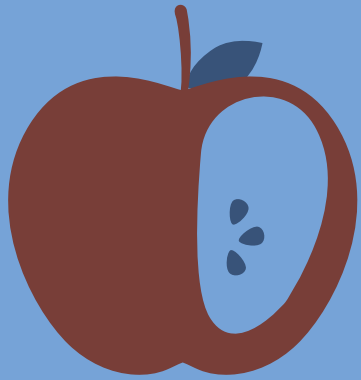


THE REPORTER

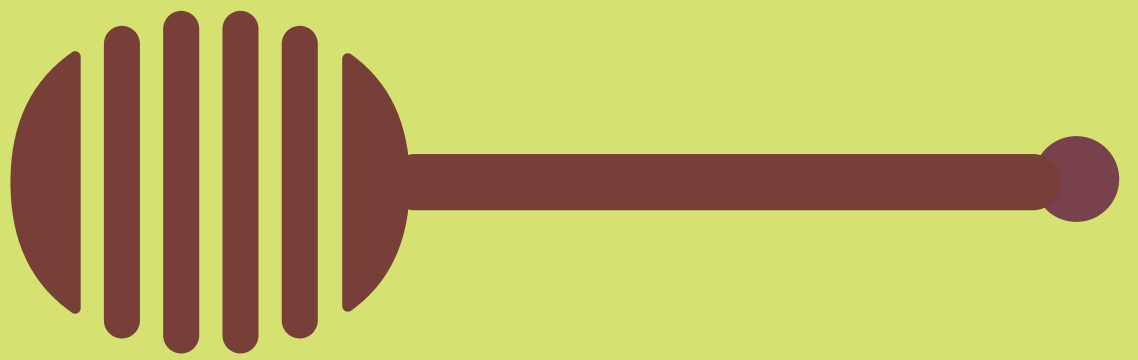
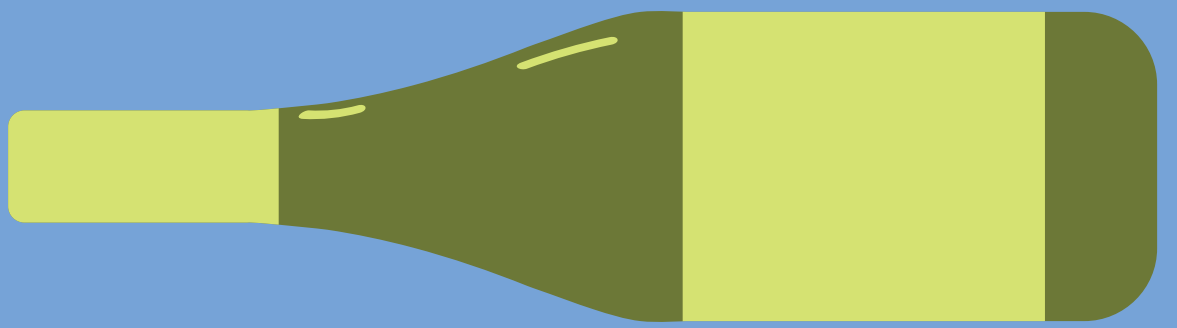
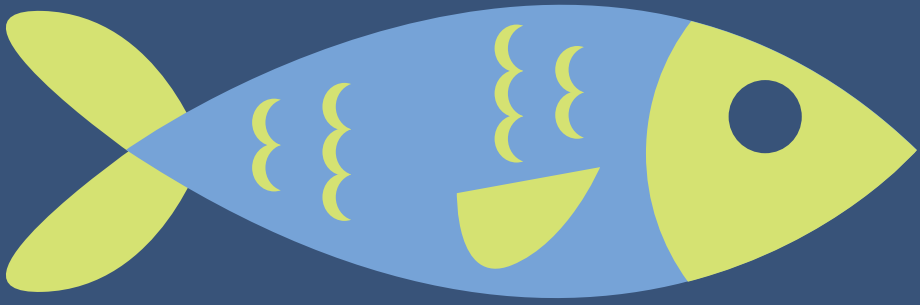
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5786*



Opinion

Criticism of Israeli policies is neither anti-Zionist nor antisemitic

By Bill Simons

The Reporter recently published a letter by Rhonda Levine and Arieh Ullmann notable for its eloquent passion and urgency. Undeterred by accusations of disloyalty, Levine and Ullmann exhort American Jews to confront the carnage in Gaza, as well as West Bank expansionism. They place blame on Israeli state actions. While affirming their alarm, other vantage points render alternative options.

Hyperbole and misrepresentation are not absent in media commentary concerning Israel's campaign against Hamas. Unfair criticism against Israel is part of the mix. Compare reaction against Israel to that directed toward the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Approximately 1,200 Israelis were slaughtered in the October 7, 2023, attack by Hamas and more than 250 taken hostage. Video shows that starvation has reduced Israeli Eviatar David, a Hamas hostage, to a barely living skeleton. Israeli retaliation has led to more

than 60,000 Palestinian deaths, largely of civilians. In contrast, Vladimir Putin launched a brutal February 2022 invasion of Ukraine that has resulted in an estimated 1.5 million combined Russian-Ukrainian casualties, far more than in the Hamas-Israel conflict.

Yet, global outrage in academia, media and governments against Russia pales before that directed against Israel. "Genocide" and "holocaust" figure prominently in the language of opprobrium aimed at Israel. On its front page, *The New York Times* published a heart-rendering photograph of Mohammed Zakaria al-Mutawaq, an emaciated 18-month-old Palestinian boy, with a protruding spine, dying from malnutrition. Then, questions arose as to why the boy's mother and siblings, also shown in the photo, looked adequately fed. Forced to print a retraction, the *Times* subsequently acknowledged that Mohammed was a victim of a genetic disorder, not starvation.

The preceding is true, but cannot rationalize Israeli tactics that have grown increasingly disproportionate, lethal and brutal. Attainment of self-defense and security is justifiable. Creating conditions in Gaza that inflict hunger and starvation on a civilian population, kill aid workers and indiscriminately deploy armaments that decimate non-combatants are not. Nor is land-grab vigilantism on the West Bank acceptable. Claiming that criticism of his policies is akin to the venerable and pernicious blood libel, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu terms credible documentation of Gaza hunger a "global campaign of lies."

Evidence mounts that Netanyahu plans to render conditions in Gaza so unbearable that Palestinians will "voluntarily" accept resettlement. There are reports that Netanyahu has discussed with the leaders of South Sudan a reciprocal agreement, admission of large numbers of Gaza

See "Policies" on page 14

One Perspective from Israel

A tent on our street

JEREMY M. STAIMAN

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

A tent rose on our street, where sorrow met holiness. There's really nothing new to see here. Move on. You already know it: It's different when it happens to someone you know.

Eight hundred eighty-eight was the number of soldiers who had died in the line of duty with the tragic ambush of the Netzach Yehuda soldiers in Beit Hanun. Five souls. One unspeakable day. When the news hit, some people sighed. As they usually do. Some people cried. Once more. Others clicked on by, compartmentalizing their grief to preserve their sanity. Yet again.

One by one, the names and hometowns of the first four appeared in the media, and people sighed, and cried, and clicked. But when the last name was published, the community of Beit Shemesh lost its breath.

It's different when it happens to someone you know.

We live on a lovely, tree-lined street, with mostly Anglo neighbors. We have our choice of two fabulous-yet-different *shuls* right across the street. One of them, Menorat Hamaor, is a staunchly Zionist congregation. The Israeli flag dances proudly in the breeze atop the building. As to be expected, Menorat Hamaor boasts an impressive list of scores of sons (and daughters), as well as grandchildren, who serve in the IDF.

The other, Aish Kodesh, is Chasidic in nature. Aish Kodesh is extremely soldier-friendly, as well. The Piacezner Rebbe, Rav Kalman Menachem Shapira, is quick to run and warmly greet anyone in uniform who enters his door. Some of these soldiers, as well, are sons and grandsons of the largely-Anglo membership.

Moshe Shmuel (Moishy) Noll, *Hashem yikom damo*,

lived two doors down from us. His father, David, is a fixture around our neighborhood. Gently stooped over his wooden cane, he is a man whose face exudes kindness, and he is quick with a smile. He can often be seen taking his Aussiedoodle on walks, or praying in Aish Kodesh or the nearby Chabad. The congenial octogenarian could easily be mistaken for the grandfather of a soldier, not his father.

It's different when it happens to someone you know.

I can't say I knew Moishy personally, but the news hit like the proverbial ton of bricks. In an all-too-familiar show of profound respect, hundreds of neighbors lined the street between the Noll home and the van parked a few blocks away, waiting to shuttle them to the funeral of their young boy on the hallowed grounds of Mt. Herzl, Israel's national military cemetery. People carried flags,

See "Street" on page 15

In My Own Words

Religious freedom

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

"Religious freedom is the right to hold, practice, and express religious beliefs without government interference or coercion, and is protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which has two main clauses: the Establishment Clause (no government establishment of religion) and the Free Exercise Clause (no prohibition on the free exercise of religion)." – Google AI

During the recent discussion about the Antisemitism Awareness Act, concerns were raised by a group of practicing Christians: they were afraid that the act would make it illegal to say that Jews killed Jesus. Their concern was so great that the wording of the bill was changed. While anyone familiar with the history of that period knows that the Romans were the ones who crucified Jesus, these Christians have the legal right to believe that falsehood, just as I have the right not to accept their statement. I know people who say that anyone who has not accepted Jesus as their savior will burn forever in hellfire after they die. Our Constitution gives them the right to believe that. However, there are limits to religious freedom: while you can believe what you want, you aren't allowed to say that those who disagree with you shouldn't be allowed to vote, to live where they choose, to receive an education, to work in

the job of their choice, receive healthcare or to marry the person they love.

For the last decade, religious conservatives have been saying our government has been restricting their religious rights. However, there are no laws that say a minister, imam or rabbi can be forced to marry someone if it goes against their religious beliefs. Clergy are allowed to preach against those they think are breaking religious law, including saying that God doesn't approve of interracial or same-sex marriages. What they are *not* allowed to do is discriminate against others in business, school or governmental spheres. The same is true for those whose religious practices are more liberal or those who have no religion: they cannot discriminate against those whose beliefs they may find abhorrent.

Unfortunately, potential changes to the Nonprofit Security Grant Program are seeking to limit our ability to exercise our religious freedom. All churches, mosques and synagogues should be able to access these funds, regardless of whether the current government agrees with their specific beliefs. Unfortunately, attacks against religious institutions are on the rise; no group is safe, as shown by the recent shooting at a Catholic school. Religious organizations should not have to change their moral beliefs to receive

funds to protect those who use their services.

However, in order to receive funds, institutions may have to welcome ICE agents, when doing so goes against their religious and moral beliefs, noting that the Bible requires them to welcome the stranger. They may also have to stop supporting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives, even if those efforts are a fundamental part of their religious identity. Those of us who see the full inclusion of the LGBTQ community as a religious obligation should not be penalized for those beliefs by being denied security funds freely given to those who oppose those ideals. I don't argue that those who restrict women's religious obligations or who oppose LGBTQ rights should not receive funds. They are absolutely allowed to practice those beliefs within their walls, but the same should apply to *all* groups.

If you believe in religious freedom, then you need to accept religious freedom for *all*, if only to protect yourself. After all, governments change and your religious practices could be targeted the next time by a different administration. The Jewish community should be all too aware of that possibility since that has happened to our community in almost every country in which we've lived. That is one of the beauties of the U.S.: religious freedom is supposed to be guaranteed for everyone.



Shelley Hubal, Executive Director

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

LETTERS

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

ADS

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

DEADLINE

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.

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www.thereporter.org

JCC to hold Rosh Hashanah event Sept. 18

The Jewish Community Center will hold a Rosh Hashanah event for families on Thursday, September 18, from 4:30-6:30 pm. The cost is \$5 per family. The community is invited to attend.

The event will include crafts, dancing and music. There

will also be a table of PJ Library books. The PJ Library sends free Jewish children's books to children ages birth-12.

"Join us for what will be a fun family event to begin the fall holiday season," said organizers of the event. "We look forward to seeing you there."

Margolis Family Lecture on "A 3000-Year History of Jews and the Pig"

Dr. Jordan Rosenblum, Belzer Professor of Classical Judaism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will deliver this year's Margolis Family Lecture on Thursday, September 18, at 7 pm, in Casadesus Hall, located in the Fine Arts Building of Binghamton University. His talk, based on his award-winning book, is titled "Forbidden: A 3000-Year History of Jews and the Pig." The lecture is open to the general public and free of charge. The talk is sponsored by the Moses Margolis Lecture Fund, the Judaic Studies Department and the College of Jewish Studies. It will serve as the first in the fall 2025 College of Jewish Studies Lecture Series, with further lectures to be announced shortly. For



Jordan Rosenblum
(Photo courtesy of Jordan Rosenblum)

questions, contact kschull1@binghamton.edu or call 607-777-3070.

"Forbidden: A 3000-Year History of Jews and the Pig," published in 2024 by New York University Press, won a National Jewish Book Award in the category of Jewish Food Writing and Cookbooks. According to the author: "Jews do not eat pig. This (not always true) observation has been made by both Jews and non-Jews for three thousand years. Over time, the pig becomes a popular metaphor for Jewish/non-Jewish identity. This talk explores this historical development. Starting in the Hebrew Bible, where the pig is tabooed, but not necessarily singled out See "Lecture" on page 5

Save the date: Federation to hold 10/7 commemoration on Oct. 5

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold a 10/7 commemorative service and speaker on Sunday morning, October 5, at 10 am, at Temple Israel. Dr. Yehezkel Caine, president of Herzog Medical Center in Jerusalem, will speak virtually about Herzog's Israel Center for the

Treatment of Psychotrauma, which works with survivors, soldiers and families.

