

THE REPORTER

Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

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BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Global Day of Jewish Learning set for Nov. 5

The Global Day of Jewish Learning will be held on Sunday, November 5, from 10 am-noon, at the Jewish Community Center, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal. The event is co-sponsored by Beth David Synagogue, the Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, Temple Concord and Temple Israel, and is open to the community. A light breakfast will be served

and a suggested donation of \$5-20 per person is requested to cover costs. Registration is requested by Wednesday, November 1, to allow adequate time for set-up for the event, but latecomers are welcome. Reservations can be made at www.jfgb.org.

The program will also be available on Zoom at [https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81431288511?pwd=cIiFDPhDEPSK-](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81431288511?pwd=cIiFDPhDEPSK-mOY87xLnBgWtKg2zsd.1)

[mOY87xLnBgWtKg2zsd.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81431288511?pwd=cIiFDPhDEPSK-mOY87xLnBgWtKg2zsd.1), or meeting ID 814 3128 8511 and passcode JFGB3377. The link will be activated at 9:45 am. The breakfast begins at 10 am with the program beginning at 10:30 am.

"Planning continues for this annual event inspired by the late Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz after he completed his translation and commentary of the Talmud in 2010," said

organizers of the event. "This global Jewish learning day will center on the theme 'The Values We Hold Dear: A Roadmap for Inspired Jewish Living.' The materials are provided by Limmud, which supports a diverse and cohesive Jewish community. Rabbis Micah Friedman and Zev Silber plan to lead the event. We hope that you will choose to attend."

JCC to hold Murder Mystery Dinner Theater fund-raiser on Nov. 11

The Jewish Community Center will hold a Murder Mystery Dinner fund-raiser on Saturday, November 11, from 7-10 pm, with doors opening at 6:30 pm at the JCC, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal. Tickets are \$50 per person and additional sponsorship levels available. The event will feature musical entertainment by John Penird and Peaches Éclair. Dinner and dessert will be prepared by

Chef Victor Torres; there will be a cash bar. Reservations can be made by calling the JCC office at 607-724-2417. Anyone interested in sponsorships should also call the JCC Office or e-mail the office at jccoffice@binghamtonjcc.org.

"Join us for Diva Death drop!" said organizers of the event. "We're holding a one-of-a-kind Murder Mystery Dinner event

where everyone's a suspect. Presented by Half Light Theater, this immersive, interactive dinner event allows you to enjoy dinner and dessert as the mystery unfolds around you. Be alert for hushed conversations and hidden secrets as everyone's a suspect, even you! Our in-house detective will be on hand to help sift through clues and interrogate key witnesses, but only you

can decide what goes into evidence. Fun for both the seasoned armchair detective and the inexperienced rookie. You can solve the case and collect a reward."

Proceeds from the event will go towards helping families in need of scholarship assistance, as well as general program support for the JCC's daycare, afterschool care, camp, youth, aquatics and sports programming.

CJS offers programs on "Jewish Encounters with Jazz"

The College of Jewish Studies fall 2023 series continues to highlight the "Jewish Encounters with Jazz: International Perspectives."

On the evening of October 26, at 7:30 pm,

CJS, in collaboration with the Binghamton Jewish Film Fest, will show "The Jews and the Blues." Voluntary contributions are welcome. The film follows director Drew Stone as he travels to Israel and discovers

how the blues ties into a wide mix of cultures – Arab, Ethiopian and Moroccan – all of which are united through the universal tie of music. "Viewers will experience the unexpected on this expedition into uncharted territory," said organizers. The film will be followed by a discussion led by Shay Rabineau, assistant professor of Israel studies and associate director of the Center for Israel Studies at Binghamton University. Rabineau, who teaches courses focusing on Israel and pre-statehood Palestine, has also written a book about hiking, "Walking the

Land: A History of Israeli Hiking Trails" (Indiana University Press). (To read an interview with Rabineau, visit <https://www.thereporter.org/miscellaneous-features/spotlight-rabineau-explores-israeli-hiking-trails-in-new-book?entry=428922>.)

The series will conclude on Thursday, November 2, at 7:30 pm, with a Zoom lecture by University of North Carolina Professor Jarrod Tanny on the history of Jews and jazz in Soviet Russia, "How They Swung in Odessa: Jews and the Birth of See "Jazz" on page 12

Federation distributes Stop the Bleed kits

By Reporter staff

In its continuing efforts to keep the local Jewish community secure, the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton distributed 17 Stop the Bleed kits to seven organizations. The organizations that received kits were Beth David Synagogue, the Jewish Community Center, the Norwich Jewish Center, the Rohr Chabad Center for Jewish Student Life (for its Vestal and Binghamton buildings), Temple Beth El of Oneonta, Temple Concord and Temple Israel. The Federation has a mobile kit for use when it holds outdoor events and a kit for use during future Stop the Bleed trainings. The Federation thanks the David and Virginia Eisenberg Fund for

its generosity in helping fund the kits.

Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation, noted that this is not the end of the Federation's security efforts. "We are planning on holding trainings so people will better know how to use the kits," she said. "We also have other training sessions planned to help keep our community safe."

The Stop the Bleed kits are designed to enable trained bystanders to take life-saving action if needed until professional help can arrive following an accident, mass shooting or other acts of violence. During Stop the Bleed trainings, instructors focus on training people from all walks of life to become immediate responders.



Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, delivered a Stop the Bleed kit to Temple Israel.



L-r: Steven Malkin, chairman of the Federation's Security Committee, delivered a Stop the Bleed kit to Ron Feldstein at Temple Beth El of Oneonta.

Donations for Israel

Anyone looking to make donations to help Israel during its current crisis can choose from the suggested organizations listed below.

- ◆ American Friends of Magen David Adom, 20 W. 36th St., Suite 1100, New York, NY 10018; <https://afmda.org/>
- ◆ Jewish Federations of North America, 2023 Israel Emergency Fund, 25 Broadway, Suite 1700, New York, NY 10004, Attn: Girlie Virgino; www.jewishfederations.org
- ◆ Friends of the Israel Defense Forces, PO Box 4224 NY, NY 10163; www.fidf.org
- ◆ Friends of United Hatzalah, 442 5th Ave., Suite 1866, New York, NY 10018;

<https://israelrescue.org>

- ◆ Jewish Agency for Israel – North American Council, 633 Third Ave., 21st Floor, New York, NY 10017; www.jewishagency.org
- ◆ American Friends of Sheba Medical Center; 6505 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 615, Los Angeles, CA 90048; www.afsmc.org
- ◆ New Israel Fund, P.O. Box 70358, Philadelphia, PA 19176-0358; www.nif.org
- ◆ American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, P.O. Box 4124, New York, NY, 10163; www.jdc.org
- ◆ American Jewish Committee, Mail Code: 6760, P.O. Box 7247, Philadelphia, PA 19170-0001; www.ajc.org

BRONZE SPONSOR

The Reporter's Editorial Committee and staff thank Susan R. Hurwitz for a generous donation sponsoring this issue of THE REPORTER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Music and more

TC reschedules Meditative Music program open to community; JLI class; BD luncheon speaker.

.....Page 3

Sisterhood events

Beth David Sisterhood plans paid-up member meeting; TC Sisterhood's Whale of a Sale set.

.....Page 9

War in Israel

Half a million Israelis displaced by war; U.S. citizens in Israel evacuated by sea.

.....Pages 9 and 11

Special Sections

Celebrating Jewish Literature.....5-8
Women in Business..... 9
Winter Home and Garden 11
Classifieds 12



The Jewish American Dream on Broadway: "Funny Girl" and "Parade"

BILL SIMONS

The 2023 Broadway theater season featured revivals of two plays, "Parade" and "Funny Girl," highlighting divergent versions of the Jewish American Dream. Pursuit of personal and public affirmation provided thematic paths for "Parade" and "Funny Girl." From April 24, 2022, to September 3, 2023, the August Wilson Theater, at 245 West 52nd St. in the heart of the Midtown Manhattan theater district, hosted "Funny Girl." A short stroll away, "Parade" played at the Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre, 242 West 45th St., from March 16-August 6, 2023. Despite the close physical proximity of their theater homes, common musical genre and mutual grounding in history of the same era, "Funny Girl" and "Parade" present radically different perspectives on the Jewish American Dream. For me, the contrast was heightened by attending both plays on March 25; a "Funny Girl" matinee followed by an evening performance of "Parade."

Based on the life of Jewish entertainer Fanny Brice, a celebrated star of stage, screen and radio during the first half of the 20th century, "Funny Girl" chronicles the comedienne's ascent. The original 1960s Broadway play and subsequent film announced the talents of the inimitable singer-actress Barbra Streisand. While Streisand remains nonpareil, the three performers – Beanie Feldstein, Lea Michele and Julie Benko – who played Brice in the most recent revival gave pizzazz to the lyrics of songs such as "If a Girl Isn't Pretty" and "I'm the Greatest Star," displayed dance talents that ranged from elegant to comical,

and delivered dialogue that, by turns, expressed yearning, disappointment, Jewish shtick and unstoppable determination. Neither jibes concerning Fanny's unconventional appearance, nor her disappointment in her romance with the charismatic, yet irresponsible, Jewish gambler Nick Arnstein, undermines the contagious feel-good spirit of "Funny Girl." As her rags to riches story took her from the poverty of the Jewish Lower East Side to stardom in the Ziegfeld Follies, the audience roots for Fanny, cheering her chutzpah and laughing with her, not at her.

The "Funny Girl" revival featured a strong supporting cast, particularly Tovah Feldshuh as Mrs. Brice, Fanny's mother. Feldshuh summoned the strength, warmth and sardonic barbs of the Yiddish momme.

"Parade," a dramatization of one of the most infamous episodes of American antisemitism, occupies a different emotional universe than that of "Funny Girl." The play depicts the persecution of Leo Frank, the Jewish superintendent of the National Pencil Factory in Atlanta, GA, who was falsely accused of sexually assaulting and murdering a 13-year-old, white employee, Mary Phagan, on April 26, 1913. Chronicling the virulent controversy surrounding Frank's trial, conviction and death sentence commutation, "Parade," adhering to the historical record, ends with Frank's lynching by a vigilante mob.

During the first preview of the production on February 22, neo-Nazi protesters rallied while accosting attendees, shouting vituperative and false slurs, including, "You're

paying \$300 to... worship a pedophile." Masked disrupters, loud and aggressive, shoved antisemitic pamphlets at playgoers. The posthumous defamation of Frank and "Parade" continued online, accompanied by links to white supremacist websites.

The leads, Ben Platt and Micaela Diamond, portraying Leo Frank and his wife, Lucille, are Jewish. Confiding that he found playing an innocent Jewish man demonized and lynched by antisemites emotionally and physically draining, Platt, frequently wearing a Star of David necklace, asserted an obligation to convey Frank's truth. As a gay Jew, Platt has insight into prejudice. He debuted in "Parade" at 29, Frank's age when accused of Phagan's murder.

On an afternoon trip to Brooklyn, Platt visited the Prospect Heights apartment where Frank grew up and where his body was returned before internment. To gain further insight into his stage identity, Platt, consulting the archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, poured over the letters Frank wrote during his long confinement. Portraying Frank, Platt recites the *Shema*, the central tenet of Judaism, before he is lynched.

The role of Lucille Frank heightened and challenged Diamond's Jewish consciousness. Diamond reflected on similarities to the character she portrays, "I can relate to Lucille – her Jewishness, her lack of Jewishness, her insistence on assimilation." Diamond revealed that before most performances the cast gathered around to recite the Mourner's *Kaddish*. See "Broadway" on page 4

Opinion

From the Desk of the Federation Executive Director

With gratitude

SHELLEY HUBAL

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton held a Vigil for Israel last week. It was touching to see the community leaders come together with short notice and create a meaningful and healing gathering. Even more touching was the large turnout and show of support for Israel.

Here is an excerpt from my welcome speech: I am not a politician. I am not a spiritual leader. I stand here to humbly offer myself as a beloved daughter and granddaughter, a treasured sister. I am a wife and blessed to be a mother. I am someone just like you. I search every day to do better

and to be better. And now, just like you, I stand here with a broken heart crying out for the madness in Israel to end. In my eyes, we are gathered under one large tent – a tent under which every Jewish soul is welcomed.

My dear friends, our tent has come untethered. The events in Israel have left us feeling lost and hurt and scared. As we go through this evening's program, I want you all to know that this is a safe space to weep and to mourn. I hope that you will find comfort in one another, and the courage to whisper words of love and support during this terrifying time in our history.

