

THE REPORTER

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BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Global Day of Jewish Learning to be held on Nov. 17

By Reporter staff

A Global Day of Jewish Learning event will be held on Sunday, November 17, from 10 am-noon, at Temple Israel, 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal. The event is co-sponsored by Beth David Synagogue, the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, Temple Concord and Temple Israel. A light breakfast

will be served. A suggested donation from \$5-20 is requested.

The Global Day of Jewish Learning has been held annually since 2010 and was inspired by the late Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. The event is held in groups and congregations across the country, and is powered by Limmud, which supports the creation

of “a diverse, cohesive Jewish community rooted in the importance of celebrating and learning from differences.” (More information on Limmud can be found at <https://limmudna.org>.)

“The Global Day of Jewish Learning brings the community together to explore basic Jewish principles,” said Shelley Hu-

bal, executive director of the Federation. “That fulfills the mission of the Federation and I am excited that we can bring this opportunity to Binghamton. This year’s theme, ‘One People,’ is about the connections that bind Jews together in common memory and destiny. I hope everyone will come out to learn and shmooze.”

Film Fest to hold virtual showing of “All About the Levkoviches” in December

By Reporter staff

The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of the film “All About the Levkoviches.” Bill Simons, Ph.D., professor emeritus of American history at SUNY Oneonta, will moderate a Zoom discussion of the film. People will be able to register for links to the film and discussion on the Federation website at www.jfjb.org/film-fest. Registration is due by Wednesday, December 4. The link will send out Thursday, December 5; the film will be available for viewing from Thursday-Sunday, December 5-8. The discussion will be held on Sunday, December 8, at 7 pm. The film is in Hungarian with subtitles. The film fest is co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton and Ithaca Area United Jewish Community.

The film tells the story of Tamás, a generous but stubborn boxing coach, who gets along well with everyone, but his own son, Ivan. The two have not spoken since Iván moved to Israel and became Orthodox. When Tamás’ beloved wife, Zsuzsa, dies unexpectedly, Tamás tells his son that he

can sit the *shiva* in his house if he brings his grandson, Ariel, with him. As past conflicts resurface, the father and son embark on an unexpected journey of self-reflection and reconciliation. They must not only face their old grievances during the one-week religious mourning, but to help Ariel, who believes his grandmother’s spirit is still in the house, deal with his own grief.

The Budapest Reporter called the film See “Film” on page 3

At right: A scene from “All About the Levkoviches” (Photo used courtesy of Ulab)



Chabad to hold Mega Challah Bake on Nov. 20

Joining hundreds of communities across the nation and around the world, the Rohr Chabad Center will host a Mega Challah Bake on Wednesday, November 20, at 7 pm, in the Mandela Room at Binghamton University. The event is co-sponsored by Beth David Sisterhood, Chabad Women’s League and Temple Israel. The event fee is \$5 for community members. Reservations

must be made in advance at jewishbu.com/challah.

“Hundreds of students and community members will come together to mix, knead and shape challahs,” said organizers of the event. “Each participant will make two challahs – one to keep and one to give to someone who would appreciate the gift.” Participants will have the chance to taste

eight different flavors of challah, and each will receive a gift to take home along with their two challahs.

“The Mega Challah Bakes, held in cities large and small, bring communities together in a fun and meaningful celebration of Jewish heritage. For us, it’s an opportunity to unite our campus and local communities, with the support of campus and local Jewish organizations and a fantastic turnout of people enjoying this activity together,” explained Goldie Ohana, the event coordinator.

Spotlight

Salomons shares her love of books and reading

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Linda Salomons *loves* (her emphasis) books and reading since she was a little girl. That love is currently playing a major role in her life. In addition to opening her free library known as Linda’s Little Free Library, she is also chairwoman of the newly formed Friends of the Vestal Public Library. However, that is not the end of her involvement with books: she’s also trying to bring the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, an organization that offers free books to children, to Broome County.

It was seeing Little Free Libraries around town and on her travels that inspired Salomons to start her own. (Little Free Libraries are book-sharing boxes that allow people to take or leave books at no cost.) “I decided that I would like to own one at my home in Vestal,” she said in an e-mail interview. “I went to [the Little Free Library] website, found what I wanted and then ‘hinted’ to my husband and boys that for Mother’s Day



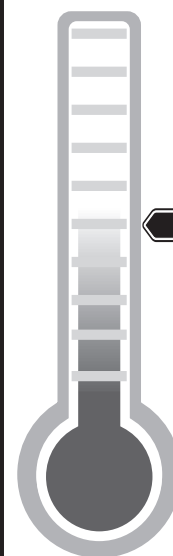
Linda Salomons stood beside her Linda’s Little Free Library box.

I wanted one. I follow an LFL Stewards’ Facebook page and other people who own LFL’s talk, share ideas and concerns that come up. Local friends have been very generous in donating children’s, teen and adult books, and my LFL has become quite popular. On Halloween, I sit outside by my LFL, give out candy, but also books! One mom told me last year that ‘this is the best thing that’s happened to our neighborhood.’ This made me very happy.” Her Linda’s Little Free Library has its own Facebook page that can be found at www.facebook.com/linda.s.little.free.library.2023/.

It was after the COVID pandemic that Salomons became involved with the Vestal Public Library. “I decided I can’t keep buying books, so I decided to go back to my local library, the Vestal Public Library,” she noted. “I hadn’t been an active patron for many years, really since my boys were young, which is close to 10 years. When See “Books” on page 8

Matching Grant Campaign Update

Support *The Reporter*.
Now through November 30th,
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Goal:
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\$2,000
as of November 6, 2024

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subject line.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PJ Library event

The Jewish Federation will hold a PJ Library “Discover Hanukkah” event on December 15.

.....Page 3

Treating wartime trauma

Ultra-Orthodox social workers are treating Israelis from all walks of life for trauma issues after Oct. 7.

.....Page 5

Jews in sports

A look at minor league broadcaster Adam Cohen and his late stepmother, Rabbi Laurie Phillips.

.....Page 7

Special Sections

Opinion..... 2
Book Reviews..... 4
Congregational Notes 6
Classifieds 8

Opinion

From the Desk of the Federation Executive Director

With gratitude

SHELLEY HUBAL

My prayers for the world:

I pray for a world where we treat each other with lovingkindness regardless of our differences.

I pray for a world where the only hunger is to be of service.

I pray for a world where my children are not bullied for simply being who they are.

I pray for a world without violence.

I pray for a world where it is OK to disagree and find common ground.

I pray for a world filled with honesty and honor.

I pray for a world where young women know they are strong and heard and safe and valued.

