talmudic* discussions will enjoy reading and analyzing the texts featured. Those unfamiliar with the study of rabbinic text will have to depend on Hain’s explanations, although those sections are fairly easy to read and understand. Lawyers and legal scholars will have an easier time with the chapters that compare Jewish law to ancient Roman law and contemporary legal theory. “Circumventing the Law” demands its readers’ attention, but anyone interested in the workings and development of Jewish law will find much of interest.



Off the Shelf

# Dealing with life and romance

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Once upon a time, romance novels focused on bringing two people together in married bliss with the action usually stopping either just before or after the wedding. Few featured women who wanted something more from life than a husband or who faced problems or difficulties beyond tying the knot. This is no longer true of many contemporary novels that can qualify equally as romances, coming of age stories or re-evaluation of life tales. Two recent novels fall into that latter category: “Expiration Dates” by Rebecca Serle (Atria Books) and “Welcome Home, Caroline Kline” by Courtney Preiss (G. P. Putnam

and Sons) focus on women who, while no longer in their 20s, are still trying to decide the direction of their lives.

All of Serle’s novels contain a supernatural element and “Expiration Dates” is no exception. Every time Daphne Bell meets a new man, she receives a piece of paper with his name and a number on that. That number tells exactly how many days, weeks or months they will be together. Fortunately, her three-month romantic relationship with Hugo turned into a continuing friendship, one that sustains her through life’s difficulties. But the piece of paper that awaits her before her blind date with Jake contains no number. For the first time, Daphne must consider that she may be meeting the man with whom she will spend the rest of her life. Things seem to go well, but Daphne wonders if their relationship can survive because there is something she has not told Jake, something that might change how he feels about her.

It’s frustrating to write a review of “Expiration Dates,” but not because it’s not a wonderful novel. It’s full of wisdom, warmth and excellent explorations about what it means to be in a committed relationship, including which dreams a person might be willing to sacrifice to make that happen. However, there are several plot twists – incredibly moving plot twists – that would spoil the surprise if revealed here. As with some of the author’s previous works, Serle’s characters feel so real and I came to care about them so deeply that I desperately wanted someone else to read the book so I

can discuss it with them. That makes this a perfect novel for a book club, but right now I’d settle for talking about it with a friend over tea or coffee.

While Daphne is given a view of her future in “Expiration Dates,” Caroline Kline has no clue about the direction of her life. At the opening of “Welcome Home, Caroline Kline,” the narrator’s life is a mess. At first, she seems to be fulfilling her dream of living and working in New York City – something she wanted when growing up in a small town in New Jersey. But then everything goes wrong at once: although she was supposed to move with her fiancé to California, he dumped her after she’d already quit her job and given up her apartment. Her work replacement is so successful that Caroline is now jobless and living with a friend. She tries to numb herself by drinking too much and sleeping with men she’s just met. Then she receives a call about her father: he’s been badly injured in a fall and wants her to move back to New Jersey to serve as his replacement on the local men’s softball team. He thinks it’s his team’s turn to win big and he believes Caroline can make it happen.

Against her best instincts, Caroline returns to New Jersey. Life there is more complicated than she expected: first, there is living in the same house as her father and stepmother after years of independence. Second, although she tries her best, she is not fully welcomed by the other players in the softball team. She is the only woman See “Romance” on page 7

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THE REPORTER  
Published by the Jewish Education of Greater Binghamton

# Model seders enjoyed around town



Adam Nasar and Alex Kaminsky at the Temple Israel Chocolate Seder.



Around 60 people attended the Chocolate Seder at Temple Israel on April 14.



The Temple Concord Religious School held a model seder on April 20.



Hillel Academy of Broome County held a model seder on April 18. Community members were invited to attend.



Hillel Academy students marched with Israeli flags during the model seder.



Hillel Academy students dressed in costumes to demonstrate parts of the seder.

*Thank you to all those community members who donated to the Federation's Chai Security Campaign*

- Sima & Neil Auerbach
- Suzanne Austenfeld
- Marilyn Bell
- David Berger
- Bill & Raanana Bernstein
- Howard & Bonnie Brown
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- Victor & Esther Rozen Foundation
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*A special thank you to Adam Weitsman and family for generously providing the matching grant.*



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- 2) E-mail Federation Executive Director Shelley Hubal at [director@jfgeb.org](mailto:director@jfgeb.org) with "pledge" in the subject line.
- 3) Fill out the form in this ad and mail it to the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

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**Jewish Federation**  
of Greater Binghamton