We are blessed to have wise and compassionate clergy here in Binghamton whose words and voices will give us hope and courage. Let us all begin to mend our broken hearts so we can pick ourselves up and find the strength to do our work as Jewish people to repair this broken world.

I would like to share of these words from the poet Mark Nepo that speak to this time: "We cannot eliminate hunger, / but we can feed each other. / We cannot eliminate loneliness, but we can hold each other. / We cannot eliminate pain, / but we can live a life of compassion."

In My Own Words

What I don't know

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

When choosing subjects for this column, I try to write only when I have something new or relevant to add to the discussion. That's particularly true when it comes to political issues: my column may put a Jewish spin on the subject or focus on the issue from a different angle. I don't pretend to be a historian or political analyst. I am not an expert on world affairs. There are times, though, when it's difficult to ignore world events, in this case what's been happening in Israel. However, I also know I have nothing special to add to the hundreds of viewpoints currently being sent in e-mails or published in newspapers and on websites. (See the end of this article for suggestions on websites to visit for that information.)

What the attack did bring to mind was something my father used to say when I was upset, something that came from his experiences as a Marine during World War II. As far as I know, he never faced combat, or, at least, he never talked about it. But that experience was a major influence on his life and would become part of mine. His standard line was that "no one is shooting at you." That phrase was

not comforting when I was a child, but I not only find it so now, but meaningful in a direct way when looking at the Middle East.

No one is shooting at me. No one is dropping bombs on my city. No one is invading my house. No one is taking my friends/family hostage. But I would go even further than that: no one is oppressing me, no one is taking away my human rights. Before you complain I'm getting political, I'm not. I feel for *all* innocents who are being hurt. My heart bleeds for the Israelis who are dying or wounded. My heart bleeds for who on the other side of the border who just want to live their lives in peace. When I was young, I was also influenced by Mark Twain's "War Prayer": we need to recognize that innocent people are injured or die in any war, even just wars. That doesn't mean we don't fight necessary battles. It just means that someday when the fighting is over, these people should also be mourned.

Everyone – even those with whom we disagree – are created in the image of God. That's something I cling to

in difficult times. We are all human: we may have different beliefs and I may abhor someone's actions, but they are still human. If only everyone saw this, if only everyone truly felt this, if only everyone could see the spark of the Divine in each of us, there would be no more war. Not in Israel, not in Ukraine, not in Sudan, not in.... the list is far too long. Unfortunately, I don't think that will ever happen.

Although as a Reconstructionist I don't believe in a God who acts in this world, I still utter this version of a Jewish prayer because I pray that our own hands will act godly: "May the One who makes peace on high make peace on us, all Israel and on all the world." That last phrase – on all the world – is important because unless there is peace everywhere, there will never be peace on us.

For Jewish news about Israel, visit the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (www.jta.org), the Jewish News Syndicate (www.jns.org) or the Forward (<https://forward.com/>). There is no charge to read stories on the first two websites. The Forward has taken down its paywall for its coverage of Israel's war with Gaza.



Shelley Hubal, Executive Director

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OPINIONS

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

LETTERS

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

ADS

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www.thereporter.org

JLI's "The World of Kabbalah" to begin on Oct. 30

Last-minute registration for "The World of Kabbalah: Revealing How its Mystical Secrets Relate to You," the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute's new fall 2023 course, is still being accepted. The course will begin on Monday, October 30, at 7 pm, and run for six consecutive Mondays, both at the Chabad Center and via Zoom.

The course is open to individuals of all backgrounds and knowledge levels. For registration and additional course-related information, interested participants can write to rshea@Jewishbu.com, call Ruth Shea at 607-797-

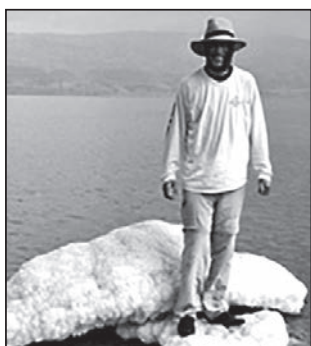
0015 or visit www.myJLI.com. The course fee is \$79 per participant or \$150 per couple. The fee includes the text book. Limited scholarships are available.

The course, which was developed in conjunction with JLI's Wellness Institute, offers up to nine Continuing Education Credits for psychologists, social workers, LMFTs and LMHCs licensed in New York state. The Wellness Institute is recognized by the New York State Education Department's State Boards as an approved provider of continuing education for these professions.

"The premise of the course is the belief that knowledge is a bridge to connection," said organizers of the course. "For both seasoned spiritual seekers and curious beginners, 'The World of Kabbalah' offers an opportunity to gain clarity about the inner workings of Jewish mysticism and its relevance to everyday life. Meticulously crafted, this educational journey breaks the multifaceted topic down into six modules: The evolution of Ego, The dawn of Limitation, The infinite Light, The world of Chaos, The great Concealment, The essence of Everything."

BD Nov. 11 luncheon to feature Tim Lowenstein

Binghamton University's Distinguished Professor Tim Lowenstein of the Department of Geological Sciences and Environmental Studies will be the presenter at the 2023-24 Beth David's Luncheon Speaker Series on Saturday, November 11. "Those who attended October's fascinating talk by Professor Shay Rabineau about his trek around the Dead Sea will now have an opportunity to find out about the latest cutting-edge research that is being done by earth scientists who are focusing on what we can learn by studying the salt of the Dead Sea," said organizers. "Tim Lowenstein is without a doubt a superstar in the field, and we are beyond thrilled to have him share the findings of his ongoing research!" People are encouraged to attend the morning service, which begins at 9:30 am. There is no charge for the luncheon.



Tim Lowenstein (Photo courtesy of Shay Rabineau and Tim Lowenstein)

Lowenstein's work has been carried out with two postgraduate students, in conjunction with a scientist from the Israel Geological Survey. The level of the Dead Sea has dropped more than 30 meters over the last 40 years, and the research team is examining what can be learned of this physical decline of the Dead Sea by looking at the salt deposits that have formed. "Salt deposits help us understand lakes, climate change, and human disturbance" Lowenstein said. "These are the focal points of our research, and I look forward to sharing our findings and their implications as they relate to the Dead Sea and beyond."

Lowenstein earned his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University, and came to Binghamton University in 1985. He was awarded the title of distinguished professor in 2016, a promotion that is given to those who have distinguished themselves within their discipline at the national or international level. Lowenstein is also a fellow of the Mineralogical Society of America, Society of Economic Geologists, and the Geological Society of America. His awards include the Israel C. Russell Award in Limnogeology from the Geological Society of America and the Lawrence L. Sloss Award in Sedimentary Geology from the Geological Society of America. He has received

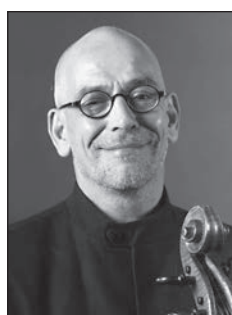
more than \$2.8 million in external grant funding.

Beth David's luncheon speaker series takes place the second Saturday of the month. Since the monthly series' continuation depends on the generosity of contributors, Beth David welcomes and appreciates donations to the Luncheon Fund in order to keep the program going. Donations as well as sponsorships can be made in honor of or in memory of someone, or to mark a special occasion. Those wishing an acknowledgment to be sent to the person being honored, or to the family of someone being remembered, can indicate that, along with the necessary information. Donations can be sent to Beth David Synagogue, 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905, Attention: Luncheon Fund.

"Among the questions Lowenstein will discuss are how do earth scientists use salt deposits to understand lakes, climate change and human disturbance? What instruments do they use, and what secrets are they uncovering?" organizers said. Lowenstein and his team have been doing research on the Dead Sea salt deposits since 2018, as part of a collaborative project funded by the United States-Israel Binational Science Foundation. The research will continue until 2024.

TC to hold rescheduled Meditative Music program on Nov. 10

Temple Concord has rescheduled the Meditative Music program originally to have taken place on Yom Kippur. It will now be held on Friday, November 10, at 8:30 pm, in the Kilmer Mansion following the 7:30 pm Shabbat services and *oneg*. The concert will be in honor of Veterans Day and in memory of Brendan Byrnes, husband of Hollie Levine. It is open to the entire community.



Hakan Tayga (Photo by Jim Blodgett)



Margaret "Pej" Reitz (Photo by Matt Dine)



Sarah Gerk (Photo by Jonathan Cohen)

arts organizations, including the Tri-Cities Opera, Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, Catskill Symphony, the Syracuse Symphony, the Orchestra of the Southern Finger Lakes and the Ensemble Concord at the Kilmer Mansion.


Gerk is assistant professor of musicology at Binghamton University. She studied

clarinet with Yehuda Gilad at the Colburn School, and has taught at Oberlin College and Conservatory, University of Michigan and California State University, Long Beach. She researches 19th century American music, and is an active flute and whistle performer in Irish traditional music.

Musicians Margaret "Pej" Reitz (piano), Hakan Tayga (violin/cello) and Sarah Gerk (clarinet) will perform compositions by J.S. Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Jean Sibelius, Maurice Ravel, Frederic Chopin, Camille Saint-Saens and Johannes Brahms.

Reitz is a native of the Binghamton area. She is currently on the faculty of Binghamton University, Ithaca College School of Music and SUNY Broome. She performed as an accompanist throughout the United States, in England, South America, Spain and at the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria. Reitz has been a guest artist with the Temple Concord Artist Series in the Kilmer Mansion. She has been the Temple Concord Meditative Music pianist since the program began nearly 25 years ago.

Tayga is principal cellist of the Binghamton Philharmonic and a founding member of the Parlor City Celli. A native of Binghamton, Tayga has performed with many regional



DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
Oct. 20-Nov. 2.....	October 11
November 3-16.....	October 25
November 17-30.....	November 8
Dec. 1-14.....	November 20 (early)

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

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Kalaniot Press visited Vestal

Kalaniot Press Publisher Lili Rosenstreich and Liza Wiemer, author of "Out and About: A Tale of Giving" (published by Kalaniot Press), offered readings of Wiemer's book at the Jewish Community Center's Early Childhood Center and Hillel Academy of Broome County on October 4.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton and the JCC co-sponsored a community Sukkot event later that afternoon, which featured a reading by Wiemer, snacks and crafts.



At the Sukkot event, Zalman Slonim and Moishe Slonim showed the children an etrog and lulav.



Liza Wiemer read her picture book "Out and About: A Tale of Giving" at the Jewish Community Center's Early Childhood Center.




Liza Wiemer visited Hillel Academy of Broome County. L-r: Wiemer; Rabbi Moshe Shmaryahu, head of Judaic studies; Lili Rosenstreich, publisher of Kalaniot Press; and Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton.



More than 20 children attended the Sukkot event co-sponsored by Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton and the Jewish Community Center.



Jewish Community Center staff members offered the children an opportunity to color pictures of a sukkah during the Sukkot event.

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

Annual Campaign 2024

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We hope we can count on your generosity again in the year to come.

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- 1) Visit the Federation website at www.jfgb.org and click on "make a pledge."
- 2) E-mail Federation Executive Director Shelley Hubal at director@jfgb.org with "pledge" in the subject line.
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500 Clubhouse Rd.,
Vestal, NY 13850**

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City: _____

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Phone Number: _____

Amount Pledge: _____

Jewish Federation
of Greater Binghamton

At right: At the Sukkot event, Liza Wiemer read her picture book "Out and About: A Tale of Giving" just outside the Jewish Community Center's sukkah.



Broadway..... Continued from page 2

"Parade" is not an easy play to watch. At the performance I attended, the house was full and the audience intent, serious, quiet and primarily Jewish. In a prologue scene, set during the Civil War, a young couple expresses affection before the youthful soldier leaves to join Confederate defenders of the Southern homeland. Departing, he sings of the red hills of Georgia. A half-century later, on Saturday, April 26, 1913, the boy soldier, now a wounded old man, is honored along with other veterans by a Confederate Memorial Day parade. On that Confederate Memorial Day, Mary Phagan, the epitome of the purity of Southern womanhood, was murdered by strangulation in a factory owned and managed by a Yankee Jew.

"Parade," taking its name from the celebration of the Lost Cause of the Confederacy, moves with the inevitable force of a Greek tragedy. As a Northerner, a Jew and an industrialist employing young girls, Frank symbolized the outsider that the impoverished, defeated, displaced agrarians

of the South despised. Parade's aggrieved Southern men, their resentments fueled by demagogues, viewed the Yankee, Jewish industrialist as a taunt to their failure to protect their wives and daughters. At several points in the production, the angelic Mary Phagan descends from the heavens in a swing, singing in celestial voice. Despite the tragic trajectory of "Parade," the heartbreak is leavened by the depiction of the deepening love and respect between Leo and Lucille Frank.

