

THE REPORTER

Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

November 29-December 12, 2024
Volume LIII, Number 24

BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

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 Li-

brary, 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.”

JCC Community Hanukkah Celebration on Dec. 19

The annual Community Hanukkah Celebration will take place at the Jewish Community Center, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, on Thursday, December 19, from 5-7 pm. The torch walk will take place from 5:15-5:30pm, followed by entertainment from 5:30-6 pm, at which time the food buffet will open. Food tickets will be sold for \$8 per person, \$6 for seniors and children, with a family maximum of \$28. There will be games, face painting and arts and crafts, as well as dreidels and chocolate gelt while they last. Reservations are appreciated and can be made by calling



One of the torches being lit at the 2023 celebration. (Names held on request.)

the JCC office at 724-2417.

“People may ask why we are celebrating six days before the first night of Hanukkah,” said Sheryl Brumer, JCC executive director. “This is because Hanukkah begins on December 25 and ends on January 2 this year. In previous years, when we have attempted to hold the community celebration during the school winter break, our turnout has been greatly reduced, so we decided to run the event a few days before everyone goes away. We will still be having the annual torch walk outside of the JCC and ceremonially

lighting all eight torches on the *hanukkah*.”

The evening will begin with the Hanukkah torch walk, during which children and teens from the community will lead a procession of lights from the entrance to Temple Israel’s parking lot, ending at the front of the JCC. There will be a brief ceremony with music and recitations, after which there will be performances by the JCC Early Childhood Center and the Hillel Academy special choir, as well as a showing of the annual community Hanukkah video, all in the JCC’s auditorium.

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.jfgeb.org/film-fest. Registration is due by Wednesday, December 4. The link will be sent out on 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



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

house, deal with his own grief.

The Budapest Reporter called the film “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.”

TC/TI Adult Ed. Committee program on Dec. 22 to focus on “Midrashic Responses to October 7th from Israeli Women”

The Adult Education Committee of Temple Concord and Temple Israel will hold a program and brunch on Sunday, December 22, from 10 am-noon, at Temple Israel, 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal. Rabbi Micah Friedman of Temple Israel will guide attendees through a participatory experience of learning called “Midrashic Responses to October 7th from Israeli Women.” The entire community is welcome to attend. There is a suggested donation of between \$5-20 per person. For more information and to RSVP, contact Temple Israel at 607-723-7461 or

Temple Concord at 607-723-7355 by Friday, December 13, so enough refreshments can be prepared.

Friedman will discuss two modern *midrashim* written in the immediate aftermath of October 7 by Israeli women who lived in communities near the Gaza Strip and the ancient texts on which they are based. Attendees will be able to offer their own responses to their words.

“The shocking and horrifying events of October 7, 2023, and the subsequent war have prompted so many Jews around the

world to grapple with challenging questions and have unearthed layers of pain and heartache which have their roots in previous periods of Jewish suffering,” said organizers of the event.

They added, “Among the many ways that Jews have struggled to respond to October 7 is writing new *midrashim*. *Midrash* is a foundational Jewish approach to Torah and to life in which a person seeks out meaning through interpreting a text from the Torah. *Midrash* is an ancient style of interpretation that plays a central role in the Talmud and

other rabbinic literature. Often, *midrashim* engage with complex aspects of human experience and difficult passages in the Torah in “provocative and inspirational” ways that speak to people even many generations after the *midrashim* were composed.

“Like most ancient literature, the classical *midrashim* that were passed down to us were written (almost) exclusively by men,” organizers continued. “However, in recent decades, women from all different kinds of Jewish backgrounds and communities See “Women” on page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

New volunteer group
A local chapter of the Mitzvah Man volunteer group is in the process of forming.
.....Page 3

BD Luncheon
The next Beth David Luncheon, open to the community, will feature speaker Eliot Fiks.
.....Page 3

Fighting Jew-hate in EU
The European Union is asked to declare a six-month emergency period for fighting antisemitism.
.....Page 12

Special Sections
Celebrating Jewish Literature..... 5-8
Chanukah Gifts..... 9
Personal & Business Services..... 11
Classifieds..... 12

Opinion

Veterans Day 2024: immigrant and minority patriotism

By Bill Simons

Cheering the 2024 San Diego Veterans Day parade, my son Joe, grandson Isaac and I observed the large Latinx contingent. Despite perennial attacks on their loyalty, immigrants and minority groups have a long history of demonstrating their patriotism in blood. They are amongst the most fervent believers in the American Dream.

Of African and Indigenous descent, Crispus Attucks, formerly a slave, was the first American killed in the runup to the Revolutionary War. During the Civil War, Blacks constituted 10 percent of the Union military. Future General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. and the Tuskegee Airmen contributed to the Double Victory Campaign, fighting for victory against Hitler and victory over American racism. General Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, quarterbacked Operation Desert Storm.

From the Civil War through conflicts in the Persian Gulf, the 69th New York Infantry Regiment, Irish Americans conspicuous in their ranks, has demonstrated bravery under fire. The 69th gave new meaning to the term "Fighting Irish."

Despite President Franklin Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 confining more than 120,000 Japanese Americans to

internment camps without due process, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, comprised of second-generation Japanese Americans, was – given size and term of service – the United States' most decorated World War II army unit.

Navajo Code Talkers crafted an impenetrable form of communication that protected U.S. Marine operations during World War II. And Ira Hayes, a member of the Akimel O'odham, was one of the six Marines who raised the American flag at the Battle of Iwo Jima atop Mount Suribachi. America's diverse racial and ethnic groups figure prominently in the nation's roster of wartime heroes, Jews amongst them.

Jews have contributed their service and lives to America's conflicts from the Revolutionary War to the Gulf. More than 20 Jews have earned the Medal of Honor. Fighting for U.S. independence on the South Carolina frontier, Francis Salvador, age 29, became, on August 1, 1776, the first Jewish combat death in American military history.

Although Uriah Levy's active naval service was intermittent, it spanned from the War of 1812 to the Civil War, and he attained the rank of commodore. Despite their then small numbers in the general population, an estimated

10,000 Jews saw military service during the Civil War, the great majority under the Union banner, three of them brevet brigadier generals and one a brevet major general.

World War I rifleman – and subsequently sergeant – Bill Shemin braved heavy fire, suffering serious wounds, to rescue wounded comrades during August 1918. Posthumously, Shemin received the Medal of Honor for his heroics. During World War I, Joseph Simonovich, like many other Russian Jewish immigrants, volunteered for military duty before he was eligible for citizenship – or changed his name to Simons. Joseph's eldest son, Shep, my father, enlisted in the World War II Army Air Corps. Middle son Shel went to Korea. And youngest son Alan was an MP in Cold War Berlin.

Upwards of 550,000 Jews joined the U.S. armed forces during World War II, enduring more than 38,000 casualties. Embracing a humanity transcending religious differences, Rabbi Alexander Goode was one of the four heroic interfaith naval chaplains aboard the *USAT Dorchester* to perish beneath the North Atlantic on February 3, 1943, while attempting to save the lives of American sailors. See "Veterans" on page 12

One Perspective from Israel

A memory from the start of the war. A reality that, for many, still holds true.

JEREMY M. STAIMAN

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

My house is a wreck.

There are dirty dishes from breakfast in the sink. And on the counter. And food left out all over the place.

Someone didn't flush the toilet.

There are toys on the floor wherever I look. Markers

and crayons. Scissors and papers cut up.

And the kids are loud. It's hard to get any work done.

My house is never a wreck. My wife keeps the place impeccably clean. But she's at work now, and we're helping out for a day with the grandkids, since their father is doing Holy Warrior work in Israel's Defense Forces.

My house is a wreck.

But it's a house without bullet holes and pools of blood. The walls may be a bit scuffed here and there, but they are not weeping bitter tears of tragedy. It's a house rattling with the sound of children, and not heaving with the memory of children suddenly gone.

My house is a wreck. Thank you, God.

Thank you God that my house is a wreck.

In My Own Words

This is America

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

This is America: An armed, masked group marched in Columbus, OH, holding flags with swastikas on them. This is America: Members of the Black population have received text notifications that they have been "selected" to pick cotton "at the nearest plantation." This is America: Members of the Hispanic community have received text messages notifying them that they have been picked for "deportation." This is America: Members of the LGBTQ community have received text notifications telling them to report to "re-educations camps." This is America.

These attacks have two things in common: they are fueled by hate, and those sending the texts or marching strove to be anonymous. The texts came from burner phones so it's difficult, if not impossible, to determine who sent them. The marchers covered their faces. The police did detain a few of them, but, so far, no one's identity has been released. Hate and secrecy: that is how our feelings of safety are undermined.

But this is also America: The FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice are searching for those who sent the texts

to members of the Black, Hispanic and LGBTQ communities. The governor of Ohio and city officials in Columbus condemned the marchers. I'm sure that somewhere people are applauding their actions and laughing about how scared members of these minority groups are, but that support does not reflect every American.

If you are expecting me to blame these actions on the recent presidential election, I am not going to do that. President-elect Trump did not invent racism or antisemitism. He did not invent LGBTQ hatred. Yes, he has been known to offer fuel to those who despise those groups, but they *already* felt this way. More important, what really fuels their hatred is fear: the fear of an unknown world where every race and ethnicity are given equal respect, where everyone's sexuality is recognized, where all are celebrated. That world is scary because it's different from the world in which they grew up and in which they felt safe. Scaring others makes them feel safe and powerful, when, in reality, it just shows how insecure they really are about their place in the world.

How do we change this? While I hope our educational system could help, the battles over the minds of American children continue as people seek to restrict what children learn about American history, including actions of which our nation should not be proud. What they don't realize is learning about our past makes us stronger. It also helps fuel what does make us great: the continuing work to make the ideal of the American dream ring true for everyone. That is equal treatment under the law, equal opportunity for advancement and equal ability to pursue happiness. Only when these are true for everyone living within our borders will our nation truly be great.

Letters

Binghamton Human Rights Commission

To the Editor:

On November 5, city of Binghamton residents turned out to support reestablishing the Binghamton Human Rights Commission. Around 75 percent of voters voted in a referendum that will allow appointments to the commission to proceed. City Council will attempt to recruit members from the community who represent the diversity of the community as set forth in Chapter 45, Binghamton Human Rights Law. All members shall reside or work in the city of Binghamton. If you are interested in applying to serve on this commission, e-mail your resume to Clerk@cityofbinghamton.gov by Tuesday, December 17. For more information, see Chapter 45 and Chapter 45A of the city charter and code of ordinances for more details at www.binghamton-ny.gov/government/elected-officials/city-

charter-and-code-of-ordinances.

As part of recruitment efforts, I have reached out to many local organizations including but not limited to the NAACP, Binghamton Pride Coalition, Office for Aging, Re-entry Task Force, Southern Tier Independence Coalition, Broome County Veterans Services, Crime Victims Assistance Center, Islamic Organization of Southern Tier, Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, Southern Tier AIDS Program, Broome County Urban League, Addiction Center of Broome County and American Legion. Help us find the best applicants for this important commission.

*Hadassah Mativetsky
Council President, District 5
City of Binghamton*



Jewish Federation
of Greater Binghamton

Shelley Hubal, Executive Director

607-724-2332 ~ www.jfgeb.org

The Reporter Editorial Committee

TBA, chairman

Rachel Coker, Ben Kasper, Rivka Kellman,
Rebecca Goldstein Kahn, Toby Kohn, Richard Lewis,
Robert Neuberger, Ilene Pinsker

HOW TO REACH THE REPORTER

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

E-mail ~ TRReporter@aol.com

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

Extension#/Department ~ 1. Advertising 2. Business Office
3. Art Department 4. Circulation 6. Editorial/News



BINGHAMTON, NY

OPINIONS

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

LETTERS

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

ADS

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

DEADLINE

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

Executive Editor Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Layout Editor Diana Sochor

Advertising Kathy Brown

Bookkeeper Kathy Brown

Production Associate Julie Weber

Columnist Bill Simons

Proofreaders

Barbara Bank, Fran Ferentinos,
Rebecca Goldstein Kahn, Merri Pell-Preus,
Ilene Pinsker



"The Reporter" (USPS 096-280) is published bi-weekly for \$40 per year by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Road, Vestal, NY 13850-3734. Periodicals Postage Paid at Vestal, NY and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Reporter, 500 Clubhouse Road, Vestal, NY 13850-3734 or reach us by e-mail at TRREPORTER@AOL.COM.

www.thereporter.org

BD Luncheon to feature Eliot Fiks on Dec. 14

Beth David Synagogue's December Luncheon will be held on Saturday, December 14. Eliot Fiks will speak about "44 Years of Natural Goodness: Eliot Fiks and his Whole in the Wall Restaurant." The community is invited to attend. Morning services will begin at 9:30 am, with the luncheon and program following the conclusion of services. The luncheon is free and open to the public.