# Weekly Parasha

Acharai Mot, Leviticus 16:1-18:30

# Atonement

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR, THE REPORTER GROUP

*Parashat Acharai Mot* includes an interesting phenomenon we've come to take for granted: Yom Kippur. According to the text, every year on 10<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month, we are commanded to pause our lives and afflict our *nefesh* (literally our breath, but usually used to mean our souls) and do no work – that includes everyone born in the land of Israel – both native born and the stranger. When we do this, “the day will make atonement for you.” (Leviticus 26:30)

While the details of what the priestly class did on this day are interesting, what strikes me is something far more basic: We are commanded to do this *every year*. Think about that for a minute. Atonement is needed *every year*. Does that mean that the text expects us to sin every year

– that, in effect, it recognizes that to be human is to make mistakes? It seems so because Yom Kippur is a normal part of the Jewish year cycle, one that is required to take place *every year*. It acknowledges that everyone at some time will stray from the right path – whether saying or doing something they should not have done, or not saying or doing something they should have.

This makes sense when you consider our biblical ancestors. While we may admire Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Leah, Rachel, Moses and Miriam, etc., none of them was perfect. That's what actually makes them interesting – and what makes it worth reading and studying their stories each year. We learn not only from their righteous actions, but from their mistakes, from

the ways they strayed. Perhaps the God of the Torah recognizes that the Israelites would never be perfect. Instead, God commanded a way for them to clean their slates, rather than forever being brought low by their mistakes and sins.

Yom Kippur offers those of us in contemporary times the same opportunity, although in a different way. You do not have to believe in a God who acts in history to recognize the importance of having a defined day to stop and truly look at yourself. In this case, afflicting the soul would also be putting aside your ego and clearly looking at your actions and interactions. If everyone would do this – really do this– our world would be a far better place.

## 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](mailto:office@templeisraelvestal.org)  
Website: [www.templeisraelvestal.org](http://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, May 4, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Leviticus 16:1-18:30 and the haftarah is Amos 9:7-15. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 9 pm.

The temple office hours for Monday, May 6; Thursday, May 9; and Monday, May 13, will be 2-4 pm. The office will be closed on Tuesday, May 7; Wednesday, May 8; and Friday, May 10.

The Executive Board will meet on Tuesday, May 7, at 7 pm.

On Saturday, May 11, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Leviticus 19:1-20:27 and the haftarah is Ezekiel 22:1-19. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 9:15 pm.

Rabbi Micah Friedman will lead a discussion on Tuesday, May 14, at 6 pm, following the minyan. The discussion will focus on the meaning of prayers people disagree with and about praying in Hebrew when one doesn't understand the meanings of the words.

### 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](mailto: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 Brith Sholom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated  
Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045  
Phone: 607-756-7181  
President: Nick Martelli  
Cemetery Committee: 315-696-5744  
Website: [templebrithsholomcortland.org](http://templebrithsholomcortland.org)  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Temple-Brith-Sholom-114006981962930/>  
Service leaders: Lay leadership  
Shabbat services: Either Friday evening at 7:30 pm or Saturday at 10 am from Rosh Hashanah to Shavuot. Holiday services are also held. Check the Facebook page or weekly e-mail for upcoming services. Contact the president to get on the e-mail list.  
Religious School: Students are educated on an individual basis. Temple Brith Sholom is a small equalitarian congregation serving the greater Cortland community. Congregants span the gamut of observance and services are largely dependent on the service leader. The Friday night siddur is “Likrat Shabbat,” while the Saturday morning siddur is “Gates of Prayer.” The community extends a warm welcome to the Jewish student population of SUNY Cortland, as well as the residents of local adult residences.