Which of the two plays – the ebullient "Funny Girl" or the tragic "Parade" – represent the true Jewish American Dream? The answer? Both. The Jewish American Dream is Janus-faced, triumphant aspiration juxtaposed to celebration morphed into nightmare. In life and on stage, the applause of adoring fans celebrated Fanny Brice. For Leo Frank, the parade ended with mocking antisemites hanging him from an oak tree. As the people of the book, we are obligated to confront the perils and potential of the Jewish American Dream.



Celebrating Jewish Literature



The past and the present

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

I periodically say, “That’s it. No more Holocaust novels for at least a few months.” Then something happens – a book gets great reviews, an author I really like publishes a book or a PR person suggests something that sounds interesting – and I once again have several novels with Holocaust and/or post-Holocaust themes on my shelves. Below are reviews of three recent works.

“The Postcard”

Some novels shouldn’t work. When looked at objectively, they are a mess of disparate events that go in too many directions to make sense. Yet, sometimes an author performs magic on this mess and produces a brilliant, fascinating work. That’s the case with Anne Berest’s “The Postcard” (Europa Editions), which was originally published in French and won several major awards. When I first learned of the novel, I was not tempted to read it. Then after reading several articles about it (and with the encouragement of someone who wanted me to review it), I asked for a copy of what turned out to be an amazing book.

In 2003, a simple postcard arrives at the Berest family home – a postcard that lists four members of the family who died in the Holocaust, but offers no other information, including a return address. The card is puzzled over for a moment, but then ignored until 15 years later when Anne is pregnant. Suddenly it becomes important to her to not only discover who sent the postcard, but to learn more about the members of her family who perished in the Holocaust. Anne seeks her mother’s help, although, at times, her mother resists reviewing the past. In addition to employing a private detective and a hand-writing specialist, Anne searches records from the era of Nazi-occupied France.

The disturbing discoveries she makes resonate in

contemporary times, particularly the status of the Jewish population of France. That includes Anne’s daughter, now old enough to attend school who notes, “They don’t like Jews very much at school.” The novel also includes Anne’s imagining of what happened to her late relatives: sections feature their thoughts and actions during their heartrending experiences with French collaborators and the Nazis who arranged their deaths. The novel moves backward and forward in time, but its lack of a linear time line works. Just before it is revealed, I guessed who sent the postcard, but the reason it was sent will chill readers hearts. It certainly chilled mine.

I highly recommend “The Postcard” – even if you’ve been tempted to never again read a novel about the Holocaust – if only to learn what the true meaning of what it feels like to be the child and grandchild of survivors. It also shines a light on France, its past and its outlook on Jews during contemporary times.

“Counting Lost Stars”

Kim Van Alkemade is the author of the wonderful novel “Orphan #8” so I always look forward to her work. In “Counting Lost Stars” (William Morrow), she manages to connect stories from two time periods. At first, it was difficult to see how these very different tales would connect, but not only did they complement each other, but the suspense offered in the novel’s last 100 pages was so great it was difficult to put the book down.

In 1960, Rita Klein, who lives in New York City, drops out of college when she becomes pregnant. After giving up her baby for adoption, she finds a job using skills she’s learned in the new field of computer programming. Rita struggles with the decisions she’s made, knowing her parents would never have let her keep her child, although she

longs to see her baby. She is befriended by Jacob Nassy, a survivor from the Netherlands who was separated from his mother during the Holocaust. The two bond, with Rita wondering if her experience with punch-card computers might be able to solve Jacob’s mystery: the definitive knowledge of whether his mother died in the Holocaust. He believes that’s what happened, but he has no proof.

The use of punch-card computers is also what drives the second part of the story, which takes place in Holland in 1941. Cornelia Vogel’s father has been working with the Nazis to do a census of the country’s population. That census will have sinister repercussions: the information gathered is to be used to make the country Jew-free. With her knowledge of the English language, Cornelia is given the task of translating the instruction for the new punch-card machine. Since she’s unable to translate the technical material, she asks for help from her Jewish neighbor, Leah Bloom. The connection they make changes the lives of both women.

Many novels that feature plots from the World War II era and a more contemporary time period are unable to make the problems people face in the latter time feel as important as those in the former one. That is not the case with “Counting Lost Stars.” Rita’s story is as moving and immediate as those of Jacob, Cornelia and Leah. The novel is based on the real-life story of punch-cards that some feel made the immerse scope of the Holocaust possible, although Van Alkemade’s characters are not based on real people. The idea that computer data can be used for good or for evil is a dilemma we still face today.

“Shadows We Carry”

While Meryl Ain’s “The Takeaway Men” was not one of my favorite post-Holocaust novels, it seems mine was a minority opinion: it won four awards. However, it was a perfect book for book clubs because it offered a great deal to discuss. I feel the same way about her latest work, “Shadows We Carry” (Spark Press), which is a sequel to “The Takeaway Men.” It continues the stories of Bronka and JoJo Lubinski, the children of Holocaust survivors and focuses on their lives from the 1960s to the 1980s. There’s numerous subjects ripe for discussion, although I didn’t find myself caring about its characters as much as I did those found in the other two novels in this review.

Readers need not have read Ain’s first novel in order to enjoy this one because enough clues are given so that it’s possible to understand the relationships between the characters. There is also a handy list of characters with explanations about their connections. Although the stories of both sisters continue, the novel’s main focus is on Bronka. Even after she graduates from college and begins her career as a writer, Bronka continues to live with her parents, partly because of convention and partly due to her parents’ past. The most interesting sections of the novel focus on post-Holocaust relationships, including Bronka’s with a Catholic priest and the son of a Nazi. Her sister, JoJo, has a different kind of struggle: getting pregnant meant she had to get married rather than follow her dream to become an actress. Each sister struggles with romance, but it’s coming to terms with their family’s history and the changing roles of women during the 1960s and ‘70s that gives readers the most to contemplate, which again makes this an excellent novel for book clubs and discussion groups. The “Note from the Author” at the end of the work gives historical background for those unaware of the Nazi presence in the U.S. before and after World War II, and places the work in context.

Rom-com heaven

by Rabbi Rachel Esserman

I got a little carried away recently when asking for review copies of rom-coms. It’s just that these novels sounded interesting and different enough from each other that I wanted to read them all. One author always features characters who have health problems, something that resonates with me because I’ve been there. Another has a cute meet, along with a great plot and some serious (and fun) sexual content. The third features an unusual character for a rom-com: an Orthodox young woman and the specific problems she faces. The fourth focuses on two Jews of color, noting the difficulties they sometimes face in the Jewish community. The fifth? Well, that one was pure fun because I just couldn’t resist its title. You’ll learn why below.

“Kissing Kosher”

One reason I love Jean Meltzer’s novels is that all her female characters have a chronic illness with which they must learn to live. In the case of Avital Cohen, one of the two main characters in “Kissing Kosher” (Mira), that illness leaves her with chronic pelvic pain. That’s the main reason she gave up her career as a photographer and now works at the family business, Best Babka in Brooklyn. But Meltzer not only acknowledges physical pain: she’s able to channel emotional pain, the type Ethan Lippmann feels after losing his parents when he was young and had to live with an abusive grandfather. That grandfather has forced him to go undercover at Best Babka in order to steal its most famous recipe as revenge for something that occurred decades before.

While this might make “Kissing Kosher” sound like a serious novel, not a rom-com, the beauty of Meltzer’s work is that she manages to offer thoughtful moments without sacrificing humor. Of course, Avital and Ethan are going to fall for each other, even though neither wants to admit it at first. And naturally, there will be numerous mishaps and potential disastrous discoveries, which are extremely funny. What makes this all work, though, is that the characters – even those in emotional or physical pain – are looking for ways to live a good life, even if only within the possibilities of their illness. As Avital notes, chronic pain is “part of my identity. Acknowledging that isn’t a moral failure. It’s not me trying to get attention, or wanting to be depressive, either. It’s simply me describing the reality of my life. Of my day. *It just is.* And I have to acknowledge that... I have to accept it as part of who I am going forward in order to make peace with it.”

“Kissing Kosher” works as a great, funny rom-com. It also serves as a serious and wonderful look at living life with an illness. As with her prior two works, “The Matzah Ball” and “Mr. Perfect on Paper,” this one comes highly recommended. (To see *The Reporter’s* reviews of Meltzer’s previous works, visit www.thereportergroup.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-looking-for-romance and www.thereportergroup.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-searching-for-romance-intellect-vs-emotion.)

“Business or Pleasure”

Chandler Cohen is having a really bad day: not only did the author of a book she ghostwrote not recognize her name, but her rare attempt at a one-night stand turns into the worse sex she’s ever had. At least, fortunately, she’ll never have to see him again. However, since “Business or Pleasure” by Rachel Lynn Solomon (Berkley Romance) is a rom-com, readers know exactly what’s going to happen. The important meeting with the person who wants her to ghostwrite his memoir is, of course, Finn Walsh, her one-night stand.

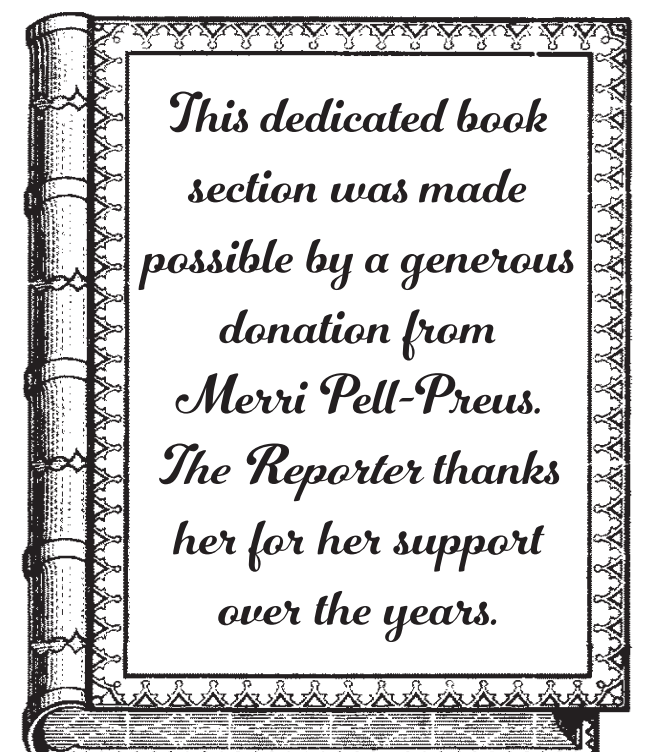
Chandler and Finn have one thing in common: neither has achieved their career goals. Chandler wanted to be a journalist, but, after a promising start, she’s unable to find a full-time job. To pay her bills, she began ghostwriting, something she does well, but which is not her dream job. Finn has had little success as an actor after appearing on a cult TV show about werewolves and now spends his time traveling across the country to appear at fan conventions. Chandler failed to recognize him because she’s never watched the show, although she soon finds out just how popular it still is. When she tells Finn the reason she left his hotel room, he’s unhappy (that’s an understatement) and that feeling doesn’t quit after he talks to former lovers and discovers they felt the same. Chandler, who has studied human sexuality, offers to help him learn to be a better lover – on a purely professional basis, of course. This being a rom-com, readers already know that will change.

“Business or Pleasure” contains a lot of hot sex, but also has some great characters whose quirks are fun to read about. The work’s minor characters add to the pleasure: I loved Chandler’s parents and Finn’s mother, who became a rabbi as a second career. The novel also offers an interesting view of millennials as they discover the real world is not the one they were promised as children.

“Unorthodox Love”

Imagine 10 years of matchmakers offering you 10 years of horrible dates. Although 29-year-old Penina, a member of the Orthodox community, longs for love and marriage, she’s come to realize that may never happen. Normally for a member of her community, that list would include children, but as readers of “Unorthodox Love” by Heidi Shertok (Alcove Press) learn, Penina is physically unable to have children, which makes her less than prime marriage material in the Orthodox world. It also means that her dates are usually much older or have emotional problems.