Eliot Fiks (Photo by Adriana Fiks)

Fiks is a restaurateur, pesto manufacturer and nutritional consultant. As the founder and continuing owner of Whole in the Wall, he will share what inspired the creation of the restaurant and what the secret of its success involves.

"How many Binghamton restaurants do you know that have been in existence and in the same location for 44 years?" said luncheon organizers. "On December 6, the Southside's Whole in the Wall restaurant, located at 43 South Washington St., will have celebrated its 44th anniversary."

The child of Holocaust survivors, Fiks was born in Brooklyn and credits his favorite grandmother Babi with

being his inspiration; one of her pots hangs on the wall of his restaurant. "A fire, three floods, economic downturns and the pandemic, and we are still kicking!" Fiks remarked. "Our menu is coded for gluten-free and vegan, and we are a proud member of the Gluten-Free Chef to Plate Program; we also manufacture a line of all-natural pesto, available in over 100 stores in 19 states."

A graduate of Binghamton University who crafted his own major in social change, Fiks writes poetry, opinion pieces, sings, plays guitar and composes music. In 1999, he was awarded a National Humanitarian Award for Stone Soup, a food donation project that he started, that is still in existence today. "Besides being a successful entrepreneur," organizers say, "Eliot is smart and has a unique story to tell about creativity and resilience. Come hear him share his personal journey, and how it got him from there to here!"

Beth David's luncheon speaker series takes place the second Saturday of the month after Shabbat morning services, and is open to the community. There is no charge

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

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to Michael Aigen, Suzanne Aigen and Linda Aigen on the death of their mother,
Marilyn Aigen

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to Joel and Fran Wolk on the death of their daughter,
Rachel Ann Wolk

The Mitzvah Man comes to Binghamton

A Binghamton Chapter of "Mitzvah Man: Gemilut Chasadim, Random Acts of Kindness" is being organized. The concept comes from Michael Cohen, known as "The Mitzvah Man" in Brooklyn, who began by performing simple acts of kindness in his spare time. "Now, this spirit of kindness is spreading to the Binghamton area," said Lori Tuberman, who is spearheading the effort locally. "The holidays are over, and it's time to roll up our sleeves and do some mitzvot!"

Cohen's mitzvot included visiting someone in the hospital, giving a ride to a doctor's appointment or picking up groceries. As word spread, others were inspired to join. Cohen began reaching out to friends and neighbors, asking for help when needed. Volunteers responded when they could and, soon, these collective acts of kindness evolved

into an organized effort. Today, The Mitzvah Man is an organization with a network of volunteers and beneficiaries.

"The concept is simple: volunteers receive messages via WhatsApp about opportunities to help someone in need," Tuberman said. "If you're available, you reply to the message privately and take on the task. If you're unavailable, no response is needed. We're looking for volunteers who can commit to helping when and how they can. It's a low-pressure way to make a big impact on our community."

Anyone who would like to join the growing team of volunteers should contact Tuberman at 607-237-1135 to be added to the WhatsApp group. "Together, let's build the Binghamton branch of The Mitzvah Man and bring the power of gemilut chasadim to our community," she added.

DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
December 13-26.....	December 4
December 27-Jan.9, 2025	December 18
January 10-23.....	December 30 (early)
January 24-February 13	January 15

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

BD Sisterhood and Men's Club to hold Chanukah Party on Dec. 29

The Sisterhood and Men's Club of Beth David synagogue will once again co-sponsor a Hanukkah party at Beth David Synagogue. The event will take place on Sunday,

December 29, at 5 pm. Thanks to the generosity of the Eisenberg Foundation, which will again be covering the major expenses, a donation of only \$10 will be requested from attendees at the door. Reservations should be made by Thursday, December 19, by contacting Stacey Silber at 607-727-9738 or silbercreations@gmail.com.

"The entire community is invited to join the members and friends of Beth David Sisterhood and Men's Club as they celebrate Hanukkah this year with an evening of food, fun and friendship," said organizers of the event. "In addition to lots of food and dreidels to play with (bring your own if you like), we anticipate an evening of musical entertainment and, of course, the lighting of the Hanukkah menorah."

Organizers added, "Please let us know if you plan to attend, so we can be certain to have enough food for everyone. Being a Jewish event, there probably will be enough food for you even if you show up and forgot to RSVP, but it makes planning and cooking easier. See you at the party."

Donations for CHOW will be accepted, as will payment for Sisterhood dues or for any mitzvah cards that have been requested.

Those who are on the Sisterhood's e-mail list or receive Rabbi Zev Silber's weekly newsletter should receive a flyer designed by Rabbi David Serkin announcing the party. Anyone who wishes to be added to either list should send their request and e-mail address to the Beth David Synagogue office at bethdavid@stny.rr.com.

Film Fest discussion



The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest held a virtual discussion of the film "Martha Liebermann: A Stolen Life" on November 10. Andrea Kastner, M.F.A., lecturer in the Department of Art and Design at Binghamton University, moderated the discussion. The film was based on the real life story of Martha Liebermann, the widow of the artist Max Liebermann.

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.

The Reporter is offering sponsorships!

Celebrate your simcha with the community or honor your loved one.

There are four levels: Bronze \$200, Silver \$400, Gold \$600 and Platinum \$1,000.

To arrange for a sponsorship or for answers to questions, contact Rabbi Rachel Esserman at rachel@thereportergroup.org.

Binghamton Philharmonic

Winter Wonderland
 Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024 at 3:30pm • Forum Theatre

Music of Mannheim Steamroller, Trans-Siberian Orchestra, The Snowman, plus Holiday Carols and More!

Tri-City HEARING Season Sponsor
 VISIONS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION Pops Series Sponsor

Box Office: (607) 723-3931 • Website: binghamtonphilharmonic.org
 Kids 17 & Under Get In Free!

SUZANNE "SUE" KRAUSE
 NYS Lic. Associate R.E. Broker

Laura Melville Team
 of Warren Real Estate

warren REAL ESTATE

(c) 607-760-3366
SUEKRAUSE@WARRENHOMES.COM
 33 FRONT STREET | BINGHAMTON, NY 13905

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, "Thank you for remembering me." Please help fund this program with monetary contributions by **Dec. 16** to: Jewish Family Service, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal NY 13850.

Global Day of Jewish Learning



At left, top and bottom: A Global Day of Jewish Learning was held on November 17. Close to 50 people attended the event, which was co-sponsored by Beth David Synagogue, the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, Temple Concord and Temple Israel. The event included a brunch and sessions led by local rabbis.



At right: A breakout group held a discussion during the Global Day of Jewish Learning.



On the Jewish food scene Goyslop

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

I wasn't sure if this should be the subject of a page 2 oped column or a food column, but considering I've discussed whether a food is Jewish or non-Jewish in several recent food columns, I couldn't resist writing about it here because it sounds more like a cosmic joke than a serious discussion of food and health. Unfortunately, while the name goyslop sounds a bit offensive (as if non-Jewish food is slop), the offense lies in a different direction.

First, you might be asking, "What is goyslop?" According to a recent article* in the Forward, it's unhealthy fast food. As someone who tries to eat healthy (OK, I try, but don't always succeed), I have no problem with the government making cer-

tain that people know the nutritional value of fast food. But I wouldn't be writing this column if that was the complete import of the term. According to that article, "Goyslop is an antisemitic meme term for fast food and other unhealthy, mass-produced snacks. It implies that low-quality food is made cheaply and easily available by Jewish elites to keep the rest of the world unhealthy and under their control." The article also mentions another term for this food is ZOGslop, which stands for Zionist Occupied Government slop.

I went looking for the meme the article talks about that is supposed to show "Hasidic men feeding pigs and obese white men wearing red baseball hats at the same

trough." I couldn't find it, although I found a pretty awful picture called "Pig-headed Jewish man in traditional attire," which shows a humanoid pig wearing traditional Jewish clothing, including a necklace with a Jewish star and with another Jewish star on his fancy hat. This reminded me of the more common antisemitic connection between Jews and pigs where Jews are compared to pigs. (If you want to read more about that connection, read Jordan D. Rosenblum's "Forbidden: A 3,000-Year History of Jews and Pigs." A review of the book appears in page 6 of this issue.)

The impetus for the article was a photo of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who has been picked to lead the Department of Health and Human Services, eating fast food with President-elect Trump. What is funny is that Trump is known for his love of fast food. That makes Kennedy an odd pick for that post since he has vowed to take on the fast food industry in

his crusade to Make America Healthy Again. While I disagree with a great deal of what he says about vaccines, etc., to be fair, he's correct that corn syrup and artificial food dyes are probably not good for our health. (On one of the medically restricted diets I was on, both of those were to be avoided.) No one can really argue a fast food diet is really good for you.

However, the problem is suggesting that Jews control the fast food industry for the purpose of destroying the health of America. I mean, seriously, another conspiracy theory? People who come up with these ideas have way too much time on their hands. But, as I've written before elsewhere, if there really is a Jewish organization controlling the world, will you please tell me how I can apply? I'd happily give up my goyslop in order to join.

*The Forward article can be found at <https://forward.com/culture/676096/goyslop-rfk-mcdonalds-nutrition-antisemitism>.

Women.....Continued from page 1

have turned to the style of *midrash* to bring their own experiences and perspectives into dialogue with traditional Jewish texts. Dirshuni is an effort of Rabbi Friedman's personal friend and teacher Tamar Biale to compile *midrashim* written by contemporary Israeli women to share their wisdom with the larger world. Over the past 10-15 years, two volumes of Dirshuni have been published in Hebrew and one in English, and the writing and study of modern women's *midrash* has become an inspiration to

American and Israeli Jews alike. The two *midrashim* we will study are part of this larger project."

Organizers added, "In the context of our ongoing grief as Israel continues to be at war, these *midrashim* invite us to recognize the tools of *midrash* that Israeli women have used to give voice to grief and hopes for the future, and the resources our Jewish tradition offers us for persevering through disasters with resilience, open-heartedness, and love."

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)

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____
E-mail _____
Greeting Style _____ Message _____

How you would like it signed _____

We accept Visa Mastercard American Express Discover

Print Name on Card _____
Card Number _____
Expiration Date _____
Address, City, State, Zip (Registered billing address of card) _____

Checks can be made payable to
The Reporter, 500 Clubhouse Rd.,
Vestal, New York 13850.



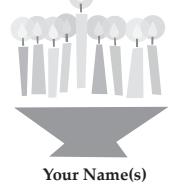
HAPPY
CHANUKAH!



YOUR NAME(S)

Style E - \$21
Actual Size: 1.52" x 1.975"

Warm Chanukah wishes to
you and your family!

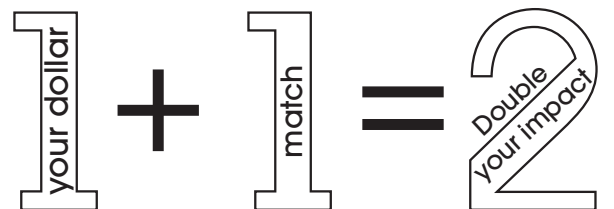


Your Name(s)

Style F - \$21
Actual Size: 1.52" x 1.975"

Support The Reporter

Now through
December 3rd,
every dollar
donated will
be matched
up to \$5,000.