I pray for a world where it is OK for young men to cry,

where they are heard and where they can dream.

I pray for a world where we know how to listen to one another.

I pray for a world where everyone has access to clean water.

I pray for a world where we value nature and all its bounty.

I pray for a peaceful world.

I pray for healing.

This is my heart's cry.

One Perspective from Israel

Some serious stickers

JEREMY M. STAIMAN

Editor's note: This column originally appeared in December 2023, but still feels relevant today.

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

Winter usually comes a bit late where I live. The end-of-December chilly weather barely qualifies as cold, especially for someone who grew up in upstate New York and lived for decades in Baltimore.

Last week, I pulled out a gray wool sweater from my drawer. On it were two stickers which one of my granddaughters had affixed last winter.

I don't remove stickers granted to me by my grandchildren. Those little signs of love may fall off on their own, but far be it from me to actually peel them off. I've gotten some funny looks in *shul* when I wear them, but I don't mind the world knowing how much my little darlings mean to me.

Those stickers from last year reminded me of a wildly-popular 2004 song by the Israeli hip-hop band Hadag Nachash – The Fish Snake (don't ask me, I didn't name them!). The song was called "The Sticker Song" and the lyrics were comprised exclusively of phrases found on bumper stickers across Israel. They ranged from the political right ("Hebron, now and forever" and "No Arabs, no terrorism") to the left (from "The Zealots should die," to the more sanguine "The entire nation wants peace.") The song was a brilliant

contemporary social commentary.

My sticker-festooned sweater also reminded me of bumper stickers from further back in Israel's history, which popped up on cars during previous wars, and told the stories of their times.

As a young boy at the time, I don't remember the Six-Day War of 1967. But I know that the sweeping, lightning-fast victory of the Jewish state established Israel's reputation as a regional powerhouse. And the credit for that achievement was bestowed squarely on the Israel Defense Forces.

Thus, the iconic bumper sticker of those days read: "Kol hakavod l'Tzahal." Literally translated: "All honor goes to the Army." More colloquially, it meant "way to go, Army!"

Many from the religious sector took umbrage at the fact that people were crediting the miraculous triumph solely to the hands of man, without a mention of God's role.

Only six years following, on the holy day of Yom Kippur 50 years ago, Israel was on the receiving end of an agonizing wake-up call. The unprepared IDF was simultaneously attacked from the north and south, and the brutal ensuing military campaign saw the loss of thousands of our men and women.

At that time, there were no cries of "Kol hakavod l'Tzahal." Instead, a chastened country embraced the spirit of a new bumper sticker: "Yisrael b'tach b'Hash-

em" – "the nation of Israel trusts Hashem." The song by that name, composed by Shlomo Carlebach, became an anthem of the war.

There were no atheists in the foxhole. Many sought out existential meaning in the face of their despair, and the *teshuvah* (repentance) movement was kicked into high gear.

Fast forward a half century, and the seemingly-indecomitable IDF has once again seen its luster tarnished, this time with incomprehensibly catastrophic results. Our homeland is reeling.

Once again, we are hearing mantras similar to *Yisrael b'tach b'Hashem*. Tens of thousands of soldiers who may have considered themselves detached from religion prior to this war are requesting religious items. People are turning to God in prayer, seeking comfort, guidance and answers. Morale is high, but the personal and national losses have mounted.

We know there are no easy answers. And we know that the answers we are pleading for may be manifest in a victory at the hands of our beloved IDF, but they are aided and orchestrated behind the scenes by the One Above.

The bumper sticker from this war reads: "yachad, n'natzeach" – "together we will win."

Together, as a fractured country reunited.

Together, with the help of God.

In My Own Words

Before and after the election

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

There is an enormous amount of anger boiling across the United States. Some people are angry at what they see as restrictions on their rights to act, think or behave as they wish. Others are angry because they don't believe they have the same protection under the law due to their skin color, ethnicity or sexual orientation. One side sees the other as trying to take away what they believe rightly belongs to them. The other side responds that they are only demanding their just share. – From "Anger" by Rabbi Rachel Esserman, written in September 2020 (www.thereporter.org/opinion/in-my-own-words-anger-by-rabbi-rachel-esserman-364035)

I decided to write this column before the election because, no matter who wins, we still have to deal with an issue I wrote about in 2016, 2020 and again this past summer: the anger people feel against those who disagree with them politically. Unfortunately, our country has developed an "us against them" mentality. That is true not only of those

who differ on political issues, but on religious ones. The word compromise has come to be a swear word, rather than a path to discover how to best serve the needs of all inhabitants of our country.

I have a friend who is worried that Sharia law will become the law of our land. I said I didn't want that either, but it wasn't until later that I realized I should have added that I don't want Christian or Jewish law to become the law of our land either. One fundamental ideal of the United States is the freedom to practice our religion. The flip side of that is that we can't force others to subscribe to our religious values. When I mention Jewish values in this column, I am speaking to those who want to live their lives with Jewish ideals. I don't expect Christian readers (and we do have some) to follow those values. However, those Christian readers shouldn't be able to force me or anyone else to subscribe to the ones in which they believe.

The irony is that Jews, Christians and Muslims share many of the same values. I'm not talking about theology, prayer or heaven. I'm talking about the way we are supposed to act in this world. All three religions require us to feed the hungry and care for the poor, something that our legislators – even those claiming to be religious – often

forget when formulating laws. I've seen memes on Facebook from Christian ministers questioning why those running for office ignore the parts of the Bible that require them to care for the less fortunate.

My position may be influenced by the chaplaincy work I do with those who have developmental disabilities. I am everyone's chaplain and have been known to sing "Jesus Loves Me" to someone who requests that song. When an individual prays using the name of Jesus, I say amen. I encourage a Jewish individual to remember that God loves him, something I have almost never said in a synagogue setting. My mission is to help them not only within their religious tradition, but in a way that meets their needs.

At the risk of once again sounding like a broken record, we need to work *together* – regardless of what political party or religion to which we belong – for the common good. We are all in this together and can accomplish more if we would truly listen to each other. Yes, all sides will need to compromise – a word we *must* embrace – on some things, but the hope is that the final result will be to allow every member of our country to pursue a life of liberty and happiness as promised by our nation's Constitution.