Penina tries to appreciate the life she has: she spends time with her sister’s children, her fashion advice on Instagram has a modest following and she volunteers at a local hospital. She also has a job working at a jewelry store she enjoys – that is, until the owner becomes ill and his son, Sam, begins to run the business. Although Sam is attractive, he is not Orthodox, and the two clash over their approach to the business. Those clashes/arguments are the funniest See “Rom-com” on page 7





Celebrating Jewish Literature



The puzzle of Poland

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

The largest number of Righteous Gentiles (those who risked their lives to save Jews during World War II) listed at Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, are Poles with 7,232 known rescuers. Unfortunately, after the war, Polish partisan groups searched for and murdered many Jews hidden by these rescuers. The exact number of those killed is unknown. To add to the puzzle, some former Polish Jews, who now live in the United States or Israel, still feel nostalgic for the country they once and, sometimes still, consider their true homeland. This enigma is explored in two new books: the memoir “Jews in the Garden: A Holocaust Survivor, the Fate of His Family, and the Secret History of Poland in World War II” by Judy Rakowsky (Sourcebooks) and the novel “Poland, A Green Land” by Aharon Appelfeld (Schoken Books).

Rakowsky’s memoir combines the history of Jews in Poland with the personal travels she made with her cousin Sam (Rakowski) Ron. Her interest was sparked when Sam finally became willing to discuss his experiences

during World War II, including his time in a concentration camp. Since the 1990s, Sam and Rakowsky made numerous trips to Poland. At first, some of his former non-Jewish friends and neighbors were suspicious that he wanted something from them (for example, the return of property and belongings that had been taken by non-Jews once the Jewish population had been deported by Nazi troops). Sam and Rakowsky learned more about the final days of some of his relatives: although they had been hidden, they were betrayed to Polish partisans – groups that opposed the Nazis, but which were still antisemitic – who found and murdered the hidden Jews. The families of people who hid them were ostracized for their actions, even decades later. Visiting the mass graves of these people was a moving experience for both Sam and Rakowsky.

However, they did learn one exciting piece of news: someone accidentally revealed that one of Sam’s relatives survived the war. Even though the rest of Hena Razenka’s family perished one night in 1944, she managed

to escape. Unfortunately, none of Sam’s friends were willing to discuss what happened to Hena and acted as if they wished they hadn’t mentioned her. Rakowsky, who works as an investigative reporter, decided to search for Sam’s relative, but found it extremely difficult: people either refused to help or declared that there wasn’t any record of Hena. An additional problem is that many Jews who remained in Poland after the war changed their names and hid their Jewish identity for safety reasons. Rakowsky writes of those who only learned of their Jewish heritage when a parent or a grandparent was on their death bed.

Even with all he discovers about the Poles who betrayed or killed members of his family, Sam refuses to hate or condemn Poland. He’s quoted as saying, “I feel a sense of belonging here. I come here and I see who our family was in the community. People liked me even if they weren’t crazy about Jews. I was good-looking and strong. I got good grades and we were well off. I was the only boy in my class who was Jewish. I don’t want my old house back; I have enough houses in the United States. I like coming back as a success.” Yet, Rakowsky’s study of the Polish partisan and resistance groups leads her to note that the operations of these groups “were not always so different from the attitude, policies, and practices of genocidal Nazis.” When the Nazis left the area, many of these groups murdered members of the Jewish population that had managed to survive the war. She also writes of how the government of Poland has refused to publicly acknowledge what occurred and recently passed laws to keep this history hidden.

This review can’t do justice to the depth of personal and historical detail offered in “Jews in the Garden.” The prose is clear and easy to read, and the pages flew by. Even those who may feel they have had their fill of Holocaust-themed non-fiction may find themselves fascinated by the details that the author offers, particularly because what she learns from her search is still relevant today. This is also true of her discussions of politics in contemporary Poland. “Jews in the Garden” comes highly recommended.

While the people and events in “Jews in the Garden” are historical, “Poland, A Green Land” offers a fictional look at one Jew’s relationship to Poland. The novel focuses on the second generation: Yaakov Fine was born in Israel to parents who survived World War II and emigrated to Israel. As a child, Yaakov felt alienated from his parents, who seemed unable to leave their European lives behind. For example, while they spoke Yiddish to Yaakov, they spoke Polish to each other, and their community was made up of those who had also come from Poland. At first, Yaakov is happy to cut ties with that part of the Israeli community when his parents die. However, he suddenly finds himself wanting to travel to Poland, even though his wife doesn’t understand his sudden interest, because he feels a great need to explore the place his parents still saw as their true homeland.

At first, Yaakov seems unsure about how he should spend his time in Poland. For days, he wanders aimlessly in Krakow before heading to Szydowce, his parent’s village, a small place off the beaten track. There are no hotels, so he takes a room with Magda, who welcomes him with open arms. To his surprise, Yaakov feels at home in Szydowce. He enjoys spending his days wandering along its roads and observing the river. In fact, it begins to feel more like home to him than Israel, allowing him to finally understand his parents’ nostalgia for their former hometown. Yaakov is thrilled when he learns that Magda remembers his family and tells him stories about their lives. In fact, the two grow very close, something not appreciated in the village.

Although, at first, people didn’t seem concerned about Yaakov’s visit, that changes over the course of his stay. Their dislike of him increases when Yaakov discovers that Jewish gravestones had been uprooted and used to pave part of the town’s center. His attempt to buy some of the stones creates problems and Yaakov learns that an undercurrent of antisemitism still exists in the village. Magda explains the reason to him by saying, “Jews don’t have ordinary lives. Poles aren’t killed because they are Poles. A Pole walks the street at night, and nothing happens to him. A Jew is always in danger.” Unfortunately, some in the village still believe it was the Jews’ own fault that they were murdered during and after the war.

The prose in “Poland, A Green Land” is blunt and plain, although easy to read. The plot, what there is of it, is extremely slow moving. At times, it seemed as if something dramatic was about to happen, but that proved not to be true. In fact, the novel’s main movement is internal: it’s the changes within Yaakov that stand out. That makes it an interesting counterbalance to “Jews in the Garden,” which included far more history and action. The two works have similar themes and ideas, but readers may better understand what happens (and doesn’t happen) in “Poland, a Green Land” after reading “Jews in the Garden.”

Out of the closet

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Academic study vs. memoir, objective analysis vs. subjective examination: these describe the difference between two recent works: “Queer Judaism: LGBT Activism and the Remaking of Jewish Orthodoxy in Israel” by Orit Avishai (New York University Press) and “Late Bloomer: Finding My Authentic Self at Midlife” by Melissa Giberson (She Writes Press). While “Queer Judaism” does offer personal stories, its main focus is an objective look at the shift in opinion about homosexuality in parts of the Israeli Orthodox community. The author of “Late Bloomer” takes a very personal approach in her memoir: she writes of what happened when, in her mid-40s, she realized she is physically and emotionally attached to women.

Avishai explores how members of the LGBT community in Israel are demanding equal rights in the Orthodox world. They counter the claim that there are no Orthodox gays or lesbians by saying that those who wanted to be open about their sexuality were forced to leave the community because they were not accepted. Although these demands might sound radical, Avishai notes that those making them are not. They are not looking to change anything else about *halachah* (Jewish law) except for it to allow their partners/spouses and children to be accepted as full members of the community. This includes being welcome in synagogues and religious schools. Some leaders claim that in every other way – religiously and politically – they are no different from other Orthodox. Many of them live in settlements in the territories, accept the rules separating men and women, and are politically conservative. All they want is a space in the community in which they grew up.

While Avishai writes about the different Orthodox LGBT movement’s organizations – their development, disagreements and changes – for many readers it will be the evolution of the religious changes that is the most interesting. These only occurred because the LGBT groups and the social media websites she writes about allowed those questioning their sexuality to recognize they were not alone: for the first time, they realized there were others who felt the same way, including many who did not want to leave their home communities. The claim became, “I can be gay or lesbian and be fully Orthodox.”

Not everyone has accepted the idea that it’s *halachically* possible to be a practicing member of the LGBT community and remain Orthodox. For example, those who felt same-sex attraction were often told they were only going through a phase or were referred to unhelpful and unhealthy conversion therapy. Other options they were given included choosing a heterosexual marriage or remaining celibate. These choices were rejected by those Avishai quotes in her book. While parts of the Israeli Orthodox community have rejected their demands and are working to penalize those who are openly gay, Avishai notes that those in her study are not looking to change other community standards: most of her subjects reject the ideals of the liberal LGBT community, which seeks equal rights for everyone, including women and Palestinians.

Avishai notes that the movement has had some limited acceptance, including support from some parts of the Israeli rabbinate. However, the author writes, “And yet this support is not unconditional because embrace, tolerance, and acceptance of the vulnerable do not amount to normalization... tolerance does not address the root cause of marginalization: an uncompromising cis and heteronormative social order.” It also does not acknowledge those who are bisexual or transsexual. Although Avishai generally manages to be nonjudgmental, readers looking between the lines can see that she wishes these groups were working against all types of oppression: she posits they will never receive full acceptance until all are fully accepted.

“Queer Judaism” includes excerpts from numerous interviews that show the heartbreak of those who have not been accepted by their families and/or community. However, these are the same people who are creating a new version of Orthodoxy simply by living their lives and expecting acceptance. Their use of Jewish texts has also helped them become more actively engaged in Judaism. “Queer Judaism” will inspire and challenge readers as it shows the active development of religious change in Israel.

While Avishai offers the personal voices of those she interviewed, in “Late Bloomer,” Giberson’s focus is on her own experiences and emotions. The author was in her mid-40s when she came to the shocking realization that she is attracted to women, something she refuses to fully accept at first. That’s because if she is a lesbian, it will completely change the life she is living. This includes telling her husband – the man with whom she’s been in a relationship for more than 20 years – that their marriage is over. Although she decides that she needs to explore her new identity, Giberson desperately wants to keep her family together. However, things change after she tells her husband about her sexuality and he moves out. (She stays in what was once their home with their two children.) However, she still does not want a divorce and is extremely upset when she’s served with divorce papers without first being notified by her husband.

Giberson does not have an easy time dealing with the changes in her life. She talks to rabbis and cantors, which leads her to attending Jewish LGBTQ groups where she can share her feelings and learn how others are dealing with similar issues. She makes friends, attempts relationships and then steps back. It takes 10 years for her to finally feel comfortable in her new life and she records a great deal of what occurred during those years. This includes experiencing some very difficult losses and the mixed emotions she has about her own past.

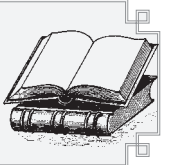
It’s interesting to note that Giberson’s now ex-husband was not Jewish, although he supported their children being Jewish and attending religious school. However, once word of what happens becomes public, Giberson feels less comfortable at her synagogue because she feels the clergy and her former friends are taking her husband’s side. (She seems unable to see that their support of her husband may have had more to do with the fact that she had an affair with a woman while she was still married than it did with her being gay.)

However, readers will sympathize with the difficulties Giberson faces, if only because she so struggles with everything that happens to her. The reason for this becomes clear toward the end of the memoir when the author learns she has a psychological condition that makes her extremely sensitive to change. People with this condition react far more emotionally than others to everything that happens in their lives. What is more difficult to understand is her lack of empathy for her ex-husband, although after her diagnosis, she does seem to offer him more to sympathy. Her expectations that somehow they could remain a happy family – including the two of them taking trips with their children – belies the shock he must have felt on having his family torn apart. Although she wasn’t ready for a formal divorce, that may have been an action he needed to take, one that allowed him to start his new life by cutting ties with his former world.

Reading “Late Bloomer” after “Queer Judaism” made the stories in the latter book come alive because Avishai could only offer brief selections from her interviews while Giberson gives an in-depth, almost step-by-step, portrait of someone affected by the realization they are gay. The two books compliment each other, even as they offer very different views of two countries and Jewish communities.



Celebrating Jewish Literature



SECRETS, RACE AND TRAGEDY

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

◆ “The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store”

It only took a few pages for me to realize I was in the hands of a master writer. James McBride’s “The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store” (Riverhead Books) is a funny, moving, wise work that will remain with readers long after they turn its final pages. Although it tells of two communities – the black and Jewish residents of the Chicken Hill section of Pottstown, PA – it feels steeped in Jewish thought: the idea that, while we may not be able to change the whole world, our actions can still make a difference.

During the 1920s, when most of the story takes place, Chicken Hill is not the rich section of Pottstown. In fact, the whites of the city try to ignore its existence and many of the Jews who once lived there moved from the area after becoming successful. That is not true of Chona Ludlow, who – even after the theater her husband, Moshe, runs gives them enough income to buy a house elsewhere – not only refuses to move, but insists on keeping her

store, the Heaven and Earth Grocery Store, open, even though it’s always lost money. That’s how she helps her neighbors, poor Jews and Blacks, who wouldn’t be able to afford groceries if she didn’t allow them to buy on credit and often forgave what was owed. It’s through her connections with the Black community that Chona learns that the state has decided a local, deaf, Black boy should be institutionalized. Chona and Nate Timblin, a local Black worker, work together to protect the boy from that disastrous decision.