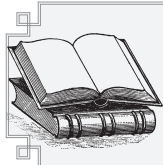


Donations may be made several ways:

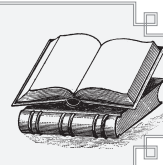
•Give online through The Reporter Group website, www.thereporter.org/about/donate.

•Through Matching Grant 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@jfgb.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.



Celebrating Jewish Literature



Jews and crime: fact and fiction

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

The connection between immigrants and crime has been a hot topic recently. However, it's not a new one: Jewish immigrant involvement in crime in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th was one of the reasons U.S. immigration laws changed to limit immigration from particular European countries. Many Jews have long been fascinated by their forebears who were involved in these criminal activities. That interest can be seen in two recent works: the nonfiction "The Talented Mrs. Mandelbaum: The Rise and Fall of an American Organized Crime Boss" by Margalit Fox (Random House) looks at the career of a notorious fence (receiver of stolen goods), while the novel "The Whisper Sister" by Jennifer S. Brown (Lake Union Publishing) offers a fictional look at a young woman who runs a speakeasy during Prohibition.

"The Talented Mrs. Mandelbaum" is a light, breezy, popular history that portrays not only the life of Fredericka Mandelbaum, but the thieves, police and politicians who helped make her career possible. At first glance, Mandelbaum seems an unlikely master criminal: she was a wife, mother and well-liked neighbor who hosted dinners for high society. She was considered a philanthropist, donating money to her synagogue and providing for those less fortunate. When she arrived in the U.S. in 1850 at the age of 25, though, she had been just another impoverished immigrant. However, by the mid-1880s, it's estimated that she owned almost \$10 million worth of stolen goods. She was not a thief herself, but rather received those goods for resale.

Mandelbaum helped those who brought her stolen goods by providing them with legal counsel and protection. She was able to do so because of her connections to New York policemen (who were often on the take) and politicians (who also received kickbacks) The police and politicians were also pleased to be invited to fancy dinners at her

house that often included the upper crust of society. Those who bought the stolen goods from her at discounted prices were also happy because it allowed them access to goods they could not otherwise afford. Fox writes that it was at this "intersection of thrift, stuff, class and desire that Fredericka Mandelbaum found her calling. It would center on a singular kind of recycling: availing herself of choice items from one bourgeois home so that they might adorn another, or lifting bolts of silk from large textile concerns for sale to neighborhood tailors."

For a while, this proved a satisfactory relationship for almost all involved. However, life changed in the 1870s when attitudes changed toward the type of property crime that had brought Mandelbaum her wealth. The author notes these efforts focused on "property crime committed by people who weren't male, native born and of Anglo-Saxon Protestant stock," which made Mandelbaum a prime target. In addition, these reformers sought to also rid politics of members of the working class, particularly those who had recently immigrated to the U.S. According to Fox, "undergirding [the reformer's] efforts were the class bigotry and xenophobia that had increasing polarized New York." Efforts against Mandelbaum were successful, although she managed to avoid prison by escaping to Canada.

Although Fox does not try to explain why Mandelbaum turned to crime, she does offer suggestions about why she was so successful. The author notes that unlike other immigrant cultures that limited women to home and hearth, Jewish women were expected to work outside the home. This was common in the Old World, where women's occupations supported men's ability to study Torah. Also, Jewish women in the U.S. began to claim rights – secular and religious – that had not been available to them in Europe. While Fox does not explore Mandelbaum's relationship with her husband, readers can assume he made no objection

to her business practices.

What also helped make Mandelbaum's career possible is the timing of her arrival in the U.S., which was at the cusp of what Fox calls "the first Golden Age of American crime." Her enterprise began when amateurs were able to make an excellent living in criminal activities, as well as other professions from doctors to lawyers, who, at that time, could just hang out a shingle without having had any professional training. By the time Prohibition arrived, crime had become far more organized, so much so that someone like Mandelbaum would never have been able to obtain as much power as she did.

"The Talented Mrs. Mandelbaum" was fun and easy to read. Readers don't learn much about Mandelbaum's feelings, but that's not the intent of the work. The book is more focused on the organization she built and how it functioned within the political and social arena of New York City. While it doesn't exactly glamorize what occurred, it's difficult for readers not to root for this Jewish immigrant mother who managed to accomplish something amazing and unexpected.

While "The Talented Mrs. Mandelbaum" does not offer much discussion of Mandelbaum's feelings, readers learn a great deal about those of Minnie Soffer in "The Whisper Sister." The novel's prologue, which takes place in 1932, leaves readers with a question that will only be answered in the latter pages of the book. But first, it explores Minnie's life after she immigrated to New York City in 1920 with her mother and her brother, Max, to join a father she barely recognizes.

At first, Minnie doesn't realize the soda shop her father bought was just a cover for the speakeasy that sits on the other side of the building. Since Prohibition is the law of the land, her father must work with the gangsters who supply the alcohol. When difficulties arise, Minnie takes over the bar, becoming a whisper sister, as the women who ran these bars were called. She enjoys the life, working hard to make the bar more popular and prosperous, rather than the dingy, quiet place her father ran. She also enjoys her relationship with Duke, who works for Meyer Lansky (a real life gangster), and believes she has control over what happens at the bar. However, she is naive about both her relationship with Duke and those who supply her with the alcohol she needs.

Unlike "The Talented Mrs. Mandelbaum," "The Whisper Sister" is not light and breezy reading. Brown does an amazing job showing just how difficult immigrant life could be, especially when money was an issue. Minnie is forced to make heart-breaking decisions about how best to help members of her family when she is unable to care for them and support herself. Although the rabbi at the local synagogue offers help, there is only so much the community can do. Plus, Minnie underestimates the dangers of her life choices. The suspense in the latter part of the novel is nerve-wracking and absorbing – almost like a car accident from which you can't turn your eyes away.

Brown's novel offers the background that might explain why Mandelbaum acted as she did, although Mandelbaum was far more successful and seemed to have far less remorse about her actions. But this is what makes "The Whisper Sister" so successful and absorbing: it allows readers to understand and appreciate its characters and their decisions. The novel would be an excellent choice for book clubs because readers can debate the choices Minnie and the other characters make. The work is even more complex than suggested by this review and comes highly recommended.

Success, assimilation and tradition

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Although Al Jolson was once one of America's popular performers, his star has diminished. That's partly due to the fact that he frequently performed in blackface (using burned cork or makeup to color his skin) – something frowned upon in contemporary times – and the fact that his appeal was best appreciated live where his overly dramatic gestures could reach the last row of the theater. Richard Bernstein's biography of Jolson – "Only in America: Al Jolson and 'The Jazz Singer'" (Alfred A. Knopf) – offers not only information about Jolson's life, but about the times that created him. It also focuses on the history of his most successful film, "The Jazz Singer," which in some ways mirrored Jolson's life. What really interests Bernstein, though, is his belief that Jolson's success could only have happened in the United States.

The author sees Jolson's life as an example of "the American immigration story at its best, the escape from a place where a rise to fame and fortune like his would have been impossible to a place where such a rise defined what the country considered special about itself." Jolson was born Asa Yoelson in Lithuania, a country not friendly to its Jews. He came to the United States at age 9 and quickly adapted to American culture. This was in spite of his father, who was a rabbi and disliked his son's choice of career. Jolson began singing in the streets with his brother when they were young, yet somehow became one of the most popular and highly paid performers in the country. His personal life suffered: he was married four times to non-Jewish women. Bernstein notes how Jolson would pursue these women, but then lose interest after the marriage. According to the author, Jolson seemed the happiest in the company of men.

Bernstein places Jolson in context by writing about the Jews who ruled Broadway and created Hollywood. He notes that "Broadway was a place of American possibility. It was untrammled, unregulated, absent of WASP aristocrats, where what counted was talent, ambition, and grit, not pedigree or family advantage. It was also a place where Jews gained power, and while Jews competed against other Jews and even sometimes stabbed them in the back, they didn't discriminate against them." Audiences – Jewish and non-Jewish – seemed to love comedy skits that showed Jews and Blacks in a less than progressive light. White and Black actors performed in blackface and gave the audience what it wanted in order to survive. Bernstein feels that Jolson portrayed his Black characters as more intelligent than did other comedians, but the basic format was impossible to escape.

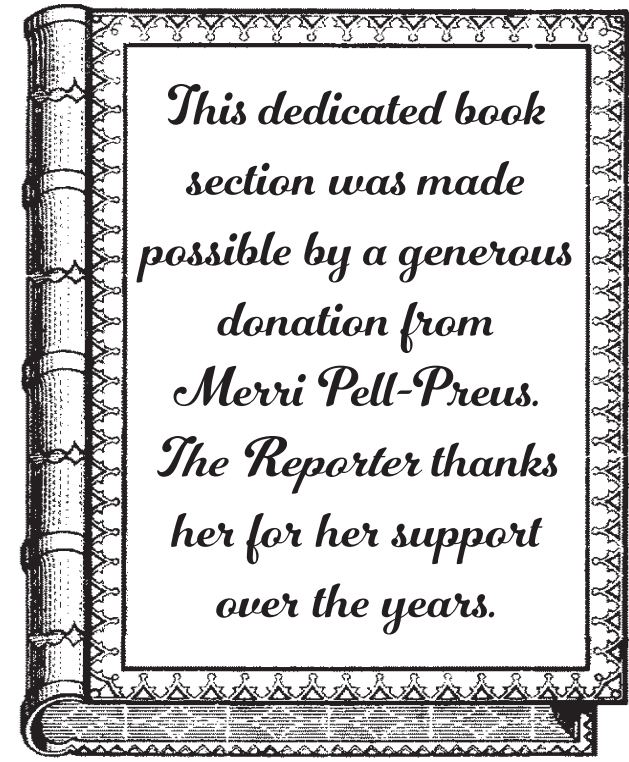
The author also discusses the history of "The Jazz Singer," noting it was first a short story and then a play. Its plots portrays the struggle between a singer who looks for success on the secular stage, and his cantor father who wants him to have a career as a religious singer. The melo-

dramatic climax of the play features a difficult decision: when his father becomes dangerously ill on Yom Kippur, the singer is asked to take his place and sing *Kol Nidre*. Unfortunately, it also happens to be the night of the singer's Broadway debut. The son decides to fulfil his father's wish and spends the night singing at the synagogue. However, fortunately for him, this does not derail his career.

Bernstein notes that "The Jazz Singer" was the first serious film Hollywood made about Jews and Judaism. Up until that time, the Jews who owned the studios were not interested in portraying Jewish life, unless the film was a comedy and the religious aspects were not taken seriously. The author writes how "The Jazz Singer" offered a very different portrayal of Jewish life "with its scenes of caftan-clad rabbis and cantors, and real Torah scrolls and praying in Hebrew, and its emotional climax, the chanting of Kol Nidre in an actual Orthodox synagogue,.... going much deeper into Jewish religious life and observance than any other of the Jewish-themed movies that preceded it, and that Jewish life could be shown realistically." The film's success with Jewish and non-Jewish audiences proved that it was possible to produce a film with Jewish content that would make money for the studios. In fact, for the film to succeed, it needed to reach non-Jewish moviegoers. That success was helped by the fact that it was one of the first films to include sound: moviegoers were able to hear Jolson sing, something that would not have been possible years before.

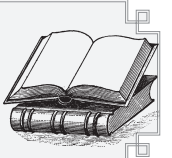
The irony is that Jolson – a secular Jewish performer who did not observe Judaism in his private life – performed in a film that focused on the importance of religious connection. Bernstein notes that assimilation into American culture was not only allowed, but encouraged; that was how these immigrants became American. This allows the author to offer what he sees as "the great paradox of Jewish history," which is that "the place Jews emigrated from, the Russian Pale of Settlement, with its ghettos, discrimination, blood libels, and pogroms, unwittingly preserved Jewish identity, which itself was a kind of fruit of stubbornness, while the dazzling freedom of America, where there was antisemitism but fewer barriers to success, threatened it with extinction." For Jolson, being an American mattered as shown by his travels to entertain American troops during World War II and the Korean War, continuing his performances even after he became ill. If the U.S. would not pay for his visits to the troops, he used his own funds.