"Join us for this meaningful event," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "We'll be publishing more information about the speaker in a future issue of The Reporter."

Holocaust memorial service to be held on Sept. 28

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold a memorial service at the Holocaust Memorial Monument in the Temple Israel Cemetery, on Conklin Avenue in Conklin, on Sunday, September 28, at 10:30 am. The service will be led by area rabbis. The monument was one of the first memorial stones in the United States to acknowledge the Holocaust.

"We are pleased to be able to hold this important event again this year," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "We not only remember those who lost their lives in the Holocaust, but honor those who developed, created and sustained this important community memorial."

The monument was the project of the Get Together Club,

which was a social and philanthropic group formed in 1948 by 13 German-speaking Jewish women. The women were the wives of cattle dealers who had resettled in the Southern See "Memorial" on page 5

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About the cover

This year's Rosh Hashanah cover was created by Julie Weber, *The Reporter's* production associate.

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High Holidays

Local services and events are announced; recipes; thoughts on apples and honey.

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The search for the biblical blue dye is told in a new visitors center in Israel.

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Damascus crowns

An exhibit in Israel features ancient Bibles that were smuggled out of Syria.

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The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to Sylvia Diamond on the death of her brother,
Joseph Feldman

DEADLINES

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

| ISSUE | DEADLINE |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| September 26-October 9 | September 17 |
| October 10-23 | September 29 (early) |
| October 24-November 13 | October 13 (early) |
| November 14-27 | November 5 |

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

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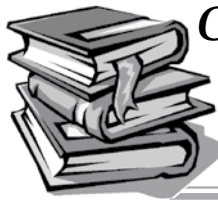
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Off the Shelf

Novels about politics and life

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Those seeking to change the world often view their surroundings through political and social ideals. For some, politics becomes the driving force behind their actions, whether it's the willingness to risk one's life to obtain a political end or political ideas coloring the way one views those of a different religion or race. That was certainly true of the real life Leon Trotsky, a portion of whose life is featured in the novel "Bronshtein in the Bronx" by Robert Littell (Soho Press). The need to understand how politics influenced her mother's actions during World War II France is what led French historian Cecile Desprairies to write her autobiographical novel "The Propagandist" (New Vessel Press). Each work offers insights into the role politics played in these families' lives.

"Bronshtein in the Bronx" opens in 1917 when Trotsky arrives in the United States with his lover and their two children, hoping to spark a revolution. His documents featured his birth name, Lev Davidovich Bronshtein, although officials are familiar with his radical politics. Trotsky escaped Russia after being exiled to Siberia and has no idea that the Russian Revolution will soon take place. Offering a first-person narrative, readers learn Trotsky is willing to sacrifice the lives of millions if that is the only way to make his revolution a success. However, his welcoming socialist hosts note that the United States is not exactly ripe for revolution: unions and political activists in the U.S. are looking to improve conditions, not overthrow the economic and social system.

Once in New York, Trotsky must find a way to make a living and is not above taking advantage of his star-status in the socialist movement. He also enters a relationship with Fedora, a woman journalist, who challenges his ideas. Unlike Trotsky, she believes a dictatorship of the proletariat will end as do most revolutions: in a dictatorship that will oppress that same proletariat. The two also differ in what they are willing to do for the revolution: she is willing to die for it, but she is not willing to kill for it. That serves as the biggest wedge between the two.

In his 10 months in the U.S., Trotsky must deal with the FBI and, on his way back to Russia, with British intelligence, which wants to prevent him from returning to his native land, since a revolution in Russia might affect the outcome of World War I. Trotsky, however, doesn't particularly care who wins the war since he sees it as a distraction: workers should not be fighting workers of another country, but rather banding together to overthrow their capitalist oppressors.

Trotsky is a far more engaging narrator than one might expect from a diehard revolutionary. That is partly because his conscious – which sounds like his Jewish childhood nemesis – offers a running commentary that challenges Trotsky's thoughts and actions. In fact, his conscious feels so real to him, Trotsky often puzzles those around him by speaking to it out loud.

Even though it's filled with serious ideas, "Bronshtein in the Bronx" is easy and breezy reading. Knowing what will happen in the U.S. and Russia actually adds an additional dimension to the work. It's possible to be engaged by this Trotsky, while, at the same time, disliking his ideas. The author concludes the novel with information about the real-life people featured. Knowing this revolutionary's real-life end is particularly poignant.

While both novels in this review feature first-person narrators, Coline, the narrator of "The Propagandist" serves as a fictionalized version of the author. The story reads more like a memoir than a novel: Coline's narration is so convincing that it's difficult to tell which parts are factual and which are invented by the author.

Although the main action takes place in the 1960s, it's the 1940s that formed this Christian family's feelings about their Jewish neighbors. Coline's mother, Lucie, her grandmother and her aunts gathered in the narrator's apartment when she was a child. It is their influence that matters: the men were barely tolerated. When the women talk of Jews, it is only to note that they are all rich; they also quickly brush aside anything that had happened in World War II.

When Coline learns more about her mother's life, she

discovers that her mother was married before: her first husband was a firm believer in, and supporter of, the Nazi cause. Lucie seemed not only accepting of that belief, but a confirmed Nazi herself. In fact, after the war is over, Lucie still believes in the cause and hopes that fascism will be revived. Even as she aged, her first husband remained the love of her life: her second husband was of little importance.

This creates an interesting dilemma for Coline since, from her family, she learns that Nazi collaborators were heroes, while also becoming aware that the rest of France condemns their actions. It's difficult to read about those who never gave up their allegiance to the Nazi cause, especially when they managed to hide or whitewash what they did, and live well after the war. Readers may debate which collaborators were worse: those who truly believed in the cause or those who only cared about profit.

"The Propagandist" does not include a section separating fact from fiction. It would be interesting to hear Desprairies discuss her novel from her viewpoint as a historian of the Nazi occupation of France. However, her novel feels as if its insights are gleaned from her personal experience.

Both of these novels look back in time, which means they offer a different perspective than those living through that time period might. Readers know far more than Trotsky does about the actual Russian Revolution. That can make it difficult not to judge his mistakes, while also realizing how disappointed he would be with the final result. Coline, on the other hand, must overcome the propaganda she learned as a child, something that is difficult because most children accept their relatives' beliefs, at least until they discover the truth behind them. Readers might be interested in a sequel to discover when Coline comes to understand the horrors of the regime her mother supported and what that means for her own future actions and ideals. However, it feels unlikely the author will offer such a work. In both of these novels, fact and fiction struggle to offer an accurate portrait of the past: each author does manage to find a good, if very different, type of balance.



Off the Shelf

Middle grade and chapter books

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

While I love a good, complex, many-paged literary novel, there are joys to be found in other types of writing. I prefer not to read too many books from the same genre in a row; it's more fun to switch around and experience a variety of subject matters and plots. This works well when looking for books to review in *The Reporter*: it leads me to discover books about which I might not otherwise have known. That's particularly true of middle grade and chapter books with Jewish themes because I don't have children or grandchildren. However, these books

can be great, whether they tackle complex problems and emotions as do two of the books in this review, or are just delightful novels about families. All four of these works come highly recommended.

"D. J. Rosenblum Becomes the G.O.A.T."

It's difficult to believe that the powerful, moving "D. J. Rosenblum Becomes the G.O.A.T." (Levine Querido) is Abby White's first novel. The work opens with a trigger warning and information from the author for those considering suicide. While that gives away part of the plot, it doesn't distract from a novel that adults can also appreciate.

The abbreviation G.O.A.T. stands for the greatest of all time: that's how D. J. feels about her older cousin, Rachel. Even though they don't live near each other, they keep in close touch via social media and text messages. D. J. so greatly admires her cousin that she is crushed when Rachel dies. After Rachel's death, D. J. and her mother move to

help Rachel's mother, father and younger brother cope with what occurred.

However, D. J. refuses to believe that her cousin died by suicide. Since none of the students in her new school know that D. J. and Rachel were cousins, D. J. joins the school newspaper pretending she is interested in writing an article about what really happened. She believes her research will uncover who killed Rachel. But her obsession grows, even when the evidence points in a different direction. She is so focused on what she thinks happened that she alienates her closest friend from her previous school and the friends she's made in her new school. Plus, she is also studying for her postponed bat mitzvah and she finds her Torah portion – which speaks of Aaron not being allowed to publicly mourn the death of his sons – disturbing and offensive.

The pages of "D. J. Rosenblum Becomes the G.O.A.T." flew by as the suspense turns from what happened to Rachel to the problems that D.J. is facing. It will be clear to adult readers that she needs help long before it occurs to her family. However, that's part of what makes the book so powerful: D. J. knows the problems her extended family faces and sees her role as not adding to their distress. One of the book's best scenes takes place during the Yom Kippur *Yizkor* service. Those pages are among the most moving that I've ever read about people dealing with grief.

Parents may want to read "D. J. Rosenblum Becomes the G.O.A.T." with their tweens and discuss what happened to D. J. and Rachel, focusing on letting their children know that they don't need to be perfect and that almost

See "Books" on page 8

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BD Luncheon on Sept. 13 to feature Eliyana Adler

Beth David Synagogue's 2025-26 Second-Saturday-of-the-Month Luncheon Speaker Series will resume on Saturday, September 13. Shabbat services will begin at 9:30 am, followed by the luncheon and program. Professor Eliyana R. Adler will speak on "Private Schools for Jewish Girls in the Tsarist Empire."

Adler is a scholar of East European Jewish history and will present insights from her award-winning book, "In Her Hands: The Education of Jewish Girls in Tsarist Russia" (Wayne State University Press, 2011, with a new edition in 2024). Her research – conducted in Russian and Lithuanian archives as well as the YIVO Institute in New York – challenges long-held conjectures about Jewish girls' education in the 19th-century Russian Empire. The

work received the 2011 Heldt Prize from the Association for Women in Slavic Studies and was a National Jewish Book Award Finalist in Women's Studies. It was translated into Russian in 2022.

"Professor Adler's groundbreaking work upended some previously held erroneous assumptions about Jewish girls' education under the Russian Empire," said organizers of the event. "She shares what was considered commonplace, as witnessed in a remark made by a European-born rabbi in a 2000 interview that appeared in *The New York Times*. He is quoted as saying that Jewish girls in Eastern Europe



Professor Eliyana Adler (Photocourtesy of Eliyana Adler)

did not need any education; they just needed to learn how to peel potatoes. 'In fact,' Professor Adler has noted, 'contemporary witnesses often remarked that Jewish women were much more educated than their peers. But how did this come about? My talk will discuss Jewish educational norms in the late 19th century, with a special focus on the private schools for Jewish girls that proliferated in the Russian Empire.'

Adler recently joined the faculty in the Departments of History and Judaic Studies, and the Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention, at Binghamton University. She holds a doctorate from Brandeis University, and teaches and studies East European Jewish history at Binghamton. In addition to her work on Jewish girls' education in Tsarist Russia, her most recent book, "Survival on the Margins: Polish Jewish Refugees in the Wartime Soviet Union" (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), received both the Yad Vashem International Book Prize for Holocaust Research (2021) and the Rachel Feldhay Brenner Award in Polish Jewish Studies (2021). Adler has published articles in many journals and has held fellowships sponsored by multiple institutions. Her current research focuses on post-Holocaust Polish Jewish memorial books.

"We are thrilled to have Eliyana as part of our community and university," organizers said. "Her groundbreaking work is sure to be fascinating and enlightening. She looks forward to sharing her findings and answering the important questions we know her audience will bring!"

Beth David's luncheon speaker series takes place the second Saturday of the month after Shabbat morning services and is open to the community. There is no charge for the luncheon. Since the monthly series' continuation depends on the generosity of contributors, Beth David welcomes and appreciates donations to the Luncheon Fund in order to keep the program going. Donations can be made in honor of, or in memory of, someone, or to mark a special occasion. Those wishing an acknowledgment to be sent to the person being honored, or to the family of someone being remembered, can indicate that, along with the necessary information. Donations can be sent to Beth David Synagogue, 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905, Attention: Luncheon Fund.

Film Fest announces 2025-26 films

The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will feature five events during its 2025-26 season. For information about dates, times and moderators, see future issues of *The Reporter*.

- ◆ "Running on Sand"
- ◆ Four short films: "No Harm Done," "The Sacred Society," "Women of Virtue" and "The Father, The Son and The Rav"
- ◆ "The Matchmaker"

- ◆ "The Tasters"
- ◆ "Soul of a Nation"

"The Film Fest Committee is excited to present the coming year's line-up," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, which sponsors the film fest. "The films range from comedy to drama to documentary, and even several short films. We hope the community will once again come together and enjoy their local Jewish Film Fest."

JFS and JCC Friendship Club to host program on estate planning

Jewish Family Services and the JCC Friendship Club will host the program "Estate Planning Basics: Wills, Trusts, and Advanced Directives" on Wednesday, September 17, at 1 pm, at the Jewish Community Center, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal. Amanda Giannone, a partner at Levene Gouldin and Thompson law firm, will speak. Giannone specializes in elder law and has been presenting workshops since

2015. To register for the event, visit www.jfjb.org or call 607-724-2332.

"Join us for this free program," said organizers of the event. "Those of all ages are welcome to attend. There will be plenty of time for questions, and snacks will be served. Join us for what will be sure to be an informational and interesting program."

Memorial.