Although their actions set the plot in motion, it’s McBride’s portrayal of the daily lives of these people that makes his novel so wonderful. There is Moshe learning the best ways to keep his theater in business, even when his catering to the Black population of the town is not appreciated by everyone. The author captures Moshe’s journey to the U.S. and the bewilderment of Jewish immigrants when the country turns out far different from their imagination. The members of the local Black community are also depicted as three-dimensional characters and the novel offers insight into the difficulties they face. At one point, McBride notes that “a colored person couldn’t survive in the white man’s world being ignorant. They had to know the news,” meaning they needed to know what was happening in order to avoid the trouble the white community often brought to their doors.

The novel’s portrayal of the casual racism and antisemitism that existed in Pottstown during the 1920s is unfortunately still relevant today: white Christian members of the town looked at people of color, or those who practice a different religion, as dangerous invaders of their ideal all-white American world. Fortunately, one example of casual racism that occurred in the past does not occur today: Pottstown’s annual Ku Klux Klan parade, about which the author writes, “No one complained. It was just one of those things. Once a year, on Klan parade day, the Negroes in town disappeared, the Jewish stores closed, the Klan marched, and that was it.” No one complained – well, except for Chona, McBride’s greatest gift to readers.

I’ve read many novels that include characters with whom I wish I could be friends. However, “The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store” contains one of the few characters I admired so much that I wanted to be her. While Chona is not perfect, she is loving and caring – refusing to accept anyone’s prejudices and treating everyone with the consideration they deserve. Her courage – that is simply part of her essence – makes her a role model.

I could write pages praising “The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store” – I haven’t even mentioned the sections that are extremely funny and the parts that are heartbreaking – but I think most readers of this column will realize just how much I enjoyed this book. However, in case I haven’t

been clear enough: “The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store” is one of the best – if not the best – novels of the year.

◆ “The Wolf Hunt”

Ayelet Gundar-Goshen’s novels usually feature a complex moral dilemma and her latest work “The Wolf Hunt” (Little, Brown and Company) is no exception. (For review of her previous novel, “The Liar,” visit www.thereporter.org/opinion/off-the-shelf-novels-that-take-place-in-israel-part-1-350806.) The work is narrated by Lilach Shuster, an Israeli, who lives in Silicon Valley with her husband Mikhael, and their American-raised son, Adam. The novel’s plot is made clear in its first paragraph: 16-year-old Adam has been accused of killing a fellow student, African American Jamal Jones. However, Lilach refuses to believe her son could be a murderer.

How this accusation came about can only be understood in the context of events that occurred before the death and Lilach carefully offers her insights into how they affected her family, starting with an attack on a local Reform synagogue that resulted in four injuries and one death. Even though her family was not a member of the synagogue, the attack felt personal and led Adam into attending a self-defense class. This decision played into an ongoing disagreement between Lilach and Mikhael. Mikhael, who had been a member of an elite unit in the Israel army, has been concerned about his son since Adam was in preschool and bullied by other students. Mikhael worries that he is raising a son who will be a victim, something he feels is confirmed by Adam’s lack of interest in sports. Lilach, in the other hand, loves her son as he is and wonders whether there is third choice, one in addition to either being a bully or being a victim.

This means that Mikhael is thrilled when Adam continues his classes with Uri Zev, who was also once part of the same elite Israeli military unit as Mikhael. Adam gains confidence in his physical abilities and invests in Uri’s ideas to an extent that makes Lilach nervous. Adam’s new abilities become a problem after Jamal dies at a party that Adam also attended. At first, the death was thought to be an accidental drug overdose. However, the investigation continues and rumors begin to emerge about the connections between Jamal and Adam. The continued police investigation greatly upsets Lilach, as does what she learns about Adam and Jamal, things that make her wonder if she really knows her son.

The plot of “The Wolf Hunt” contains many twists and turns, while also offering insight into racism and antisemitism in the U.S. However, it’s the secrets people keep that truly underscores the plot. Not all readers will be satisfied with the novel’s ending for reasons that won’t be revealed here. The differing opinions about its conclusion, though, would make for some interesting discussions at book clubs.

A Judaism for our time

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

When reviewing books by Orthodox and Conservative rabbis, I frequently comment that, while I may disagree with the author’s theology, his/her practical suggestions have a great deal to offer readers. What a pleasure, then, to feel differently about “Judaism Disrupted: A Spiritual Manifesto for the 21st Century” by Rabbi Michael Strassfeld (Ben Yehuda Press), who is best known as the editor of “The Jewish Catalogue” and author of the excellent reference work “The Jewish Holidays.” Not only did I appreciate his practical suggestions, but his theology resonated with me, something that makes sense since we are part of the same Jewish movement, Reconstructing Judaism. However, we’ve never met: he graduated from my rabbinical school a year before I started.

Strassfeld comes from an Orthodox background and, while he no longer accepts Orthodox theology or law, his work is steeped in Jewish practice and understanding. He believes that Judaism still has much to offer, even to those who think the religion is outdated and has nothing to offer. He provides two answers to counter those claims: 1) “Judaism is actually about how to live a life of freedom. It asks us to take the most precious gift we have – life – and live it to the fullest.” and 2) “Judaism shows us how to live with purpose. Its wisdom helps me face the challenges of life. Wisdom, not answers – not answers about whether to stay in this job or relationship or why my friend died young. In fact, Judaism is more questions than answers – especially questioning why the world is not a more just and compassionate place. It encourages awareness – awareness of the moment. It encourages gratefulness for the blessings in my life even as it helps me acknowledge the disappointments and losses that will inevitably be a part of my experience. It enables me to embrace the universal aspects of existence but to do so grounded in a particular tradition – Judaism.”

Seeking a Judaism of meaning and purpose leads Strassfeld to reject the parts of rabbinic Judaism he feels do not speak to modern times, for example, the divisions found in traditional Judaism between Jew and non-Jew, men and women, and the forbidden and permitted. He acknowledges that the future of liberal Judaism is not guaranteed, but that’s the reason behind his book: just as the ancient rabbis reconstructed Judaism after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in order for the religion to continue, Strassfeld sees the need to do something similar in contemporary times.

In his quest to show how Judaism can be a religion of freedom, Strassfeld offers 11 core principles and dedicates a chapter of his work to discuss each in detail. They include the idea that we are all created in the image of God; that our universe is a moral one; that we must live with an awareness of “the true nature of existence”; that we must not only focus on our own freedom, but that of others; that we must find holiness in everyday interactions, in addition to creating special times; that it’s essential to take care of our planet; that God can be understood as something larger than humans; that we must also work on becoming better people and reaching our potential; that we must realize that making mistakes is part of being human; that we are required to study Torah our whole lives so we can grow and change; and that we must use these 10 principles to articulate his 11th principle: the need “to create a Judaism without borders leading to the freedom to be connected to others.”

See “Judaism” on page 8

Rom-com. Continued from page 5

parts of the book. However, when Penina learns that her sister and family are in danger of losing their home, and she’s offered a way to help them, she has to make some difficult decisions about how she wants to live her life.

Although “Unorthodox Love” is definitely a rom-com – and a fun one at that – it does offer a serious look at how women who are unable to have children may find life in the Orthodox community difficult. Penina is a great character, even for those of us who would never follow her fashion advice (and she offers plenty of it).

“Thank You for Sharing”

Novels about Jews of Color are still relatively rare; rom-coms about Jews of Color are even rarer. That’s one of the reasons I asked for a review copy of “Thank You for Sharing” by Rachel Runya Katz (St. Martin’s Griffin), which features the points-of-view of two main characters: Liyah Cohen-Jackson (Jewish/Black) and Daniel Rosenberg (Jewish/Korean). While their Jewishness only plays a small role in the work, it does inform the characters’s lives. However, it is the fact that, 14 years after breaking off their friendship at a Jewish summer camp, they meet on a plane. That meeting does not go well and they both hope never to see each other again. Since this is a rom-com, readers know that’s exactly what will happen.

In fact, they find themselves forced to collaborate together when Daniel’s marketing firm is hired to do a campaign for the museum where Liyah works. The two must find a way to deal with their past, something they basically manage to do, although they don’t share the worst parts of their lives at first: the death of Daniel’s father the previous year and the traumatic experience that changed the way Liyah views the world. Although neither wants to admit it, they are attracted to each other: the question becomes whether they can overcome their past and look toward the future.

“Thank You for Sharing” offers a mixture of seriousness

and comedy, although sometimes, it focuses more on the former. Liyah can come across as very prickly and, at times, almost nasty. Readers do learn why, which gives the work an additional dimension, but does make it feel more like a romance novel than a full-fledged rom-com.

“My Roommate is a Vampire”

How could a book with that title not get my attention? Then I noticed its main character, Cassie Greenberg, had a Jewish sounding name and, after searching the web, I found it tagged on the Goodreads website as having a Jewish character. Alas, “My Roommate is a Vampire” by Jenna Levine (Berkley Romance) has no specific Jewish content, but there was also nothing that said Cassie isn’t Jewish and that was good enough for me.

Cassie’s life is not going well: she’s unable to find a job as an art teacher because her artistic vision is not one appreciated by most high schools. She works several dead-end jobs, but still can’t make her rent, meaning that she needs to move again. When a sounds-too-good-to-be-true ad for a roommate appears Cassie knows she doesn’t have much choice, but to apply. Her roommate, Frederick J. Fitzwilliam, does seem a bit strange: he’s very formal, has some unusual rules and a weird sense of decorating, but Cassie decides to accept his offer to move in. It doesn’t spoil anything to reveal that Frederick is a vampire (just check out the title of the book), but he’s a vampire who has been asleep for 100 years (it’s too complicated to explain why here) and needs someone to help him adjust to contemporary times. Cassie agrees to do so and the fun begins.

Frederick (who is definitely not Jewish) is a great character: watching him try to understand contemporary life is grand fun. The plot also features complications with Frederick’s family and an arranged vampire engagement, but to reveal more would spoil the plot. “My Roommate is a Vampire” is definitely mind-candy, but it was a welcome break from the more serious works in this review.



Celebrating Jewish Literature



Jews, Native Americans and not-so-free land

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

“Every other week, my rabbi and I would meet to read ancient Jewish texts that proscribe how to atone and reconcile after a harm has been committed, even and especially one that a person didn’t cause directly but did benefit from... [we learned] before you can fix anything, you must tell the truth, not just to God, but out loud to the entire community.” – Rebecca Clarren

To “tell the truth, not just to God, but out loud to the entire community”: that is the reason for, and the purpose behind, Rebecca Clarren’s “The Cost of Free Land: Jews, Lakota, and an American Inheritance” (Viking). Clarren is not looking so much to assign blame, but, rather, to find a way forward that rectifies the harm that was (and still is being) done. She also wants to understand how a group of persecuted Jews (including her ancestors, which makes this personal) took advantage of the genocide of the Native Americans by the American government. It’s a tale of persecution and lies, one made even more disturbing when Clarren writes about how Adolph Hitler used the American treatment of its Native Americans as his blueprint for ridding Europe of Jews during the Holocaust.

Clarren’s first chapter “Beyond the Pale” juxtaposes the treatment of the two groups. Native American culture had no concept that land could be sold so the first treaties made were unfair and meaningless from the start. The U.S. government continued to take advantage – to lie to and cheat Native Americans in an effort to rid the country of those they saw as either dangerous savages or innocents needing to be westernized. In fact, the government still controls much of their financial lives, giving Native Americans less freedom than any other group living in the U.S. Clarren also writes of the prejudice and attacks against the Jews in Europe, including how her great-great-grandfather was beaten during a pogrom and left for dead, something from which he never completely recovered. She offers comparisons between the U.S. government’s treatment of Native Americans and the Eastern European treatment of its Jews: both were only allowed to live in certain areas, neither could own weapons or land, and both were subject to the whims of

government officials and their neighbors.

However, things changed for those Jews who came to the United States. Yes, there was antisemitism and they were often not fully accepted by their neighbors, but they were finally able to own land, something they could not do in Eastern Europe. In fact, the government was offering free land – land stolen from Native Americans – but these immigrants didn’t look carefully at the reasons the land was available. Clarren does look at those reasons in heartbreaking detail, but she also understands why those like her great-great-grandfather weren’t concerned about the political motivations behind the offer. She notes that her ancestors “had finally escaped exile; they believed they were no longer wandering. I hope they felt a thrill, a sense of pride. For the first time in generations, they were standing on their own land.” That sense of pride lasted for generations – even for those who never farmed the land – and was still spoken of when Clarren was little, before she knew there was another side of the story.