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



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of Greater Binghamton

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

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

DEADLINE

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

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www.thereporter.org

Federation to hold PJ Library “Discover Hanukkah” event on Dec. 15

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold a PJ Library “Discover Hanukkah” event on Sunday, December 15, from 1-3 pm, at the Discovery Center, located next to the Ross Park Zoo, 60 Morgan Rd., Binghamton. The event is co-sponsored by the PJ Library, the Jewish Community Center and



the Discovery Center. There will be singing, crafts, treats and more. The event will be free for Jewish families who pre-register by visiting www.jfgeb.org or contacting the Federation at 607-724-2332 or director@jfgeb.org. The deadline to register is Sunday, December 8. The cost for those who do not pre-register will be free for Discovery Center members

and, for non-members, \$10 per person with infants under 1 year old given free admission. Security will be provided. “The goal of this event is to share the joy of Hanukkah,” said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton. “This event is for all young families! You don’t have to be affiliated with a synagogue or Jewish organization to attend. Come and celebrate the holiday of light and share the warmth of our wonderful Jewish community.”

Matching grant for *The Reporter*

By Reporter staff

The Reporter announced that it has received a \$5,000 matching grant courtesy of the David and Virginia Eisenberg Fund. Donations will be accepted now through November 30. Donations may be made several ways:

- ◆ Give online through The Reporter Group’s website, www.thereportergroup.org.
- ◆ Through Giving Tuesday e-mails that will be sent by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton. Anyone who does not receive Federation e-mails, but would like to be on the list, should e-mail director@jfgeb.org with “Federation e-mail list” in the subject line.
- ◆ Mail donations to *The Reporter*, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850 with “matching grant” in the check’s subject line.

“We are thrilled to once again receive a matching grant from the David and Virginia Eisenberg Fund,” said Rabbi Rachel Esserman, executive editor of The Reporter Group. “They have been so generous over the years, and we deeply appreciate all they have done and continue to do.”

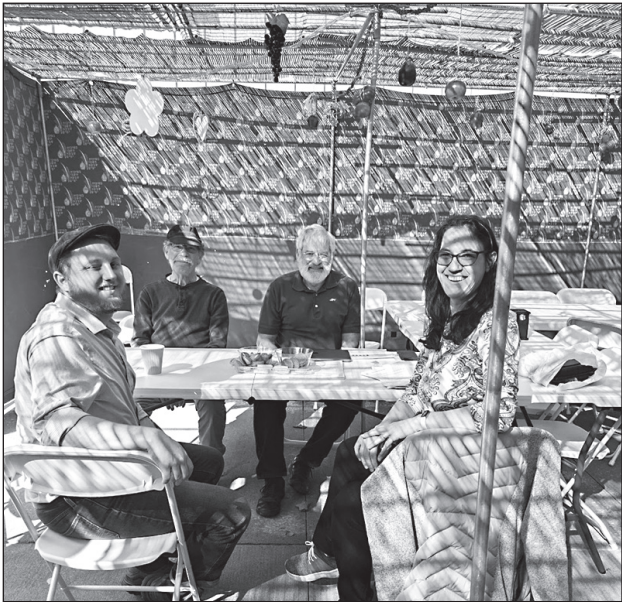
Esserman added, “If you are thinking about making a donation to the paper, this is the perfect time to do it. Every

penny counts in this economic climate. So many Jewish newspapers are either going under or turning into online publications only. Although *The Reporter* is now biweekly, I am pleased we are still able to produce hard-copy newspapers for our readers. I know that I prefer to read offline. Plus, a hard copy is great for those of us who like to read the paper on Shabbat, but don’t get on the computer that day. We try to be the one-stop shop for those interested in learning about Jewish events in our community.”

Esserman also noted, “Over the past three years, *The Reporter* has received many Syracuse Press Club awards and American Jewish Press Association Simon Rockower awards. That is pretty impressive for a small community newspaper.”

Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation, was also pleased that *The Reporter* received the grant. “I think the paper is a valuable addition to our community,” she said. “It not only lets me know what local organizations are doing, but helps keep us connected. Thank you to the Eisenberg Fund for its gift. I know the generosity of our community will make this fourth Giving Tuesday mini-campaign a success.”

TI members studied in the sukkah



Temple Israel members joined fellow member Hadassah Mativetsky in the sukkah on October 22-23 to discuss Jewish texts, as well as academic research in social psychology presented to her as part of her Mahloket Matters fellowship with Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies. Mativetsky noted that Judaism has “a rich tradition of constructive disagreement” modeled in the Talmud.

After her election to the Binghamton City Council, Mativetsky said that she applied for the fellowship “to help her keep her head on straight in the dirty world of partisan politics.” She shared how the text study she completed during the spring semester impacts the way she thinks and acts in city hall.

At left: Clockwise from left: Rabbi Micah Friedman, Ben Kasper, Arthur Siegel and Hadassah Mativetsky.

DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
November 29-December 12...	November 20
December 13-26.....	December 4
Dec. 27-January 9, 2025	December 18
January 10-23.....	December 30 (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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Binghamton Philharmonic

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Tea and Talk

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

Upcoming dates are:

- ◆ December 5
- ◆ December 19

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

Binghamton Philharmonic

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FilmContinued from page 1

“a clever blend of comedy and drama, ‘All About the Levkoviches’ is one of the rare movies that offer a little bit for everyone. The story... is captivating and educational, offering a great insight into the life of the Jewish community in Hungary, and the characters are definitely memorable.” The website Film at Lincoln Center said the film is “told with delightfully mordant humor and a genuine warmth... [director Adam] Breier’s film is masterfully acted and directed, maintaining a perfectly balanced tone between comedy and pathos.”

The film was nominated for the George Gund III Memorial Central and Eastern European Film Competition for Breier at the Cleveland International Film Festival; and a nominee for the Grand Prix International Competition for Breier and a winner of the FIPRESCI Prize for Best Film.

“Join us for an intimate look at a Jewish family struggling with grief and animosity,” said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. “This film is sure to speak to everyone.”

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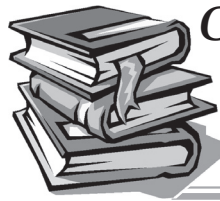
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Off the Shelf

Fact and fiction in historical novels

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Writing historical fiction that combines fact and fiction – particularly using real life people as characters – can be difficult because the writers’ plots are constrained by historical events that readers can confirm in history books or on the Internet. There are several different approaches to writing these types of works, two of which can be seen in recent novels: “Ain’t No Grave” by Mary Glickman (Open Road) and “Regina of Warsaw: Love, Loss and Liberation” by Geri Spieler (Speaking Volumes). While the former novel features fictional characters who interact with real life ones, the latter is based on the life of the author’s grandmother and combines factual and fictional elements.

“Ain’t No Grave” takes place in the rural American South during the early part of the 20th century and focuses on two characters: Max Sassaport, whose family is the only Jewish one in their small town, and Ruby Johnson, a member of a Black sharecropper family. The two become friends in 1906 when they are 9 years old, an age when Black and white children can still play together. However, both know their relationship has an age limit due to the culture and customs of the time – one that frowns on the mixing of the races past a certain age.