Bernstein does an excellent job using Jolson and "The Jazz Singer" to explain Jewish American life. Sometimes the author pushes his points a bit far, making readers wonder about the extreme importance he gives to the singer and film, but that does fit with the grandiose way that Jolson felt about his life and career. "Only in America" is easy to read and offers a great deal of interest even to those unfamiliar with Jolson and his work.





Celebrating Jewish Literature



Exploring biblical laws for contemporary meaning

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Western society's legal system has been influenced by biblical law, even when lawmakers don't specifically reference the Bible in their thinking. Instead, these laws serve as the underpinning of the system, something that is often taken for granted. Daphne Barak-Erez explores the connections and disconnections between biblical laws and contemporary dilemmas in "Biblical Judgments: New Legal Readings in the Hebrew Bible" (University of Michigan Press). Barak-Erez, a justice of the Supreme Court of Israel and a former dean and professor at Tel Aviv University, does not offer a historical study of the development of biblical laws, but, rather, focuses on the way these laws can shed light on potential solutions for contemporary problems.

Barak-Erez presents more than 120 short essays—usually only three to four pages each—that discuss a wide variety of topics. Her work is divided into six parts, including sections on "Law and Government," "Judging and Judges," "Human Rights and Social Justice," "Criminal Law," "Private Law" and "Family and Inheritance Law." The author notes that she does not offer traditional rabbinic interpretations of biblical laws for three reasons: 1) those interpretations usually feature predetermined choices while she prefers readers to be open to a variety of possibilities; 2) she believes that every reader of the Bible should be able to see the work from their own particular perspective and 3) her focus is on legal and jurisprudential parts of the law in which traditional commentators were generally not interested.

While the essays are easy to read, they do assume some familiarity with the biblical text. However, Barak-Erez provides footnotes on each page that tell where in the Bible the relevant information can be found. It would be difficult, although not impossible, to use the book for Torah study since the work does not follow the order of the laws as offered in the biblical text. Readers can access that information, though, through the index.

Sometimes the same story is used to illustrate more than one topic. For example, the tale of Joseph and Potiphar's wife is discussed in the "Judges and Judging" and the "Human Rights and Social Justice" sections. The former case focuses on the "he said, she said" principle with Joseph and Potiphar's wife offering different testimony about what happened. It also looks at the physical evidence available and how it could be interpreted. In addition, the author writes of other methods that have been used to decide guilt and innocence in the past, for example, the use of casting lots (based on the belief that God would make the guilty party known). However, Barak-Erez notes that, in the regular course of events, most legal decisions have been based on physical evidence and witness testimony.

In the social justice section, the author looks at the sexual harassment aspects of the case, since a person in a position of power (Potiphar's wife) was demanding sexual contact from someone in a lesser position of power (Joseph). Barak-Erez also discusses Queen Vashti from the Book of Esther to show the possibility of retaliation that can occur when someone refuses a superior's advances.

Each essay held something of interest, but some stood out for this reader:

◆ "Caleb hushed the people"—The Importance of Minority Opinions" focuses on the story of the 12 spies in the book of Exodus, when 10 of the spies sent to Canaan declare that it would be impossible for the Israelites to conquer the land. Although this was the majority opinion, two spies—Caleb and Joshua—felt differently. At first, their opinions weren't solicited, that is, until Caleb told the people to be quiet and listen to him. Although, ultimately, he failed to convince the Israelites, Barak-Erez sees the principle of including minority opinions as extremely important. She notes that this doesn't mean that the minority opinion will win, just that it needs to be heard. The author also mentions that in the Anglo-American courts, minority opinions are released along with those of the majority so people can learn what every justice thought.

◆ "The Judgment of Solomon—What Is a Just Trial" offers a fascinating look at what should serve as the more important aspect of a trial: a fair process or a just outcome. The case under discussion requires Solomon to decide which of two women claiming to be a baby's mother is the true parent. Without DNA evidence, Solomon picks who he thinks will be the best parent, which does not actually mean that is the birth parent. Barak-Erez also discusses a modern play, "The Caucasian Chalk Circle," that focuses on a similar dilemma. She notes that "in reality, we do not typically know what is the 'right' outcome. Therefore, when striving toward a resolution, our standard of choice is procedural justice. Fair procedure does not guarantee a desirable outcome, but it nonetheless increases the chance of its attainment."

◆ "Vengeance—Vigilantism and Lynching" features an unexpected comparison between vigilantly justice and social media. The biblical case under discussion is from the book of Numbers when Pinchas stabs and kills an Israelite man and the Midianite woman with whom he is having sex. Pinchas and his descendants are rewarded and most commentators offer positive interpretations of his action. Barak-Erez notes, though, how this type of justice as worked against Jews over the centuries, including the lynching of Leo Frank in the American South. She also writes how accusations on social media treat people as guilty without

giving them an opportunity to defend themselves and often have great negative effect on their lives. The author sees two sides of the issue: 1) these anonymous sources offer no way for the accused to defend themselves, making them metaphorically the equivalent of a lynching or 2) the posts serve as "the last resort of disempowered individuals who are unable to directly contend with a well-heeled or prominent perpetrator with great resources." She also notes that "sometimes, they are [both] at the same time."

◆ "Gleanings, Forgotten Produce, and the Edges of the Field—From Social Duties to Social Rights" explores the biblical commandment to leave the corners of fields from which the poor can gather food by focusing on the story of Ruth and Naomi from the book of Ruth. Barak-Erez looks at the development of welfare laws in modern times, which help provide for the poor. She notes the differences between Ruth and Naomi in their ability to gather from the field: while Ruth is young and strong enough to do so, Naomi is too old to do the same. The author discusses the difference between assistance to the poor as a form of religious charity and compares it to legal systems that provide for the poor through governmental actions. She sees these governmental actions as a way of acting according to biblical laws, although now in a form that suits a non-agricultural society.

◆ "Dinah, the Levite's Concubine, Tamar, and the Revolt of Absalom—Rape and Sexual Abuse" discusses several different rapes that occur in the Bible and the characters' reactions to them. Particularly interesting was the story of Absalom's sleeping with his father's concubines, which Barak-Erez sees as a rape that is often not discussed by commentators. She notes the reactions to Dinah's rape, with Jacob ignoring what occurred, while Simeon and Levi overreacted by killing others in addition to the rapist. (The author discusses this in more detail in other essays in her book.) Perhaps the most horrific case is the rape of the Levite's concubine in the book of Judges, which ends in the concubine's death, as she was sacrificed (without her consent) in place of the Levite who made no attempt to save her. In all of these cases, Barak-Erez notes that the woman's point of view is often ignored. None of these women were consulted about the actions the men took to avenge them. The author's focus, therefore, is on getting the law to take note of and listen to women's voices.

"Biblical Judgments" offers thought-provoking discussions about the biblical legal system and our contemporary one. With its more than 120 essays, it's impossible to do justice to its depth. One does not need to be a lawyer or biblical scholar to find much of interest in its pages. General readers should also enjoy this stimulating work.

JEWES AND PIGS OVER THE AGES

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Regular readers of this column might be puzzled: Didn't she already review a book about the history of Jews and pigs? Those asking this question would be remembering my 2021 review of the excellent "Evolution of a Taboo: Pigs and People in the Ancient Near East" by Max D. Price (www.thereporter.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-a-taboo-like-no-other-by-rabbi-rachel-esserman). However, as a person interested in anthropology and sociology, I am endlessly fascinated by food customs. That's true of food customs across the world, but, as a rabbi, the study of the history of *kashrut* (Jewish food customs and laws) holds a special interest. I was thrilled, therefore, when I learned that one of my favorite Jewish food historians, Jordan D. Rosenblum, had written a new book. I'd been impatiently awaiting the publication of his "Forbidden: A 3,000-Year History of Jews and Pigs" (New York University Press) and the wait was worth it. Rosenblum's book not only shows why the pig stands out as the symbol for foods Jews will not eat (or, sometimes, deliberately eat), but also offers interesting tidbits about the history of that development. For puns lovers, the work features some real groaners, proving the author also has a sense of humor.

Rosenblum is interested in how the pig became what he calls "a litmus test for Jewish/non-Jewish identity and practice." He notes that he "refer[s] to the animal in question as 'the pig,' rarely referring to it as 'pork' or 'bacon' or 'ham.' In doing so, I want to remind us that the pig is so much more than just food. It is also both an embodied and metaphorical nonhuman animal, which is

being used to stake various claims about the identities of human animals." At one point in history, the pig became "The Pig," an entity that also referred to ancient Rome, the civilization that conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple. It was at that time that, according to Rosenblum, "biblical Israel moves from Judean tribe to Jewish religion." Following the dietary rules then became a major symbol of Jewish identity.

This plays out in the martyrdom narratives Rosenblum relates from the Greco-Roman period. People allowed themselves to be killed, rather than eat pig. That is what makes the pig stand out as a symbol of something more than food, as the author cleverly notes in the title of his chapter about contemporary America, "No Jew Ever Died Refusing to Eat Shrimp." Rosenblum writes, "While biblical texts treat the pigs as just one of a several categorically nonkosher animals, now it was singled out and endowed with greater significance. With the development of the Second Temple Period of pig as a litmus test for Jewish identity and practice... From this era on, to eat the hare, the rock badger, or the camel simply does not carry the same transgressive weight as does eating the pig." That's because, from that time onward, not eating pig meat could be dangerous, particularly for those Jews living in Europe.

Eating or not eating pigs came to define not only Judaism, but Christianity, particularly during the Medieval Period. Jewish identity was tied to pigs in unusual ways. For example, Christianity came to identify physical Jews with physical pigs. It was thought that the reason Jews didn't eat pigs was because pigs and Jews were biologically related. Pigs also became a symbol of vice and therefore a symbol of Judaism, which is strange considering the Jewish aversion to pigs. Drawings and sculptures showed Jews drinking pig's milk directly from the sow's teats. In Spain, Conversos, Jews who converted to Christianity, were referred to Marranos (pigs), which was a derogatory term, and their diets carefully watched to see whether they ate pig's meat or kept any part of the Jewish dietary laws. If they were accused of avoiding pig, they risked being

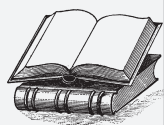
tortured and/or killed by the Inquisition. There were so-called humorous songs or stories that told of Jews being outwitted and forced to eat pig. Actually consuming pig was considered so important a religious marker that it was said that the Jew who ate pig converted to Christianity by that action.

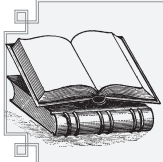
Rosenblum's discussion of the contemporary period shows that the complex relationship between Jews and pig continues. His discussion of Israel notes that, while parts of the population would prefer if everyone kept the laws of *kashrut*, some Israelis show their rejection of Judaism by eating pig. He notes that "while for religious Jewish Israelis, to ban the pig is a symbolic victory against religious oppression by non-Jews, now for secular Israelis, to permit the pig is a symbolic victory against religious oppression by religious Jews... secular Israelis use pig to intentionally transgress Jewish law and, in doing so, to establish a new—and highly contested—Jewish identity." The pig as a symbol is also used in Israeli culture for something that is disapproved of, for example, those who compare women carrying Torahs at the Western Wall to pigs carrying Torahs.

The chapter focusing on contemporary America offers a variety of interesting tidbits. Rosenblum notes that, in memoirs written by formerly Orthodox and Chasidic Jews, eating pig is considered particularly transgressive. That first taste of pig seems to be a major step in their journey to secular living. The author notes instances in film and television where the non-eating of pig is used to symbolize that someone might be Jewish. In addition, he writes of the wonderful children's book "Baxter, the Pig Who Wanted to Be Kosher," noting the book would not be as funny if Baxter were a camel or other animal forbidden by the Bible.