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

### Synagogues limit face-to-face gatherings

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

### Beth David Synagogue

Affiliation: Orthodox Union  
Rabbi: Zev Silber  
Address: 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905  
Phone: 607-722-1793, Rabbi's Office: 607-722-7514  
Fax: 607-722-7121  
Office hours: Tues. 10 am-1 pm; Thurs. 9 am-1 pm  
Beth David e-mail address: [bethdavid@stny.rr.com](mailto:bethdavid@stny.rr.com)  
Rabbi's e-mail: [rabbisilber@stny.rr.com](mailto:rabbisilber@stny.rr.com)  
Website: [www.bethdavid.org](http://www.bethdavid.org)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/bethdavidbinghamton](http://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](mailto:aslonim@binghamton.edu)  
[rslonim@chabadofbinghamton.com](mailto:rslonim@chabadofbinghamton.com)  
Address: 420 Murray Hill Rd., Vestal, NY 13850  
Phone: 607-797-0015, Fax: 607-797-0095  
Website: [www.Chabadofbinghamton.com](http://www.Chabadofbinghamton.com)  
Rabbi Zalman and Rochel Chein, Education  
E-mail: [zchein@Jewishbu.com](mailto:zchein@Jewishbu.com), [rchein@Jewishbu.com](mailto:rchein@Jewishbu.com)  
Rabbi Levi and Hadasa Slonim, Downtown and Development  
Chabad Downtown Center: 60 Henry St., Binghamton  
E-mail: [lslonim@Jewishbu.com](mailto:lslonim@Jewishbu.com), [hslonim@Jewishbu.com](mailto:hslonim@Jewishbu.com)  
Rabbi Yisroel and Goldie Ohana, Programming  
E-mail: [yohana@Jewishbu.com](mailto:yohana@Jewishbu.com), [gohana@Jewishbu.com](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.tikkunvor.org), E-mail: [info@tikkunvor.org](mailto:info@tikkunvor.org)  
Rabbi: Shifrah Tobacman, [rabbishifrah@tikkunvor.org](mailto:rabbishifrah@tikkunvor.org)  
Presidents: Sue Merkel and Laurie Willick, [presidents\\_22@tikkunvor.org](mailto:presidents_22@tikkunvor.org)  
Education Director/Administrative Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky  
Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator: Michael Margolin  
Services: All services currently on Zoom. E-mail [info@tikkunvor.org](mailto: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, May 3, light candles before ..... 7:47 pm  
Shabbat ends Saturday, May 4 ..... 8:49 pm  
Friday, May 10, light candles before ..... 7:55 pm  
Shabbat ends Saturday, May 11 ..... 8:56 pm  
Friday, May 17, light candles before ..... 8:02 pm  
Shabbat ends Saturday, May 18 ..... 9:03 pm

### Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism  
Rabbi: TBA  
Address: 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905  
Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm  
Phone: 607-723-7355  
Fax: 607-723-0785  
Office e-mail: [TempleConcordbinghamton@gmail.com](mailto:TempleConcordbinghamton@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.templeconcord.com](http://www.templeconcord.com)  
Regular service times: Fri., 7:30 pm; Sat., 10:35 am, when religious school is in session.  
Hebrew school: Hebrew school meets at 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm on Tues. and Thurs. during the school year unless otherwise noted.

Some services and programs are online only.  
Friday, May 3: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Leah Moser. Join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y>, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/templeconcord/](http://www.facebook.com/templeconcord/).

Saturday, May 4 At 9 am, Religious School; at 9:15 am, Torah study with Rabbi Leah Moser in person and on Zoom (<http://bit.ly/3XDnvRE>, meeting ID 825 1226 2831 and passcode 743892). At 7:30 pm, Rabbi Leah Moser will lead a Havdalah program.

Sunday, May 5: From 10 am-2 pm, Sisterhood Rummage Sale. Shoppers are asked to use the Oak Street entrance.

Tuesday, May 7: At 10:30 am, Tuesday Morning Book Club: “Shayna” by Miriam Ruth Black in person or on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3CXVd9b>, meeting ID 881 6469 4206 and passcode 653272. For more information, contact Merri Pell-Preus at 607-222-2875 or [merrypell.preus@gmail.com](mailto:merrypell.preus@gmail.com).

Friday, May 10: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Suzanne Holwitt, Rabbi Rachel Esserman and Robin Hazen. Join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y>, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/templeconcord/](http://www.facebook.com/templeconcord/).

Saturday, May 11: At 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom (<http://bit.ly/3XDnvRE>, meeting ID 825 1226 2831 and passcode 743892).

### Norwich Jewish Center

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

### Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

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

For upcoming services and events on Zoom, visit [www.tinyurl.com/HappeningAtTBE](http://www.tinyurl.com/HappeningAtTBE).

**Moving any time soon?  
Or just leaving town for a few months?**



Whether you're moving across town or across the country, please let *The Reporter* know so you can stay up to date on community news and quickly receive the paper at your new (or temporary) address!  
E-mail [treporter@aol.com](mailto:treporter@aol.com) with "Reporter Address change" in the subject line, or call 607-724-2360, ext. 254, to let *The Reporter* know about your new address.

**Romance.....Continued from page 4**

in the league and is taunted by both her teammates and the players on other teams. Third, her mood is not helped when she sees a former friend and now arch-enemy, who is now married to a star player on another team. If all that is not enough, her path crosses with Crispin Davis, who was her childhood love. The crush was never reciprocated, but that doesn't stop her from still being attracted to him. He has his own demons, though, but tries to help Caroline manage hers when she's arrested for DWI and must attend court-ordered meetings in order to keep her license. The questions that arise include, will her team accept her and/

or win their championship, and will she and Crispin ever become a couple?  
"Welcome Home, Caroline Kline" does an excellent job balancing humor and serious topics. The novel is fun and easy to read, even if you are not a softball fan (which I am not). The characters are engaging, even though at times, I shook my head at Caroline's self-destructive behavior. There is not as much for a book club to discuss as there is in "Expiration Dates," but its exploration of 30-somethings who have not found their life path may appeal to some clubs.