Tier after fleeing Nazism. The decision to raise a memorial stone occurred after a member's husband wished he had a place to say *Kaddish* for his parents, who, since they had died in the Holocaust, had no grave he could visit. The club raised the necessary funds for the stone. The names of more than 250 individuals who died in the Holocaust and had no grave were placed in a copper box, which was buried at the foot of the monument. The inscription on the stone says, "Victims of Racial Persecution who lost

Their Lives in Europe During the Years 1933-1945. They Will Never Be Forgotten."

The first ceremony took place on Sunday, November 9, 1952, and continued for 20 years. Then, after Professor Rhonda Levine spoke about the Get Together Club at the Federation's Super Sunday in 2015, it was decided to resume the ceremony, holding it between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur each year.

"I want to thank our local clergy for supporting the memorial program," said Hubal. "I hope you will join us for what is always a moving event. It's important that we never forget the lives lost in the Holocaust."



The Holocaust Memorial in the Temple Israel Cemetery

Lecture.

more than other food prohibitions, we see the emergence of the pig as a symbol of Jewish identity in the Second Temple period and beyond. From the Talmud to modern television shows, we follow the pig as it forages through Jewish history."

Rosenblum's research focuses on the law, literature and social history of the rabbinic movement in general and, in particular, on Jewish food regulations. His previous books include "Rabbinic Drinking: What Beverages Teach Us About Rabbinic Literature" (University of California Press 2020), "The Jewish Dietary Laws in the Ancient World" (Cambridge University Press 2016) and "Food and Identity in Early Rabbinic Judaism" (Cambridge University Press 2010). He is also the co-editor of four volumes, including "Feasting and Fasting: The History and Ethics of Jewish Food" (New York University Press 2019) and "Animals and the Law in Antiquity" (Brown Judaic Studies 2021).

Continued from page 3

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Bookkeeper wanted

The Reporter is seeking a part-time bookkeeper who has experience with QuickBooks, Excel and Access, plus a willingness to learn other programs and material as necessary. The bookkeeper must also be able to interact with clients in a personable manner.

This is a part-time position with a flexible schedule.

E-mail resume to Shelley Hubal at director@jfjb.org with "bookkeeper" in the subject line.

THE REPORTER
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High Holiday services at area synagogues

High Holiday services information was provided by the synagogues listed below. Other area synagogues have already provided their information (see the August 22-September 11 issue of *The Reporter*, www.thereportergroup.org/local-news/2025-high-holiday-services-at-area-synagogues), or are still in the process of planning their services to ensure the safety of their congregants – as those plans may change, those interested in attending services are asked to contact synagogues for their most up-to-date service schedule. See the Congregational Notes on page 18 for contact information for all of the area synagogues.

Beth David Synagogue

Saturday, September 13
Selichot – 10 pm
Tuesday, September 23, Rosh Hashanah Day 1
 Services – 8:15 am
 Shofar – 10:50 am
Tashlich at Confluence Park – 6 pm
Wednesday, September 24, Rosh Hashanah Day 2
 Services – 8:15 am
 Shofar – 10:50 am

Wednesday, October 1, erev Yom Kippur
 Candle lighting – 6:26 pm
 Fast begins – 6:45 pm
Kol Nidre – 6:30 pm
Thursday, October 2, Yom Kippur
 Services – 9 am
Yizkor – 12:20 pm
Mincha and Neilah – 4:15 pm
 Fast ends/shofar – 7:25 pm
Tuesday, October 7, Sukkot day 1
 Services – 9 am
Wednesday, October 8, Sukkot day 2
 Services – 9 am
Saturday, October 11, Shabbat Chol Hamoed
 Services – 9 am
Monday, October 13, Hoshanah Rabba
 Services – 7 am
Tuesday, October 14, Shemini Atzeret
 Services – 9 am
Yizkor – 10:45 am
Maariv and Hakafot – 6:45 pm
Wednesday, October 15, Simchat Torah
 Services – 9 am
Hakafot – 9:45 am

Temple Brith Sholom holiday service with Cantor Star Wahnnon

Temple Brith Sholom will hold High Holiday services with Cantor Star Wahnnon leading, along with several congregants. Rosh Hashanah services will be held on Monday, September 22, at 7 pm; Tuesday, September 23, at 10 am, with *Tashlich* taking place at noon; and Wednesday, September 24, at 10 am. Yom Kippur services will be held on Wednesday, October 1, at 6:45 pm, for *Kol Nidre*; and on Thursday, October 2, at 10 am, with a service that will include *Yizkor*; and at 6 pm for the *Neilah* and *Havdalah* services, with a break-the-fast at 6:45 pm.



Cantor Star Wahnnon (Photo provided by Temple Brith Sholom)

Robert Wahnnon, also sang there. She is the first female in her family to become a cantor.

She studied at the Academy for Jewish Religion under the direction of Cantor Sol Zim. She has performed concerts in both Sefardi and Ashkenazi *nusach*, as well as taught classes to children and adults in synagogues all over the United States. She has served numerous communities as a cantor, including Temple Isaiah in Palm Springs, CA; Temple Beth-El in Ithaca; and Gurwin Jewish Nursing and Rehab Center in Commack. She is currently the spiritual leader at the Jewish Center of the Moriches.

Wahnnon is the great-granddaughter of Sefardi Cantor James Mesod Wahnnon of Congregation Shearith Israel, the Spanish/Portuguese synagogue of New York City, which is also the oldest synagogue in the United States. Her grandfather, *Shamash* Martin James Wahnnon, and her father, James

Wahnnon has said she likes to encourage her congregation to explore new melodies from Ladino romantikas to contemporary Jewish music. “When we open our minds to new music, it gives us more voice and opportunity to praise Hashem!” she noted.

Temple Beth El of Oneonta

Monday, September 22, erev Rosh Hashanah
 Evening service – 7 pm
Tuesday, September 23, Rosh Hashanah day 1
 Morning service – 10 am
 Followed by:
 Torah service
 Shofar service
Wednesday, September 24, Rosh Hashanah Day 2
Tashlich at Lower Wilber Park, Spruce Street entrance – 1 pm
Wednesday, October 1, erev Yom Kippur
Kol Nidre – 7 pm (be prompt)
Thursday, October 2, Yom Kippur
 Morning service – 10 am
 Followed by:
 Torah service
 (Half hour break)
Yizkor (memorial) service
 (Half hour break)
 Torah study with Cantor Green
 Forgiveness Workshop – 4:30 pm
Neilah – 6:15 pm
Tekia gedolah (shofar blast)
 Break-the-fast (reservations are required). Members will receive break-the-fast reservation forms with their High Holy Day tickets. Non-temple members should contact Temple Beth El at 607-432-5522 or tboneonta@gmail.com for tickets and break-the-fast reservation forms.

TC Sisterhood to host Rosh Hashanah Super Kiddush

Close to three dozen Temple Concord Sisterhood members will provide the annual Temple Concord Rosh Hashanah Super *Kiddush*. It will be held in the mansion dining room following services on Tuesday, September 23. There will be sweets for a sweet new year and other snacks.

“Everyone who attends adult or children’s services is encouraged to enjoy the *kiddush* and the camaraderie,”

said organizers of the event. “They can renew friendships and make new friends.”

A Sisterhood committee will set up the *kiddush*. Led by Babs Putzel-Bischoff, committee members include Tracy Putzel-Bischoff, Barb Dickman, Gayle Klein and Marsha Luks. “They all thank the participants and wish the congregation a happy and sweet New Year,” organizers added.



Have a sweet, happy & healthy New Year!

The Coker Family

May this New Year be a time of peace & joy for you and all those you love.

Terri Bennett

Let the New Year be the start of only the sweetest things!

Steve Gilbert

L'SHANAH TOVAH

HOWARD FISHER

May this New Year be a time of peace & joy for you and all those you love.

Bob Tomanek

Shana Tovah

from Shari Neuberger

May peace, happiness and good health be with you throughout the New Year.

Bob & Lori Schapiro
 Jared, Stefi, Lindsey and Daniel

May the nations & people everywhere understand that peace and cooperation is the answer.

Neil & Sima Auerbach

L'SHANAH TOVAH

Hon. Hollie S. Levine

L'SHANA TOVA TIKATEVU

Susan and Gerald Hubal

May this New Year be a time of peace & joy for you and all those you love.

Kathy Brown,
 Advertising Representative

TI to host "Sukkot with the Rabbis" on Oct. 12

Temple Israel will hold "Sukkot with the Rabbis," on Sunday, October 12, from 2-4 pm, at the temple. There is a charge of \$5 per person or \$18 per family. The community is invited to attend. The event will celebrate the holiday of Sukkot and the beginning of Rabbi Micah Friedman's third year with Temple Israel. Rabbi Talia Laster will lead

the program along with Friedman. To volunteer to help with the event, contact Arlene Osber at 607-206-2032 or Bonnie Brown at 607-759-5476. To make a reservation or to sponsor the event, contact the temple office at 607-723-7461 or office@templeisraelvestal.org.

"The rabbis look forward to meeting and connecting

with everyone as we share in the joy of community and tradition," said organizers of the event. "Light refreshments will be provided in either the sukkah or the social hall, depending on the weather. Join us for this joyful occasion of community, tradition and celebration. We look forward to seeing you there!"

Jewish holiday online resources

By Reporter staff

◆ Hadassah Magazine will hold the virtual event "'Happy New Years' from Master of Israeli Fiction Maya Arad" on Thursday, September 18, at 7 pm. Hadassah Magazine Executive Editor Lisa Hostein will speak with Israeli-born author and playwright Maya Arad about her new book, "Happy New Years," as well as the experiences of Israeli expatriates in America today. For more information or to

register, visit www.hadassahmagazine.org/2025/08/05/happy-new-years-from-master-of-israeli-fiction-maya-arad.

◆ The Blue Dove Foundation, which addresses "mental illness and addiction in the Jewish community and beyond," offers resources for the High Holidays. For more information, visit https://thebluedovefoundation.org/resource_category/high-holy-days.

◆ The Kveller website is offering a free booklet "Kveller's

Guide to Hosting Rosh Hashanah." To request a copy, visit www.kveller.com/rosh-hashanah-hosting-made-easy.

◆ The Jewish Theological Seminary is offering "To Be More Fully Human: Reflections on Hope for the Days of Awe 5786," essays written by JTS faculty, leadership and students, at no cost on its website. For more information or access to the essays, visit www.jtsa.edu/blog-content/to-be-more-fully-human-reflections-on-hope-for-the-days-of-awe-5786/page/1.

Spotlight

Local teen serves up gold at the Maccabi Games

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Tennis and Judaism? The connection between the two might not be obvious to many people, but, then again, those people aren't local teen Aviva Kaminsky. Kaminsky won a gold medal in tennis at the 2025 JCC Maccabi Games, which were held in Pittsburgh this year. Since Binghamton didn't have its own team, Kaminsky was invited to play with the delegation from the Cleveland Jewish Community Center.

Kaminsky acknowledges that there was something different about participating in a Jewish sporting event. "I wanted to play in the Maccabi Games because it's such a special opportunity to compete in a sport I love while also meeting other Jewish athletes from all over the world," she said in an e-mail interview. "This was my second year going and, after last year, I knew I wanted to come back."

She noted that she was nervous when she attended last year. "I was nervous because I didn't know what to expect, but this time I felt more confident, both on and off the court," she added. "What stayed the same is the vibe: it's still so much fun, supportive and exciting."

For Kaminsky, the Maccabi Games were different from the other tournaments she's attended. "It feels way different because it's not just about the matches: it's about



Aviva Kaminsky with her gold medal (Photo courtesy of the Kaminsky family)

the community," she said. "In regular tournaments, you're mostly focused on winning and going home. At Maccabi, you play hard, but you're also cheering for your friends, trading pins, hanging out and participating in service projects. There's also so much Jewish pride and that is such an amazing feeling."

She enjoyed her time on and off the court. "On court, definitely competing and pushing myself, especially in big matches [was one of my favorite things]," she noted. "Off court, it's the friendships. I love meeting people from all over the country (and even other countries) and going to the evening events. It's also really special for me because I've lived in cities all over the U.S. and went to Jewish day schools, so I've been able to reconnect with a lot of friends from my old communities."

Kaminsky highly recommends participating: "It's honestly one of the best experiences I've had. You get great athletic competition, but also an entire week of making memories and connecting with so many Jewish teens. This year, I was so proud because I won the gold medal! It felt amazing, especially because I spent my summer training and playing tennis, and it was amazing to see the hard work pay off."

As for being able to participate, she feels "really grateful.



Aviva Kaminsky on the tennis court during the Maccabi Games.

Playing in the Maccabi Games makes me proud of both my tennis and my Jewish identity, as well as representing the Binghamton community (by way of the Cleveland JCC). I am so appreciative that the Cleveland JCC invited me to join their delegation this year and I hope that, in the future Binghamton, will have a delegation of its own."



L'Shanah Tovah
Rabbi Rachel Esserman

L'Shanah Tovah from Maria & Bob Kutz

As we celebrate a New Year, we wish the entire community Shana Tovah.
Rabbi Barry and Jill Baron

May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for good health, peace and prosperity.
Jean and Lew Hecht and Family

May this New Year be a time of peace & joy for you and all those you love.
Suzanne Holwitt and Family

לשנה טובה תכתבו
Wishing you and your family a very Happy New Year. May you be blessed with life, health, prosperity and nachat.
Rabbi Zev and Judy Silber and family.

Happy New Year from Steven, Gail, Michael, Emily, Milo & Eli Feuer of Otego, NY

L'Shanah Tovah
Marilyn Bell & Family

May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for good health, peace and prosperity.
Shelley, Mark, Josh & Rae Hubal



On the Jewish food scene

Apples and honey

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

I've always loved apples. My current favorite are Granny Smith apples, a bag of which I keep in the house all year-round. They are long lasting, and stay fresh even cut, so I can bring them along with me for a snack. Not everyone likes them because they are tart, but they also have an underlying sweetness. One of my favorite yogurt mixtures is chopped-up Granny Smith apples, raisins, walnuts and cinnamon mixed in unsweetened yogurt.