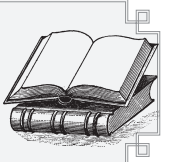
One need not be a scholar to read "Forbidden." Rosenblum has written a popular history that's perfect for those with no previous experience in its subject matter. The work allows readers to ponder the ways Jewish and non-Jewish identity can be expressed through food. Fans of Rosenblum will now be impatiently waiting for his next book.

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





Celebrating Jewish Literature



Jewish fantasy: dybbuks and mirror realms

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

If you have ever adored a novel, you sometimes approach the author's next work with trepidation. After all, is it possible for them to succeed in enchanting you a second time? That was particularly true in the case of Sacha Lamb, whose first book "When the Angels Left the Old Country" was a Stonewall Book Award winner, a Sydney Taylor Award winner, a Michael L. Printz Honor Book and a National Jewish Book Award finalist. It was also listed as a best of the year by NPR, the New York Public Library and Kirkus. (To read *The Reporter's* review of the work, visit www.thereportergroup.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-sorrows-and-joys-in-old-and-new-countries?entry=431350.) While Ariel Kaplan's first book in *The Mirror Realm Cycle*, "The Pomegranate Gate," didn't win any awards, readers of that exciting work have been impatiently waiting for the second in the series. (To read *The Reporter's* review, visit www.thereportergroup.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-angels-alternative-worlds-and-jewish-themes?entry=459425.) Those who loved both those books as much as I did will be happy (thrilled, jumping for joy?) to learn that their second works are also a delight.

The opening of Lamb's second novel, "The Forbidden Book" (Levine Querido), left me a bit confused as first because its plot requires readers to puzzle exactly what has happened to its main characters. For example, why did 17-year-old Sorel Kalmans leap from her window to escape an arranged marriage? It's clear that the marriage was not a love match, but rather a political arrangement between her rich father, a leader of the Jewish community, and the local Chasidic rabbi, who controls the more religious members of their town. Sorel's groom-to-be, the rabbi's son, could barely look her in the face when they met. But running away seems an unusual response in a novel that takes place during a time when women had few rights.

At first, her escape seems a success. Sorel disguises

herself as a young man and takes the name of Isaac Jacobs. It soon becomes clear, though, that was a mistake because there is another Isaac Jacobs living in their town and a great many people seem to want him dead. Although Sorel originally planned to leave the area, she finds herself enmeshed with learning why people want Isaac dead. With the help of Sam, a peddler who seems to be following her everywhere, and Adela, a friend of the original Isaac, Sorel not only wants to find Isaac, but discover what his disappearance means to the larger Jewish community.

In the beginning, it wasn't clear why "The Forbidden Book" was labeled a fantasy, readers soon learn it includes several mystical elements, including a dybbuk, angels, a mysterious dog and a book humans and otherworldly creatures want for different reasons. While to say more would spoil the plot, the story quickly became absorbing and includes some surprising revelations. The ending was wonderful, with the author successfully tying together all the different aspects of the plot.

Although "The Forbidden Book" is a standalone novel, the same is not true for Kaplan's "The Republic of Salt" (Erewhon Books): while readers can puzzle out parts of the plot without having read the first book in the series, it would be difficult. (If you are a big fan of fantasy with Jewish content, feel free to put this review down and order the first book in the series before continuing.) The story takes place during the Spanish Inquisition and, in the first novel, the Jewish characters were traveling from Spain to new, hopefully more hospitable homes. However, a few of them, including Toba and Naftaly, stumble into another a mirror realm of the human world where magic is real. Toba and Naftaly discover they are part human/part Mazik, which means they can perform magic due to their Mazik blood. What they also learn is that a full-blooded Mazik is looking to take over not only the mirror realm, but the human world, something that would spell disaster for both worlds.

The end of the first book left human and Mazik characters traveling toward the human and Mazik versions of the city of Zayit, where they hope to prevent its takeover in both worlds. However, unexpected problems arise, including demons and other mythical creatures who might be able to save or destroy each world. This is, of course, an oversimplification shown by the fact the novel opens with a five-page listing of the characters found in both worlds, and four pages explaining the different geographical locations featured. While no plot summary of the first novel is offered, these pages help readers reorient themselves.

The most important thing about "The Republic of Salt" is how quickly its 500-plus pages flew by and how absorbing it was. The characters – from both worlds – come to feel like friends and it's crushing when something bad happens to them. This is only the second book in the series and even though it leaves many questions unanswered, my final question was a simple one: when will book three be published?

Jew, not a Jew

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

"Goyhood, *he thought* – the state of rebounding from one travesty to the next." – *Mayer Belkin in "Goyhood"*

What happens when you discover everything you thought about your life was based on a lie? At age 12, twins Marty and David Belkin learn from Ida Mae, their mother, that they are Jewish – that not only was their father Jewish, but their mother's mother was also Jewish. The impetus behind this revelation is the Chabad rabbi who had just moved into their small town in Georgia. Rabbi Kugel takes both boys under his wing, but only Marty, now known as Mayer, becomes observant. In fact, as readers learn in "Goyhood" by Reuven Fenton (Central Avenue), he not only leaves the South to learn in a yeshiva in New York City, he agrees to spend his life within the confines of his small, Orthodox community. He is aided in this by the head of the yeshiva who arranged for him to marry his daughter, Sarah, and promises to support him as long as he continues to study and never leave the yeshiva, something to which Mayer agrees.

However, Mayer's life is turned upside down when a phone call informs him that his mother has died. He returns to Georgia to be with his brother – who, after years of flitting from one unsuccessful deal to another, is finally rich – and bury his mother. But he is surprised to learn that Rabbi Kugel wants to see him and David before the funeral, which should have been taking place that day. Kugel shows them a letter he received from their mother, sent just before her death, in which she reveals a secret: she is not Jewish. That means, according to the Orthodox Jewish law that Mayer accepts, that neither he nor David are Jewish. That also means his marriage to Sarah is invalid and all his years of study are meaningless because he believes that it is forbidden for non-Jews to study Talmud.

Ida Mae has also demanded to be cremated and have her ashes spread somewhere meaningful. Mayer is less concerned about spreading her ashes than with quickly arranging for an official Orthodox conversion and finding a way to explain to Sarah that they need to remarry since their first marriage is Jewishly invalid. But his relationship with Sarah is not the usual one of man and wife: they have been unable to have children and she has walled off a part of herself from him. Since the brothers, not being Jewish, are not required to sit *shiva*, David asks Mayer to join him on a short road trip. Mayer is horrified by David's behavior during their travels, particularly when David invites a woman he sort of knows to join them in New Orleans.

The trip does give the brothers an opportunity to better know each other, but also shows the many ways they differ. David is impulsive and fun seeking. Mayer can be extremely self-righteous and has a low opinion of anyone who isn't Jewish, which is funny considering that he now doesn't consider himself a Jew. (He adamantly refuses to accept patrilineal descent.) However, he also shows an amazing ability to talk to people, as shown in the wild and funny section when the brothers and their new friend visit a fireworks store. Because Mayer has lived such an isolated existence, readers will soon guess the underlying problem with his and Sarah's relationship, which shows just how clueless he is.

The novel's ending is also wild, although when thinking back, it doesn't feel completely believable. However, that won't bother most readers because it was so satisfying. In fact, the plot contains numerous semi-believable coincidences, but those just add to the fun. What does work is watching Mayer struggle after learning the truth about his life and trying to find a way to live in his new reality. Grappling with his ideas about God, Mayer must also decide if God really only cares about Jews, a puzzle whose answer may change the direction of his life.

Work, family and romance

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Romantic comedies: that is the longer term for what are frequently referred to as rom-coms. The shorter term suggests these novels are light and fluffy with no real substance. However, the best of these works offer a wider view of women's lives. For example, two new rom-coms – "Til There Was You" by Lindsey Hameroff (St. Martin's Griffin) and "Behind Every Good Man" by Sara Goodman Confino (Lake Union Publishing) – focus on their main characters' desire to find meaningful work, in addition to portraying their connections/disconnections to their parents.

"Til There Was You" is the more traditional rom-com. Lexi Berman is in culinary school when the novel opens. Although she loves cooking, she finds her classes difficult and unsatisfying because she is unable to concentrate on her favorite part of cooking: creating new and exciting recipes. However, she plans to persevere, if only to make her late mother proud. Cooking for her mom when she was dying of cancer was Lexi's way of showing love. Her desire to succeed is fueled by her wish to prove that her mother's belief in her was not unfounded. She is also determined to prove her worth to her father, who quickly remarried and moved to Florida after her mother's death, leaving Lexi alone in the family's apartment in Manhattan, which no longer feels like home.

Lexi does know the one thing she doesn't have time for is romance. However, when she meets Jake Taylor, a musician performing at a dive bar, they spend a wonderful weekend together. He appreciates the blueberry pancakes and other food she cooks for him. Although he is heading to Los Angeles to cut a record that next week, she can't help but wonder if they will stay in touch. He seems to want to, that is, until he suddenly begins ghosting her. Lexi tries to forget him and concentrate on her classes, but then, suddenly, not only does Jake become an overnight success whose music she can't avoid, his first hit song is about her pancakes. Even Lexi's friends are drooling over him, although they don't connect the new superstar to the Jake who once spent a weekend with Lexi.

Then Jake unexpectedly shows up at Lexi's door saying that he misses her and needs a friend. Lexi is willing to help him as a friend, but wants to guard her heart. That, of course, turns out to be easier said than done. Plus, the pressure of his celebrity greatly affects her life, including the work that she is now doing at a restaurant. Lexi is not sure exactly what she wants out of life since working at the restaurant isn't making her happy. She also has yet to deal with her feelings about her father, who wants to stay in touch, but to whom she can barely speak. These additional complications may destroy any possibility of a relationship with Jake.

"Til There Was You" was funny at times – with parts

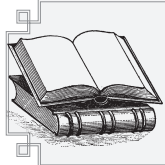
making me laugh out loud – and moving at others. Some readers may not be happy that Jake is not Jewish, but that doesn't seem to bother Lexi. The novel contains a great amount of hot sex. Its ending was fun, crazy and exciting. The author does a good job tying together all the different parts of the plot and answering questions readers might have had about Lexi's behavior.

Unlike Lexi, who is single, Beverly Diamond, the main character in "Behind Every Good Man," is married with two young children and lives in a DC suburb. Her husband, Larry, runs a senatorial campaign for an incumbent. While she does have issues with her mother, Beverly adores her father, a retired congressman and former speaker of the House, whose contacts helped Larry. In fact, her life seems just about perfect, until her world comes crashing down: Beverly learns Larry is having an affair with his secretary. Although encouraged to forgive him and move on, she can't shake his betrayal and orders him from their home.

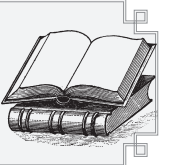
Unfortunately, a woman's economic position in 1962, when the novel takes place, is precarious. When Larry threatens to take away the house, Beverly decides she needs to find work. But she left college before graduating to marry Larry and has no business skills. However, after years of living with her father and Larry, she does have political savvy and chutzpah. She marches into the office of Michael Landau, an underdog running against the senator for whom Larry works. Although his current campaign manager is less than thrilled to have her in the office, Beverly soon proves her worth, especially after showing the men the way to succeed is by attracting women voters.

An additional complication is finding someone to watch her children while she's working. However, unexpectedly, her mother moves into her house to help her. That seems great, except for the fact her mother wants everything done her way. Beverly does appreciate the help, though, until she realizes that her mother has left her father and the move into her home is permanent. She can't stand the idea that her parents' marriage is a failure and adds reuniting them to her agenda.

"Behind Every Good Man" is light and breezy reading. The writing features dialogue and short descriptions, which makes the pages turn quickly. The best parts of the novel are watching Beverly clash with Michael's campaign manager and successfully manipulate him. Although her desire to work began partly as revenge, it turns out that Beverly is a natural. It also helps that Michael is a far better candidate than the one for whom Larry works. The romance in this rom-com is less important than the political campaign and that's fine because the political campaign was such fun to read about. In other hands, the novel could have been a depressing melodrama about a wronged woman. Instead, it was a great deal of fun about a woman who knows her worth.