The author notes the U.S. government’s treatment of Native Americans, including the forcible removal of children from their parents and their placement in boarding schools (where they were punished for speaking their native language or practicing native customs), policies that forced larger family units apart in order to break Native Americans’ traditional practices and denying them citizenship to prevent them from voting. Also discussed is the continued breaking of treaties and the harm done by government policies that refused to see the Native Americans as anything but children unable to control their own destiny. Clarren shows the many ways that Native American activists have worked to change this, but, even today, they have not been completely successful.

The contrast between the lives of Clarren’s Jewish relatives and the Native Americans she writes of is stark: the Jews were able to own land, to marry whom they wanted and to give their children a Jewish education. Their ability to practice Judaism was not regulated and they were free to celebrate Jewish holidays and rituals. Perhaps the most important difference is that the Jews were able to control how they used their land – leveraging it for mortgages or

loans, or selling it and moving elsewhere – while Native Americans were not allowed to handle the funds given to their tribes. The U.S. government still decides how most of that money will be used.

Particularly distressing is the way Hitler was “inspired” by the American treatment of its “Indian problem”: “In a 1928 speech, [Hitler] applauded the way Americans had ‘gunned down the millions of Redskins to a few hundred thousand, and now keep the modest remnant under observation.’ Hitler ‘often praised to his inner circle the efficiency of America’s extermination – by starvation and uneven combat – of the red savages who could not be tamed by captivity,’ wrote John Toland in ‘Adolf Hitler: The Definitive Biography.’” Although Clarren’s relatives arrived in the U.S. after the slaughter of Native Americans during the Indian Wars, they never thought about what had occurred before they arrived on U.S. shores, nor did would they have realized how that treatment would later be used against members of their own religious group.

Clarren is not looking to condemn her ancestors. She is helped in this by her conversations with the Native Americans to whom she spoke. One notes that the author’s ancestors were fleeing their own genocidal attacks and didn’t have the luxury of considering where their good fortune came from. They were only looking to survive. However, Clarren acknowledges that “it’s now the job... of my generation, those who have grown up free of such upheaval, to do the work of considering the harm of this entangled history.” The author realized that now is the time to have conversations about restorative justice as a way to heal historical wrongs.

“The Cost of Free Land” is not always an easy work to read. The treatment of Native Americans is a horrific chapter of American history, one that is unfortunately still ongoing. Clarren is to be commended not only for revealing what occurred, but for showing compassion to her ancestors. She ends her work with resources so people can not only see if their ancestors benefitted from stolen Indian land, but what steps can be taken to rectify that harm. “The Cost of Free Land” is a moving, sad, incredible portrayal of U.S. history that belongs on the shelves of every American library.

Red Jews in German and Yiddish culture

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

I find the development of cultural ideas fascinating, which is one of the reasons I asked for a review copy of “Sons of Saviors: The Red Jews in Yiddish Culture” by Rebekka Voß (University of Pennsylvania Press). The other is that I’d never before heard the term Red Jews and was curious about not only who they were, but how a negative concept in German Christian culture morphed into a positive one in Yiddish Jewish culture. The fact that

both cultures believed these Jews came from a kingdom that was the home of the 10 Lost Tribes of Israel – a legend that has always interested me – added to the pleasure of reading this scholarly work.

According to the author, the idea of Red Jews gained currency when Medieval Christians reconfigured a legend concerning the survival of the 10 Lost Tribes of Israel. That legend claimed that the 10 tribes had been exiled to a kingdom surrounded by a river known as the Sambatyon. This river was impassible six days of the week, only stopping its flow on the Sabbath, when members of the tribes were unable to cross it without breaking the laws against travel on Shabbat. The members of the tribes became known as Red Jews.

Declaring that these Jews had red hair and beards served as more than a description of their physical appearance. The author writes, “At its most extreme, amid the ambiguous logic of moral significance attributed to this color, red implied falsehood, deceit, danger, violence, and bloodshed.” In the Christian imagination, that meant these Red Jews were immoral and dangerous. If they were to escape their kingdom, they would attempt to liberate the Jewish population by helping the anti-Christ begin the end of days. This idea – that a kingdom of Red Jews were a danger to Christians – arose in the 13th century and disappeared during the 1600s. Perhaps due to language barriers, this concept never spread beyond German Christian culture.

As the idea of Red Jews began to disappear from Christian consciousness, it gained a place in Yiddish Jewish culture. Stories of Red Jews who successfully helped communities in danger began to appear. The color red came to represent pride and resilience. The legend remained popular in western and central Europe at the end of the 18th century, after which it became part of Eastern European Yiddish culture until the early 20th century. The idea also informed Zionism, which embraced the idea of powerful Jews. However, Red Jews as a symbol of power never spread beyond Yiddish culture, meaning that Jews outside of Europe never embraced the legend.

The change from a negative image of Red Jews in Christian culture to a positive one in Jewish culture forms an important part of the study. In Christian culture, these Jews were fearful warriors who embodied a threat against Christianity. As the stories developed in Yiddish culture, the Red Jews were powerful, but not because of

their physical development. Rather than being mighty warriors, they used the powers given them by God to defeat their enemies. In the tale “Ma’aseh Akdumat” (which was first published in the early 1700s, although the story most likely existed in an oral form before that), the hero who arrives from beyond the Sambatyon is referred to as “a little Red Jew.” The author notes “he is presented as a frail figure, ostensibly impeded by old age and physical disability.” Yet, he is able to defeat an imposing, strong Christian monk who has threatened the destruction of the Jews in his land. This idea is also found in other tales of Red Jews, including one story whose heroes are two children – a boy and a girl – who defeat those threatening the Jewish population. Both tales offer endings where Jews are then welcomed into the society in which they live.

The stories of Red Jews served a purpose in both Christian and Jewish communities. The author writes, “In the early modern European imagination, newly encountered peoples in distant lands were often assumed to be threatening... So too the Red Jews were collectively cast as an intimidating horde in both Jewish and Christian traditions... This Yiddish myth [of Red Jews] served as more than a literary expression of spiritual resistance and an emotional outlet or buttress for in-group identity; it’s concluding image also conveyed a desire for societal acceptance.” It should be noted that both Christians and Jews believed in the reality of the Red Jews, that is, that the group actually existed, whether as a threat (to Christians) or saviors (to Jews).

“Sons of Saviors” offers an interesting discussion of European Christian and Jewish culture of which many readers may not be aware. The book is scholarly, although its writing is accessible to the average reader. It also includes the text of “Ma’aseh Akdumat” translated into English, which is well worth reading for its own sake. Readers interested in medieval culture will find much of interest, as will those fascinated to learn how negative cultural images can turn into positive ones.

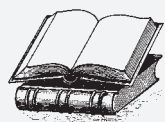
Judaism. . .Continued from page 7

Strassfeld sees Judaism not as a way to return to a perfect past, but as a journey forward to a better life and a better world. He notes that, “The purpose of Torah is to encourage us and remind us to strive to live a life of compassion, loving relationships, and devotion to our ideals. The Jewish tradition does that by suggesting ways to focus on important themes in life – such as openheartedness, gratitude, and awareness.” Chapters speak about specific holidays in terms of his principles, for example, Shavuot and Simchat Torah’s relationship to being a lifelong learner and Sukkot as a way to learn to live with nature and care for our planet. In addition, Passover serves as a reminder to engage in social justice.

As a Reconstructionist rabbi, Strassfeld writes of how Jewish ideas about God have changed over the centuries. He notes that he can’t write much about God because he subscribes to the Maimonidean idea that God is unknowable. For him, the descriptions of God found in the past – for example, God as a king or an old man with a beard – don’t resonate with many people in contemporary times. Yet, Strassfeld notes that he has mixed feelings about the idea of God: rationally, he finds it difficult to believe in God, yet he notes that “when I sit with my heart, I have faith that we live in a universe of meaning.” This changed his approach to prayer: for him, true prayer is “seeking an experience of connection, not an answer to request.”

While the theology offered in “Judaism Disrupted” won’t speak to all readers, Strassfeld’s practical suggestions should, even to those who practice Conservative or Orthodox versions of Judaism. For anyone who feels connected to Judaism, but has difficulty finding meaning in many of its contemporary forms, this work could offer the spiritual experience they are looking for.

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



TC Sisterhood to hold Whale of a Sale

Temple Concord Sisterhood's 2023 Whale of a Sale will be held Sundays, November 5 and 12, from 10 am-4 pm.; Monday through Thursday, November 6-9, from noon-6 pm; and Friday, November 10, from noon-4 pm, in the first floor social hall of Temple Concord, 9 Riverside

Dr., Binghamton. The sale is not open on Saturday, November 11. Shoppers should use the Riverside Drive entrance or the rear doors for entrance.

There will be a bake sale in the lobby on Sunday, November 5, from 10 am until it is sold out. On Sunday, November 12, there

will be a bag sale at \$12 per bag.

"Whale of a Sale features new and upscale previously owned items," organizers said. "The merchandise is very reasonably priced and 'thrifting' creates a consumer cycle of goods that reduces waste. The sale is just in time for holiday decorating

and giving, plus winter clothing needs."

Organizers noted, "Merchandise includes quality clothing for all ages, shoes, housewares, home furnishings, jewelry, books for children and adults, baby items, toys, games, sports equipment, small appliances and more!"

BD Sisterhood plans paid-up membership meeting

The Sisterhood of Beth David synagogue will hold its annual paid-up membership meeting on Wednesday, November 8, at 7 pm, in the Beth David social hall. Plans for the paid-up membership meeting are still being finalized. Additional details about the meeting will appear in the next issue of *The Reporter*. Flyers about the meeting will be sent to anyone on the Sisterhood e-mail list. Anyone who is not on the list and wishes to be included should either call the Beth

David Synagogue office at 607-722-1793 and leave a message with their e-mail address, or e-mail Beth David Synagogue at bethdavid@stny.rr.com.

"This meeting is intended to encourage everyone to pay their dues for the 2023-24 season," said organizers the meeting. "Unlike so many things these days, our dues have not gone up! Membership in Beth David Sisterhood is still only \$25 for the year. A real bargain! The collection

of dues is one of the primary ways in which Beth David Sisterhood raises funds that pay for refreshments at meetings, help provide programs of interest to our members and the community and allows Sisterhood to make a generous donation to Beth David Synagogue each year."

Organizers added, "Although technically this meeting celebrates those who have already paid their Sisterhood dues, unpaid members and friends are welcome

to attend. Our meetings are always open to the community. Men, too!"

One may also contact the Beth David Synagogue office to request that Toby Kohn send out a mitzvah card, which costs \$3, to express their appreciation, happiness or sympathy to someone.

"Please mark November 8 on your calendar and join us as we celebrate our loyal members who keep Beth David Sisterhood strong," organizers said.

TC Religious School celebrates Sukkot



Students in Temple Concord's Religious School spent time in the sukkah and had the opportunity to shake the lulav and etrog. (Names held on request)

Half a million Israelis displaced by war

By JNS staff

(JNS) – Almost 500,000 Israelis have been displaced by the war, an Israel Defense Forces spokesperson said on October 17.

"There are about half a million internally displaced Israelis at the time," Lt.-Col. (res.) Jonathan Conricus said during a briefing for reporters.

More than 20 communities near the Gaza Strip have been evacuated as the army gears up for a ground offensive. Another 28 communities within two km. of the Lebanese border have also been evacuated. In recent days, Hezbollah has fired anti-tank rockets into Israel.

The evacuations come on the heels of an October 7 assault by Hamas on Israeli communities near the Gaza border that caught Israelis off-guard. Fighting raged for days as the IDF initially struggled to clear out the terrorists. Terrorists have killed more than 1,400 Israelis and wounded over 4,100 others. At least 199



Volunteers in Sderot prepared food packages for residents evacuating the city on October 15, 2023. (Photo by Eitan Elhadetz-Barak/TPS)

hostages were taken to Gaza.

Meanwhile, the IDF killed four people trying to infiltrate Israel from Lebanon on October 17 morning. And in Metula, Israel's northernmost town, an anti-tank rocket fired

See "War" on page 12

Women in Business

A paid advertising section.

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Kristys Imagination Photography is a locally owned business in the Binghamton region providing on-location photography services for any occasion, such as weddings, portraits or other special events. Sessions are done on location by appointment only, and provide you with quality photography services in the comfort of your own home or the location of your choice.

"I have always had a passion for photography and therefore decided to pursue it as a career," says owner Kristy Johnston. "I truly enjoy what I do as a photographer. I get to capture some of life's most important and precious moments."

Offering a variety of products and photography services, Kristys Imagination Photography is your professional on-location photographer.

For more information, call 607-221-1225 or e-mail kristyphotography@gmail.com. You can also see a portfolio and more information at www.kristysphoto.com.