On the other hand, I was not a fan of honey when I was growing up, which is kind of ironic in that Honey was my mother's name. (Well, not her birth name, but many people didn't realize that she had any other name.) I've grown to tolerate honey and now don't mind eating it. But there are plenty of other sweet foods I like better, which led me to ponder something I never really thought about before: why were apples and honey picked as the foods we use to wish ourselves a sweet new year?

Let's be honest: chocolate cake or a cookie of one's choice (I'm a big fan of oatmeal raisin), a candy bar, or a bowl of your favorite flavor of ice cream would make more sense as something to use to bring you a sweet new year. This, of course, led me to search for the history of this food choice. A few things quickly popped up: I did know

that the ancient Israelites could not have eaten apples and honey for Rosh Hashanah because apples are not native to the Middle East. While we're discussing ancient times, it should be noted the honey written about in the Bible was probably date honey, which was far more common than bee honey.

A reference led me to the Tur, Orach Chayim 583, which I found on Sefaria. That text notes that in Germany, apples and honey were eaten during a meal, with those eating them saying, "Let this new year be a sweet year for us." Some of the customs for the new year may be less appealing: one in the same section suggests that if you want to know if you will live through the year, you should light a candle and place it in a room that doesn't have a draft. If it lasts for Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, you'll live. If the flame goes out, you will not "continue." (That is the translation on Safaria. I guess that's more pleasant than saying if the light goes out, you'll die.)

But back to food: something must have happened at some point for the custom to develop, but the only way we'll know for certain would be to use a time machine. After all, I'm not sure the claim on several websites that the use of apples comes from a quote in Song of Songs, comparing

people to apples, is accurate. (Had apples traveled from Asia to the Middle East by that time? Where is that time machine?) For those thinking about the Garden of Eden, the name of the fruit is never mentioned and as for what particular fruit it was, that's up for debate. (Books have been written about the topic: I know because I read one. You can find the review at www.thereporter.org/book-reviews/celebrating-jewish-literature-the-fruit-of-the-tree-of-knowledge.)

What is interesting is how widespread – at least for Ashkenazic Jews – this one custom has become. There are a variety of other food related customs, some of which I've written about before that most Western Jews have no idea exist. (You can find the one about fish heads at www.thereporter.org/features/on-the-jewish-food-scene-fish-heads-and-the-new-year.)

This year, feel free to use apples and honey. Or you could go wild and try one of my other suggestions, or pick out one of your own. The idea is to have a sweet new year. I don't think it matters what food we eat since I don't really believe eating a sweet will change our destiny. However, I am all for celebrating and praying for a good new year. May yours be filled with joy and good health.

Books.....

everyone needs outside help sometimes during their life. However, you don't need to have children to appreciate this absorbing and emotionally touching work. It comes highly recommended for adult readers.

"Trouble Finds Evie Lefkowitz"

Diana Harmon manages to combine humorous and serious situations in "Trouble Finds Evie Lefkowitz" (P. J. Library). Evie is still considered the cantor's daughter, even though her father died two years before. She's lucky to have a loving mother and two really good friends, Rachel and Spencer. However, her life soon becomes complicated on a variety of fronts. First, it's bad enough that her mom has a temporary position at her middle school, but now the new assistant principal has asked her on a date, and her mother seems very interested. Evie and her mom had bonded over the very bad dates that her mother had had, but this one seems different – a potential threat to their bond.

Another potential disaster occurs when her mother volunteers her to tutor Joey Ceraco with whom she was friends in kindergarten. Since they were sent to different grade schools, Evie has not spoken with him. The worst part is that he's good friends with troublemaker and bully Tommy Halliday, who regularly picks on Spencer, but tutoring Joey might help her mother get a permanent position.

Then the five students begin to bond over a project that could get them all in trouble. The results of their actions teach Evie some important lessons.

Those lessons will be obvious to adult readers of "Trouble Finds Evie Lefkowitz," but those in middle school should be challenged by the novel's thought-provoking ideas about how people are judged and pigeon-holed. This would be an excellent work for tween discussion groups or classes of middle grade students. Parents might also find it worth talking to their children about how to apply what they've learned to their own lives.

"Miriam's Magical Creature Files"

I found the two books in "Miriam's Magical Creature Files" series – "The Truth About the Tooth Fairy" and "The Discovery of Dragons" – written by Leah Cypress and illustrated by Sarah Lynne Reul (Amulet Books) absolutely delightful. These chapter books are aimed at those in grade school, but adults could have great fun either reading the works out loud to children or having children read the books to them.

Miriam is a joy: curious, funny, exasperating and determined. The juxtaposition of the drawings to the story – which inform each other – are extremely well done, although Miriam would complain that I'm using "fancy words" like

.....Continued from page 4

her big brother Ilan. Her old sister Ariella is constantly on her phone, except for Shabbat. The fact that the family is Orthodox is integrated into the story matter-of-factly, as are Jewish concepts. All are explained in simple, clear ways.

The plots of both works are based on Miriam's desire to learn the truth about whether mystical creatures exist. She plans to ambush the tooth fairy to prove it is really one of her parents, but first faces the question of whether the tooth fairy will visit on Shabbat. If not, does that mean the tooth fairy is Jewish, too, or would she just not want to give Miriam money on a day she's not allowed to touch it? The solution to the problem is cute and fun.

The search for dragons occurs during a class trip to the zoo. Ariella tells Miriam that she saw one during her class trip there. However, Miriam's search is complicated by the fact that her father is one of the chaperones. She alternately loves or hates having him there depending on whether he agrees to let her do whatever she needs to find the dragon. The solution to whether dragons exist is also handled nicely.

Those who enjoy their time with Miriam as much as I did will be thrilled to know that the next book in the series, "The Mystery of the Mermaid," will be published in April 2026.




Rhona & Richard Esserman




Have a sweet and happy New Year!
Rebecca Kahn & Richard Birchard




לשנה טובה תכתבו
MAY YOU BE INSCRIBED FOR A GOOD YEAR
Susan and Ben Kasper




Happy & Healthy New Year to all our friends and family!
Harold & Toby Kohn and Family



Wishing all my friends in the Binghamton area a healthy and happy new year
Shelley Goldman Black



May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for good health, peace, and prosperity.
Arieh Ullmann & Rhonda Levine

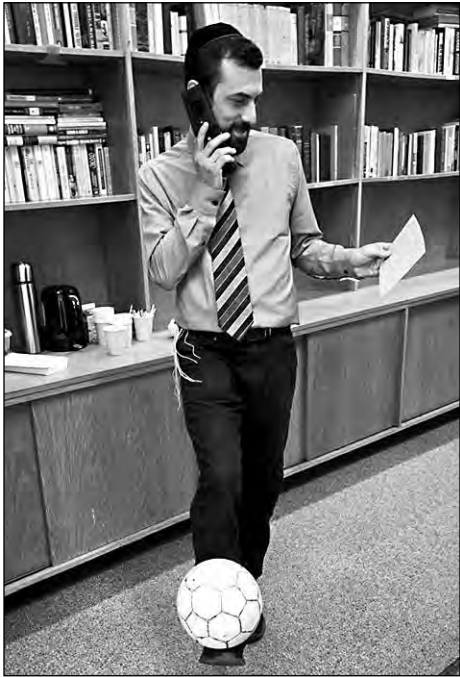


May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for good health, peace, and prosperity.
Ann C. Brillant
וכתבנו בספר החיים



Happy Rosh Hashanah!
Linda & Dennis Robi and Family

Making the call on Super Sunday



Benny Kellman made calls to support the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton's Campaign on Super Sunday, September 7.



Maren Nasar solicited pledges for the Jewish Federation's Campaign on Super Sunday, September 7.



L-r: Tara Kaminsky and Federation President Suzanne Holwitt volunteered for the Jewish Federation's Campaign on Super Sunday, September 7.

Israeli medical delegation brings sight-saving treatments to Ethiopia

By JNS staff

(JNS) – An Israeli medical delegation recently returned from Ethiopia, where sight-saving treatments were provided to more than 1,600 people, including refugees and members of the Ethiopian Jewish community. The mission, led by professor Morris Hartstein, senior oculoplastic surgeon at Shamir Medical Center, was carried out under the auspices of the non-profit Operation Ethiopia. The team spent six intensive days in the African country, setting up mobile eye clinics in four different locations and delivering urgently needed care to those with no access to ophthalmologists.

The delegation treated 1,653 patients, including nearly 500 orphaned children, and distributed more than 440 pairs of

eyeglasses and 654 units of medication donated by Jewish communities in Israel and around the world. The team worked at refugee camps near Debre Berhan, the Mother Teresa Charity Mission, the Meke-donia Center for people with disabilities and within the local Jewish community.

“What began in 2014 as a family volunteer trip has become our life’s mission,” said Hartstein, who founded the organization along with his wife, Alisa. “We witnessed people losing their vision to conditions that can be treated easily elsewhere, cataracts, infections and preventable diseases, simply because they lack access to care. We felt compelled to return year after year, because otherwise these patients would remain untreated.”

See “Ethiopia” on page 16



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For students staying put on campus, a sweet High Holiday season

By Ethel G. Hofman

(JNS) – Home for the holidays? That's not always the case for college students, who travel far and wide to attend schools throughout the United States. It's not always possible to return to family after arriving across the country to study. Travel is expensive and time-consuming, and this year, with the Jewish holidays falling midweek, it could result in too much missed time for classes.

Fear not. Campuses across North America offer services, meals and more for those students staying put on campus. The Philadelphia area is a case in point.

At Penn Hillel, rabbis and staff have a well-organized, publicized celebration for High Holidays. Fliers are distributed saying, "Your Home for the New Year," inviting students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends to join in "inspiring, meaningful" experiences. Everyone is welcome.

This year, Rabbi Joshua and Sara Klein, OU-JLIC directors at Penn Hillel, will conduct Orthodox services; Rabbi Beth Levy and Rabbi Matthew Anisfeld will conduct Conservative services; and Rabbi Misha Clebaner and Rabbi Madeleine Fortney will lead Reform services. Holiday meals are provided by Falk caterers, with the same

company offering kosher meals on campus year-round. And at the end of *Neilah* – the final Yom Kippur service – and after the long piercing blast of the *shofar*, everyone is invited to a break the fast meal. Students who want to hang out with friends after the service ends may host their own break fast, which can be "reimbursed by Penn Hillel," notes Rachel Saifer, director of operations.

Rabbi Chaim and Moussia Goldstein, co-directors of Chabad Serving Drexel University for the past 15 years, are a part of the fabric of their campus community. In preparation for the High Holidays, Moussia Goldstein says that "we're in touch with administration ... they're supportive and help with the planning. Rosh Hashanah is the first day of the semester, so we send out e-mails to the Jews on campus, regardless of their affiliation or observance level."

Rabbi Goldstein and Rabbi Menny Greenberg, and Moussia Goldstein, will provide incoming freshmen with general information and details about holiday activities. On September 17, there's a Shofar Factory, where students can make their own *shofars*. There's "tabling" on September 21, when Greenberg will serve apples and honey (and brownies). Before and during Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Goldstein will walk around the campus to blow the *shofar* for those who couldn't make it.

And the caterer for the holiday meals? "That's me," chimes in Moussia Goldstein, "and students help, too." Her pomegranate ice-cream is al-

ways served at Chabad. She won't share the recipe ... but maybe stir pomegranate seeds into yogurt for a quick seasonal fix?

Rabbi Jeremy Winaker, executive director of Greater Philadelphia Hillel, is responsible for Hillel at Bryn Mawr and Haverford colleges, as well as Villanova and Thomas Jefferson universities. Leo Levine is the rabbinic intern for Haverford this year, and Miriam Ginsberg is the rabbinic intern at Bryn Mawr, where they will conduct High Holiday services.

"We spend the first day back getting to know the students, what's on their minds, so that we can focus on what's important to them," says Winaker. The rabbinical staff works to make sure that all Jewish students can celebrate either on campus or at local synagogues, where transportation can be arranged.

"We have good relations with all the colleges, so that makes planning easy," he says, "and space is set aside for services." At Haverford, kosher meals are provided by Deluxe Kosher Catering. At Bryn Mawr, meals can be provided by Nana's Kitchen a few towns over. Meals will be provided at Villanova, a Catholic school, and at West Chester University. Although services are not held on these campuses, High Holiday discussions focus on topics such as "How can you forgive yourself as well as others? How can I be a better person in the coming year?"

"*Tashlich*, on Rosh Hashanah afternoon, is an important ceremony attracting many Jewish students," says Winaker. "Throwing bread into a body of water represents the desire to shed past wrongdoings and start fresh."

Traditional dishes, like brisket and tzimmes, are nostalgic, and everyone's mother has the "best" recipe. The recipes below, exchanged between longtime friends and family, are always at the Hofman holiday table. If there's any leftover brisket, whip up a Shepherd's Pie, a tasty homemade dish that's ready to bake in minutes. Pumpkins are in season, and Golden Spiced Pumpkin, akin to a carrot tzimmes, is a holiday favorite in Israel. Serve hot as a side dish, or sweeten with honey and offer as a dessert. Fruit compotes are essential in kosher cooking, as they may be served with any meat meal. For Crimson Compote, I use frozen fruits to save time, but fresh ones work even better. Just cook them a little longer to soften them.

Shanah tovah! Blessings for a sweet, peaceful year!