Celebrating Jewish Literature



Family, career and more

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman
"Songs for the Brokenhearted"

Israel from a Yemenite Jewish point of view: that describes Ayelet Tsabari's short stories and memoir. While those works were excellent, they may leave readers unprepared for her moving and powerful first novel, "Songs for the Broken-Hearted" (Random House). The work, which takes place in the years 1950 and 1995, offers a fascinating look at Israeli life during those difficult and pivotal time periods.

The 1950s were not an easy time for Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries. Although many wanted to come to the Promised Land, life seems far from promising at first: they were forced to live in camps with their only shelter tents that offered little to no privacy. Food was sparse and tasteless. Even worse, the Israelis from Ashkenazic backgrounds treated them as primitive and ignorant. However, some remember those years fondly: at least, Yacob does, as he remembers hearing a woman singing by the river. For him, it was love at first sight. Unfortunately, even when his affection is returned, a life together is impossible. Saida already has a husband and child: there is no way she can leave her family and even innocent meetings are dangerous.

The majority of the novel, though, takes place in 1995, when Saida's daughter, Zohara, returns to Israel after her mother's death. Although the two were not close, Zohara now feels lost. Her aimlessness is partly caused by the fact that she and her American husband recently divorced. She's also lost interest in obtaining the Ph.D. toward which she has been working. Zohara and her older sister, Lizza, have grown even further apart over the years, with Zohara

knowing almost nothing about her teenage nephew, Yoni. She does note the growing division in Israel over the Oslo Accords. Yoni, who is distraught over losing his grandmother, becomes part of a group that opposes the accords. Readers with a knowledge of Israeli history will foresee just how dangerous Yoni's growing attraction to that group might be.

Tsabari brings the two parts of her plot together with great skill, but the work also offers an intriguing and extremely well-done look at Israeli society. There are discussion of the Ashkenazic-centric attitude in Israel, which greatly affected Zohara when she was sent away to boarding school after her father's death. The novel also mentions the disappearance of Yemenite babies from the immigrant camps: whether these children died as some claimed or were given to Ashkenazic parents is a question that still remains unanswered. What really stood out, though, is the discussion of the songs the Yemenite women sang that allowed them to express their feelings in a societally acceptable way. In fact, Zohara only begins to truly understand her mother when she learns about the music that these women have passed orally from generation to generation.

The depth of plot and character found in "Songs for the Broken-Hearted" marks this book as a major work of literature. It not only shows another side of Israel – including the casual racism against those whose families emigrated from Arab countries – but portrays how even those who are discriminated against can still deeply love the land that is their home. Book clubs interested in serious literature will definitely want to read and discuss "Songs for the Broken-Hearted."

"The Love Elixir of Augusta Stern"

Some writers start out strong and quickly run out of ideas. That is *not* true of Lynda Cohen Loigman, whose

works have offered a wide variety of plots and characters. Her latest, "The Love Elixir of Augusta Stern" (St. Martin's Press), is a delight: alternatively funny and moving. Its main characters, Augusta Stern and Irving Rivkin, are wonderful and engaging, both in the sections of the novel that take place in 1923 and those that show life in 1987.

Augusta is finally retiring from her job as a pharmacist at age 70 – well, really 80 – although she is only doing so to prevent discovery of how she changed the dates on documents showing her age. She's spent her life in New York City, but her niece Jackie has arranged for her to retire to a lovely senior retirement community in Florida. Augusta is not thrilled with the idea, but, at least, there is a pool she can use to continue the exercise – swimming – that keeps her in shape. Unfortunately, her first day at the pool, she hears a voice she never expected – or wanted – to hear again: Irving greets her and acts as if they can be friends. But the two have a history from her teenage years in Brooklyn, where they met at the pharmacy owned by her father.

Augusta's life radically changed after her mother died in 1920. Her father, sister Bess and Augusta seem lost without her. The worst part for Augusta is that her mother died from diabetes not long before insulin – which could have saved her life – became available. This fuels Augusta's desire to become a pharmacist, which few considered an appropriate career for a woman. That desire becomes more complex when Aunt Esther arrives. Esther is a wonderful cook and makes their apartment once again feel like a home. She is also an apothecary, although not a formally trained one. Her herbal remedies help people when doctors and drugs fail them. Augusta's father is not pleased that Esther is dispensing her remedies, but as long as she keeps them out of the store, he is willing to let her continue.

When Irving comes to work for the pharmacy as a delivery boy in 1923, he and August become friends. She begins to fall for him and believes that he feels the same. When she uses a love elixir on him – against Esther's teachings – things don't go the way she planned. In fact, Irving breaks her heart and she's determined that won't happen again in 1987. As much as he tries to befriend her, Augusta rebuffs him. That makes her a wonderful character: tough, cranky and crotchety. Irving is also interesting because readers soon realize there is more to his story than Augusta knows. The novel weaves the two time lines to show not only what happened in the past, but how life can offer new opportunities no matter your age.

"The Love Elixir of Augusta Stern" celebrates women who were willing to fulfil their dreams, even at the risk of heartache. The novel also shows how it may never be too late to find love, if only one is open and willing to risk being hurt. Book clubs who have discussed Loigman's previous works will definitely want to add this one to their list. Readers who are unfamiliar with the author may find themselves looking up her earlier works to enjoy once they finish this one.

"The Singer Sisters"

Mothers and daughters taking different life paths: those differences form the undercurrent of Sarah Seltzer's "The Singer Sisters" (Flatiron Books). At first, it seems that what divides Emma and her mother, Judie, is the choice between a music career or a more conventional life. This simplifies the dilemma since Judie once had an extremely successful music career, performing with her sister and writing songs for her successful musician husband. Emma, who is just starting out in her career, longs for the kind of success her mother had: people still love Judie's music even though she has long disappeared from the public eye to raise her three children. However, as Emma and readers discover, there is far more to Judie's story. The novel moves back and forth in time as mother and daughter each must decide what they want from life.

The most interesting section of the novel deals with Judie's younger life, particularly what occurs after she ran away from home as a teenager. The events that took place formed her worldview and character. To say more would spoil the plot, but most readers will be able to fill in the blanks before the characters in future generation understand what occurred. What Emma does not realize at first is how these events changed her mother's priorities. When she does discover why her mother acted as she did, she still has difficulty coming to terms with her mother's choices because what they desire is so different. An additional problem arises when Emma performs songs her mother wrote and never wanted to be performed publicly. That threatens to permanently rupture their relationship.

To this reader, Emma came across as a bit spoiled, partly because she so favors her father, a problematic choice due to his behavior over the years. She is also unable to appreciate her mother's desire to focus on her family rather than her career. Although I didn't feel particularly engaged with the characters during most of the novel, its ending proved to be extremely moving, partly because it explores the feelings that music creates in its listeners – how it can make them feel as if the writer was speaking directly to them.

Dystopias focus on Israel and anomalies

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

The Oxford Dictionary defines the term dystopia as "an imagined state or society in which there is great suffering or injustice, typically one that is totalitarian or post-apocalyptic." That term describes two recent novels – "The Third Temple" by Yishai Sarid (Restless Books) and "Next Stop" by Benjamin Resnick (Avid Reader Press) – that offer very different versions of the future. Sarid's book features a post-democratic kingdom of Israel, while in Resnick's a black hole suddenly swallows the state of Israel. Both works explore how these events affect Israel and the Jewish community.

"The Third Temple" opens with a statement by a Scientific Council noting that the following document was written by Prince Jonathan, who was third in line for the throne of the Kingdom of Judah. At first, readers might assume that the novel pretends to be a newly found book of the Bible. However, it soon becomes clear that this is a vision of the future. Jonathan is writing his words while sitting in a jail cell after the kingdom was conquered. Over the course of the novel, readers piece together exactly how the kingdom formed and why it failed.

The impetus for the change from a democracy to a kingship was a nuclear attack that destroyed Tel Aviv, Haifa and other progressive cities. Jonathan's father, Jehoaz, had a vision that told him to return to the true version Israel: a third Kingdom of Judah based purely on biblical law. Declaring himself both king and high priest, Jehoaz expelled all the Amalekites (which is how Jonathan refers to Arabs) from the state. Most importantly, he rebuilt the Temple, reestablished the priesthood and reinstated animal sacrifices. Since Jehoaz believes that the destroyed cities had gone against God's will, he encouraged the Judeans to live in strict accordance to biblical law and return to farming. This has not prevented food shortages and other financial difficulties, since the rest of the world has boycotted Israel, allowing for no food or other goods to be exported to the country.

Jonathan's focus, though, is on the Temple. Although he was physically injured and, therefore, according to biblical law, should not have been able to serve as a priest, his father allows him to help his older brother Joel, who handles the financial aspects of the Temple. Jonathan focuses on the daily sacrifices, which are described in great detail, from the slicing of the animal's throat to the collection of the blood and the burning of sections of the carcass. Although Jonathan feels God's presence in the Temple and carefully follows the laws, unlike the other priests, he can no longer bring himself to eat meat.

After Jehoaz declares war against the surrounding Amalekite nations, Jonathan receives a mysterious visitor. Claiming to be an angel bringing the word of God, the visitor tells him that he must demand that his father relinquish his kingship. If not, God will destroy the country. This revelation causes Jonathan to ponder the meaning of his connection to God and to wonder why God needs animal sacrifices, especially when people are starving. Jonathan also begins to wonder if God actually cares about the Jews since the visitor also recounts all the evils that have happened to the Jewish people over the generations.

"The Third Temple" is an unusual novel in that it is im-

pressive and unlikable at the same time. But that's its power: it makes readers face what might happen if Israel was no longer a democracy, but rather a kingdom based on biblical laws enforced by one man. In an author's note written in 2024, Sarid notes that, when the novel was published in 2015, people in Israel saw it as science fiction, but today its treatment of extremism is seen as contemporary and relevant. Book clubs that focus on difficult, serious fiction should find much to discuss.

While "The Third Temple" take place in Israel, "Next Stop" begins in an unnamed metropolis that clearly feels like New York City. When Israel disappears in a black hole type anomaly and other, smaller anomalies appear across the world, the world has a typical reaction: the Jews are to blame. That blame is caused by fear: no one knows what caused the anomalies and no one knows when the next one will appear. Plus, if someone Jewish approaches an anomaly, they feel pulled to enter it, even against their better judgement. However, no one knows what is on the other side since no one who entered an anomaly has ever returned. As fears grow, Jews are fired from their jobs and forced to live in specific areas. Even children aren't safe: they are soon enrolled in Jews-only schools.

In the midst of this turmoil, Ethan Block meets Ellen Halperin during the time when Jews could still obtain regular employment. He is drawn to her, but she, at first, resists their mutual attraction. This is partly because she has a son, Michael who is 6 when they meet. Michael's father was a non-Jew who deserted her and Michael, and this makes her wary. Their relationship develops with the secular Ethan meeting her family, who are more observant, although not Orthodox. Even as they try to develop a life together, strange and unexplained events affect their decisions, from a so-called messiah who causes people to float above the ground to a mysterious jar of pickled tomatoes that never empties no matter how many tomatoes are taken from it.

Another difficulty is that Ethan and Ellen approach their situation from different points of view. Should they take part in a growing Jewish resistance movement? Or should they wait for the world to return to normal and restore Jewish rights? Looming behind these choices are the anomalies. Some non-Jews want to force the remaining Jewish population to enter them. Some Jews feel that all Jews should emigrate through them, although, in both cases, one question remains: what is on the other side? An additional question that the novel never truly addresses is exactly what caused the anomalies in the first place and what – if any – is their connection to the Jewish people.