Unfortunately, as young as he is, Max truly loves Ruby and the feeling is returned. But they soon are unable to spend much

time together because Max needs to help out in his parents’ store and Ruby is now old enough to work with her family in the fields and take odd jobs. Then a violent act forces Ruby to leave their small town and move to Atlanta. Max dislikes working at the store and, after several years, also moves to Atlanta, now working as a newspaper reporter. The two friends find each other, although there are numerous impediments to their being together as a couple. In fact, they know the only safe way for them to marry and have a family is to leave the South.

Before they can leave, though, historical events get in their way. Those familiar with Southern Jewish history will be aware of the Leo Frank trial. Frank, a Northern Jewish man, was accused of murdering a young white woman who worked at the factory he supervised. The case created a great divide between the Black and Jewish communities of Atlanta because the other potential murder suspect was Black. Each community feared the repercussions that would occur if someone of their race or religion was found guilty. Frank’s trial affects Max and Ruby, and leaves them wondering about their place in the world.

“Ain’t No Grave” is well written with an interesting plot and more suspense than one might expect. Glickman offers a list of “Historical Personages” at the end of

the novel, some of whom might surprise readers. This is an excellent work for book clubs interested in Jewish American life in the South, and the fragile relationship between Blacks and Jews. It may also encourage readers who are unaware of the Leo Frank trial to learn more about this miscarriage of justice.

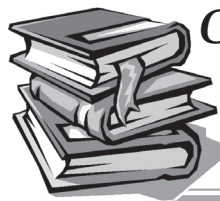
While the main characters in “Ain’t No Grave” are fictional, the Regina in “Regina of Warsaw” is a mix of fact and fiction. Although Spieler writes in an author’s note that Regina is based on her grandmother, she also notes that there is a great deal of her grandmother’s story that she never knew when her grandmother was alive. However, she discovered more about Regina’s life when she visited relatives in Warsaw after Regina’s death, and came to recognize the courage and determination that brought her grandmother to the United States.

This novel also begins in 1906, but in Poland during a pogrom. What should have been a wonderful visit with her sister in Bialystok turns into a nightmare. Both women return to their family home in Warsaw, but Regina is permanently changed by what occurred. Her negative thoughts about life in Poland and Europe are confirmed by her work for the Bund, the first Jewish Socialist party: she translates material for the local group and learns just how precarious

life is for the Jews of Europe. She marries one of the male revolutionaries, but her thoughts about the future are different from his and the other members of her family: she believes that they need to leave Europe now because things are only going to get worse. Her husband refuses to leave, but she and their son emigrate on their own.

Stopping in Paris to visit her sister on the way to the U.S., Regina marries again, although readers will learn that marriage is far from perfect. Since Spieler notes in her introduction that her mother and aunts lived in a Los Angeles Jewish orphanage during their school years, it doesn’t spoil any surprise to write that life did not turn out exactly the way Regina expected. She also discovers there is antisemitism in her new home, although not the horrific kind she faced in Europe.

The prose in “Regina of Warsaw” is plain and blunt. What carries the novel is not the writing but the story itself. Readers will become absorbed in the ups and downs of Regina’s life, and will appreciate her strength and willingness to do what she believes will help her family, even if it’s not something of which society approves. It’s difficult to know how much of this work is fact and how much is embellishment, but that doesn’t take away from the story of this remarkable woman.



Off the Shelf

Searching for meaning through poetry

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Religious poetry that speaks to both observant and secular Jews is a rare phenomenon. That’s why it’s always

a pleasure to read poems by Yehoshua November. He has a way of finding words that address both worlds. This is

certainly true of his most recent book, “The Concealment of Endless Night” (Orison Books). While those familiar with Judaism will have a deeper understanding of some of his poems, most offer ideas that will resonate with all readers.

Two themes run through these poems: the first is November’s exploration of the mystery behind why there is suffering in the world. The second focuses on his relationship with his wife; these poems offer beautiful images of the woman with whom he shares a life. This mixture of sacred and profane works because it portrays the poet’s struggles with daily life.

“The Concealment of Endless Night” features 32 poems. Some of my favorites include:

- ◆ “Teachers and Students,” which offers examples of how students affect each other’s lives. In one stanza, November notes, “Strangely, often, / teachers’ most hurtful comments / are also untrue.” He writes of his impatience with his son and the surprising lessons he learned about students, particularly how some carry hurts deep inside them.

- ◆ An exploration of suffering in “Hearing Roy Orbison in a Mikvah in Salem, MA.” The poet describes the sorrows the singer faced during his life (two of his young sons died in a fire) before writing of Moses asking God, “Who could have made the world any way He wanted, / why He’d created suffering.”

- ◆ A love song to his wife in “This Summer Day,” in which he notes, “How you have remained beautiful / over these fourteen years, / beautiful and optimistic, despite / the nights in the small apartment / with great fears, carrying cups of water / to four sleepless children,” while he

commuted to teaching jobs to support his family.

- ◆ “Universal Symbol,” a short poem that packs a powerful punch as it ponders the question, “If a Jew is a symbol of exile – / a symbol for others – / what is a Jew herself?”

- ◆ A second love song to his wife, “Poem on Our Eighteenth Anniversary,” during which he discusses how they met and the way their relationship grew.

- ◆ An offering about the life of a poet in “Poetry Readings,” in which November explores how he differs from most of authors who read at poetry events.

- ◆ “Morning Prayer and the Waste Management Co.,” which does a wonderful job juxtaposing the sacred and profane, as the poet tries to pray while, outside his window, sanitation workers collect garbage.

- ◆ The poet’s acknowledgment of women’s spiritual side in his “Women at Prayer,” which he ends with a question about God and human suffering.

- ◆ The beautiful, moving “Chanukah: Kiel, Germany” about a photograph of a menorah taken by Rachel Posner in 1932 that also shows a Nazi flag hanging on the building across the street. November compares Rachel and her husband, Akiva, to the ancient Rabbi Akiva and his wife, Rachel. The stories of both these couples leave the poet pondering “the concealment of God” in our world.

Poetry lovers will find much of interest in “The Concealment of Endless Night,” while readers looking for insights into religion and daily life should be intrigued by November’s thoughts. The author is to be congratulated for another book of excellent poetry.

CHANUKAH Greetings

Deadline: December 5 (December 13 issue)

Once again this year, *The Reporter* is inviting its readers and medical professionals to place personal Chanukah greetings to the community. These Chanukah greeting ads will appear in our December 13 issue.

You may choose from the designs, messages and sizes shown here - more are available. You may also choose your own message, as long as it fits into the space of the greeting you select. (Custom designs available upon request.) The price of the small greeting is \$21 (styles E and F), the medium one is \$40 (style A and D) and the largest one (not shown, style G) is \$78.

To ensure that your greeting is published or for more information on additional styles, sizes & designs, please contact Kathy Brown at 724-2360, ext. 244; or e-mail advertising@thereporter.org. Checks can be made payable to The Reporter and sent to: The Reporter, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

Style D - \$40
Actual Size: 3.22" x 1.975"

Wishing you a Happy Chanukah
light • peace • love

May the lights
of Chanukah
shine in
your hearts
forever
Your name(s)



Your Name(s)

Style A - \$40
Actual Size: 3.22" x 1.975"

CHANUKAH Greetings

Deadline: December 5 (December 13 issue)

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How you would like it signed _____

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Print Name on Card _____
Card Number _____
Expiration Date _____
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Vestal, New York 13850.



Style E - \$21
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1.52" x 1.975"

Warm Chanukah wishes to
you and your family!



Your Name(s)

Style F - \$21
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HAPPY
CHANUKAH!



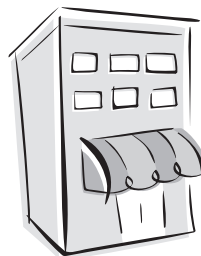
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Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

Piaker lecture marked October 7



Binghamton's Jewish community marked October 7 at the annual Pauline and Philip M. Piaker Memorial Lecture, which featured a talk by Orit Mark Ettinger, on October 29.



At left: Orit Mark Ettinger presented her life story and lessons in a talk titled "Broken Ray of Light; Finding the Light through the Darkness" at the annual Pauline and Philip M. Piaker Memorial Lecture.



L-r: Rabbi Aaron Slonim, Alan Piaker, Orit Mark Ettinger, Susan Kasper and Julie Piaker.

Ultra-Orthodox social workers treat wartime trauma

By Etgar Lefkovits

(JNS) – It was three days after the October 7, 2023, Hamas massacre, and an Israeli woman whose brother had been killed in the surprise cross-border terror assault was conferring with a social worker about how to talk with her parents. At the end of the call, she asked the social worker matter-of-factly where he was from. His answer surprised her – Beitar Illit, an ultra-Orthodox community southwest of Jerusalem in Gush Etzion.

"Isn't that an ultra-Orthodox city?" she asked, confessing that coming from a very liberal milieu, the chance of her having a conversation with an ultra-Orthodox man – let alone receiving help from him – was "near zero." Then again, it isn't every day that an NGO created to cater exclusively to the ultra-Orthodox sector makes a 180 shift and decides to focus on helping the public at large, sometimes free of charge.

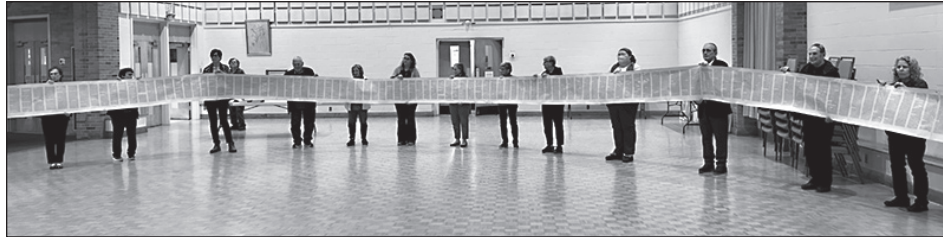
But that is exactly what Pinchas Weiss, the 35-year-old founding director of Jerusalem-based Mivtach, decided to do in the wake of the October 7 massacre. For him, the move was more than breaking a glass ceiling; it was his way of closing a personal family chapter and a trauma stemming from the Holocaust.

"October 7 caused something which showed that we as a nation must create unity and togetherness both in Israel and in the Diaspora," Weiss told JNS in a recent interview at the organization's Jerusalem offices.

"There is no doubt that we will be dealing with tens of thousands of people for years who will need treatment for direct and indirect trauma caused by the war," said Weiss. "I believe that even when the war ends we will be a country in trauma for some years."

See "Treat" on page 8

TC celebrated Simchat Torah



Above: Temple Concord celebrated Simchat Torah on October 24 with a service and dancing. Members also unrolled the full Torah scroll in the social hall.



At right: Deb Daniels danced with the Torah during Simchat Torah celebrations at Temple Concord.

Below: Rabbi Rachel Esserman was among those who read a few verses of Torah during the Simchat Torah celebration.



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- 3) Fill out the form in this ad and mail it to the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

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WE REMEMBER YOU 2024 A Project of Jewish Family Service



During Hanukkah 5785, JFS will be distributing monetary gifts to community members in need who always say,

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Weekly Parasha

Vayera, Genesis 18:1-2:24

Abraham and the angels

RABBI MOSHE SHMARYAHU, HEAD OF JUDAIC STUDIES

“And Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold three men (angels) standing over him.” (Genesis, 18:2) The relationship of the position between Abraham and the angels changes as the verses progress: In the beginning, it is said that the angels “stand above him,” but later in the verse, it is said “and he ran toward them,” meaning that he is equal to them: they are not above him and he is not above them. Finally the Torah tells us that he (Abraham) is standing over them. Here a reversal is a created and Abraham is above the angels.

The *midrash* explains, “When the angels came to meet Abraham, they stood on a higher spiritual level than Abraham, but when Abraham, our father, began to prepare for the *mitzvot* of receiving guests, the Torah wrote, ‘And he saw and ran toward them,’ meaning he was equal to them; Then, when he had already begun to fulfill the *mitzvot* of hospitality and they began to eat, then ‘and he stands over them’, meaning that he was on a higher spiritual level than the angels.”

Here we see that the Torah goes on and on describing how fulfilling a mitzvah affects a person’s spiritual

level. In the first stage, before the mitzvah is fulfilled, the angels “stand over him”: their rank is higher than Abraham’s, since they are angels and he is a man. But immediately after that, when Abraham begins preparing for the mitzvah of welcoming guests, his spiritual rank rises, and the language is “and ran toward them,” meaning his rank is already equal to theirs. Finally, when he is already engaged in the actual fulfillment of the mitzvah, and feeds and water them, here it is already said, “And he stands over them, ‘his rank is higher than theirs.’”

Congregational Notes

Temple Israel

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

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

On Saturday, November 16, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person. The bar mitzvah of Dan Sokol will take place during the service. The Torah portion is Genesis 18:1-22:24 and the haftarah is II Kings 4:10-37. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 5:30 pm.

On Sunday, November 17, at 11 am, the Jewish Global Day of Learning will be held at Temple Israel. For more information, see the article on page 1.

On Wednesday, November 20, a Ritual Committee meeting will be held at 10 am. The Hebrew School will also meet.

On Saturday, November 23, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Genesis 23:1-25:18 and the haftarah is I Kings 1:1-31. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 5:30 pm.

The temple office will be closed Wednesday-Friday, November 27-29.

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

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

Presidents: Melanie Kalman and Alexis Siemon
Sisterhood President: Gail Zussman
Director of Education: Calle Schueler
Services: Friday 8 pm; Saturday 10 am, unless otherwise announced. Weekday morning minyan 7:30 am (9 am on Sundays and legal holidays).
Religious School/Education: September-May: Classes meet on Sunday, 9 am-12:30 pm and Wednesday afternoons, 3:45-5:45 pm. The teen No’ar program meets twice per month (every other Sunday from 5-7 pm) and is designed with the flexibility to accommodate busy student schedules.
Adult Ed.: Numerous weekly courses, several semester-long courses and a variety of mini-courses and lectures are offered throughout the year. Call the temple office for more details.

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

Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive
Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815
Phone: 334-2691
E-mail: fertigj@roadrunner.com
Contact: Guilia Greenberg, 373-5087
Purpose: To maintain a Jewish identity and meet the needs of the Jewish community in the area.
Adult Ed.: Call ahead, text or e-mail to confirm dates.

Penn-York Jewish Community

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

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

Beth David Synagogue

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

Rohr Chabad Center

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

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

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.

Friday, November 15, light candles before 4:23 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, November 16 5:23 pm
Friday, November 22, light candles before 4:18 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, November 23 5:18 pm
Friday, November 29, light candles before 4:15 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, November 30 5:15 pm

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Rabbi: Leah Moser
Address: 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905
Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm
Phone: 607-723-7355
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, November 15: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Leah Moser. Join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y>, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, dial in at 646-931-3860 or watch on Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Saturday, November 16: At 9 am, Shabbat school; and at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87897900994?pwd=bOM-vwxDuovoaBInB4aVfHoTlSYamj.1>, meeting ID 878 9790 0994 and passcode 743506. To dial in, call 646-931-3860.

Sunday, November 17: 10 am-noon, “One People”: A Global Day of Jewish Learning. For more information, see the article on page 1.

Friday, November 22: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Leah Moser. Join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y>, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, dial in at 646-931-3860 or watch on Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Saturday, November 23: At 9 am, Shabbat school; at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87897900994?pwd=bOM-vwxDuovoaBInB4aVfHoTlSYamj.1>, meeting ID 878 9790 0994 and passcode 743506. To dial in, call 646-931-3860.

Thursday, November 26-30: No religious school.

Temple Beth El of Oneonta

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

Congregation Tikun v’Or

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Address: PO Box 3981, Ithaca, NY 14852; 2550 Triphammer Rd. (corner of Triphammer and Burdick Hill), Lansing, NY
Phone: 607-256-1471
Website: www.tikkunvor.org, E-mail: info@tikkunvor.org
Presidents: Martha Armstrong and Mitch Grossman, presidents_22@tikkunvor.org
Education Director/Admin. Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky
Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator: Michael Margolin
Services: All services currently on Zoom. E-mail info@tikkunvor.org for the times and links. Contemplative morning services every Tuesday from 8:30-9:30 am. Saturday mornings, Gan Shabbat and other special services at least once a month. Call for the weekly schedule. Jewish Learning Experiences (JLE) for second through seventh grade classes meet on Sunday mornings. Sixth and seventh grades also meet on Wednesday afternoons. Family programs for kindergarten and first grade held monthly. Adult Education: Offered regularly throughout the year. Check the website for details.


Jews in Sports


The sportscaster and the rabbi: Adam Cohen and Laurie Phillips

BILL SIMONS

Rabbi Laurie Phillips played a pivotal role in the ascent of Adam Cohen, announcer for the Tri-City ValleyCats of the independent Frontier League. The team plays its home games at the “The Joe,” fan-friendly Joseph L. Bruno Stadium, located on the Hudson Valley Community College campus in Troy, NY. Since his 2023 arrival in the broadcast booth, Adam Cohen, now 24, has invested ValleyCats home games with telling detail and “inside baseball” engagement.

A graduate of Allegheny College, Adam, despite his youth, earned broadcasting spurs with the Norfolk Redbirds, Rockford Rivets, Duluth Huskies and Erie SeaWolves before joining the ValleyCats. Through subscription, ValleyCats streaming and radio game broadcasts, along with Adam’s pre- and post-game shows, stream on FloBaseball and Mixlr. Working without a partner, Adam does a remarkable job of communicating the facts, flow and feeling of the game sans recourse to bathroom, respite or munchies.

Through notable memory and thorough preparation, Adam effortlessly treats fans to the essential team and player stats, trends and storylines. On the air, he is the best version of himself, holding the excitement of “punchout” whiffs, “bang-bang” double plays and “out of here and out of sight” home run calls. Eschewing the excessive partisanship of a “homer,” he, nonetheless, conveys identification with the ValleyCats through phraseology and emphasis. During each game, a young fan gets to spend a few minutes on-air in the broadcast booth. Adam has a knack for setting these fledglings at ease and showcasing their charm.

In addition to broadcasting, Adam is the ValleyCats’ media relations coordinator, setting up interview logistics, contributing to sales and publications, monitoring broadcast technology, sharing metrics with coaches and fulfilling a host of other duties. Although he would welcome another season at “The Joe,” Adam looks forward to working his way up the broadcasting ranks.

Prologue and epilogue

A child of divorce, Adam went back and forth between the homes of his father, Howard, a New York Life Insurance Company executive, and Jules, his social worker mother, during the course of a typical week, albeit spending more time with his father. Although his parents moved around, including a significant stint in Harlem, Manhattan’s Upper West Side was the frequent habitat. Adam grew up in a complex, blended family: “My dad and mom divorced in 2005, my mom married my now-stepmother... Nyna in 2008, and my dad married Laurie in 2009. After my dad and Laurie broke up in 2018, my dad got remarried to my now-stepmother named Lol in 2022.”

Adam and his father shared several attributes – analytic minds, orientation to detail, attraction to travel, baseball



At a Jerusalem restaurant in 2019 (rear): Rabbi Laurie Phillips and her stepson, Adam Cohen, with friends in front. (Photo courtesy of Adam Cohen)

fandom and self-identification as secular Jewish atheists. Laurie, Reform Rabbi Laurie Phillips, introduced new levels of spirituality, creativity, happiness, structure, strength and responsibility to Adam’s world. With his father’s support, Adam attended Jewish services and programs that Rabbi Laurie led; he was bar mitzvahed. By age 14, however, Adam preferred New York Yankees games to temple.

A dynamic and creative force in New York Jewry, Rabbi Laurie – founder of the Beineinu “synagogue without walls” movement, innovative educator, model and missionary of kindness and intimacy, champion and celebrant of Israel, exponent of candor leavened by humor and humanity, passionate feminist – did not challenge Adam’s adolescent religious agnosticism.

Ironically, the relationship between Rabbi Laurie and Adam grew stronger and more personal after she and his father divorced. He calls their evolving relationship “a huge blessing.” They would meet at restaurants, synagogue, her place in Brooklyn, the beach and vacations with her family. When Adam took a gap year between Bard High School and Allegheny College as an Israel Association of Baseball player, youth coach, umpire and groundskeeper, Rabbi Laurie arranged one of her periodic trips to Israel to greet him upon arrival and facilitate Adam’s transition to a place he had never before visited.

Rabbi Laurie, recalls Adam, “was not the biggest baseball fan. But as a devoted stepmother, she learned a lot more about it after entering my life. She listened to some of my broadcasts and came to some of my games.” Financial contributions from Laurie, her father Dennis (whom Adam calls “Saba”), and her siblings facilitated Adam’s travels and professional development, including

a “three-week intensive voice work course in Pretoria, South Africa” that proved instrumental in his growth as a broadcaster.

During her final journey, Rabbi Laurie valiantly battled leiomyosarcoma, an uncommon cancer. Despite the complications of the disease and chemotherapy, she continued to model kindness and courage, celebrating a *b’nai mitzvah* just a couple of weeks before she passed. But the last days were very hard. At age 55, Rabbi Laurie died on Sunday, November 26, 2023, three days after Thanksgiving. Her *Jerusalem Post* obituary listed four immediate survivors – father, brother, sister and stepson Adam. He had complex and intense feelings about Rabbi Laurie’s departure: “I wasn’t with her when she passed away, as much as I would have liked to have been there in her final moments. She was not herself, and I’m sure that would have been traumatizing. So, I think she tried to protect me.” Rabbi Laurie’s body was cremated and the ashes scattered in the Sea of Galilee. Despite his still nascent religious beliefs, Adam confides, “I believe there’s a heaven. I hope to see her again.”

When I first interviewed Adam in 2023, he identified as a secular Jew and an agnostic. A year later, he wanted to discuss a significant change: “Now, considering myself religious for the first time in my life, I believe in God.” Upset by the death of Rabbi Laurie, Adam spoke almost every day to her sister, whom he calls Aunt Beth. And a Christian friend from the Frontier League “got me into religion. That’s when I started going to synagogue.” Joining Congregation Gates of Heaven, a Reform temple, in Schenectady, Adam attends Shabbat services unless broadcasting responsibilities conflict. He also engages with the synagogue’s Torah study group, enjoying the spirited disputation amongst participants.

Networking with the Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York, Adam played a significant role in facilitating Jewish Heritage Night at the ValleyCats’ last home game of the regular season on August 25. To honor his stepmother, Adam gave out 400 pins to fans emblazoned with Rabbi Laurie’s signature credo – “Be Kind.”

The JCC Friendship Club is going out for lunch. Please join us on Wednesday, November 20, at 1 pm, at The Lost Dog Café. Everyone is welcome. No reservations needed.



On the Jewish food scene

Jewish ice cream flavors

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

A friend and I differ in our tastes in ice cream. As much as I like chocolate (her usual pick), I also love the fruit-flavored ones, for example, blueberry, key lime pie and banana cream pie. She thinks ice cream and fruit should not mix. While she sticks to her usual choice, I also like to try different flavors just for the fun of it – sometimes the more exotic the better.

However, I’m not sure I would have tried the flavors Salt and Straw offered when its new stores opened recently in New York City. Well, two of the flavors – chocolate babka with hazelnut fudge, and cinnamon raisin bagels and schmear – didn’t sound that bad. But I’m not sure I would ever want to try pastrami-on-rye flavored ice cream. I eat ice cream because it’s sweet. If I want something savory, I’ll get a deli sandwich. But I do understand offering outlandish flavors to generate attention. That obviously succeeded or I wouldn’t be writing about it. (FYI: the flavors were on a limited time offer and are no longer available.)

Thinking about this made me wonder if there are other Jewish flavors. That is, in addition to the periodic jokey ones like gefilte fish ice cream. (At least, I hope that was a joke.) There actually is a Ben and Jerry’s charoset flavored ice cream, but it was only available in Israel last year during Passover. However, search the Internet for “charoset ice cream” and you’ll find several recipes for how to make your own from scratch. For those looking for a short cut, I suppose you could buy a good vanilla ice cream, make the charoset of your choice and then mix the two.

The next question is, of course, what makes a food Jewish, something we could debate for hours, if not years. Is concord grape ice cream Jewish? How about ice cream made with figs, dates or halvah? Hmm, is an olive oil ice cream Jewish? Maybe anything made with the seven species (the agricultural products considered sacred in the

Bible) would work, although I’m not sure I would want a wheat ice cream. I would be willing to try a pomegranate one, though.

A bigger question is whether ice cream season – at least, eating ice cream outdoors – ends in November. A great number of ice cream stores close for the winter, although there are some that stay open all year. But that’s really a question for a different column.

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Warsaw returns ambassador to Israel after three-year rift

By Etgar Lefkovits

(JNS) – After a three-year hiatus, Poland recently installed an ambassador in Israel, turning a new page in relations between the countries, the European’s nation’s embassy in Tel Aviv said in mid-October. The appointment of the former intelligence and espionage chief Maciej Hunia, 63, as ambassador follows a long in relations between the countries over Holocaust-related issues that was defused last year.

“A warm welcome to our new Head of Mission,” the Polish Embassy wrote in a post on X. “Mr. Maciej Hunia is joining us in Tel Aviv to strengthen Polish-Israeli relations.”

A short, touristy video attached to the social media post highlights Krakow, where the new ambassador was born, as well as the city’s Jagiellonian University where he studied, while shying away from defense and security issues or the contentions of the past.

During a hearing in the Polish parliament ahead of his appointment, Hunia said military operations that caused unintended harm to civilians is not genocide as South Africa has claimed, in charges brought against Israel at the U.N.’s International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Ties between the two countries nose-dived after Poland’s previous government enacted a law in 2021 that were

seen by Israel as whitewashing Poles’ role in the Holocaust, and then banned claims for restitution of seized property by Holocaust victims and their heirs.