Braised Beer Brisket (meat)

Serves 8-10

Cook's tips:

◆ If you don't have a Dutch oven, use a thick, heavy-bottomed pot with a tight-fitting lid. *Beef brisket.* (Photo by Greg Reese/Pixabay)

◆ Look for choice or prime cuts of meat. Prime cuts have more marbling, meaning fat, resulting in a more flavorful, tender brisket.

◆ Untrimmed brisket has more fat to prevent greasiness. Skim off fat just before the end of cooking.

◆ Can substitute frozen white onions and peeled baby carrots from the market.

2 Tbsp. vegetable oil

5- to 6-lb. brisket

1 lb. small white onions, peeled
1 medium rutabaga, cut into 2-inch chunks

4 to 5 carrots, peeled and sliced ½-inch thick

3 bay leaves

½ tsp. salt

½ tsp. black peppercorns

¼ cups beer

1 lb. white mushrooms, halved

Preheat oven to 325°F.

Heat oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the brisket, turning until nicely browned on all sides, 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat.

Add onions, rutabagas, carrots, bay leaves, salt and peppercorns. Pour the beer over the top and cover tightly. Cook in a preheated oven for 2 hours. Stir in the mushrooms.

Cook for 1½ to 2 hours, or until the brisket is tender. A fork should slide out easily when inserted in the thickest part of the brisket. Let it stand for 10 to 15 minutes before slicing.

Serve on a warm platter with vegetables spooned around the meat. Skim the fat off the gravy. Pour into a sauceboat to pass around.

Shepherd's Pie (meat)

Serves 6

Cook's tips:

◆ For weekday supper, substitute cooked ground turkey or cooked ground beef for brisket.

◆ Stir in one-third cup snipped parsley and 1 teaspoon cumin with the vegetables.

2 Tbsp. vegetable oil

1 medium onion, thinly sliced

3 cups cooked brisket, shredded

⅓ cup steak sauce

¼ cup ketchup

1 (10-oz. package of frozen peas and carrots), thawed

3 to 4 cups mashed potatoes

Paprika for dusting

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Heat oil over medium heat.

In a large pot, add the onion, cooking until softened, about 5 minutes.

Add the remaining ingredients except the potatoes. Stir to mix.

Turn the mixture into a 9-inch square baking dish. Top with mashed potatoes, swirling the surface with a fork. Dust with paprika.

Bake in preheated oven 30 minutes, or until the potato topping is lightly browned and the meat is heated through.

Serve hot.

Golden Spiced Pumpkin (pareve)

Serves 6-8

Cook's tips:

◆ Ready-cut up pumpkin is available in supermarkets.

◆ If a whole pumpkin is used, remove seeds and cut into 1½-inch pieces.

3 tablespoons margarine

6 cups cubed pumpkin

¼ cups orange juice

⅓ cup light-brown sugar

¼ tsp. nutmeg

½ cup golden raisins

See "Sweet" on page 13



A challah bake at Chabad Serving Drexel University in Philadelphia. (Courtesy photo sent via JNS)

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The search for the biblical blue dye is told in a new visitors center

By Etgar Lefkovits

(JNS) – KFAR ADUMIM, Israel – It was four decades ago that three childhood friends from New Jersey who had immigrated to Israel heard of a young Jerusalem rabbinical student who was looking for scuba divers who could help him find snails off the Mediterranean coast. The three young men knew nothing about snails or the centuries-old search for the biblical blue known as *tekhelet*, but it was an adventure that would change their lives.



Murex trunculus shells and coins depicting them from the Roman period. (Photo courtesy of Ptil Tekhelet)

“It became a hobby that became an obsession that tuned into a mission,” Baruch Sterman, who took part in the sea outing 40 years ago, told JNS recently.

Sterman, 63, from Efrat, went on to found the Ptil Tekhelet nonprofit in this Jerusalem bedroom community on the road to the Dead Sea. It obtains snails to produce the biblical dye.

The search for the source of the dye used for the biblical blue goes back centuries and weaves together archaeology, chemistry and biblical scholarship involving chemists, marine biologists, a great Chassidic rabbi and a former chief rabbi of Israel who is the grandfather of the state’s current president.

For about 1,400 years following the Muslim conquest of the land of Israel in the seventh century, the identity of the sea creature used to make the dye was lost to the world. This after two millennia when the purple and blue dyes derived from snails were used as a sign of royalty, coloring the robes of the kings and princes from Media and Babylon to Egypt to Greece.

Until that expedition four decades ago, no one wore the biblical blue on the fringes of their white prayer shawls other than a small group of Chassidim who followed the opinion of Rabbi Gershon Henoch Leiner (1839-1890), the first to be known as the Radzyner Rebbe, who thought he had found the source for the *tekhelet* from a squid, Sterman said.

But a 1913 University of London doctoral dissertation



Rabbi Yitzhak Halevi Herzog, first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of the state of Israel, wrote a doctorate on tekhelet in 1914. (Photo courtesy of Ptil Tekhelet)

by the chief rabbi of Ireland, Rabbi Yitzhak HaLevi Herzog, who would go on to become the Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel, and subsequent laboratory testing of material he sent for analysis found that the dye from the squid was inorganic and synthetic, a manufactured color created by the chemicals used in the labs and not by the sea creature.

For about two centuries, researchers continued to search for the source of the traditional biblical blue, a marine animal known, according to rabbinic literature, only as the hillazon.

A French zoologist found three mollusks in the Mediterranean Sea in 1858 that produced purple blue dyes, and See “Dye” on page 16

Sweet Continued from page 10

1 tsp. ground cardamom (optional)
Melt the margarine in a large saucepan.
Add the pumpkin, orange juice and sugar. Bring liquid to a simmer over medium heat.
Cover tightly and cook until the pumpkin is soft and pulpy, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat.
Add the nutmeg and cardamom (if using), and mash with a fork. Stir in the raisins.
If the mixture is too liquidy, return it to the pan and cook, uncovered, until the liquid is absorbed.

Sticky “Bun” Kugel (pareve or dairy)

Serves 8
Cook’s tips:
◆ Use any nuts, such as walnut halves or chopped pistachios, for pecans.
◆ Store-bought lemon juice works fine.
½ lb. wide egg noodles, cooked according to package directions

1 stick (4 oz.) margarine or butter, softened, divided
⅓ cup brown sugar
2 large eggs
2 Tbsp. granulated sugar
1½ tsp. cinnamon
2 Tbsp. freshly squeezed lemon juice
½ cup pecan halves or nuts of choice (optional)
Preheat oven to 350°F.
Spray a 9x5x3-inch loaf pan with nonstick vegetable spray. Drain noodles, place in a large bowl. Set aside.

In a separate bowl, mix 6 tablespoons of margarine or butter with the brown sugar until well blended. Spread over the bottom of the prepared loaf pan.

Press pecan halves, if using, flat sides up into the brown-sugar mixture. Set aside.

Beat together the remaining margarine or butter, eggs, granulated sugar, cinnamon and lemon juice. Fold into the drained noodles. Spoon the brown-sugar mixture over the top.

Bake in a preheated oven for 45 minutes, or until the kugel is firm and nicely browned.

Cool for 5 minutes. Loosen edges with a round-bladed knife. Turn onto a serving platter.

Serve hot.

Crimson Compote (pareve)

Serves 4-6
Cook’s tips:
◆ If using fresh fruit, cut strawberries in half, increase marmalade to one-third cup and increase wine to half a cup.
◆ Make it two days ahead of time and chill.
◆ Serve in wine glasses for a fancier look.

¼ cup sweet red kosher wine
¼ cup orange marmalade
2 cups frozen blueberries
2 cups frozen strawberries
1 cup frozen raspberries
2 Tbsp. shredded fresh mint leaves
Honey to sweeten, as desired
In a medium saucepan, combine the wine and marmalade. Warm over medium heat, stirring, until the marmalade is melted.

Stir in the frozen fruit and mint leaves. Bring to a simmer. Cook until the berries are thawed and soft, about 10 minutes.

Mash coarsely with a fork. Cook for 5 minutes more. Sweeten with honey, as desired. Cool.

Serve at room temperature or chilled.

Ethel G. Hofman is a syndicated American Jewish food and travel columnist, author and culinary consultant.

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Tel Aviv to hold sex-segregated public Yom Kippur prayers

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – After last year’s public service was canceled over fear of altercations, gender-separated Yom Kippur prayers will be held in a Tel Aviv public space in October. The Tel Aviv Municipality on September 4 issued the Rosh Yehudi NGO a permit to hold prayers in Meir Park, located in the center of the metropolis, Ynet reported recently.

Rosh Yehudi (“Jewish Head” in Hebrew) tries to spread Orthodox Judaism in Tel Aviv, an attempt that has been met in the past with antagonism in the predominantly secular city. Prayers in Meir Park will be held from 5:30- 9 pm on the eve of Yom Kippur on October 1, and from 5-7 pm during the Jewish holy day on October 2.

“We are expecting a large and quiet prayer in accordance with the approval of the municipality and the High Court of Justice,” Ynet quoted Rosh Yehudi Chairman Israel Zeira as saying. “We invite local residents to join a unifying and uplifting prayer, as one person with one heart, in accordance with the municipality’s approval.”

In July, a petition was submitted to the Supreme Court, sitting as the High Court of Justice, against an earlier court ruling that permitted separation between men and women in public spaces, for the purpose of traditional Jewish prayer on Yom Kippur. Petitioners argued that this would create a “slippery slope” and enable local authorities to allocate additional public spaces for sex-segregated activities, according to Ynet. Yitzhak Amit, president of the Supreme Court of Israel, dismissed the claim, saying he is not concerned about this possibility, the report added.

This controversy began in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic in the beginning of the decade. Government restrictions prohibited congregations in synagogues, so

worshippers prayed outdoors, with many secular Jews joining in. When restrictions ended, outdoor services on Yom Kippur continued at Tel Aviv’s Dizengoff Square in 2023. The service descended into violence when radical secularists disrupted it, desecrating scripture and tearing down dividers that participants had placed to separate the sexes. The events were vivid evidence of the polarization shaping Israeli society around several issues, including the role of religion in society.

The following year, a High Court ruling overturned a Tel Aviv District Court decision to back the municipality’s ban on gender-separate public prayer. The municipality said allowing sex-separated events was discriminatory. Petitioners who appealed the decision to the district court said that banning such events was anti-Jewish, citing similar events held by Muslims, and a violation of their religious freedom.

The High Court said that sex-segregated prayers should be allowed according to Jewish tradition, but offered to substitute Meir Park for Dizengoff Square as a compromise. Nevertheless, Rosh Yehudi last year canceled the service for fear of harassment. “Although the court ruled in our favor, and following fears of rioting, Rosh Yehudi will hold the prayers in the synagogue at 54 Bar Kochba Street,” wrote the group.

The Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality told JNS recently: “As stated in the permit granted by the municipality for holding the event, it was issued in accordance with last year’s Supreme Court ruling, which allowed the Rosh Yehudi association to hold a gender-segregated prayer in Meir Park, and the municipality, of course, respects court rulings. We hope that the prayer will take place in a manner that respects all parties.”

Fiji to inaugurate Jerusalem embassy

By Etgar Lefkovits

(JNS) – Fiji is scheduled to inaugurate its embassy in Jerusalem later this month, becoming the seventh nation to have its official representation in Israel’s capital, the Israeli Foreign Ministry announced on September 3.

Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, who first announced the decision in February, will come to Israel for the September 17 opening. Rabuka, who took office three years ago, heads a three-party government that includes the right-wing Christian Sodelpa party, one of whose leaders’ demands was that Fiji open an embassy in Jerusalem.

“I congratulate Fiji and its Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Friend of Israel Sitiveni Rabuka, on its decision to open an embassy in Israel, in Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the Jewish people,” said Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon

Sa’ar on September 3. “We will continue to work to open and transfer additional embassies to Jerusalem, our capital.”

Six countries currently have their embassies in Israel’s capital – the United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Kosovo, Paraguay and Papua New Guinea. U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision to move the American embassy to Jerusalem in 2018 set the stage for other countries to follow suit, although the October 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack on southern Israel and the ensuing war against the terrorist group in Gaza temporarily derailed such moves.

Two years ago, Fijian Deputy Prime Minister Viliame Gavoka said in a telephone interview with JNS: “Our desire to have an embassy in Jerusalem is very strong. We as a people feel very close to the descendants of Abraham and want to connect with Israel in its entirety.”

Policies. . . . Continued from page 2

refugees in return for economic and diplomatic benefits. The South Sudan is populated by indigenous African Christians. Forced exile of Muslim Arabs to a turbulent region governed by a people foreign to them would violate Muslim, Christian and Jewish ethics.

Tisha B’Av compels Jews to remember and reflect on our own history of sorrows. The solemn holiday is certainly not an encouragement to inflict miseries on others. The calamities of Babylonian exile, diaspora following Roman conquest, expulsion from European countries, ghettoization, pogroms, Shoah and fanatical cries to drive modern Israel into the sea elicit an implacable “Never Again” resolve. To retain Jewish morality, it is imperative that we not perpetrate such tragedy on innocents.

Initially a just war of preservation against Hamas terrorists, the Israeli campaign has devolved into an operation to militarily subjugate Gaza and its people. It is not the type of war that David Ben-Gurion and the founding generation conducted to re-establish a Jewish homeland in 1948, or that Levi Eshkol with Moshe Dayan, Yitzhak Rabin and a rising generation of sabras waged in 1967 to preserve Eretz Israel, or that Golda Meir led to ensure the survival of the Jewish state in 1973.

The misguided trajectory of the Hamas-Israel War has diminished the moral and international standing of the Jewish homeland. Subject to stipulations, France and other nations now contemplate granting formal recognition to a Palestinian state. Large protest rallies against Israeli actions in Gaza mount in Western nations, amongst them the United States, as well as in Israel itself, where public demonstration against the Netanyahu regime commenced even before the war, triggered by his attempts to enervate the authority of the judiciary. From pulpits and the streets, numbers of rabbis condemn the suffering in Gaza.