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Website: [www.parsonsfuneral.com](http://www.parsonsfuneral.com)  
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# Biden, world leaders issue joint statement demanding release of hostages

By Andrew Bernard

(JNS)—U.S. President Joe Biden and 17 other world leaders issued a joint statement on April 25 calling on Hamas to immediately free all of the hostages the terrorist organization is still holding in the Gaza Strip and to accept a ceasefire.

“We strongly support the ongoing mediation efforts in order to bring our people home,” the leaders stated. “We reiterate our call on Hamas to release the hostages, and let us end this crisis so that collectively we can focus our efforts on bringing peace and stability to the region.”

Signatories to the statement include the leaders of France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Thailand and Colombia, all of whom have citizens known to be held in Gaza or who have been missing since October 7. Israel was not one of the 18 signatories.

A senior Biden administration official speaking to reporters on background before issuing the joint statement said the White House had previously tried and failed to get these leaders to sign on to an official call to release the hostages. “An effort was tried earlier in the crisis, and actually, we were not able to get it done given some of the disagreements, but we were able to get a unanimous sign-on to this statement today, largely because of the current situation with the hostages,” the senior official said. “We have now discussed with all of these capitals the elements of the deal on the table, and

there is a deal on the table that would bring a ceasefire immediately to Gaza simply with the release of women, wounded, elderly and sick hostages.

“That is ready to go, and we have worked it out in meticulous detail, and Hamas has rejected that,” the official added.

The Biden administration has previously issued statements suggesting that Israel was at least partly responsible for the failure to achieve a breakthrough ceasefire-for-hostages deal in the months-long negotiations in Cairo and Doha. On April 4, the White House released a readout of a phone call between Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that “urged the prime minister to empower his negotiators to conclude a deal without delay.”

On April 25, however, the senior administration official placed the failure to achieve a deal squarely on Hamas’ leader inside Gaza—Yahya Sinwar—and contrasted his rejections with the messages coming from Hamas leaders outside Gaza who are negotiating the deal. “There have been a number of times where the negotiations have made significant progress outside, with Hamas leaders living in fancy hotels, but Sinwar is the ultimate decision-maker,” the official said. “Sinwar is living deep, deep underground as Gaza above him is a warzone, and as Gazans are suffering, and the question goes for him, ‘Will we agree to release this vulnerable category of hostages to secure a ceasefire and relief for Gazans?’

and the answer that comes back from Sinwar personally is, ‘No.’”

The official said that one impetus for the joint statement was news about the hostages over the recent weeks, including Hamas’ release on April 24 of a proof-of-life video of 23-year-old dual U.S.-Israeli citizen Hersh Goldberg-Polin. “He needs to come out,” the senior administration official said of Goldberg-Polin. “And Sinwar has made the decision he’d rather hold him and others rather than securing a ceasefire in Gaza—I mean, that’s just the truth of the situation.”

Hamas’ leadership outside of Gaza has suggested to negotiators that their repeated rejections of the deal are not final; however, the official said that Hamas’ latest counterproposals have been “totally non-constructive” and that Hamas might just be “stringing things out.”

“We hear things from leaders of Hamas outside that do not reflect the Hamas leadership inside, which seems determined to simply sit underground, holding hostages,” the official said.

“Hamas leaders on the outside say all sorts of things, and it’s Hamas that we are dealing with here,” the official added. “They also acknowledged they’re not decision-makers, and the decision-makers are inside Gaza—again, living deep, deep underground and holding hostages, and oftentimes are with the hostages. The whole situation is just so totally outrageous when you kind of step back from it.”

## NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

### Heaviest known black hole in Milky Way uncovered

The Milky Way galaxy’s heaviest known black hole has been discovered in a binary star system, Tel Aviv University announced on April 16. The astronomical phenomenon, found by analyzing data from the European Space Agency’s Gaia space observatory craft, is more than three times heavier than the largest previously identified black holes in our galaxy. An international team of researchers discovered the star, which orbits a black hole 33 times heavier than the sun’s mass, 1,500 light-years away from Earth. The Gaia BH3 binary system contains an ordinary star that seems to have formed more than 10 billion years ago, when our galaxy was very young. The star orbits the black hole in an 11-year cycle. “This is an exciting discovery of the heaviest black hole in a binary system known today in the galaxy,” said Tel Aviv University Professor Emeritus Tsevi Mazeh. “I am convinced that the discovery will lead to a new mode of thinking regarding the presence and prevalence of the black holes that cruise through the expanses of our galaxy.” The European Space Agency launched Gaia in 2013. Hundreds of scientists across Europe, led by Mazeh, process the data coming in from the spacecraft in anticipation of discovering black holes, a difficult feat since light cannot overcome the strong gravitational force in their vicinity. The research was published in the journal *Astronomy & Astrophysics*.