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 Location: 825 Vestal Parkway West, Vestal, NY 13850
 Owner: Darcy Sobel, D. V. M.
 Phone: 754-7221
 Hours: Mon. and Fri. 8 am-5 pm, Tues. and Thurs. 12:30-8 pm, Wed. 8 am-3 pm, Sat. 9 am-1 pm

The Cat Doctor is celebrating 29 years of caring for cats and their people. Dr. Darcy Sobel and Dr. Kaitlin Pace and staff at The Cat Doctor recognize that cats are important family members and treat each individual with special attention to their age, temperament and health conditions. Preventive medicine is practiced by providing complete physical examinations, behavioral counseling, dental care, diet management and appropriate vaccinations. The hospital has advanced radiology capabilities, providing instant, superior quality, digital x-rays as well as digital dental x-rays for the detection of early tooth disease below the gumline. The hospital now offers abdominal ultrasound for early detection of organ problems. When illness does occur, thorough and caring medical and surgical treatment is tailored to each patient.

The Reporter

Specialty: Advertising
 Location: 500 Clubhouse Rd. Vestal, NY 13850
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 Phone: 607-724-2360, ext. 244
 E-mail: advertising@thereportergroup.org
 Website: www.thereportergroup.org
 Facebook: The Reporter Group
 Hours: Mon. 9 am-4 pm, Wed. 9 am-3 pm, Thurs. 9 am-4 pm

Advertising was a new field for Kathy when she started two years ago, but she's discovered the pleasure of working with the clients, giving them ideas on how to promote their business using print ads. Her motto is "the client comes first" and, to prove that, she researches each client to see what they have done in the past and tries to figure out if there is a way to improve their ad-image. She also works with them to discover the ad sections that will best highlight their business.

Kathy has lived here for 40 years, moving from Long Island to meet and marry her husband. She loves the outdoors, even in the winter. She is ready to help you advertise your business in *The Reporter*, in Binghamton and Scranton, the best way she can. Call her to discuss options.

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Weekly Parasha

Noach, Genesis 6:9-11:32

Human pride

RABBI MOSHE SHMARYAHU, HEAD OF JUDAIC STUDIES, HILLEL ACADEMY OF BROOME COUNTY

“And this is the gate of heaven”: where is the gate to heaven?

The story of the building of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) is the story of human pride that knows no bounds. Humans wanted to build a tower and reach heaven to make a name for themselves (verse 4) in order to cross the boundary that separates man from God. The expulsion from Eden, after Adam crossed this boundary and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, did not teach mankind a lesson,

Also, the connection between heaven and earth that was made at the initiative of the “*nefilim*” (giants or angels of God?) – the act of the coming together of the sons of God with the daughters of men (Genesis 6:1-4) – was a disaster

and brought the flood.

And yet, humans had not yet stopped desiring to be like God and continued their attempts to rebel against God. This time, they planned to build a tower with its head in heaven. They said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make ourselves a name, lest we be scattered upon the face of the entire earth.”

The failure of the human race was then complete, and their punishment is not long in coming: God breaks their unity, scatters them over the whole earth and separates them by their languages, lest they understand each other’s speech.

The act ends with a description that the *midrash* uses

to explain the name Babel, the place through which the *midrash* says the “Babylonians” sought to climb and reach heaven. Therefore, the Torah named it Babel, for that the Lord “confused the language of the entire earth, and from there the Lord scattered them upon the face of the entire earth.” (V. 9)

The *midrash’s* interpretation of the name “Babel” in the Torah can seem confusing. It claims that the name does not come from the word *bab* (gate in the Babylonian language), meaning “gate to heaven.” The story of the Tower of Babel in the Torah argues with a Babylonian tradition that saw the building of the tower/temple of

See “Pride” on page 11

Congregational Notes

Temple Israel

Orientation: Conservative

Rabbi: Micah Friedman

Address: 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal, NY 13850

Phone: 607-723-7461 and 607-231-3746

Office hours: Mon.-Thurs., 8:30 am-3:30 pm; Fri., 8 am-3 pm

E-mail: titammy@stny.twcbc.com

Website: www.templeisraelvestal.org

Service schedule: Tues., 5:30 pm; Fri., 5:30 pm; Sat., 9:30 am

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

On Saturday, October 21, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required for unvaccinated participants). The Torah portion is Deuteronomy 14:22-16:17 and the haftarah is 1 Kings 8:54-66. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 7 pm.

On Tuesday, October 24, at 7 pm, there will be a Sisterhood meeting.

On Saturday, October 28, at 9:30 am, Shacharit services will be held via Zoom and in-person (masks are required for unvaccinated participants). The Torah portion is Genesis 12:1-17:27 and the haftarah is Isaiah 40:27-41:16. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 7 pm.

Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive

Rabbi: David Regenspan

Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815

Phone: 607-334-2691

E-mail: fertigj@roadrunner.com

Contact: Guilina Greenberg, 373-5087

Purpose: To maintain a Jewish identity and meet the needs of the Jewish community in the area.

Adult Ed.: Shabbat study sessions are held on designated Saturday mornings at 10 am. Call ahead, text or e-mail to confirm dates.

Temple Beth El of Oneonta

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Cantor: David Green

Address: 83 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY 13820

Mailing address: P.O. Box 383, Oneonta, NY 13820

Phone: 607-432-5522

E-mail: TBEOneonta@gmail.com

Regular service times: Contact the temple for days of services and times.

Religious School/Education: Religious School, for grades kindergarten through bar/bat mitzvah, meets Sunday mornings.

For the schedule of services, classes and events, contact the temple.

Temple Brith Sholom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated

Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045

Phone: 607-756-7181

President: Nick Martelli

Cemetery Committee: 315-696-5744

Website: templebrithsholomcortland.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Temple-Brith-Sholom-114006981962930/>

Service leaders: Lay leadership

Shabbat services: Either Friday evening at 7:30 pm or Saturday at 10 am from Rosh Hashanah to Shavuot. Holiday services are also held. Check the Facebook page or weekly e-mail for upcoming services. Contact the president to get on the e-mail list.

Religious School: Students are educated on an individual basis.

Temple Brith Sholom is a small equalitarian congregation serving the greater Cortland community. Congregants span the gamut of observance and services are largely dependent on the service leader. The Friday night siddur is “Likrat Shabbat,” while the Saturday morning siddur is “Gates of Prayer.” The community extends a warm welcome to the Jewish student population of SUNY Cortland, as well as the residents of local adult residences.

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

Synagogues limit face-to-face gatherings

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

Beth David Synagogue

Affiliation: Orthodox Union

Rabbi: Zev Silber

Address: 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905

Phone: 607-722-1793, Rabbi's Office: 607-722-7514

Fax: 607-722-7121

Office hours: Tues. 10 am-1 pm; Thurs. 9 am-1 pm

Beth David e-mail address: bethdavid@stny.rr.com

Rabbi's e-mail: rabbisilber@stny.rr.com

Website: www.bethdavid.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/bethdavidbinghamton

Classes: Rabbi Zev Silber will hold his weekly Talmud class every Tuesday evening after services.

Congregation Tikkun v'Or

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism

Address: PO Box 3981, Ithaca, NY 14852; 2550 Tripphammer Rd. (corner of Tripphammer and

Burdick Hill), Lansing, NY

Phone: 607-256-1471

Website: www.tikkunvor.org, E-mail: info@tikkunvor.org

Rabbi: Shifrah Tobacman, rabbishifrah@tikkunvor.org

Presidents: Sue Merkel and Laurie Willick, presidents_22@tikkunvor.org

Education Director/Administrative Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky

Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator: Michael Margolin

Services: All services currently on Zoom. E-mail info@tikkunvor.org for the times and links. Contemplative morning services every Tuesday from 8:30-9:30 am. Saturday mornings, Gan Shabbat and other special services at least once a month. Call for the weekly schedule.

Jewish Learning Experiences (JLE) for second through seventh grade classes meet on Sunday mornings. Sixth and seventh grades also meet on Wednesday afternoons. Family programs for kindergarten and first grade held monthly.

Adult Education: Offered regularly throughout the year. Check the website for details.

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Adult Education: Offered regularly throughout the year. Check the website for details.

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism

Rabbi: TBA

Address: 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905

Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm

Phone: 607-723-7355

Fax: 607-723-0785

Office e-mail: TempleConcordbinghamton@gmail.com

Website: www.templeconcord.com

Regular service times: Fri., 7:30 pm; Sat., 10:35 am, when religious school is in session.

Hebrew school: Hebrew school meets at 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm on Tues. and Thurs. during the school year unless otherwise noted.

Some services and programs are online only.

Friday October 20: At 5:45 pm, Sisterhood BYO Shabbat Dinner in the Temple Concord library. RSVP by Tuesday, October 17, to Deb Daniels (ddaniels2@stny.rr.com or 607-743-1427), or Roz Antoun (RAntoun77@stny.rr.com or 607-644-0107). At 7:30 pm, Shabbat services with Bruce Orden and Robin Hazen. Join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y>, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Saturday October 21: Saturday, October 14: At 9 am, Religious School; at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and Zoom (<http://bit.ly/3XDnVRE>, meeting ID 825 1226 2831 and passcode 743892); and at 10:35 am, a Shabbat family service. From 1:30-3:30 pm, the Roberson International Folk Dancers will meet in the social hall. For additional information, contact Dr. Ted Major at 607-725-8666 or emajormd@gmail.com, or Lavinia Adler at 607-722-7909 or LaviniaA@juno.com.

Friday, October 27: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Nancy Dorfman and Robin Hazen. Join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y>, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

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Tuesday, October 31: At 10:30 am, Tuesday Morning Book Club, “The Thread Collectors by Shaunna J. Edwards Alyson Richman,” in person or on Zoom (<https://bit.ly/3CXVd9b>, meeting ID: 881 6469 4206 and passcode: 653272). For more information, contact Merri Pell-Preus at 607-222-2875 or e-mail merrypell.preus@gmail.com.

Wednesday, November 1: At 7 pm, Sisterhood board meeting in the Temple Concord library. Contact Barb Thomas at 607-759-2573 with questions. Anyone interested in joining Sisterhood should contact Carol Herz at 607-222-7144.

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Saturday October

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

FBI: Antisemitic hate crimes up 25 percent in 2022

The FBI's newly released 2022 hate-crime statistics, which are based on data that some 78 percent of U.S. law enforcement agencies agreed to provide, reveal that 2,044 incidents – of a total of 11,643 – were based on religion, and 1,124 of the religion-based incidents involved hatred of Jews. “Antisemitic hate crimes rose 25 percent from 2021 to 2022, and antisemitism accounted for over half of all reported religion-based hate crimes,” U.S. President Joe Biden said on Oct. 16, addressing the FBI stats. “To those Americans worried about violence at home, as a result of the evil acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas in Israel, we see you. We hear you.” The president added that he directed his team, including U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Attorney General Merrick Garland

PrideContinued from page 10

the god Marduk in Babylon as an expression of respect for God, and the belief that Babylon is indeed the place of connection between heaven and earth. The *midrash's* interpretation offered a different idea than the prevailing Babylonian one, which said that the name of the place was Bab-ilu or Bab-el (*bab* meaning gate, and *ilu* or *el* meaning God), which means God's Gate.

The Torah – which was not ready to accept that Babylon, a city of idolaters, was the gate of heaven – found different ways to deal with the Babylonian tradition. The Torah presents the act of building in a different way, making it a story of human failure and arrogance. It also presents an alternative story about the placement of the Gate of Heaven, now locating it in the land of Israel. This alternative story is found in Genesis 28.

On Jacob's way to the land of his exile in Haran, he stops for a night's rest at the place that will be called “Beth-El” and has a dream there: “And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was placed on the ground, and its top reached heaven, and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.” (Genesis 20:12) The words “and its top reached heaven” remind us of the Babylonian builders' verse “and its head reaches heaven.” (Genesis 11:4) Indeed, a close look at the stories of the Tower of Babel and Jacob's ladder indicates that the latter story is about a place of worship in Beth-El (Jerusalem) that is the opposite of the story of the city of Babylon.

- There are several differences in the stories:
- ◆ The tower of the city of Babel is a human initiative and attempt to ascend to heaven that failed. In the story of the ladder in Beth-El, Jacob is on the earth and the angels create a connection between heaven and earth.
 - ◆ In the city of Babel, God descends to see the tower. In Beth-El, God stands at the top of the ladder and does not come down.
 - ◆ In the city of Babel, they used stone to build against God. In Beth-El, Jacob places a stone on which the Temple was built.
 - ◆ In the city of Babel, God scatters the Babylonians everywhere. In Beth-El, God promises to return Jacob to Beth-El.
 - ◆ The story of Babel opens with the unity of mankind after the flood and their intention was to go on a common journey of confrontation and war against God. The story of Beth-El was the preparation of the foundation for the Temple as shown by Jacob saying, “And this stone which I have placed as a tombstone will be the house of God.”