In America, key elements in the Democratic Party have withdrawn support from Netanyahu. Tellingly a critic of Israel, Zohran Mamdani won the Democratic primary endorsement in the upcoming New York mayoral election; this in the Diaspora’s most Jewish city. A light sleeper, American antisemitism has ratcheted up to levels not seen since World War II. The next U.S. president may discontinue the largess of weapons, military intelligence and diplomatic support essential to Israel’s security. Nor is it a given that substantial financial contributions by Diaspora Jews will continue at customary levels.

Elements in the Arab world that appeared ready to work toward normalization of relations with Israel have changed course to condemn Netanyahu’s evolving territorial ambitions. The decisive Israeli campaigns against Hamas, Hezbollah and Houthi terrorists, along with the humbling of their Iranian paymaster, were strategically imperative, but those against Gaza civilians are not. Criticism of Israeli policies under Netanyahu is neither anti-Zionist nor antisemitic.

Judaism provides a moral compass from which Netanyahu has strayed. Netanyahu’s right-wing ultra-Orthodox coalition constitutes an Israeli equivalent to the Christian nationalist version of America that President Donald Trump espouses. Israel and the United States are great nations, defined by noble founding principles and proud histories. Today, however, the two nations suffer under imperious and aggrandizing leadership.

Israel needs to articulate a clear vision for the future of Gaza and the West Bank. Eradication of Hamas, return of hostages, security and a just peace are attainable and compatible goals. The post-World War II rehabilitation of a defeated Germany offers a model. Third Reich leaders were punished and denazification proceeded. Victorious Allies rebuilt Western Europe and Germany. Within a decade, a prosperous and democratic West Germany emerged as a Cold War ally and NATO member. Emulating the German model, an independent Palestinian state, comprised of Gaza and part of the West Bank, could emerge after a period of occupation.

As an American Jew uneasy about Israeli policy in Gaza and President Trump’s proposal to turn the rubble into a resort, I think back to a *parasha* commentary that Alan Levine, my old college roommate, shared: “There are no monasteries in Judaism. We cannot hide ourselves away from temptation. We can only utilize our will power to resist it.”

Happy Rosh Hashanah!

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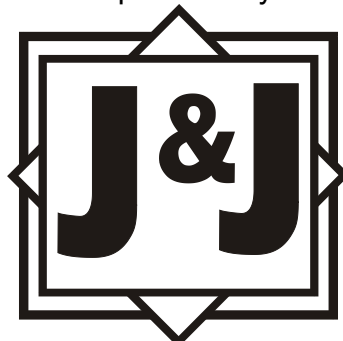
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Archaeologists decipher ravaged scenes in Negev after Oct. 7

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – Public tours at a new exhibition portraying the events of the October 7, 2023, Hamas-led massacre in southern Israel – as seen through the eyes of archaeologists – will open in August in Jerusalem. This is the first time that the involvement of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) in the Swords of Iron War will be presented to the public.

In the wake of the war, the official body found itself operating in the scene of modern destruction, using its arsenal of archaeological tools and experts to decipher the ravaged scenes in the western Negev. “Professionals who developed their skills and tools to engage in interpreting ancient archaeology found themselves digging amongst the rubble of just-destroyed houses, and through their unique expertise were able to see and identify the scant human remains, and thus restored their faces, names and

memory,” said project director Leora Berry.

Researchers operated in ravaged *kibbutzim*, burnt houses, charred roads and cars, and the open-air Nova music festival complex, the IAA noted.

Bereaved families were afforded closure thanks to the work of the archaeologists, who, in cooperation with the army, managed to locate 16 missing persons whose whereabouts had been unknown.

Personal objects were found that helped to reveal the fate of the victims. For example, Stav Miles has regained jewelry that her late mother, Yona Fricker, had made – which Miles will wear on her wedding day, according to the IAA. The family of the late Shani Gabay also received definitive evidence about her fate, after her necklace with a pendant was discovered, right at the spot where she was now understood to have been murdered.

IAA Director Eli Escusido said, “We deliberately chose to open the ‘Rising from the Ashes’ exhibition precisely around this period when the nation of Israel marks the fast of Tisha B’Av – the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, the day of the destruction of both the First and Second Temples – which corresponds to and reflects the savage destruction suffered by the Gaza Envelope communities in our own time.”

He went on to remark, “It is our duty as the Israel Antiquities Authority to preserve, document, and ensure the survival of the memory of the most difficult episodes in our history, from which we must grow and learn. The Jewish people have always known how to rise from pain, even after the most severe destruction.”

The IAA, in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage See “Negev” on page 17

Street.....Continued from page 2

silently accompanying them in a harrowing procession that no family wishes to join, yet so many bear with such grace and honor.

A handyman with a full schedule arrived for a repair in our bathroom just as the people began streaming down our street. I met him outside. When he saw what was unfolding, his hectic schedule suddenly seemed unimportant, and he stood with me silently for a quarter hour, paying tribute to a Moishy he had never met.

While military funerals follow a certain structure, they are anything but formulaic. As opposed to civilian services, where the burial is at the end, the army version often has the burial first, followed by honor guards, eulogies, memorial prayers, wreath-laying ceremonies and a three-volley rifle salute.

Most funerals for fallen soldiers are attended by many hundreds – and often many thousands – of mourners, and this was no exception. As a non-family attendee, it is not unusual to be away from the large open tent where the service takes place, and to have no view whatsoever. There are loudspeakers which convey the proceedings to the masses beyond the line of sight.

So began this funeral, as the filling of the grave was announced.

A woman’s voice called out. A wail. A lamentation. A plea to heaven. “Moishy!”

And again. “Moishy!”

And again. And again. And again. And again.

A tsunami of grief washed over the crowd, drenching it in sorrow.

It’s different when it happens to Moishy.

The eulogies which followed were nothing short of soul-stirring. Moishy’s yeshiva rabbi spoke of his determined overcoming of significant learning issues and his ever-present good cheer. The Aish Kodesh rebbe, Rav Shapira, pleaded with Moishy’s soul to advocate for those of us down below. He urged him to refuse the glorious entry awaiting him at the heavenly gates, unless and until God agrees to end our earthly suffering and bring Mashiach.

Reluctant to take their leave, hundreds lingered with

the family long after the ceremony, their hearts entwined in song after song of faith in God.

There’s a tent on our street.

That’s another thing about military funerals here. The typically modest Israel apartments can’t possibly accommodate the throngs of visitors to the *shiva*. So a large tent outside the home is erected by the IDF, where mourners can sit and visitors come to console – or at least try to console.

What words can possibly fill the gaping hearts of a family who will never again set their eyes on their son or daughter? Never hug them. Never remind them to pick up their things from the floor. Never bless them on Shabbat. Never call them to ask them to pick up milk on their way home.

Never, never anything.

The tent was bustling, and the summer heat wave was intense, so Aish Kodesh graciously opened their social hall to host the relocated *shiva*. It was there that I made a first attempt to visit. The crowd was formidable, the line to speak to the family impressively long.

What made it all the more exceptional was that David was speaking to everyone personally, offering each visitor a parting blessing, both heartfelt and unique. His trademark glow was radiant. His face shone with a hybrid of pure faith coupled with a total confidence that his son had sacrificed himself in a holy and exalted quest.

It took quite a while to get through the line, but that did not bother me. It’s a privilege just to show up and be counted among those paying respect. As my turn to speak to David neared, the doors opened and there was an announcement that we needed to part the Red Sea of mourners, as Rabbi David Lau, former chief rabbi of Israel, had arrived for a *shiva* visit.

Oh, that’s one more thing about these funerals and *shiva*. They are often attended by dignitaries, politicians and other public figures. This visit wasn’t going to happen for me, and I was out of earshot of the conversation, so I decided to return the next day.

The scene the next morning was more manageable, with people seated around the mourners, conversing and sharing memories and lessons. A *Chareidi* man found an

opening in the conversation: “I have two sons in Gaza, who served with Moishy,” he explained. “I have to share what they told me about Moishy’s final moments.”

David was transfixed as the man, who hails from a neighborhood known for its anti-army philosophy, continued. The man revealed that Moishy’s last actions were those of a true warrior, insisting on helping those around him, when he himself was gravely injured.

David was almost speechless. Almost. He uttered: “I don’t know if it’s nice to say this about your own son, but if that is true, it is so heroic!”

To witness a moment like that – when a father discovers a new, transcendent dimension to his child – was nothing short of a privilege.

He knew his son lived as a hero. He knew his son had died a hero. But this added an entirely new level to that title.

On the Shabbat of the *shiva* of Moishy, we read the account in the Torah where Bilaam blessed the children of Israel: “How goodly are your tents, Yaakov!” I wonder if Bilaam saw the tents of the encampment of Israel, and was struck by a contrast. He may have peered back over his shoulder at the sullied tents of his own people. Perhaps he noticed that their tents were filled with cynicism. Curses. Weapons. Maybe even terror tunnels.

And then he gazed forward, observing the tents of Israel. There he saw goodness, and positivity, and blessing. He opened his mouth and all that could come out were words of praise.

Even in tents heavy with farewell. Even in tents heaving with mourning. In every tent of Israel, there is goodness.

It’s different when it happens to Moishy. But we all know a Moishy. So whether we sigh, we cry or we click, it’s always different. And through the pain, we somehow also uncover the good. And discover the heroic.

“Moishy!”

May the memory of Moshe Shmuel ben David Betzalel always be a blessing for his family, his friends and all of Israel, along with the memories of all the other “Moishy’s,” whether their names were Moishy or not.

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Global conference on Historical Jewish Press project

By Sharon Altshul

(JNS) – Scholars, librarians, journalists and cultural leaders from around the world recently gathered in Jerusalem for the JPRESS Conference to celebrate 20 years of the Historical Jewish Press project, considered one of the most ambitious digital preservation efforts in the field of Jewish studies.

Launched jointly by the National Library of Israel and Tel Aviv University, the project has grown from a small initiative into the largest online archive of Jewish newspapers and periodicals. Its mission has remained simple, but powerful: to digitize Jewish newspapers from across the globe and make them freely accessible and searchable to all.

In 26 languages – including Hebrew, Yiddish, Judeo-Arabic and Ladino to French, English, Persian and Hungarian – the platform now includes more than six million pages, with more than 500 periodicals spanning continents and centuries.

With titles originating in Israel, North Africa, the Americas, Europe and beyond, the project offers a rich lens into Jewish political, cultural, and religious life. Marxist and Zionist newspapers sit alongside Orthodox journals, women’s columns, underground bulletins and anarchist pamphlets. The platform has logged over 70 million page views from 200 countries, with more than 15 million visits by 7.5 million unique users.

At the opening conference session on a Monday evening in the NLI auditorium, author Haim Be’er delivered a keynote address. He was followed by a panel titled “Looking Back, Moving Forward: The Evolution of the Historical

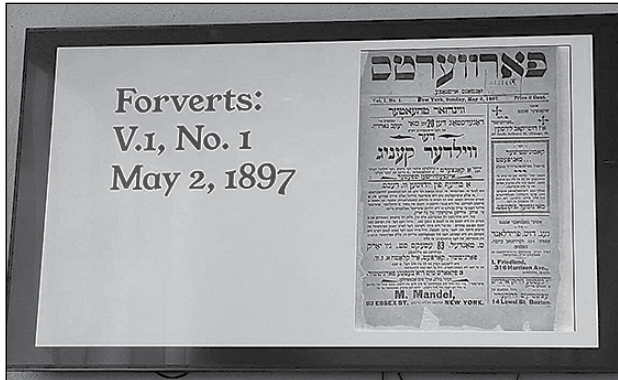


Eyal Miller, manager of the Historical Jewish Press Collection, spoke at the opening event. (Photo by Michael Zekri, NLI)

Jewish Press Project,” moderated by HJP manager Eyal Miller, featuring co-founders Yaron Tsur and Orly Simon.

The event also marked the launch of newly digitized 19th-century Hebrew periodicals. Miller said he constantly strives to expand the collection, calling on researchers and institutions to contribute additional titles.

Sessions over the three-day conference examined the



An illustrative slide of The Yiddish Forward (Forverts) on May 2, 1897, from Michelle Margolis. (Photo by Sharon Altshul)

digital corpus from multiple angles: as a tool for historical research, education and international collaboration. Highlights included panels on AI analysis of historical texts, the portrayal of women in the Orthodox press and newspapers’ role in shaping modern Jewish identity.

The only English-language session, “Connecting Collections: The Historical Jewish Press as a Hub for International Collaboration,” was chaired by Caron Sethill, program manager for Europe at the NLI. It brought together voices from Columbia University, Goethe University Frankfurt and national libraries from Lithuania, Serbia and the U.S.

Speakers shared how institutional partnerships had See “Press” on page 17

Dye. Continued from page 13

identified one, the Murex trunculus (nowadays known as the Hexaplex trunculus), a medium-sized sea snail, as the source of the biblical blue, but they were not the pure blue described in ancient Jewish sources.

Researchers consulted at Washington’s Smithsonian Institution in 1979 also couldn’t figure out how to get the coveted sky blue from the sea creature.

The mystery was finally solved in 1985, when Professor Otto Elsner at Israel’s Shenkar College of Fibers, who was researching ancient dyes, discovered that when exposed to sunlight, the snail’s dye was blue after all.

This led Eliyahu Tavger, the young Jerusalem rabbinical student, to enlist the three New Jersey men on their snail expedition on Israel’s northern coast. “By the time we got there, we had fallen in love with the idea, having learned all the history in the drive up north,” Sterman, who had learned how to scuba dive during his student days at Columbia University, recalled.