## Refugees.....

people. A flimsy barracks partition might separate the living space of young former Vietnamese soldiers from that of a family.

Indiantown Gap, administered by the federal Interagency Task Force (IATF) and the military, was divided into six sectors. Technically, the refugees were not considered to have yet entered the U.S. Rather, they were designated parolees at a military base and not free to leave the camp volitionally. The Army presence was ubiquitous. Refugees could not exit the camp until a sponsor, typically a host family or organization, assumed an obligation for their welfare as long as needed. Refugees had some, but not total, voice in their sponsorship placement. Indiantown Gap was meant to be a transitory experience of a few months’ duration, transforming camp refugees into American immigrants. The camp bureaucracy didn’t want the adults to get too comfortable and form a real community, so my proposals to utilize their talents were rejected. Despite the limitations of camp life, many refugees developed “campitis,” fearing dispersal into the larger American society.

I spent a lot of time encouraging, orga-

nizing and officiating recreational activities, particularly sports. Volleyball, soccer, tetherball, badminton and ping pong ranked amongst favorites. To combat dust and heat, we took youngsters to a concrete slab where military vehicles were washed and turned the hoses on them. I made the mistake of organizing a Vietnamese-Cambodian softball game, an event that nearly descended into chaos when ethnic antagonisms and my inability to cross language barriers precluded adequate explanation of why a fielder armed with a ball could sometimes trigger an out by touching third base with a foot and sometimes could not.

My attempts to teach English as a second language faltered. Assisted by a slide carousel, I was able to generate interest in presentations about the geographic and social diversity of America. Images of snow created anxiety about falling temperatures. Downtime away from formal activities provided some of the most meaningful opportunities for candid discussion and information sharing. I remember two brothers, enamored of Vincent van Gogh’s art, who frequently referenced Don McLean’s

“Starry, Starry Night” lyrics. They aspired to go to the University of Rochester for engineering studies.

Each refugee carried a distinct story. In his early 40s, Mr. Minh arrived with his 10 children and mother-in-law. His wife survived wounds sustained during an assassination attempt on Mr. Minh, but succumbed to cancer before the fall of Saigon. In Vietnam, he was a bank president, owner of 20,000 acres of agricultural land and influential in government circles. In Vietnam, the family enjoyed a very comfortable lifestyle, which Mr. Minh displayed through scrapbook photos. His dream was to accumulate enough capital for the family to buy a McDonald’s. Ambition and determination were also evident in Mr. Minh’s 15-year-old son Ai, who prevailed upon me to obtain an unabridged English-Vietnamese dictionary for him. Subsequently, Ai requested that I come to his barracks. At the entrance, he said, “Welcome to my abode. Welcome to my domicile.” Ai had risen at 4 am to study the dictionary.

Pittsburgh’s St. Bede Church sponsored the Minh family. For the next two years, Mike Pini, a fellow Indiantown Gap volunteer and my dear friend, and I stayed in contact with the Minh family. Initially, Mr. Minh took a daily two-hour round trip by bus to Washington, PA, where he worked the graveyard shift as a bank guard. His

oldest daughters, Lan, 18, and Thuy, 17, found employment as cafeteria workers at the Carnegie Museum. I hope that the Minh family found their golden arches.

The U.S. government invited Catholic Charities, the Red Cross and other support groups, including HIAS, to play a service role at Indiantown Gap. HIAS provided a formal Jewish institutional presence at the camp. Originally founded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society to assist Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, HIAS, still imbued with Jewish values, evolved into a global organization for all refugees. At Indiantown Gap, HIAS helped meet the needs of Vietnamese refugees and played a major role in securing host sponsors for them.

My Aunt Rhoda set the Passover cup of Elijah in an American context. She said that we open the door to welcome the stranger who might be without a seder place. During much of Jewish history, we have wandered in the Diaspora. We must not forget our liberation from Egyptian slavery nor that in another age we found a home in America, a nation of immigrants. The words of the Jewish poetess Emma Lazarus provide welcome at the Statue of Liberty: “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free... I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Continued from page 1

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