These and these seek to reach higher and higher: the Babylonian wants to build a tower (*migdal*) to reach into the heavens, while in Beth-El, a Temple (*mikdash*) will be built on the highest place on earth.

And here is the great difference between those who build a tower into the sky and those who build God's temple in the land: those (Babylon) who seek to make their own name “to be like God,” while those (Beth-El) who seek to learn from God “and walk in His ways.”

(both Jewish), to “prioritize the prevention and disruption of any emerging threats that could harm Jewish, Muslim, Arab-American or any other communities during this time. “My administration will continue to fight antisemitism and Islamophobia,” Biden said.

EU announces humanitarian air corridor, triples Gaza aid

The European Union announced on Oct. 16 that it would launch a humanitarian air corridor to Gaza through Egypt, with the first flights expected that week. “Palestinians in Gaza are in need of humanitarian help and aid. That is why... we are launching an E.U. humanitarian air bridge to Gaza through Egypt. The first two flights will start this week,” European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Oct. 16 in Albania while attending a Balkan summit. The decision follows a E.U. declaration on Oct. 15 that it was tripling humanitarian aid to Gaza to 75 million euros (approx. \$79 million), backtracking from an announcement in the immediate aftermath of the Oct. 7 Hamas attack that it was putting all of its development funding to the Palestinian territories on hold. Israel had praised the decision at the time. European Council President Charles Michel told press on Oct. 14 that he would convene a video conference of European leaders on Oct. 17 to discuss the unfolding events in Gaza. While the European Union expressed “full solidarity” with the Israeli people after the “brutal terrorist attacks,” Michel said, “It is of utmost importance that the European Council, in line with the treaties and our values, sets our common position and establishes a clear unified course of action that reflects the complexity of the unfolding situation.” The Hamas attack cost the lives of more than 1,400 Israelis and left more than 4,100 wounded. The terror group kidnapped at least 199 Israelis, some of them children with special needs and others with ongoing medical conditions. Israel Beiteinu Party chairman Avigdor Liberman on Oct. 16 called on the government to make humanitarian aid to Gaza contingent upon Red Cross access to the hostages. Liberman demanded “that they don't get one crumb, that one liter of water won't be transferred until the Red Cross sees our abductees.” The Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which has brought together families with abducted or missing members and thousands of volunteers, detailed the medical conditions of some of the hostages in a letter to the International Committee of the Red Cross. “Many of the abducted and missing civilians are in life-threatening conditions and in urgent need of treatment and life saving medication for injuries,” wrote forum medical team head Dr. Hagai Levine. “Based on initial and partial intake from their families, many of them need immediate humanitarian intervention due to their medical condition.”

Netanyahu to Putin: We “won't stop until Hamas is destroyed”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Russian President Vladimir Putin on Oct. 16 that Israel intends to eliminate the Hamas terrorist group in Gaza. “The prime

minister made it clear that Israel had been attacked by brutal and abhorrent murderers, had gone to war determined and united and would not stop until it had destroyed Hamas' military and governing capabilities,” per a readout from Netanyahu's office. It was the first phone call between the two leaders since Israel launched “Operation Swords of Iron” against Hamas after the terror group's Oct. 7 massacre that claimed more than 1,400 lives and left more than 4,100 people wounded. The terrorists took at least 199 hostages back with them to Gaza. Putin expressed his “sincere condolences” to Israeli families and friends of those killed in the terror rampage, emphasizing “total rejection and condemnation of any actions that result in civilian casualties, including among women and children,” per a statement from Moscow. Putin “laid out the steps being taken by Russia to help normalize the situation, to prevent the further escalation of violence and to avert a humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip,” per the statement. It added that Putin informed Netanyahu “of the key points of today's telephone calls with the leaders of Palestine, Egypt, Iran and Syria” and that Moscow's “principled commitment to continue its work to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and achieve a peaceful settlement through political and diplomatic means was reaffirmed.” A Russian-drafted United Nations Security Council resolution on Oct. 16 calling for a humanitarian cease-fire in the Israel-Gaza war was rejected, as it failed to mention Hamas at all. The United States, United Kingdom, France and Japan voted it down, with six other countries in the 15-member body abstaining. Five member states, including Russia, China, the United Arab Emirates, Gabon and Mozambique, voted in favor. Security Council resolutions need a minimum of nine yes votes and no vetoes by the five permanent members to pass. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, slammed Russia for failing to mention Hamas in the draft resolution. “By failing to condemn Hamas, Russia is giving cover to a terrorist group that brutalizes innocent civilians. It is outrageous, it is hypocritical and it is indefensible,” she said her speech, explaining why the United States had rejected the resolution.

Dozens of U.S. citizens evacuate by sea via Haifa

Scores of United States citizens evacuated Israel by ship on Oct. 16, seeking to leave the country as the war against Hamas continues. The rare civilian evacuation by sea, which was organized by the U.S. Embassy in Israel, came as foreign airlines canceled flights to and from Israel due to the Arab rocket fire. The U.S. vessel is taking the Americans to neighboring Cyprus, where they can board flights to the United States. The passengers were required to sign a document saying they would reimburse the U.S. government, American officials said, although that fee may be waived in the future in light of the emergency situation. Israeli carriers El Al (and its Sun D'Or unit), Israir and Arkia have added flights. According to the SecretFlights website, Air Serbia, Bluebird Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, Etihad Airways, FlyDubai, Georgian Airlines and Hainan Airlines continue to operate routes to Israel.



Did you know?

(NAPSA) – Fire experts agree you have as little as two minutes to escape a burning home before it's too late. That's why the Red Cross encourages you to practice your home fire escape plan twice a year. Visit redcross.org/homefires for a free plan.

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“Stunned, sickened” by Harvard’s silence on Hamas, Wexner cuts ties

By JNS staff

(JNS)—The Wexner Foundation supports up to 10 Israeli “outstanding government and public service professionals” to study in a one-year, mid-career master’s degree in public administration at the Harvard Kennedy School, per the philanthropy’s website. The goal of the Israel fellowship, per Wexner, is “providing Israel’s next generation of public leaders with superlative training.”

The webpage, which notes Harvard’s “rich environment that is conducive to reflection and dialogue about Israel’s policy challenges and the diverse leadership strategies that could address those challenges,” will need updating. Wexner told the Harvard Kennedy School on October 16 that it is cutting ties after more than 30 years. “We believed that at its core, HKS was a school with moral purpose, matching the core values we embrace in our own work,” wrote three Wexner leaders: Rabbi B. Elka Abrahamson (president), Ra’anan Avital (director general, Israel) and Abigail and Leslie Wexner (chairmen).

“We have observed that this cherished tolerance for diverse perspectives has slowly but perceptibly narrowed over the years. A disappointing consequence of this trend is that our Wexner Israel Fellows are increasingly marginalized, their voices and views even shouted down,” the philanthropy leaders wrote. “Disappointingly, HKS has been slow to craft a strategy to enable Israeli students to engage in productive – even if difficult – dialogue within the school. We believe this is an unfortunate trend for the entire MPA student community.”

Following Hamas’ terrorist attacks on October 7, which killed more than 1,400 Israelis, the Wexner leaders were “stunned and sickened at the dismal failure of Harvard’s leadership to take a clear and unequivocal stand against the barbaric murders of innocent Israeli civilians by terrorists,” they wrote.

“Since then, many of our Israel fellows no longer feel marginalized at HKS. They feel abandoned,” the leaders wrote. “Our core values and those of Harvard no longer align. HKS is no longer a place where Israeli leaders can go to develop the necessary skills to address the very real political and societal challenges they face.”

Gilad Erdan, Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, praised Wexner’s decision. “The leadership of Harvard have proven they have lost their moral compass. Not only do they allow Jew-hatred and pro-terror rhetoric to permeate their campus, but they cannot bring themselves to immediately condemn terrorism,” the diplomat wrote. “I call on every North American Jew and supporter of Israel to send this message to every university that behaves similarly.”

WarContinued from page 9

from Lebanon wounded three people. IDF tanks fired in response toward the source of the fire. The army declared Metula a closed military zone and ordered the remaining residents there and in the city of Kiryat Shmona to enter bomb shelters until further notice.

Israeli communities that took in people from border towns are facing a shortage of doctors, pharmacists and mental health professionals, experts and evacuees told the Knesset Health Committee on October 17. One woman who was evacuated from Kibbutz Nahal Oz near Gaza to Kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek in the Jezreel Valley told lawmakers there weren’t enough doctors to deal with the sudden increase of residents.

Nachi Katz, CEO of Kedem—The Association for Pro-

“If your child’s university thinks twice before condemning the murder of innocents or allows a culture of hate to grow on campuses unhindered, then it cannot receive one more cent from any of you,” Erdan said. “Whoever stays silent after the massacre of children does not hold the moral credibility to educate our children.”

“It shouldn’t have taken this long to realize what a morally compromised institution Harvard has become, but. . . better late than never,” wrote Jeff Jacoby, a columnist for *The Boston Globe*.

The week of October 13, Idan Ofer, an Israeli billionaire, and his wife Batia quit Harvard’s Executive Board. “We denounce those who seek to place blame on the people of Israel for the atrocities committed by the terrorist organization, Hamas,” the couple said.

moting Seniors Housing Communities in Israel, which represents nursing homes and assisted living facilities, warned of a shortage of nurses and security guards.

Gadi Yarkoni, chairman of the Eshkol Regional Council, whose area of jurisdiction is adjacent to the southern Gaza Strip, stressed the need to treat trauma victims, noting that in some of the communities he represents, a quarter of the residents were either murdered, kidnapped or still missing. Yarkoni also urged that preparations be made for the return of hostages being held by Hamas in the Strip.

Dr. Michael Shapiro, who is in charge of emergency medicine in Ashkelon, located eight miles north of the Gaza Strip, pointed to a shortage of pharmacists in the cities to which residents were evacuated.

JazzContinued from page 1

Soviet Jazz.” To sign up for the lecture, visit the CJS Facebook page at www.facebook.com/bingcjs/.

“Jazz is America’s greatest contribution to world culture and jazz has become a global phenomenon,” said organizers of the event. “Jews participated in its development and dissemination almost from the start and have played a role in fostering jazz in many lands.”

Tanny said, “In the early 20th century, Jewish musicians from Southern Russia harnessed the traditional improvisational klezmer music of Eastern Europe to help create Russian Jazz. Although Soviet jazz musicians were heavily influenced by American jazz, the wild music performed by the Jews for swashbucklers, criminals and merrymakers in the seedy taverns of Odessa left an indelible imprint on Soviet music. This music captured the spirit of the Odessa myth, a seaport town legendary for its Jewish gangsters and deviants who refused to conform to the ‘proper’ puritanical behavior demanded by the Soviet government.”

Tanny is associate professor of history and the Charles and Hannah Block distinguished scholar in Jewish history at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California at



Shay Rabineau (Photo courtesy of Shay Rabineau)



Jarrod Tanny (Photo by Jarrod Tanny)

Berkeley and is the author of a study of “Jewish Odessa, City of Rogues and Schnorrers” (Indiana University Press, 2011) and “The Seinfeld Talmud” (Academica Press, 2023), a satiric take on the TV series, in which the rabbis of the talmudic era gather in a yeshiva to discuss and debate the issues raised in each Seinfeld episode in the context of Judaic law. He has also published numerous scholarly essays on Jewish humor in post-World War II America and its place within the larger context of the

European Jewish past.

The College of Jewish Studies provides opportunities for adult Jewish education for the Broome County community by offering fall and spring programs. Drawing on local resources, and inviting scholars and experts from a range of universities and cultural and religious institutions, CJS sponsors a wide array of programs dealing with Jewish history, culture, religion and politics.

The College of Jewish Studies, founded in 1986, is an informal coalition between the Judaic Studies Department of Binghamton University and several area Jewish sponsoring institutions: the Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, Beth David Synagogue, Temple Concord, and Temple Israel. Programming for CJS would not be possible without the additional financial support of grants from The Community Foundation for South Central New York – David and Virginia Eisenberg Donor Advised Fund, the Jacob and Rose Olum Foundation, the B’nai B’rith Lectureship Fund, the Victor and Esther Rozen Foundation, an endowment fund from the former Temple Beth El of Endicott, a grant from the JoyVel Charitable Fund and the donations of individual sponsors.

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