They succeeded in taking a few hundred snails from the Mediterranean, producing five sets of tzitzit, ritual fringes attached to the corners of Jewish prayer shawls. The snails produce tiny amounts of the coveted dye, requiring as many as 40 to color the fringe of one garment.

Four decades and hundreds of thousands of Jewish prayer garments later, a small visitor center telling the story of the mystery of the biblical blue is being launched at the end of this month, at Ptil Tekhelet’s factory, located a 20-minute drive east of Jerusalem in the Judean Desert.

The enterprise, which was founded in 1991, sells cotton or wool Jewish prayer shawls with the biblical blue attached to one of the fringes, for about \$50 each.

The snails used to make the dye are brought to Israel exclusively from abroad, including Europe and the Mediterranean countries, since they are a protected species in Israel.

The factory has already attracted Jewish and Christian tourists over the years, leading founders to press ahead with setting up an educational center at the site.

(A blue and white Israeli flag with the biblical dye used in the factory was presented to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during President Donald Trump’s first term in office.)

The visitor’s center tells the story of tekhelet from ancient times to the present and its rediscovery, along with a view of the dyeing process. “We felt it was not just a goal to provide tekhelet for people who want to wear it,” Sterman said. “We believe that this is an incredibly inspirational story bringing together science, Torah, spirituality and our culture all wrapped together.”



The sixth-century edict of Roman Emperor Justinian I, which made possession of tekhelet by commoners a capital offense. (Photo courtesy of Ptil Tekhelet)



The “ME’IL”—the robe of the High Priest, made entirely of tekhelet. (Photo courtesy of Ptil Tekhelet)

Ethiopia. . . Continued from page 9

Accompanied by ophthalmology medical residents from Shamir, Beilinson and Meir Medical Centers, as well as 10 volunteers, the delegation worked under difficult conditions, often setting up makeshift clinics inside churches, classrooms, or tents.

“People line up from six in the morning,” said Alisa Hartstein, who manages Operation Ethiopia. “We examine hundreds of patients each day. The gratitude, the relief and the joy we see, it’s indescribable.”




Happy Rosh Hashanah


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Tovah
Tikatevu



Israeli baseball chief eyes 2028 Olympics with homegrown talent

By Oren Aharoni

Originally published by Israel Hayom. (Israel Hayom via JNS) – Ari Varon, president of the Israel Association of Baseball, believes children currently playing locally will represent Israel at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games, as he spearheads an ambitious transformation of the sport from its American immigrant roots into a distinctly Israeli athletic culture.

Varon entered his role with “passionate determination” to expand the sport’s reach beyond its traditional base among North American immigrants. A Tel Aviv resident, married with three children, he made *aliyah* from Oregon at age 13 and discovered baseball accidentally at a training session.

“For me, baseball is much more than a game,” Varon said in an interview. “It’s a place where I learned values, gained lifelong friends, and now I want to pass that on to the next generation.”

The sport of baseball faces a critical juncture following its success at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and its restoration to the Olympic program for Los Angeles 2028 after being absent from the 2024 Paris Games.



Israel’s national baseball team, 2025. (Photo courtesy of the Israel Association of Baseball)

Varon sees this as an opportunity to solidify Israel’s national team internationally while demonstrating to Israeli children the heights they can reach.

The sport provided Varon with integration tools as a teenage immigrant who barely spoke Hebrew. “Baseball was the place where I found a common language. It didn’t matter if I didn’t speak Hebrew – on the field, everything was clear: rules, team, responsibility. It gave me an incredible sense of belonging,” he explained.

The association head emphasizes the

character-building aspects of baseball for his own three children and the next generation. “I want them to have the opportunity to grow up with the values that baseball provides – discipline, cooperation and also patience,” Varon said. “It’s not a game of immediate solutions, but of planning, strategic thinking and proper utilization of opportunities.”

Varon assumed his position at a critical moment for Israeli baseball. While the sport gained international exposure at Tokyo 2020, domestic conditions remain far from ideal. The number of fields is limited, youth leagues struggle for budgets and schools barely recognize the sport.

“I want baseball to be accessible to every child in Israel who wants to try,” he declared. “That means more fields, more coaches and an organized program that connects the sport to the education system. It’s impossible for this to remain an ‘American niche’ game – there’s real potential here, and children

who come fall in love with it very quickly.”

His vision extends beyond Israel’s borders. With baseball’s return to the Olympics in Los Angeles in three years, Varon sees a double opportunity to continue establishing the national team globally while showing Israeli children how far they can go. “Anyone who saw the national team in Tokyo knows this isn’t fantasy,” he said. “Israel can compete with the greats for real. My goal is that we’ll reach Los Angeles with a young and hungry squad.”

One of Varon’s greatest challenges involves establishing a different sports culture in Israel than the one in the United States, where baseball is almost a religion. “I understand why some people say baseball is too slow,” he acknowledged with a smile, while believing the perception can change. “Those who understand the game discover a whole world.”

According to Varon, Israeli culture can provide an interesting twist to the game. “There’s energy here, creativity, healthy chutzpah. That’s what’s needed to develop the Israeli style in baseball, one that doesn’t try to copy the Americans, but finds its own original path.”

When asked what drives him to invest so much time and energy, Varon quickly responds. “I feel a mission,” he said simply.

The challenges are clearly numerous: raising budgets, convincing decision-makers to invest in fields, and expanding the fan base in a country where sports compete for See “Olympics” on page 19

Negev Continued from page 15

and the Tekuma Directorate, has also established a national documentation project that reproduces the Gaza Envelope destruction sites. For this purpose, the project created 3D models, or “digital twins,” using modern and extensive technologies originally developed to document and present major ancient archaeological sites.

“The Gaza Envelope documentation project ensures that the horrors of October 7 will remain engraved in our collective memory, and that the evidence will never be lost,” even as the region recovers and revives, the IAA announced.

The multi-layered use of audio-visual

media, narration and live visual presentation enables visitors to experience the story not only as a testimony, but as a personal and collective journey of documentation and memory, according to the IAA.

The Alejandro Weinstein Crenovich Exhibition, “Rising from the Ashes: Archaeology in a National Crisis,” will be on display at the IAA’s Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein National Campus for the Archaeology of Israel in the country’s capital. The exhibition is not intended for children and is open only to groups of adults. Each tour is accompanied by professional guidance.

Press Continued from page 16

broadened access to Jewish newspapers worldwide, often leading to unexpected discoveries and innovative approaches.

Michelle Margolis, the Norman E. Alexander librarian for Jewish Studies at Columbia University, reflected on the value of preserving Jewish periodicals, mentioning initiatives such as the Manhattan Research Library Initiative (MaRLI), in which Columbia and NYU pay for digitization of American Jewish newspapers on microfilm from NYPL’s collection to be included in the Historical Jewish Press.

A broad range of views from the history of American Jewry are included in the digitized material. Criteria for newspaper selection include language, location, thematic relevance and historical value.

The costs of digitization and copyright clearance issues are significant factors in the work. Collaboration is important, and she looks forward to more coming from this conference. The archive includes everything from Civil War-era publications to Forverts front pages in Yiddish and forgotten women’s newspapers such as Deborah, published until 1902.

Kerstin von der Krone, head of the Judaica Division at the University Library Frankfurt am Main at Goethe University, shared Germany’s “Compact Memory” project, which digitized even fragile pages of publications and highlighted rare finds. Early Jewish newspapers often copied content, ads and articles alike from one another, forming a dynamic pre-digital information network.

Another presentation revealed remarkable stories of rediscovery. Lara Lempert, head of Judaica at the National Library of Lithuania, spoke about archival efforts post-Communism and described the beginnings of the recovery of Jewish periodicals in Lithuanian repositories. These included materials from the late 19th century through the 1930s and ‘40s, offering new insights

into Jewish intellectual life before the Holocaust. Through metadata and international partnerships, we’re learning from magazines about the lives, struggles, and resilience of entire communities.

Biljana Albahari from the National Library of Serbia reported on the challenges of Jewish press preservation in the Balkans. Though thousands of titles have been identified, most did not survive Nazi destruction. “The National Library of Serbia was deliberately bombed and burned by the Nazis,” she said, adding that digitization is not just technical work, it’s an act of restoration and remembrance.

The third panelist was Dr. Lyudmila Sholokhova, a curator of the Dorot Jewish Collection at the New York Public Library. The participants at this session presented an international aspect to the projects and conference, which was Israel-centric.

During the first full day of the conference, the building was closed to the public. Israeli President Isaac Herzog of Israel took President Frank Walter Steinmeier of Germany on a tour of the NLI as part of the 60th anniversary celebration of diplomatic relations.

However, the conference went on in a secure area as scheduled, according to Lara Lampert, who said it was her second visit to the NLI. Further, she added to JNS, “I am glad I came.”

The event closed with a roundtable titled, “They Wrote About Him in the Newspaper,” moderated by NLI spokesperson Vered Lyon-Yerushalmi. Israeli journalists and historians reflected on the legacy and future of Jewish journalism, as both historical source and living tradition.

The milestone conference was hosted in partnership with TAU as well as the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation and Geshet L’Europa, with support from a wide range of academic and cultural institutions dedicated to the preservation and revitalization of Jewish heritage.





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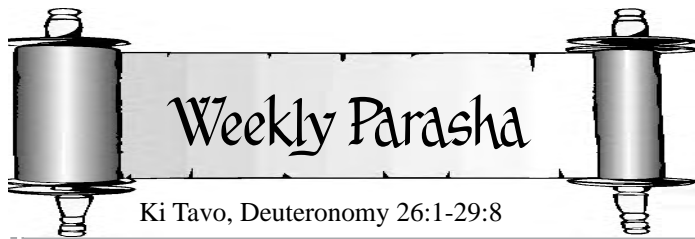
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Ki Tavo, Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8

Embracing the covenant

RIVKAH SLONIM, EDUCATION DIRECTOR, THE ROHR CHABAD CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDENT LIFE

Parashat Ki Tavo completes Moshe's recapitulation of all the commandments, beginning with those that become relevant upon entrance into the Holy Land. Chasidic teachings illuminate why the mitzvah of *bikurim*, which figures prominently in this *parasha*, is the appropriate segue into Moshe's review of the covenant between the Children of Israel and God, which follows immediately after.

Bikurim, the commandment to bring of the first fruits that blossom on one's land to the Temple, is more than yet

another way that Judaism inculcates gratitude. It serves as a powerful metaphor for our relationship with the Creator.

The prophet Hosea compared the Jewish people to God's "first fruit." The commandment of *bikurim* mandates that a Jew in Israel carefully select the first of the season's produce, arrange it in an ornate basket, travel with great pomp and pageantry to bring it to the Temple in Jerusalem, and articulate a declaration of gratitude to God. In undergoing this process, the Jew was reminded of a profound truth:

Each one of us, by virtue of the soul nestled within us, is a "first and precious fruit."

As such, no matter how disconnected we might feel from our traditions, how alienated we feel from our history, we nevertheless belong in "the Temple," in close proximity with God. Only when we understand this, can we truly "rejoice over all of the good that God has granted..." and fully embrace the covenant that binds us with our Creator.

Congregational Notes

Holiday service schedules

September-October holiday service schedules can be found on page 11 of the August 22-September 11 issue and on *The Reporter's* website at www.thereporter.org/local-news/2025-high-holiday-services-at-area-synagogues. Contact information for area synagogues can be found in the congregational notes on this page.

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, September 13, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8 and the haftarah is Isaiah 60:1-22. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 8 pm.

On Saturday, September 20, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Deuteronomy 29:9-30:20 and the haftarah is Isaiah 61:10-63:9. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 8 pm.

Upcoming events:

"Torah in Our Times" class will be held on Tuesday, September 16, at 4:30 pm.

A Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 16, at 7 pm.

A Ritual Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 17, at 10 am.

Penn-York Jewish Community

Treasurer: Beth Herbst, 607-857-0976
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.com
rslonim@chabadofbinghamton.com
Address: 420 Murray Hill Rd., Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: 607-797-0015, Fax: 607-797-0095
Website: www.Chabadofbinghamton.com
Rabbi Zalman and Rochel Chein, Education
E-mail: zchein@Jewishbu.com, rchein@Jewishbu.com
Rabbi Levi and Hadasa Slonim, Downtown and Development
Chabad Downtown Center: 60 Henry St., Binghamton
E-mail: lslonim@Jewishbu.com, hslonim@Jewishbu.com
Rabbi Yisroel and Goldie Ohana, Programming
E-mail: yohana@Jewishbu.com, gohana@Jewishbu.com
Regular service times: Daily 7:30 am, Friday evening 6 pm, Shabbat morning 9:30 am, Maariv and Havdalah one hour after candle-lighting time, Sundays 9:30 am.
To join the mailing list, for up-to-date information on adult education offerings or to arrange for a private tutorial, for details concerning the Judaica shop and resource center, or for assistance through the Piaker Free Loan Society or Raff Maasim Tovim Foundation, call Chabad's office at 797-0015.

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

Temple 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.

Friday, September 12, light candles before 6:59 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, September 13..... 7:58 pm
Friday, September 19, light candles before 6:47 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, September 20..... 7:46 pm
Monday, September 22, light candles before 6:42 pm
Tuesday, September 23, light candles after 7:40 pm
Wednesday, September 24, yom tov ends 7:39 pm
Friday, September 26, light candles before 6:35 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, September 27..... 7:34 pm
Wednesday, October 1, light candles before 6:26 pm
Thursday, October 2, yom tov ends..... 7:25 pm
Friday, October 3, light candles before 6:23 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, October 4..... 7:21 pm

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
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, September 12 and 19: At 7:30 pm, Friday Shabbat services are in person, on Zoom and Facebook.

Saturdays, September 13 and 20: At 9:15 am, Torah study is in person and on Zoom. An in-person only service will take place at 10:30 am.

Wednesdays, September 17 and 24: At 5:30 pm, evening prayers in person only. At 6 pm, adult education class in person and on Zoom.

Upcoming events:

High Holidays: Temple Concord welcomes the Greater Binghamton Jewish community to attend the synagogue for its High Holiday services. As part of its security procedures, attendees are asked to register in advance for free tickets by contacting the temple office. Anyone who is not a member must bring a photo ID in order to attend High Holiday services.

Monday, September 22: At 7:30 pm, erev Rosh Hashanah service.

Tuesday, September 23: At 9:30 am, Rosh Hashanah service; from 10:30 am-12:30 pm, Rosh Hashanah school program (in person only); and Super Kiddush to follow in the Kilmer Mansion (in person only). At 2 pm, Tashlich at Confluence Park (in person only).

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 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.

Congregation Tikun v'Or

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

Smuggled secrets and sacred scripts from Syria

By Sharon Altshul

(JNS) – On May 22, the Hugo Lowy Special Collections Reading Room at the National Library of Israel (NLI) in Jerusalem hosted an exhibit – a moving blend of memory, mystery and manuscripts – in a special event.

Honoring the late Rabbi Abraham Hamra, the chief rabbi of Syrian Jewry until his emigration in the 1990s, the NLI unveiled a new exhibit: 12 Damascus Crowns, or *Ketarim* – delicate, handwritten Bibles steeped in centuries of reverence and secrecy.

The event highlighted both the spiritual and historical significance of these ancient texts and the daring, behind-the-scenes efforts that brought them and their community to safety.

Chief Rabbi Hamra, born in Damascus in 1943, was more than a spiritual leader; he was a lifeline. A cantor, educator and ultimately the last chief rabbi of Syria, he worked quietly yet relentlessly to protect Syrian Jews during some of their most perilous years. Members of his extended family from Israel and the United States gathered to pay tribute to him on the fourth anniversary of his passing.

Rabbi Benjamin Hamra honored his father’s memory by opening the program with a traditional prayer, asking the audience to rise in remembrance. “From generation to generation, we stand united. *Am Yisrael Chai!*” he declared.

With rare access to Syrian government officials and a calm authority that inspired trust, Rabbi Hamra became a quiet conduit of hope. In the 1990s, he played a pivotal role in the covert rescue of Jewish artifacts, including these sacred codices, with the assistance of Canadian Jewish heroine Judy Feld-Carr and the Mossad.

Although forbidden from immigrating to Israel directly, Rabbi Hamra and thousands of Syrian Jews eventually reached freedom, first traveling to the United States, with some then making their way to Israel. He later settled in Holon, where he continued to lead and serve the Syrian Jewish community until his passing in May 2021.

Efraim Halevy, a former Mossad director with decades of experience in secret operations, was interviewed during the event by Israeli journalist Dikla Aharon Shafran. Though the details remain classified, Halevy hinted at the high stakes and complexity of those operations and suggested they might be needed in the future.

The only detail he would reveal: “I first met Rabbi Hamra in New York.” He did, however, elaborate on how Mossad helped Hamra when he arrived, because government agencies did not respond by assisting the family to settle in Israel.

The Damascus Crowns or Codices (*Ketarim*) are among the most carefully preserved Hebrew Bibles, requiring exacting conditions for their continued preservation. While they were not actually written in Damascus, they were safeguarded there for centuries in synagogues such as the Hushbasha Al’anabi, where they were believed to offer divine protection. The manuscripts vary in origin. Some were penned in Tiberias; others in medieval Spain, Italy, or Ashkenazic lands. Each found sanctuary in Damascus.

Now safeguarded in Jerusalem, these manuscripts are more than historical artifacts, but spiritual survivors. Fragile yet enduring parchments feature vocalization and elaborate micrographic Masorah notes – once essential tools for scribes and now cherished hallmarks of Jewish textual tradition.

One of the oldest and most complete Pentateuchs in the



Syria’s Chief Rabbi Abraham Hamra inserted a note in the Western Wall in 1994. (Photo by Avi Ohayon/GPO)

exhibition is believed to have been written more than 1,000 years ago, a silent witness to centuries of Jewish continuity.

As visitors moved reverently past the glass display cases, reading each codex’s journey and provenance, one could sense not only awe but deep gratitude for the scribes who created these masterpieces, the communities who protected them and the quiet hero who helped carry them and his people to safety.

“These are not just books,” Dr. Haim Neria, curator of the Haim and Hanna Solomon Jewish Collection, told JNS. “Each Codex is a work of art, a vessel of devotion, and a testament to survival. We chose to unveil them now... in memory of Rabbi Hamra and in time of the holiday of giving of the Torah.”

The exhibition stands not only as a celebration of sacred texts but as a living legacy of faith, scholarship and courage.



Former Mossad director Efraim Halevy spoke with Israeli journalist Dikla Aharon Shafran. (Photo by Sharon Altshul)

A 12,000-year-old spinning machine found in northern Israel

By Etgar Lefkovits

(JNS) – A 12,000-year-old tool used to spin fibers into yarn has been identified in an archaeological dig in northern Israel, highlighting humanity’s prehistoric drive for innovation, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem announced late last year.

The discovery of the ancient spindle whorls unearthed at Nahal Ein Gev in the Upper Jordan Valley, located at the middle of a stream that flows west to the Sea of Galilee, provides the earliest known evidence of fast-spinning technology in the Levant, predating previously known textile tools by 4,000 years, the university said. Round, weighted objects that are attached to a spindle stick, spindle whorls form a similar wheel-and-axle-like device to help the spindle rotate faster and longer, enabling it to efficiently gather up fibers such as wool or flax and spin them into yarn.

The study, which was published in the peer reviewed PLOS One journal and is based on digital 3-D models of the stones, describes more than 100 of the mostly limestone pebbles, which feature a circular shape perforated by a central hole. “These perforated stones are actually the first wheels in form and function – a round object with a hole in the center connected to a rotating axle, used long before the appearance of the wheel for transportation purposes,” said Hebrew University Professor Leore Grosman.

These ancient spinning machines paved the way for future wheel-based rotational innovations that revolutionized human technological history, such as the potter’s wheel and the cart wheel that appears 6,000 years ago, the study found.

The Nahal Ein Gev II site with its permanent structures, lime-plastered burials and diversified tools, provides a glimpse into the end of the Natufian culture, which dates back to 15,000 to 11,500 years ago and the transition from a hunter-gatherer society to an agricultural one.

Olympics...Continued from page 17

attention against countless other options.

“My dream? To see a packed baseball stadium in Tel Aviv, with families coming to enjoy the game, and knowing that the children who played today on Ra’anana or Petach Tikvah fields are those representing Israel on the Olympic stage in Los Angeles,” he said.

There are six baseball leagues across Israel, with players ranging from ages 5 through 50.



A perforated stone that was part of a 12,000-year-old spinning machine uncovered in northern Israel atop the 3D model used to identify it. (Photo by Daniel Rolider/Smithsonian magazine)



An open Keter Yom Yakir, one of the Damascus Crowns on exhibition at the National Library of Israel. (Photo by Sharon Altshul)

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Breakthrough in Israel's plant conservation efforts

By JNS staff

(JNS) – One of Israel's rarest plants – the spear-leaved dogbane – is currently blooming in the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens after its extinction from the Negev Desert. The species, which now survives only in isolated areas along the Carmel coast and in the Acre Valley, was once far more widespread, including in En Avdat National Park in the Negev.

The plants currently blooming in the Botanical Gardens originate from specimens collected decades ago at En Avdat by Atai Yoffe, director of the Botanical Garden at Kibbutz Netiv HaLamed-Heh. As part of the conservation initiative, researchers have been propagating the plants under controlled conditions in the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens, with the explicit goal of reintroducing the spear-leaved dogbane to En Avdat National Park

in cooperation with the Israel Nature and Parks Authority.

According to Noam Bar-Shai, curator of the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens in Givat Ram, conserving these plants is particularly significant. This species typically thrives in cooler, more temperate regions than Israel, whereas the now-extinct Negev population likely developed unique genetic adaptations that enabled it to survive the harsh desert climate.

Until it is returned to the Negev, visitors can admire the plant's beauty at the "refuge" pond at the Botanical Gardens' northern edge, where clusters of small, bell-shaped flowers, delicately patterned with stripes on their pink petals, can be seen alongside other rare species.

"Each success reinforces our efforts to preserve Israel's unique plant diversity," says Nurit Hibsher, director of the

Central Region Forestry Department at Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael-Jewish National Fund. "The spear-leaved dogbane presents a dual challenge: conserving a species at severe risk of extinction while attempting to reintroduce a vanished population, and preserving its distinct genetic traits developed under desert conditions. Our progress with this species represents another step forward in saving many more."

The experiences and protocols developed through the initiative will be published in an upcoming digital book titled "Endangered Plants in Israel: A Guide to Propagation and Cultivation." It provides practical guidelines for cultivating and propagating some 500 rare plant species, designed to make essential knowledge available to conservationists, gardeners, researchers and nature enthusiasts.



Spear-leaved dogbane (Photo by Ori Fragman-Sapir)

Beit Issie Shapiro opens inclusive early childhood campus

By Sharon Altshul

(JNS) – A quiet revolution in early childhood education was unveiled recently with the inauguration of Beit Raz, an inclusive early childhood campus launched by Beit Issie Shapiro in Ra'anana. Designed to integrate toddlers with and without disabilities from birth to age 3, the campus has the potential to reshape the landscape of early intervention and inclusion.

The ceremony, held at Beit Issie's Ra'anana campus, brought together personal stories, communal pride and glimpses into the ambitious future of the campus. The morning began with mingling over coffee and pastries, followed by a program emceed by Israeli journalist Ben Shani.

He shared with JNS an emotional connection as a parent of a child who attended Beit Issie: "Every time I come here, I remember our first time – Keren and I, pushing a stroller with our son Ori, our firstborn, who was just 1 year old. That was 24 years ago. We were confused parents, with no idea what path lay ahead of us. And here, for the first time, we met warm, smiling faces (some of whom I see here today) – people who welcomed us during one of the most dramatic times of our lives."

Attendees heard opening remarks from



At left: A view of the playground in Beit Raz, an inclusive early childhood campus launched by Beit Issie Shapiro in Ra'anana, on June 4. (Photo courtesy of Beit Issie)

Beit Issie CEO Ahmir Lerner, Ra'anana Mayor Haim Broide and a special video blessing from Israeli President Isaac Herzog. "This place embodies the best of Israel," said Herzog. "It's a testament to innovation, inclusion and the belief that every child deserves a chance."

Named in memory of Raz Fisher, a former Beit Issie child with a rare genetic condition, Beit Raz reflects his parents' determination to build a place of hope. "Beit Issie saw Raz as a child first, not as his disability," said Tamar Fisher during a moving on-stage interview. "We wanted to

give other parents what we received: love, care and a place where children can thrive."

Beit Raz was carefully designed with that vision: a facility that feels like home, built with safety, light, and accessibility at its core. Tamar and her husband Adam, who worked closely on every detail, even brought in the architect who designed their home. "We paid attention to everything – from the colors to the height of the windows," Tamar said. "We wanted to create a space filled with light."

The new campus includes an early intervention center, a mainstream daycare center, inclusive indoor and outdoor play areas, the Wohl Therapy Center and Israel's new National Center for Emotional and Mental Health for people with disabilities and their families. All services are woven into the children's daily routines.

Lerner said the new campus would help countless children realize their potential and give families the support they need during the most fragile early years. "From its humble beginnings in 1980 to its current impact on more than 180 early intervention centers across Israel and its consultative status with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Beit Issie Shapiro continues to pioneer solutions, leading by example," he said. "Like Beit Issie Shapiro's other innovative programs, the goal of Beit Raz is to share the model for replication in Israel and around the world."

Jo Cohen, Israel director of Wohl Legacy, praised the initiative. "What inspires us about this new building is the seamlessness and accessibility of all the

services and treatments children need," Cohen said. "They'll go to their therapies at the Wohl Therapy Center and return to their classrooms to learn, all within the same building and at the highest professional standards."

"This is more than a building," said Beit Issie founder Naomi Stuchiner. "It's a new model of inclusion, of resilience and mutual respect, that will shape how our society supports all children."

Board Chairwoman Sasha Weiss Trump echoed the sentiment: "Here's where you meet the beautiful Israel, in the heart and soul of Beit Issie, where every person with a disability has the right to equal opportunity."

A highlight of the morning was a musical performance by Michal Greenglick, whose brother Shauli, a soldier killed in Gaza in 2023, had once aspired to represent Israel in the Eurovision Song Contest. "He taught us to pursue our dreams, even when we can't see what's ahead," she shared with JNS. "That's what Beit Issie does every day."

The ceremony also introduced the Shlomot Wellbeing Prize, a \$25,000 award recognizing excellence in emotional therapy for people with disabilities. Initiated by Merav Mandelbaum, the prize was awarded to two professionals: Dr. Ran Neuman, developer of a humanistic "Seeing the Person" model now adopted nationwide that empowers professionals to support people with disabilities; and Ronit Argaman, founder of ELA and the Argaman Institute and a pioneer in socio-sexual therapy and advocacy.

"This prize is for those who help others see light," said Mandelbaum. "Beit Issie sees people – and helps others do the same."



Adam and Tamar Fisher with Beit Issie CEO Ahmir Lerner at the inauguration of Beit Raz. (Photo by David Gelb)

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