Both countries’ summoned their ambassadors home at the time, with Poland turning from supporter of Israel to its opponent in international forums and the European Union.

The dispute served to heighten a longstanding disagreement between the countries over the content of Israeli youth visits to Poland for Holocaust education. The visits were frozen during the crisis, and recently restored.

Until the dispute broke out, tens of thousands of Israeli teens routinely trav-

eled to Poland on such educational trips each year, touring former German death camps to learn about the Holocaust and memorialize those murdered. The trip has long been a rite of passage.

During the current war against Hamas in Gaza, Poland has been a safe place for Israelis in a continent marked by a surge in antisemitism.

In a sign of the warming of relations, Israeli President Isaac Herzog visited Poland last year for the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the 1943 revolt by Jews in German-occupied Poland.

Israel had previously restored its ambassador to Warsaw.

Treat Continued from page 5

Over the last year, Weiss and his 12 employees have offered counseling to direct trauma cases, including bereaved family members and the families of survivors, and indirect ones, such as children who fear to go outside as a result of the war.

Some of the scars run very deep. A 19-year-old man who was sexually assaulted during the attack, and whom Weiss had been supposed to treat at the behest of the young man’s parents, attempted to commit suicide and is now in a psychiatric hospital. In October, in a highly publicized case, a 22-year-old survivor of the massacre at the Nova music festival near Kibbutz Re’im killed herself after a year-long struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder.

“There is going to be work for years to come,” said Shraga Weiss, 31, a social worker from Jerusalem. “In the end, this is a *haredi* [ultra-Orthodox] NGO, but our emphasis is on professionalism. Each person comes with their own trouble, and we help them with their trouble irrespective of who they are.”

Israeli police officer Shmuel Ashkenazi, who spent nearly four months of reserve duty after the war began commanding the center that searched the remains of 1,600 terrorists’ bodies, told JNS that he connected with Pinchas after he found himself getting agitated easily and stressed out a month or so after his reserve duty ended. “He led me to understand that this is something that needs to be treated and that I should not put aside,” said Ashkenazi.

In the end, he was diagnosed with PTSD



Pinchas Weiss, the founder and director of Jerusalem-based NGO Mivtach (Photo courtesy of NGO Mivtach)

and referred for treatment. “October 7 brought this NGO to a place that there is no such thing as ‘just ultra-Orthodox,’” said Ashkenazi.

Mivtach, whose budget comes from donations from abroad, is planning to open a course this winter combining EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) and group therapy for 50 additional social workers.

Weiss’ decision to become involved in social work has to do with his own personal story. A decade and half ago, after consulting with and receiving the blessing of his rabbi, he left his electrical engineering studies

and enrolled in Bar-Ilan University to study social work, ultimately going on to study at Haifa University (“it will be good for you and the people of Israel,” the rabbi had said). In one program of study at a Jewish humanitarian organization, the Joint, he was the only ultra-Orthodox male in the class, he said.

Since then, he’s become accustomed to the surprise some in Israel exhibit when they encounter an ultra-Orthodox social worker. “It saddens me that death had to bring us together,” he said of his encounter with the woman right after October 7.

Weiss’ grandparents were Holocaust survivors from Hungary whose whole families were murdered by the Nazis. “They were able to rebuild a new generation, but the only thing that they never got treatment for was their trauma, which they passed down to the next generation,” said Weiss. “My mission is to ensure that there will be no second generation of pain from October 7.”

Books Continued from page 1

I went into the library, I was so pleasantly surprised! They had renovated the inside, all new furniture, large open and very bright spaces. The staff was so friendly. It got me thinking that more people need to know about this place! Unfortunately, the outside of the building still looks old and run down. If a person doesn’t step inside, they would never know how wonderful the environment is on the inside. The library definitely needs some curb appeal!”

Salomons wanted to spruce up the outside of the library, but that turned out to be more complex than she thought. “I had seen on Facebook or other places that some libraries in other cities actually paint murals of book stacks on the exterior of their buildings,” she said. “I spoke with one of the staff at the circulation desk about this idea and she shared with me that there were some issues about doing something like this because the library is actually owned by the Town of Vestal, and the library leases it and pays a yearly rental fee. I did some research about murals with a friend who oversaw the mural projects in downtown Binghamton, and came to the conclusion that there may be some issues (or it may take forever) with getting approval for a permanent solution on the exterior.” She hopes the library might be able to put up large vinyl vertical banners on the outside of the library instead, although she realizes this is not a permanent solution.

As chairwoman of the Friends of the Vestal Public Library, Salomons oversees and manages more than 20 community volunteers who are devoted to supporting and enhancing the library. “Together, we have had two successful book sales, have secured funding for a new water filling station in the library funded by a local business, have been tending to the outside gardens with a volunteer master gardener and are continuing to raise money to fund projects at the library that are not covered by their general operating budget, including the exterior outdoor banners,” she said. “We continue to seek out local businesses, individuals and families who might like to donate to the Friends group so we can continue to make an impact on this gem in our community.”

Her love of books and her passion for reading is what fuels her activities. “I believe books can enhance our imagination, bring us comfort, speak to us as friends,”



Children enjoyed looking at her library on Halloween 2023.

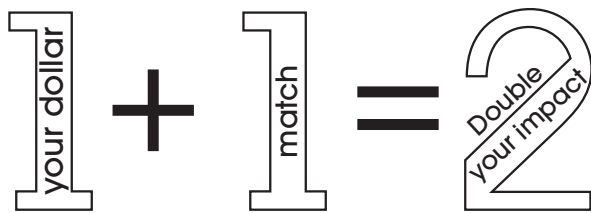
Salomons said. “Since installing my [free little library] and getting involved at the [Vestal Public Library], I have found a camaraderie with so many more people who love books, collect books and are excited to share books. It brings me a lot of joy.”

To share the joy, Salomons has been working with a group of women since January to bring the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to Broome County. “Our group has been meeting with the United Way of Broome County which fully supports the program and strategies are being put into place to raise the funds to support the program,” she noted. “There is a bill (Bill S8514A) in the New York State Senate right now, which will provide matching funds to affiliates who are coordinating a Dolly Parton Imagination Library in their communities.”

She feels this is very important because the “Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library is a book gifting program that mails free, high-quality and age-appropriate books to children from birth to age 5, no matter their family’s income. The program launched in 1995 and quickly expanded beyond Dolly’s hometown in Sevier County, Tennessee. It became such a success that in 2000, a national replication effort was created. By 2003, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library had mailed one million books and as of this past December (2023), over 226 million free books have been gifted to children since the program began.”

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