"Next Stop" is a puzzling work because so many of its questions remain unanswered, even after its conclusion. What does succeed is the author's portrayal of the developing relationship between Ethan, Ellen and Michael. Readers will begin to care about them, even when the parts of the plot focusing on the anomalies don't make sense. For this reader, the ending of the novel felt incomplete: while interesting, I felt like I was missing something essential. Was there a deeper meaning or did the author just want to leave readers with unanswered questions? This intriguing work may have greater appeal to readers who enjoy debating unanswered questions.

JCC held fund-raising gala



The Jewish Community Center held its fund-raising gala on November 16. Shown are members of the staff and JCC board members who attended.



Comedian Josh Wallenstein entertained those attending.



COMEDY CAFE
 Friday, November 16th 7:00 P.M.
 Following Midway of Good Deeds!

Special Guest: **MIKE ALBANESE**
 Opening Act: **JOSH WALLENSTEIN**

Special Guest: **NAIMA KRADJIAN**
 Opening Act: **JAN DEANGELO**

TICKETS: \$25
 (607) 724-2111
 BROADWAY THEATRE BOX OFFICE NOV. 21
 JCC BROADWAY BOX OFFICE 8000 ROAD VESTAL

Mike Albanese is a New York based comedian, writer, and director who has captivated audiences worldwide with his stand-up comedy since 2009. With a distinctive blend of humor and insight, Mike has made a name for himself as a versatile performer and creative force in the comedy scene. You may recognize him from his appearances on BET's "The Gents" (live streaming on Paramount+), the indie comedy "American Dittags" (available for free on Amazon), and the upcoming comedy thriller film "Blood Mountain Massacre" (now available on Fandor).

Josh Wallenstein, a Huntington native, has been performing stand up comedy since 2018. While living in California, he performed at Levity Live, Ventura Harbor Comedy Club and Flappers Comedy Club. In 2022, Josh was featured in "Boys & Cells," a one man show produced at the Cider Mill Stage. Josh currently resides in New York City where he performs comedy and teaches middle school science.

"What soap is to the body, laughter is to the soul."
 ~Yiddish Proverb

Shown above is the program for the evening.

At left: Naima Kradjian was one of the performers during the gala.



	4.49 with AdvantEdge Card Golden Blintzes 6 Pack 13 oz. • Select Varieties		15.99 lb. Meal Mart 1st Cut Fresh Beef Brisket Kosher
	2/\$7 with AdvantEdge Card Kedem Sparkling Juice 25.4 oz. • Select Varieties		3.99 lb. Empire Kosher Whole Turkey 3.99 lb. Frozen
	2/\$7 with AdvantEdge Card Gefen Whole Roasted Chestnuts 5.2 oz. • Shelled		4.49 lb. Empire Kosher Whole Roasting Chicken 4.49 lb. Frozen
	4/\$5 with AdvantEdge Card Streit's Egg Noodles 12 oz. • Select Varieties or Bows 8 oz.		18.99 Empire Kosher Boneless Chicken Breast 2 Lbs. 18.99 Frozen
	5.99 with AdvantEdge Card Osem Chicken Consomme 14.1 oz.		10.99 Meal Mart Chicken Wings 10.99 Frozen • 24 oz.
	3.99 with AdvantEdge Card Osem Mini Croutons 14.1 oz. • The Original Mini "Mandel"		9.99 Meal Mart Frozen Ground Beef • 16 oz. \$12.99
	2/\$5 with AdvantEdge Card Osem Toasted Couscous 8.8 oz.		12.99 Meal Mart Egg Rolls With Mushrooms & Vegetables 25 oz. Meal Mart Meat Balls in Marinara Sauce • 33 oz. \$15.99
	2/\$5 with AdvantEdge Card Lipton Recipe Secrets Soup and Dip Mix 1.9-4.5 oz. • Kosher Varieties		6.99 PICS Cold Smoked Atlantic Salmon 6.99 4 oz. • All Varieties
	2/\$6 with AdvantEdge Card Manischewitz Broth 17 oz. • All Varieties		4/\$3 Kedem Tea Biscuits 4.2 oz. • Select Varieties
	2/\$6 with AdvantEdge Card Manischewitz Matzo Ball & Soup Mix 4.5-5 oz. • Select Varieties		3.99 Bosco Chocolate Syrup 22 oz.
	2/\$5 with AdvantEdge Card Farmers Horseradish 8.5 oz.		5/\$2 Carmit Chanukah Coins .42 oz. • Milk or Dark Chocolate
	3.49 with AdvantEdge Card Breakstone's Whipped Butter 8 oz.		89¢ with AdvantEdge Card Streit's Chanukah Candles 44 Ct.

CHANUKAH GIFTS

www.AUDIOCLASSICS.com
 AUDIO • HOME THEATER • STEREO

Phone/Fax **607-766-3501**
 BUY • SELL • TRADE • REPAIR • CONSIGN

3501 Vestal Road Vestal, NY 13850 Hours: Mon-Fri 8-5:30 • Sat 11-4

Your ad could be here!

For more information on advertising, please contact advertising@thereportergroup.org

THE REPORTER
 Published by the Jewish Federation of Broome County, Inc.
 www.thereportergroup.org

HAPPY CHANUKAH

KOSHER WINE

Space Time® Mead & Cider Works
 419 S. Blakely St
 Dunmore, PA 18512
 570-504-5758

We Ship!
 spacetimeadworks.com

Celebrating the Festival of Lights



	8.99 with AdvantEdge Card Golden Honeycrisp Apples 5 Lb. Bag		3.99 with AdvantEdge Card Golden Pancakes 10.6 oz. • Select Varieties
	2/\$3 with AdvantEdge Card Streit's Potato Pancake Mix 6 oz. • All Varieties		3.29 with AdvantEdge Card PICS Apple Sauce 23-24 oz. Jar • All Varieties

MARKET 32 BY PRICE CHOPPER

Price Chopper

Offers effective Sunday, November 24, 2024 thru Saturday, January 4, 2025 in all Market 32, Price Chopper and Market Bistro stores located in CT, MA, NH, NY, PA & VT. Not all items are available in all stores.



Weekly Parasha

Toldot, Genesis 25:19-28:9

This year, we read *parashat* Toldot the same week that families throughout the U.S. gather together in celebration of Thanksgiving. This correspondence is noteworthy. Thanksgiving is a time when many people prepare themselves to either avoid or to square off in debates with relatives about cultural and political issues. As Thanksgiving approaches, especially in the wake of a presidential election, many Americans wrestle with how best to handle different perspectives, values and life-choices within the intimate circles of our families and friends. When our relatives say or do something that feels like an affront to us, how should we respond?

Parashat Toldot portrays several incidents of family conflict between Jacob and Esau. What lessons can we learn from these stories as we try to navigate our own families with empathy and integrity?

A simple reading of the *parasha* does not represent our ancestor Jacob in the greatest light. Twice, Jacob intentionally usurps his brother to claim the more powerful role within the Abrahamic family. In particular, our ancestor Jacob buys his birthright from Esau and “tricks” his father Isaac into giving him the covenantal blessing. Jacob here does not seem like an exemplar of compassionately navigating his differences with his brother. On the contrary,

with the help and encouragement of his mother Rebecca and, according to *midrash*, the consent of his father Isaac, Jacob pursues his vision for the future. He acts in order to claim the mantle of family leadership.

It may be that there are moments when this approach is called for. There are times when it is good that our moral clarity and conviction drive us to take action on behalf of the world we hope to see, even at the cost of the grief of those who see things differently. There may be moments at your Thanksgiving table when you feel moved to speak up about what you believe is right, even with complete

RABBI MICAH FRIEDMAN, TEMPLE ISRAEL

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 30, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Genesis 25:19-26:5 and the haftarah is I Samuel 20:18-42. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 5:30 pm.

An Executive Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 3, at 7 pm.

The Hebrew school will meet on Wednesdays, December 4 and 11, at 4 pm.

On Saturday, December 7, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Genesis 28:10-32:3 and the haftarah is Hosea 12:13-14:10. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 5:30 pm.

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 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 29, light candles before 4:15 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, November 30 5:15 pm
Friday, December 6, light candles before 4:13 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, December 7 5:14 pm
Friday, December 13, light candles before 4:14 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, December 14 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 29: 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 30: No Shabbat school; at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87897900994?pwd=bOMvwx-DuovoaBlnB4aVflHoTlSyamj.1>, meeting ID 878 9790 0994 and passcode 743506. To dial in, call 646-931-3860.

Sunday, December 1: From 10 am-2 pm, Sisterhood Rummage Sale in the temple basement. Shoppers are asked to use the Oak Street entrance.

Tuesday, December 3: At 10:30 am, the Tuesday Morning Book Club: “The Wolf Hunt” by Ayelet Gundar-Goshen, translated by Jessica Cohen. For more information, contact Merri Pell-Preus at 607-222-2875 or merrypell.preus@gmail.com. Join via Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88164694206?pwd=RFp0Y3g5M-mJZQjVwRGtjNFdIRnFDUT09>, meeting ID 881 6469 4206 and passcode 653272.

Tuesday-Thursday, December 3-5, at 5:30 pm: Evening prayers with Rabbi Leah Moser, in-person only.

Friday, December 6: 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, December 7: 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=bOMvwx-DuovoaBlnB4aVflHoTlSyamj.1>, meeting ID 878 9790 0994 and passcode 743506. To dial in, call 646-931-3860.

Tuesday-Thursday, December 10-12, at 5:30 pm: Evening prayers with Rabbi Leah Moser, in-person only.

Tuesday, December 10: At 7 pm, General (Board of Trustees) Board meeting. The meeting is open to members of Temple Concord. For the meeting link, contact the synagogue at 607-723-7355 or templeconcordaa@gmail.com.

Congregation Tikkun v'Or

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

Website: www.tikkunvor.org, E-mail: info@tikkunvor.org
Presidents: Martha Armstrong and Mitch Grossman, presidents_22@tikkunvor.org

Education Director/Admin. Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky
Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator: Michael Margolin
Services: All services currently on Zoom. E-mail info@tikkunvor.org for the times and links. Contemplative morning services every Tuesday from 8:30-9:30 am. Saturday mornings, Gan Shabbat and other special services at least once a month. Call for the weekly schedule. Jewish Learning Experiences (JLE) for second through seventh grade classes meet on Sunday mornings. Sixth and seventh grades also meet on Wednesday afternoons. Family programs for kindergarten and first grade held monthly. Adult Education: Offered regularly throughout the year. Check the website for details.

BD Sisterhood paid-up membership dinner



Dina Danon spoke about her research at the dinner.

On November 13, Beth David Sisterhood held its paid-up membership dinner, which was prepared by Stacey Silber and her committee. Guests were welcome. The speaker was Dina Danon, associate professor of Judaic studies at Binghamton University, who talked about her research into matchmaking and marriage in the Ottoman Sephardi world as it transitioned into the modern era.

At right: Attendees at Beth David Sisterhood's paid-up membership dinner listened to Dina Danon speak about marriage and matchmaking customs in the pre-modern Ottoman Sephardi world. (Photos by Cathy Velenchik)



Family.....Continued from page 10

knowledge that others at the table might feel rebuffed as a result. There are times when standing up for something or someone you care about is the right path, even if it could jeopardize a relationship with a loved one.

At the same time, the Torah clearly emphasizes the transformative and redemptive power of siblings who come together despite their differences. While throughout Bereshit siblings fight with each other, in Exodus, our redemption is borne through the mutual respect, recognition and team-work of siblings with different perspectives and skills. In contrast to the rivalry of Jacob and Esau, a rivalry so heated that, in our *parasha*, Esau expresses his desire to kill Jacob, Moses, Aaron and Miriam demonstrate that there is an alternative path for relatives to take. The redemption of the Jewish people from enslavement in Egypt requires the collaborative effort of three siblings, Moses, Aaron and Miriam. (See Micah 6:4: "In fact, I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage, And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.") After the horrible betrayal of Joseph by his brothers, and the horrible destruction of enslaved Hebrew families, one family (Yocheved, Amram and their three children) is able to work together in order to free the larger family of Israel, the descendants of Jacob's sons.

Since ancient times, Jews have sometimes understood our current geo-political conflicts to be derived from the prototypical conflicts of our ancestors and their brothers, of Jacob and Esau, of Isaac and Ishmael. While identifying current conflicts with apparent biblical antecedents might help us feel as if we understand our own circumstances

with greater clarity, this projection of the past onto the present can serve as an impediment to turning a new page and charting a path toward a more peaceful future.

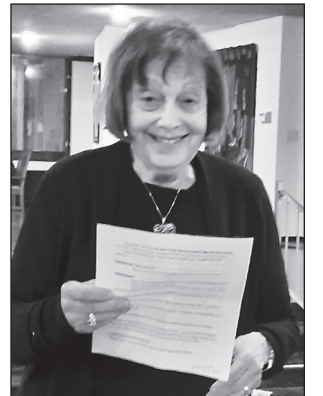
On the other hand, it is also possible that our reading of and identification with the stories of the conflicts of our ancestors can inspire us to see the moments when they were able to find common ground, even with their sibling-enemy. Even in the book of Bereshit, despite the rivalry between Isaac and Ishmael and their mothers, they come together to bury their father Abraham. (Genesis 25:9: "His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah.") Despite Esau's apparent hatred for Jacob, Jacob and Esau come together to bury their father, Isaac. (Genesis 35:28: "He was gathered to his kin in ripe old age; and he was buried by his sons Esau and Jacob.")

I humbly suggest that our efforts to maintain good relationships with family and friends, even as we may disagree vehemently, can help us to inherit the blessings promised to our ancestors. When we are able to treat our brethren with mutual-respect and generosity – even those whose views we cannot comprehend – we can carry on the tradition of our biblical ancestors and of the three siblings who collaborated together for the liberation of the children of Israel.

As we prepare to share long and possibly loaded visits with our loved ones, we have the opportunity to follow in the redemptive path laid by the children of Yocheved and Amram: Moshe, Aharon and Miriam. We have the chance to rise above our rivalries and express our disagreements while maintaining our dedication to our shared heritage and our shared future.



Toby Kohn prepared to read the meeting's opening prayer.



Susan Hubal read the minutes from the September Sisterhood meeting.

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

Moving any time soon?
Whether you're moving across town or across the country, please let *The Reporter* know so you can stay up to date on community news! E-mail treporter@aol.com with "Reporter Address change" in the subject line, or call 607-724-2360, ext. 254, to let *The Reporter* know about your new address.

Clip and Save These Personal Business Services

THE REPORTER
Published by the Jewish Federation of Broome County, Inc.

ERNEST H. PARSONS FUNERAL HOME
Faithfully Serving Broome County Since 1928

PRE-ARRANGEMENTS AND PRE-FUNDING AVAILABLE
Joseph Fritsch
Managing Director

71 Main St., Binghamton, NY 13905
Phone 607-724-1336
Fax 800-948-5844

parsonsfuneral@yahoo.com
www.ParsonsFuneral.com

HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

Disaster Clean-Up
Fire & Water Damage Restoration

Mold Removal
Dehumidification
Moisture Testing • Contents
Building Cleaning
Packouts & Storage
Construction & Repairs

24/7 Including Holidays
607.748.0128 (ph)
607.748.3604 (fx)

Arthur Diamond, President
3216 Watson Blvd.
Endwell, NY 13760

www.disaster-cleanup.com

HOPLER & ESCHBACH FUNERAL HOME
"A new family tradition"

Personal Service
Professionalism
Experience You Can Trust

COMPARE OUR PRICES
We charge far less than other area funeral homes

Kurt M. Eschbach, Funeral Director
483 Chenango Street Binghamton
607-722-4023
www.HEfuneralhome.com

It just makes cents to advertise here in *The Reporter!*

For information on advertising, contact Kathy Brown at 607-724-2360, ext. 244, or advertising@thereportergroup.org.

THE REPORTER
Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

Greater Binghamton's Preferred Electrical Contractor

BLANDING ELECTRIC, INC.
729-3545

Service Upgrades
Panel Change-outs
Heating Circuits
Indoor & Outdoor Lighting
Appliance Circuits & Outlets
Generator Installation
Data & Phone Cabling
Audio * Video * Security

FREE ESTIMATES GUARANTEED WORK EMERGENCY SERVICE

FREE ESTIMATES GUARANTEED WORK 24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE

WINTER IS HERE!
Generator Installation
Roof De-Icer * Heat Circuits
Heat Tape * Outdoor Outlets

10% OFF
with this ad. Cannot be combined with other offers. Valid for Residential Service only. Expires 2/28/25

429 Commerce Road
Vestal, New York 13850
blanding-electric.com

Jewish group seeks six-month "emergency" to fight Jew-hate in EU

By Canaan Lidor

KRAKOW, Poland (JNS)—A rabbi from Brussels recently called on the European Union to declare a six-month emergency period for fighting antisemitism at anti-Israel protests and beyond. He warned that Jews would leave Europe in the absence of such action.

Rabbi Menachem Margolin, the director of the Brussels-based European Jewish Association, issued the call in a speech he made in Krakow, Poland, to about 100 participants of a conference commemorating the 80th anniversary of the liberation of

the nearby Auschwitz German death camp.

"The European Jewish Association calls on the European Union and its member states to declare a six-month emergency period to combat period, with high-level protection for Jewish communities but also special measures at public events," said Margolin. Such events have become "a fanfare where anything goes and anything can be said and done."

Organizers of protests under the plan would need to "sign an obligation" against speech that incites violence and face rigorous monitoring for such conduct and heavy

punishments, said Margolin. "If our call today won't be answered, we will start to see an exodus of Jews from Europe and the end of Jewish life on this continent, and Europe will lose an important part of its history and rich culture," he said.

The conference at a hotel on the outskirts of Krakow was advertised on large, jarring banners featuring a photograph of graffiti documented in London this year that read: "Kill a Jew."

Amichai Chikli, Israel's minister of Diaspora affairs and combating antisemitism, addressed the conference via a video message. The "slogan 'Never again' seems to be fading away amid countless attacks on Jews, especially in Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and France," he said.

The conference, held ahead of the annual EJA Delegation to Auschwitz, was attended by top politicians and Jewish community leaders from across the continent. The EJA showed a film that began with archive footage of buildings burning in Germany during the Kristallnacht pogroms of 1938. This was followed by a string of videos from a series of assaults by Arabs against Israelis in Amsterdam on November 7 following a soccer match between Maccabi Tel Aviv and the Ajax team.

The pogrom in Amsterdam "reminded us of pictures we wanted to forget and that we thought we'd never see again," Chikli said.

"The situation is the worst it's been since Kristallnacht," Margolin said. "As we pre-

pare to visit Auschwitz, where 6 million Jews were murdered, we do so sadly knowing that Europe is walking down the same path."

Budapest Mayor Gergely Szilveszter Karacsony spoke at the conference about the complicity of Hungarians in the Holocaust, a controversial issue in his country. "Although the accepted history is that Nazis killed the Jews in the Holocaust, in Hungary this is not true. The Hungarian state was responsible," he said. Today, he added, Budapest is "one of the safest places in Europe for Jews."

Christer Mattsson, a lecturer and expert on radicalization and antisemitism from the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, spoke about anti-Zionism as a modern reincarnation of traditional antisemitism.

"When the nation was the ultimate good, the Jew was a cosmopolitan," he said. "Today, when human rights are the ultimate good, Israel becomes the ultimate antithesis. This is Israelification of antisemitism, where Israel serves as the collective global Jew."

Mattsson noted how in traditional Christian antisemitism, some baptized Jews who'd converted to Christianity were presented as role models for others. The same dynamic, he argued, is on display in anti-Israel circles and propaganda, where "token Jews, good Jews, who are anti-Israel, are presented as acceptable.

"This is stated openly: The only real Jew is an anti-Zionist Jew, an idea often placed prominently at these events," he said.

TC Sisterhood held cooking event



On November 17, members of the Temple Concord Sisterhood attended a cooking event to learn to prepare street foods. The event was held at the Phantom Chef. Front row (l-r): Nancy Dorfman, Hollie Levine, Phyllis Kellenberger and Suzanne Holwitt. Back row: Rabbi Rachel Esserman, Lynn Ross, Deb Daniels and Rachel Coker.

Veterans Continued from page 2

Major General Maurice Rose, commander of the Third Armored Division, known for aggressive tactics, succumbed to 14 rounds of German fire on March 30, 1945.

In 1906, Hyman Rickover, age 6, followed his Polish Russian family to America in search of a better life. Ultimately a four-star admiral with a record 63 years of active service, his was perhaps the most storied career in American naval history. Rickover's greatest achievement was as "Father of the Nuclear Navy."

The quarter-century military career of Green Beret Sergeant Major Lawrence "Gus" Freedman began in Vietnam, where he received two Bronze Stars. In 1992, a landmine took his life during the Somalia intervention.

Commissioned a four-star admiral in 2021, Rachel Levine challenged barriers as an admiral, transgender M.D. and head of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps.

Assuming command of the legendary New York Army National Guard's "Fighting 69th" battalion in 2021, a historically Irish Catholic bastion, Lieutenant Colonel Shawn Tabankin, recipient of two Bronze Star medals during the Iraq campaign, became the protector of the unit's iconic Kilmer crucifix, an ironic, yet proud, task for a Jewish officer.

Immigration and Judaism shaped the trajectory of Army colonels and identical twin brothers Eugene and Alexander Vindman. Born in 1975, their mother died when the twins were 3 years old. Their father Simon, fired as a civil engineer for denouncing the Communist Party, saw no future for his family in the repressive, authoritarian, antisemitic Ukraine of that era, then part of the Soviet Union. With the twins, older son

Len and the boys' maternal grandmother, Simon fled Kiev for Italy before coming to their American home in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, in 1979. At age 10, Alexander and Eugene gained minor celebrity for their brief appearance in filmmaker Ken Burns' 1985 documentary "The Statue of Liberty," a paean to America as a land of liberty for immigrants yearning to breathe free.

Initially, times were tough for the Vindman family. Arriving with only \$759 and hauling furniture for \$20 a day, Simon studied at night, took exams and reclaimed his place a civil engineer in New York City.

To express their gratitude to America, the twins – and brother Len – volunteered for military service. An infantry commander in Iraq, Alexander suffered wounds inflicted by an explosive device during a 2004 reconnaissance mission. In 2019, Alexander, on military assignment to the National Security Council, gave eloquent testimony despite threats during the House of Representatives impeachment investigation against President Donald Trump. Alexander recounted a phone call during which Trump pressured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate rival Joe Biden's son, Hunter, by threatening loss of military aid.

Also on military assignment to the NSC, Eugene supported his brother speaking truth to power. After losing their positions in retaliation, the Vindmans never expressed regret, regarding their whistleblowing as patriotic. Despite Trump's 2024 triumph, Eugene Vindman, a proponent of refugee asylum as emblematic of the American Creed, won election to the House of Representatives.

Don't wait until next November 11 to thank a veteran for his/her service.

Annual Campaign 2025

this year it's different

MAKE YOUR PLEDGE NOW!

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

You can make your pledge 3 ways:

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

Mail this form to:

**Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton,
500 Clubhouse Rd.,
Vestal, NY 13850**

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____

State/ Zip Code: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone Number: _____

Amount Pledge: _____



this year it's different.



Jewish Federation
of Greater Binghamton

Eye-Catching
Classifieds

YOUR HEATING & PLUMBING SPECIALISTS
BAKER'S PLUMBING & HEATING
We Also Do Natural Gas Conversions & All Plumbing Work
Free Estimates • Fully Insured • Residential & Commercial
We Install, Service & Repair...
Furnaces • Air Conditioners
Water Heaters • Gas Fireplaces
SERVING BROOME & TIoga COUNTIES
754-6376
pbaker927@yahoo.com

It just makes cents to advertise here in The Reporter!
To advertise, contact Kathy Brown at 607-724-2360, ext. 244 or advertising@thereportergroup.org.

THE REPORTER
Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton