

THE REPORTER

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Opinion

“But is it good for the Jews?”: Election 2024

By Bill Simons

“But is it good for the Jews?” I am uneasy when that phrase is referenced concerning American politics. It feeds the canard about a powerful, secretive, international Jewish cabal. Making identity politics central is divisive, corrosive to the vital center. Although Jews have largely leaned left and Democratic since Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, neither ideology nor party affiliation are uniform amongst us. On specific, Jews respond in diverse ways.

To retreat from the toxic polarization of contemporary American politics, we need to consider the common good, not exclusively that of a particular segment of the populace. Commitment to the common good doesn’t mean uniformity of thought or behavior, but it does encourage advocacy, debate, compromise and resolution consistent with the Constitution and a decent respect for the opinion of others. Within that framework, it is appropriate to bring values and aspirations shaped by our ultimate concerns into the public square for robust discourse. That right must remain

inviolable, regardless of one’s creed, color, ancestry, gender or orientation. Jews don’t need to hide or forget who they are in their public life, nor does any other American.

Popular Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, a Democrat, often relates his conception of Judaism to a commitment to justice and fair play. So, too, did the late Connecticut senator and 2000 Democratic vice-presidential candidate Joe Lieberman, who strictly observed the Sabbath and frequently wore a *kippah* in public. Not all Jewish office holders, candidates and voters are so candid about their religion and ethnicity. Nonetheless, many American Jews came to the 2024 presidential election campaign supporting Israel, albeit with assorted views of what that meant, and concerned about rising U.S. antisemitism.

President Joe Biden failed in his attempts to prod Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to prioritize negotiations and minimize civilian casualties. Nonetheless, Biden, whose three ranking cabinet officers are Jewish and three children all married Jews, never equivocated in providing

Israel with vital armaments, military intelligence and diplomatic support. And the president took a hardline against resurgent antisemitism on the home front.

The Democratic candidate, Vice President Kamala Harris, despite the visibility of her Jewish husband Douglas Emhoff, lacked Biden’s bona fides on Israel. She failed to preside over Netanyahu’s address to Congress or even to meet with him. Her campaign rhetoric about war in the Mideast appeared contradictory and disingenuous. Harris affirmed Israel’s right of survival and self-defense, but she would emphasize, particularly when addressing Arab American audiences, that she would not allow Israel to continue to inflict heavy losses on noncombatants.

Due to his failure to condemn the nativist implications of Christian nationalism and the far right’s embrace of the replacement theory, many Jews questioned Republican candidate Donald Trump’s commitment to combating domestic antisemitism, some even comparing him to Hitler. See “Election” on page 12

One Perspective from Israel

Who wants 10 sweaty, smelly soldiers?

JEREMY M. STAIMAN

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

“How do you think they feel, having 10 sweaty, smelly soldiers living in their house?” she asked.

I’m no historian, but I remembered learning something about soldiers taking over private homes for their own use. The details, however, were elusive. I guess I should have paid more attention in American history class, but thankfully, Professor Google quickly refreshed me on the particulars.

With apologies to my British daughter-in-law, it seems that 11 years before the American Revolution, the British passed the Quartering Act, which required the Colonists to provide housing and provisions to the British soldiers in their towns, at their own expense.

While it’s popularly believed that this allowed soldiers to take over citizens’ homes, the Professor tells me that that’s not actually correct. However, the public did need to come up with the funds to provide for the British troops’ needs. In any case, the Third Amendment to the U.S. Constitution severely curtailed the practice of “quartering” soldiers, requiring the consent of the owners.

Enough of the history lesson. If I didn’t pay sufficient attention the first time, there’s no reason why you should have to suffer through it now.

When the rocket fire from Lebanon escalated into a new full-blown front in the war, many troops were relocated from the southern border to the north. My son’s group was among them. Was it a unit? A platoon? A brigade? As a member of the sandwich generation that didn’t get sent to war, I honestly can’t keep the differences straight. All I know is that there were thousands of soldiers.

Thousands of soldiers whose training over the years was for battle in Lebanon.

Thousands of soldiers who now needed somewhere to stay on the Israeli side of the northern border.

I don’t envy the logistics people in the IDF who have to magically conjure up transportation, housing, food, etc., for large numbers of people, sometimes at a moment’s notice. But they found lodging for my son’s immediate group of 10 or so in a *gan* (a children’s nursery). Perhaps not very comfortable, but at least it was an indoor space, with a solid roof over their heads.

Evidence of the abrupt evacuation of the local residents following Hezbollah’s shelling was everywhere. The local *shul* was still decorated for Sukkot and Simchat Torah. The *gan* walls were adorned with pictures of the holidays. And while all of these ornaments could easily have been from this year, they were not. They were from last year. The orphaned cottage cheese in the nursery’s refrigerator

told the story. Its date: October 6, 2023 – the day before our whole world changed.

Reminders of this northern community’s regular life were the soldiers’ shadows. There was no escaping them.

A week or so after they arrived, a friend of a friend (or maybe it was a cousin of an aunt, or a neighbor of a co-worker – in Israel it’s pretty much all the same), found them a house they could stay in. There were no issues of the Quartering Act at play here, with the soldiers forcing themselves upon a residence. Just the opposite. The family – from their sanctuary far away from the border – gladly agreed to have the soldiers stay in their house.

Even in the comfort of a real home with real beds, the reminders were omnipresent. Enter the front door, and there was a lulav, blackened with mold, suspended on the coat hook where it was hung a year prior.

It’s an odd thing living in someone else’s home, even with their assent. There’s wear and tear (and soldiers probably excel at inadvertently wearing and tearing!), and there are gas and lights and electricity being used. So this minyan of home guests, of their own initiative, and from their own pockets, started a Paybox account to help reimburse their hosts for the costs of their stay.

See “Soldiers” on page 6

In My Own Words

My synagogue quirk

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

I have what some might consider an unusual quirk when meeting someone new at my synagogue: I never ask them what they do for a living. While I’m more than happy to learn about their work/career if they are interested in talking about it, in the context of the synagogue, it is irrelevant. As far as I am concerned, once we enter those doors, we are all equal. From the rich and powerful to the poor and powerless, we all count the same in the minyan. Our worth outside those doors doesn’t matter.

While I’ve learned to say that this is because we are all *B’tselem Elohim* (made in the image of God), I really learned this lesson years ago, long before I went to rabbinical school. The reason is intensely personal: I was once the person who was considered beneath consideration in many places. For years, I had health problems that made it difficult to work. That might have been excused if at least I’d been married, but I wasn’t. The members of my synagogue, though, welcomed me because I showed up

and pitched in when and if I could. It was the one place besides my parents’ home where no one looked down on me.

I thought about this recently because I attended the burial of Marilyn Aigen, who had been a member of Temple Beth El of Endicott during the years when that synagogue was my second home. I owe a great debt to her and her late husband, Joe. When their son became a Reconstructionist rabbi, they brought Temple Beth El to the Reconstructionist movement. I’d always identified as Jewish, but had not been particularly ritually religious. But, as I learned with the first Reconstructionist rabbi we had, I could finally bring my whole self to the prayer services and classes – both my spirit and my brain. Questioning was encouraged and no question was off limits.

If Temple Beth El had not become Reconstructionist, I would not be a rabbi. The Aigens supported and encouraged me to begin leading services. After my parents, they were the first people I told when I was accepted to rabbinical

school. They and others from the temple became part of my extended family: they rooted for me and cheered my successes. Most importantly, they never made me feel less than anyone else, even when I was an adult living at home unable to work.

And that is why I don’t care about what people do for a living once they walk through the synagogue’s doors. I carry my experience at Temple Beth El – a lesson I learned from wonderful people like Marilyn and Joe – that a synagogue should be a safe haven from the world, a place where we are all equal, even if we have health problems, even if we are unable to work, even if we’re unmarried, even if we don’t fit neatly into one of society’s boxes. That generation – the generation of my parents – is almost gone, but I still owe all of them a debt of gratitude and pay it back the only way I can: by trying to make others feel as welcome in my current spiritual home as they made me feel in my former one.



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Federation's PJ Library "Discover Hanukkah" event on Dec. 15

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold a PJ Library "Discover Hanukkah" event on Sunday, December 15, from 1-3 pm, at the Discovery Center, located next to the Ross Park Zoo, 60 Morgan Rd., Binghamton. The event is co-sponsored by the PJ Library, the Jewish Community Center and the Discovery Center. There will be singing, crafts, treats and more. The event will be free for Jewish families who pre-register by visiting www.jfjb.org, or contacting the Federation at 607-724-2332 or director@jfjb.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 \$10 per person for non-members, 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 to hold 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 5:15-5:30 pm, 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 the JCC office at 607-724-2417.



Children performed during the annual Community Hanukkah celebration in 2023.

"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 *hanukkiah*." 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, in the JCC's auditorium.

Federation to sponsor community hockey event on Jan. 18

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will sponsor a community hockey event at a Binghamton Black Bears game at the Visions Veterans Memorial Arena, 1 Stuart St., Binghamton, on Saturday,



January 18, at 7 pm. Tickets will be available at the discounted rate of \$9. The deadline to purchase tickets is Sunday, January 12. Tickets can be purchased on the Federation website, or by contacting the Federation office at 607-724-2332 or director@jfjb.org. A limited number of seats are available, so those interested are asked to reserve early.

"This event is for people of all ages and is just for socializing," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "If you are looking for a way to get out on a winter night and have some fun, then I hope you will consider joining us."

About the cover

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


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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.

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The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to **Charles Gilinsky** on the death of his brother, **Stanley G. Gilinsky**



DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
December 27-January 9, 2025	December 18
January 10-23	December 30 (early)
January 24-February 13	January 15
February 14-27	February 5

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

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Off the Shelf

Hanukkah books for almost all ages

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

"Eight Very Bad Nights"

The Oxford Languages dictionary defines noir as "a genre of crime film or fiction characterized by cynicism, fatalism, and moral ambiguity." Readers might wonder what noir could possibly have to do with Hanukkah, which is a festival of light and joy. According to Tod Goldberg, the editor of "Eight Very Bad Nights: A Collection of Hanukkah Noir" (Soho Crime), having to spend eight nights with relatives is enough to drive almost anyone to murder. But don't be fooled by his funny introduction: these stories are dark, offering plenty of surprise and questionable morality. While only a few directly deal with Hanukkah, all take place during the holiday, even if it is only mentioned in passing.

My favorite story was "Not a Dinner Party Person" by Stefania Leder, which was a surprise because I'm not usually fond of stories about sociopaths. But Rachel, who narrates the tale, is not only very clear about her thoughts and actions, but carefully explains why society needs sociopaths: they can make dispassionate choices when empaths or normals react too emotionally to make the correct decision. What does create problems for her is a Hanukkah dinner with her awful mother and her sister's even worse husband. She cares about her sister and niece as much as she can about anyone, but Rachel's life is complicated with work problems, too, so the addition of these unpleasant people threatens to push her over the edge.

Ray Boyd, the main character in Lee Goldberg's "If I Were a Rich Man," might also qualify as a sociopath. After all, he's only visiting his former prison roommate Phil Zarkin because he hopes to discover where Phil hid diamonds after a heist years before. It's not Ray's fault that he's not stupid enough to fall for other people's scams, nor is he willing to let anyone take advantage of him. His main worry is whether Phil, who now lives in a nursing home, is truly senile, or just pretending to have dementia in order to protect his stash. The way that the different plot elements come together was extremely satisfying.

Not all the characters lack concern for their fellow citizens. Take Jack Katz who worries that he won't be able to make payroll, which would leave his employees without jobs during the holiday season. However, in "Eight Very Bad Nights" by Tod Goldberg, Jack doesn't make the best decisions about how to solve his problems. In fact, he creates additional difficulties not only for himself, but anyone who tries to help him. The ending of the story came as a very pleasant surprise, taking a direction readers might not expect.

In J. R. Angelella's "Mi Shebeirach," Molly Blaze only wants to help her husband, who suffers from a great deal of pain after an accident. She'll do whatever it takes to get the pain pills he needs to survive, even if it means acting in ways that go against her basic nature, such as stealing a briefcase from Gershom Fox, an Orthodox Jew, who treats her with kindness, even as she tries to rob him. The solution to her dilemma is surprising and wonderful.

Others stories also offer surprises and moving endings, particularly "Johnny Christmas" by Ivy Pochoda and "Twenty Centuries" by James D. F. Hannah. Even the less successful stories have delights to offer. Anyone who enjoys reading noir will want to get their hands on a copy of "Eight Very Bad Nights."

"Love You a Latke"

I knew what to expect. After all, I read and enjoyed Amanda Elliot's first two novels, "Sadie on a Plate" and

"Best Served Hot."* Her work includes romance, comedy and great descriptions of food and drinks. But to my surprise, "Love You a Latke" (Berkley Romance) did something else: it got under my skin in a way her previous books had not. Perhaps that's because Abby Cohen, the work's narrator, is cranky and cynical. Her mood is not helped by having to serve the incredibly irritating (and good looking) Seth Abrams, who stops by her café for coffee every morning. His cheery and find-the-good-in-everything manner is too much. However, Abby's mood is also not helped by the worry that if her café doesn't get more business, it may have to close. Plus, somehow she gets roped into organizing a Hanukkah festival for the small town in Vermont in which she lives. But the people she works with don't seem to understand that Hanukkah is not Christmas and adding yarmulkes to plastic figures from a Nativity scene will not make a festival Jewish.

Abby decides there has to be someone else in Vermont who is Jewish and can help her. It won't surprise readers that that someone lives in her town: the very annoying Seth. The two make a deal: he will use his Jewish connections to get her the vendors she needs if she will pretend to be his girlfriend during a visit to his parents in New York City for the eight nights of Hanukkah. Abby is so desperate that she agrees. Of course, misunderstandings and miscommunications ensue, and the flame of true love is lit. (This is, after all, a rom-com.)

In addition to all the rom-com fun, the novel deals with a serious underlying issue: Abby's parents' behavior while she was growing up leaves her unable to trust others. She has basically closed herself off to friendship and love. This is not helped by the romance she did have, which is what brought her to Vermont in the first place. Its ending was not pleasant. Even worse, Abby felt that in order to protect herself, she not only had to break off contact with her parents, but with the Jewish community. Her longing for Jewish connections becomes clear when she and Seth visit with his parents and it's wonderful to see.

"Love You a Latke" is a perfect book for the holiday season, but don't worry if you don't get to read it during Hanukkah. This outstanding rom-com can be enjoyed any season.

*(To read *The Reporter's* reviews of these books, visit www.thereporter.com/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-romance-fantasy-or-a-combination-of-the-two-part-two and www.thereporter.com/features/off-the-shelf-various-genres-including-434361.)

"The Festival of Lights"

Is it possible for adults and young children to enjoy short stories written for middle-grade readers? It is if that book is "The Festival of Lights: 16 Hanukkah Stories" edited by Henry Herz (Albert Whitman and Company). Adults may pretend to be reading these works only so their younger children can enjoy them, but will find themselves as moved by the stories as the rest of their family. The tales range from sweet fun to the extremely moving.

Fans of stories with supernatural elements will enjoy R. M. Romero's "Ewa and the Five Sites," which includes a house spirit with a message from Ewa's late grandmother, and Gini Koch's "The Luck of the Irish" with its six-inch tall leprechaun. Both stories feature non-Jewish characters who learn something about their true heritage. Since this is a collection of Jewish stories, that secret is not a great

surprise, but the execution of both is extremely well done.

Several stories deal with a December dilemma: whether to sing Christmas carols. "Dancing on Hanukkah" by Nancy Holder tells what occurs when a Jewish Girl Scout visits a nursing home to sing those carols and learns an important lesson after talking to a Jewish resident. Whether or not to forgo singing a religious solo for her school chorus is a problem faced in "The Most Jewish Christmas Song Ever" by Erica S. Perl, whose main character learns to be true to herself.

Gift giving is featured in the humorous "The Gift of Gift-Giving" by Alan Katz, which offers a multi-generational look at gift giving, and the sad and serious "The Greatest Gift" by Joanne Levy, whose main character is spending her first Hanukkah with her uncle after her parents died in a car accident.

It's impossible to talk about all the stories in "The Festival of Lights," but the range of plots and differences in mood makes this an excellent collection. Readers will have favorites they may find themselves revisiting every holiday season.

"Eight Nights to Win Her Heart"

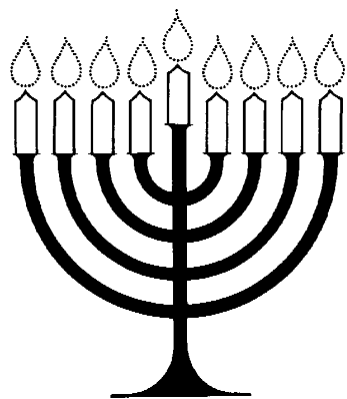
Dear Hallmark Channel: Instead of wasting time trying to find a decent script for a Hanukkah-themed movie, just buy the rights to Miri White's "Eight Nights to Win Her Heart" (Alcove Press). It contains two interesting main characters: Leo Dentz, who works for his father's antique store, and Andie Williams, a preschool teacher who recently lost her remaining parent, and who will lose her job in the spring when her school closes. These two charming characters are neighbors who have been attracted to each other for ages, but both have been afraid to make a move. When Andie's bag of groceries breaks on the first night of Hanukkah, Leo is so thrilled to discover that she is also Jewish that he invites her to share the lighting of the first candle and his take-out dinner.

Of course, if things went smoothly, this would not be a Hallmark drama. Their lives are complicated by several things. 1) Andie and Leo believe their romance will be limited to Hanukkah because Andie has a job offer out of state. 2) Leo's father wants to sell the family business, but because of something that happened when Leo and his brother, Dean, were teenagers, he refuses to sell it to them. 3) Andie is looking for family, but not the drama she finds with the Dentz family. Adding to the fun is an adorable niece (Millie, the daughter of Leo's older sister, Jodie), a synagogue holiday party, a blackout and a few details that can't be revealed without ruining the plot. Plus, Leo has a hearing impairment and the author's portrayal of life with a hearing loss is well done. "Eight Nights to Win Her Heart" would make a great Hallmark movie.

"The Day I Became a Potato Pancake"

How could I resist a graphic novel about a boy who turns into a latke? In "The Day I Became a Potato Pancake" by Arie Kaplan with illustrations by Beilin Xu (Apples and Honey Press), best friends Ben and Naomi should know better than to sneak into Naomi's mother's secret lab. After all, her mother has forbidden them to enter many times. But that just makes the lab more intriguing. Unfortunately, although Ben should also know better than to touch anything, he can't resist pushing one of the buttons, one that turns him into a potato pancake.

See "Books" on page 10



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the Ancient Promise of Shalom

Federation announces Wallach as new JFS director

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton has hired Merryll Wallach as the new director of Jewish Family Service. Wallach's prior experience includes more than 30 years as a crisis counselor for the Vestal School District. She has also worked at the SOS Shelter (now called RISE) and the Rape Crisis Center (now called the Crime Victims Assistance Center). In addition to providing direct counseling, she also made referrals to

outside agencies when needed.

"I decided to apply for the JFS position because my friend Nancy Dorfman called and said she had the perfect job for me," Wallach said in an e-mail interview. "I retired a year earlier, and it really did seem perfect. I've only been here for two weeks, and I can say that it really is a good fit. Shelley [Hubal, Federation executive director] and Jen [Kakusian, office manager] are incredibly supportive, and patiently answer all of my (many) questions. At the heart

of it all, it's an honor for me to be able to support people and families when they find themselves in need."

"We're so pleased to have Merryll as part of the Federation team," said Hubal. "She comes to us with a wealth of experience and will be a great comfort to those in our community who need help."

For more information about JFS, visit www.jfjb.org/local-global-community/jewish-family-service. Wallach can be contacted at 607-724-2332 or familyservice@jfjb.org.

TC/TI Adult Ed. Committee program 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 nearby the Gaza Strip, along with 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 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* 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."

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 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.

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.

The upcoming date is December 19.

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

Happy Chanukah!

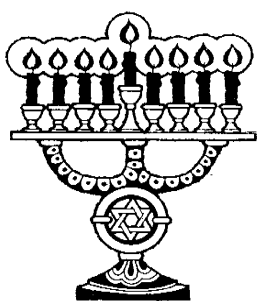


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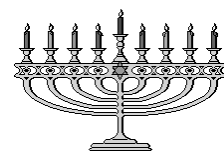
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On the Jewish food scene

Taste testing coffee for Hanukkah

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

I have friends who make barfing noises whenever I mention I drink instant coffee at home. While I do like a good cup of coffee, I'm no connoisseur. But when I was offered samples of three different coffees made by Atomo Coffee, I accepted. That's because I thought it would be a perfect excuse to get together with these friends. (Our lives can get busy, so I don't see either of them as much as I would like.) Doing this in an evening didn't seem like a good idea, though, because some of us don't sleep well after drinking too much caffeine at night. (OK, I can't sleep. Those young folks who are my friends can.) But one of them said

she would make a Sunday brunch, which seemed a perfect time to do a coffee taste test.

Atomo sent the coffee samples because the company thinks its "beanless" coffee is perfect for Hanukkah – whether to drink yourself or give as a gift. The included PR material noted that the coffee is kosher and vegan, and is made from "upcycled, eco-friendly ingredients," which might appeal to those on your gift list. You should check the list of ingredients, though, to make certain the person isn't allergic to them. (The different coffees can contain millet, guava, fructose, date seeds, ramon seeds, pea protein, baking soda, sunflower

seeds, lemon and fenugreek.)

Back to the coffee tasting: four of us tried three coffees. There was a clear favorite: we all liked the dark roast best, followed by the Flagstaff Remix and then the medium roast. Of course, that just means we all like our coffee dark and strong. Those who prefer a lighter, milder roast will probably find the medium more to their taste. But, perhaps the most important thing, none of us would have realized that the coffee was beanless: it tasted just like regular coffee. The only difference might have been that we didn't feel wired after the taste test, although it's hard to say if that was because we didn't

drink three full cups of coffee, or because the coffee contains less caffeine.

What was funny was mentioning to a different friend that I took part in a coffee taste testing. She asked, "What is there to taste test? They are all bitter." I laughed because, unlike my friends, I usually drink my coffee black. I did put some cream in the Atomo dark roast after tasting it black to get rid of a hint of bitterness. That makes me wonder about my friends' reaction to my drinking instant coffee: they need cream and/or sugar to drink coffee. I take mine straight. Maybe that makes me the real coffee maven.

Share the story of The Festival of Lights with the gift of books from PJ Library

By PJ Library staff

Hanukkah is coming. Beginning on December 25 and running through January 2, the Jewish Festival of Lights is a celebration of miracles, resilience, religious freedom and oil. Jewish families worldwide recount the story of the Maccabees, ancient Jews who fought against the Greeks for their religious freedom. This small Jewish army encountered miracle after miracle: first, when they defeated the bigger, stronger Greek army and then when the tiny, single-day's worth of oil in the Eternal Light lasted for eight days.

This story is commemorated yearly by eight nights of lighting the menorah, eating fried foods such as latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly donuts), and playing dreidel for chocolate gelt (coins). It's also a popular holiday for giving gifts – including books! PJ Library subscribers received free Hanukkah-themed books in their mailboxes this month, and these books, alongside plenty of others from PJ Publishing, can be found on PJ Library's Amazon web store (amazon.com/pjlibrary) or through external book sellers. Read on for some PJ Library recommendations that are sure to delight

dreidel-players of any age.

Baby-age 2

◆ "You're My Little Latke!" written by Nicola Edwards, illustrated by Natalie Marshall, Printers Row Publishing Group

Hanukkah is full of tasty treats and fun traditions, but the best part of all is sharing it with your little ones. From the best-selling "You're My Little" series comes "You're My Little Latke," a festive board book with cut-outs and raised elements on every page, featuring everything from yummy latkes to golden gelt to shining menorahs, all paired with sweet rhyming text. (\$9.99)

◆ "Jewish Cats All Year Round" written and illustrated by Varda Livney, PJ Publishing

Jewish cats (and their mouse friends) celebrate Jewish holidays all year long... and so can Jewish babies! This board book takes readers through the Jewish calendar year with art and simple text. Babies will love seeing their own faces smiling back from the mirror at the end! (\$9.99, available on the PJ Library Amazon Web Store)

Ages 3-5

◆ "Antlers with Candles" written by Chris Barash, illustrated by Melissa Iwai,

PJ Publishing

Everything looks new when seen from a child's perspective, including menorahs, dreidels and latkes. But family togetherness is something everyone understands. Even

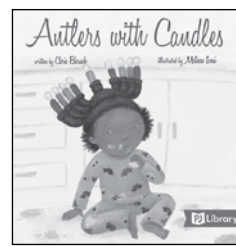
if children are too young to understand the history and details of Hanukkah, they are never too young to share in the joy of family, special foods, symbols and singing – all featured in this delightful book. (\$12.99, available on the PJ Library Amazon Web Store)

◆ "Hanukkah at Monica's" written and illustrated by Varda Livney, PJ Publishing

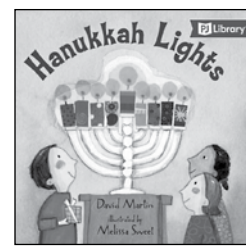
Everyone loves Hanukkah, the eight-day Jewish festival of lights – and no one loves Hanukkah more than Monica! That's why Monica's house is the place to be for a candle-lighting, dreidel-spinning, latke-frying good time. Octopi, jellyfish and robots all agree. Who's going to arrive at her party next? (\$8.99, available on the PJ Library Amazon Web Store)

◆ "Hanukkah Bear" written by Eric A. Kimmel, illustrated by Mike Wohnoutka, Holiday House

Bubba Brayna makes the best latkes in the village, and on the first night of Hanukkah, the scent of her cooking wakes a hungry, adorable bear from his hibernation. He lumbers into town to investigate and Bubba – who does not see or hear very well – mistakes him for her rabbi. She welcomes the bear inside to play dreidel, light the menorah and enjoy a scrumptious meal. However, after her well-fed guest leaves, there's a knock at the



PJ Library books



door – it's the rabbi, and all of Brayna's other friends, arriving for dinner. But there are no latkes left – and together, they finally figure out who really ate them in this playful Hanukkah tale from

a master storyteller. (\$7.99)

Ages 6-8

◆ "Hanukkah Upside Down" written by Elissa Brent Weissman, illustrated by Omer Hoffman, Abrams

In this award-winning, upside-down picture book holiday story, cousins from opposite sides of the globe debate who can celebrate the best Hanukkah. Eight chances to prove it – may the best cousin win! From their homes in New York and New Zealand, cousins Noah and Nora decide to have a competition. Winter versus summer: Who can have the world's best Hanukkah? But as the eight nights go on, the contest proves tougher than they imagined. A holiday story from award-winning creators Elissa Brent Weissman and Omer Hoffmann, "Hanukkah Upside Down" shows that while there are countless ways to celebrate Hanukkah, family is what matters most. (\$18.99)

◆ "Onions & Garlic" written by Rebecca Sheir, illustrated by Sabina Hahn, PJ Publishing

In this graphic adaptation of an old Yiddish folktale, Haskell masters the art of cooking onions, survives a shipwreck and finds himself successful beyond his wildest dreams. Retold by public radio veteran Rebecca Sheir, with comic-format artwork See "PJ" on page 10

CHANUKAH GREETINGS

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Happy Chanukah!

Soldiers. Continued from page 2

As Rosh Hashanah approached, the army delivered provisions for the holiday. There was chicken. There were side dishes to appeal to both Sefardi and Ashkenazi palates. There was dessert.

There was no challah.

Was it those unenviable logistics people who slipped up? Or maybe it was the kitchen people. Or the people who boxed everything up. Or the guy in the jeep who made the deliveries. Whoever it was, somehow there was no challah.

But there were 10 resourceful soldiers. And some of them – including my son – knew how to bake a challah. But what of the ingredients?

A quick call to the friend-of-a-friend (or whoever it was whose house they were quartering in) yielded an enthusiastic woman whose kitchen was being commandeered for their baking session. Her side of the conversation went something like this: "With pleasure! "Here's where I keep my flour! And here's where you'll find the yeast! The salt and sugar are in the cupboard! Help yourselves to everything, and shana tovah!"

They were able to procure some fresh

eggs, and before they knew it, for the first time in a year, the sweet fragrance of fresh challah permeated this formerly-aromatically-bereft home in the north. Our soldiers were able to enjoy a delicious piece of their own homes, in the loving hospitality of someone else's.

"How do you think they feel, having 10 sweaty, smelly soldiers living in their house?" she asked.

I replied: "I think they are feeling honored to have the soldiers there, prepared to sacrifice their lives, so that the family who belongs there can return home. I think they are feeling hope, that one day soon their kids might go back to their gan (with fresh containers of cottage cheese), and that the sound of laughter may once again fill the air, as they swing on the ropes in the park nearby. I think they are feeling love and pride.

"I think that there's nothing in the world that makes them as happy right now, as having 10 sweaty, smelly soldiers living in their home, muddying the floors, and using their electricity."

And baking fresh, hot challahs in their oven.

BD Sisterhood and Men's Club to hold Hanukkah 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-



Steve Gilbert (Photo by Denise Gilbert)

727-9738, or silbercreations@gmail.com.

The entire community is invited to join in the celebration, which will include refreshments, dreidels to play with (or bring one from home) and the lighting of the Hanukkah menorah. Steve Gilbert, professor emeritus of psychology at SUNY Oneonta and past president of Temple Israel, will entertain by playing his baritone ukelele, which he began playing at the age of 4. Attendees

may also choose to participate in a gift grab bag for a donation of \$5.

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."

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 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.

Hanukkah online resources

By Reporter staff

A variety of Jewish groups are offering educational and recreational online resources for Hanukkah, a few of which are noted below.

◆ The American Jewish University will hold the virtual class "A Light Unto the Nations: The Jewish Mission" on Thursday, December 19, at 3 pm. Rabbi Jonathan Leener will explore the nature of Judaism's mission through the laws and themes of Hanukkah. For more information or to register, visit <https://open.aju.edu/event/a-light-unto-the-nations-the-jewish-mission/>.

◆ The Blue Dove Foundation offers resources for Hanukkah for those dealing with mental health issues and their friends

and family. The resources can be viewed at https://thebluedovefoundation.org/resource_category/hanukkah/.

◆ Hadar is offering texts to help people reflect on the meaning of Hanukkah and to inspire them "to find and create more light." To download the texts, visit www.hadar.org/torah-tefillah/resources/little-bit-light.

◆ Melton will hold the virtual talk "Beyond the Miracle: Seeing the Festival in a New Light" on Monday, December 23, from 7-8 pm. Rabbi Amy S. Wallk will explore Hanukkah's origins and its development over time. For more information or to register, visit <https://events.org/events/calendarcourse?tid=3656455f-e503-4ee6-b48a-747de2042603>.

Film Fest discussion held



The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest held a virtual discussion of the film "All About the Levkoviches" on December 8. Bill Simons, Ph.D., professor emeritus of American history at SUNY Oneonta, moderated the discussion, which was attended by 25 people.

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Everything's better with beignets for Hanukkah

By Ethel G. Hofman

(JNS) – It's tradition! The Jewish holiday of Hanukkah means latkes and *sufganiyot* – lots of them, crisp, hot and, hopefully, not too oily – to help celebrate the victory of Judah Maccabee and his four brothers over the Syrian-Greeks in 165 B.C.E. This year, the eight-day holiday of Hanukkah begins on the evening of Wednesday, December 25 (always the 25th day of Kislev on the Jewish calendar) and ends on the evening of Thursday, January 2.

Dishes fried in oil symbolize the miracle of the one cruse of oil left in the Holy Temple that lasted for eight days instead of one. On each of the eight nights, candles are lit on the menorah, dreidel games are played, and heaps of crisp fried latkes and *sufganiyot* are dished up bowls filled with applesauce and sour cream to spoon over top.

Consider adding related treats to the table this season – cousins of a culinary sort in the form of beignets and funnel cake, also fried in oil. They both come with powdered sugar, and kids and adults alike will enjoy these added delicate desserts that please palates the world over.

For Eastern Europeans, potato latkes were a symbol of Hanukkah; potatoes were cheap and often fried in fat leftover from the Passover duck. In modern-day Israel, *sufganiyot* are the fried doughnuts sold in nearly every food store and on every street corner, and come in absolutely every kind of flavor these days (sea-salt caramel next to fig- and date-filled). But look back not too long ago to the American South in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; in an effort to assimilate, immigrant Jewish women combined regional flavors with Old World ingredients. Think salt herring, fried and served with grits.

On a sweeter note, past and present recipes merged into dishes such as pecan pie and beignets – the latter being those scrumptious pastry squares fried in oil and dredged with

sugar that have become a mainstay for tourists to places like New Orleans. Today, Jewish homes there celebrate the holiday with platters of hot fried beignets alongside crisp potato latkes.

Make it a family affair. Everyone can pitch in; even little ones can stir the batter with a wooden spoon and be the first official tasters. The recipes below include traditional potato latkes, made easy by using the food processor, so there's no risk of scraping fingers on a box grater.

Leek-and-Parsley Fritters are based on a recipe from my Israeli friend, Alisa Shaya; and the crisp, puffy New Orleans beignet recipe uses baking powder instead of yeast.

Oil is the essential frying ingredient. The variety on supermarket shelves can be overwhelming these days. Good frying oil is known for three qualities: being flavorless, affordable and having a high "smoke point." (A high smoke point is considered 375° F and higher, and is best for frying.) For the recipes here, avoid using olive oil with its overly robust flavor; better to save that more expensive variety for salad dressings and sautéing purposes.

Here's a primer for some common supermarket oils.
 ♦ Corn oil: most affordable with a high smoke point. Good for deep frying or shallow frying in a skillet.

♦ Vegetable oil: multipurpose with a high smoke point.
 ♦ Canola oil: versatile, neutral-flavored cooking oil. Great for all frying methods.

♦ Peanut oil: good for deep-frying with a high smoke point (avoid for those with allergies).

♦ Coconut oil: with a smoke point of 350° to 400°F, it's good for sautéing vegetables and light pan frying (also avoid for those with allergies). Refined generally has a higher smoke point than unrefined.

This year, the message of Hanukkah is more significant than ever as Jews the world over search for happiness amid grief and concern for Israel. The light of the menorah gives us hope that soon there will be peace, no more bloodshed and that all hostages return home to their loved ones.

Classic Potato Latkes (Pareve)

Makes 18-20

Cook's tips:

- ♦ Use a combination of white and red-skinned potatoes. No need to peel red-skinned potatoes.
- ♦ May substitute matzah meal for flour.
- ♦ Leftovers may be refrigerated. Reheat at 350°F for 10 minutes.

2 eggs

¼ small onion, cut into 3 to 4 pieces

4 medium potatoes, about 1½ pounds peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks

¼ tsp. baking powder
 3 Tbsp. all-purpose flour

1 tsp. salt
 ½ tsp. freshly ground pepper

Vegetable oil for frying

Break eggs into a food processor. Add onion and potatoes. Pulse 3 to 4 times, or until the potatoes are coarsely chopped. Transfer to a bowl.

Add the baking powder, flour, salt and pepper, mixing well.

Heat about a quarter-inch oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Drop rounded tablespoonfuls of the potato mixture into skillet pressing lightly with the back of a wooden spoon to flatten slightly. Reduce heat to medium. Cook on both sides until nicely browned, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Drain on paper towels.

Continue frying adding more oil as needed until the batter is used up.

Serve hot with applesauce for a meat meal or sour cream for a dairy meal.

Alisa's Leek-and-Parsley Fritters (Pareve)

Makes 10-12

Cook's tips:

- ♦ Pick up store-bought frozen cooked leeks. Thaw and use as needed. No need to cook first.
- ♦ To clean leeks: Slice 1-inch thick. Place in a bowl and cover with cold salted water (2 to 3 teaspoons to 1 quart water). Press the center of each slice to separate the rings. Rinse again in cold water to clean thoroughly.
- ♦ Add another egg if the mixture is too stiff.
- ♦ For deep frying, a thermometer should register 350° to 375°F.
- ♦ Sumac (berries) is related to the cashew family and ground into a rich, red-colored spice. It has a similar taste to lemon and brings out the natural flavors of foods it is




Potato Latkes (Photo by Pixabay)




Alisa's Leek-and-Parsley Fritters (Photo by Ethel G. Hofman)

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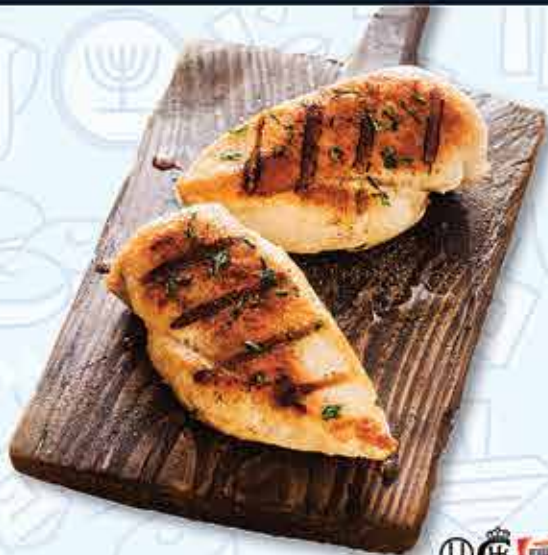


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IDF picks Chanukah for *haredi* recruitment to Hasmonean Brigade

By JNS staff

(JNS)—The Israel Defense Forces plans to form the first company of the new Hasmonean Brigade, to be made up of ultra-Orthodox soldiers, by Chanukah, which this year starts on December 25. The IDF wants to capitalize on the symbolism. The Hasmonean Dynasty began after the Jews threw off the yoke of Hellenistic rule in the Maccabean Revolt (167 to 141 B.C.E.) against the Seleucid Empire, liberation that the holiday commemorates.

Thirty young men have already passed the first screenings and dozens of others have expressed interest in serving in the brigade, Ynet reported. The army is also looking to

make *haredi* soldiers currently serving in noncombat roles into combat soldiers for the brigade. A company is made up 60 to 80 soldiers.

The IDF is taking a gradual approach, hoping that the *haredi* community will take note that the brigade is responsive to the religious needs of the ultra-Orthodox, creating trust between the community and the army.

The new brigade requires recruits to follow a strict *halachic* lifestyle, that is, one in keeping with religious law. Observant Jews will serve as commanders in the brigade.

Brigade enlistees will sign a document accepting its rules. One clause states that recruits will at all times maintain an

ultra-Orthodox way of life, be careful to use clean speech, keep beards and sidelocks throughout their service if they entered the army with them, and wear Sabbath clothes during Sabbath prayers and meals “as is customary in ultra-Orthodox society (and even a suit and a hat).”

See “Brigade” on page 11

PJ. Continued from page 6 by Sabina Hahn, “Onions & Garlic” is inspired by the first live episode of the award-winning podcast Circle Round (WBUR). A tale about the realities of supply and demand, “Onions & Garlic” may delight readers of all ages. (\$8.99, available on the PJ Library Amazon Web Store)

Ages 9-12

◆ “Detour Ahead” written by Pamela Ehrenberg and Tracy López

Every weekday morning, 12-year-old Gilah takes the same public bus to her school in Washington, DC, and this year, she’s finally allowed to ride alone. On the very first day, the bus swerves too close to a bicyclist, and Gilah finds the courage to alert the driver to stop the bus. Without a bike, 13-year-old Guillermo starts riding the H4 with Gilah. This National Jewish Book Award finalist is the story of a Salvadoran-American boy who is a poet and a neuro-diverse Jewish girl who loves breakdancing, and how they navigate the detours of their families, their friendship and their lives. (\$9.99, available on the PJ Library Amazon Web Store)

For a gift that keeps on giving well past the eight days of Hanukkah, sign up for a free PJ Library subscription to receive a new, age-specific book each month through the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton at www.jfjgb.org/local-global-community/pj-library.

PJ Library seeks to inspire joyful Jewish experiences by sending free storybooks and activities to families with children ages 0-12 and offering ways to connect with community. The program was founded in 2005 by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation (HGF) and, with the support of generous donors and partners, now distributes books in seven languages to more than 650,000 children in over 40 countries every month. The PJ Library family experience is built around the monthly storybooks and also includes family-focused holiday guides and other free gifts. Anyone who visits PJ Library’s website, pjlibrary.org, can hear original storytelling podcasts and explore a vast collection of Jewish parenting resources. The program is designed to be welcoming for families across the diversity of Jewish life.

Books. Continued from page 4

At first, Ben is upset, but, as he lets people know what happened, he begins to enjoy the notoriety. After all, a walking, talking latke is a great novelty. But there is a problem: if Naomi’s mom can’t discover an antidote before the week is over, Ben will have to spend the rest of his life as a human fried potato. To complicate matters, someone else – someone out of this world – is interested in Ben.

OK, so “The Day I Became a Potato Pancake” is silly, but it is also great fun. The drawings add to its appeal: Xu does a wonderful and convincing job of making Ben look like a latke with a human personality. In fact, he looks so appealing, readers will understand Ben’s temptation to remain a potato. The novel is perfect for middle graders and anyone with a great sense of whimsy.

“A Dragon for Hanukkah”

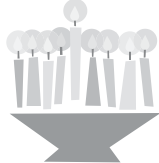
Speaking of readers with a great sense of whimsy: They will love the picture book “A Dragon for Hanukkah” by Sarah Mynowski and illustrated by Ariel Landy (Orchard Books). Older readers may wonder if Hannah really receives a dragon, a rainbow, a merry-go-round, unicorns and more for the holiday, but the author successfully shows how Hannah’s imagination creates a holiday filled with wonder. The drawings are bright and well done. The drawings of the dragon and unicorns are such fun that readers (young and old) may wish they’d received those presents themselves. The book concludes with a conversation Hannah holds with her dragon where she explains the meaning and symbols of Hanukkah.

“Eight Sweet Nights”

It’s a rare book that offers a combination of Ashkenazic and Sephardic holiday customs, but that is true of “Eight Sweet Nights, a Festival of Lights: A Hanukkah Story” by Charlotte Offsay with illustrations by Menahem Halberstadt (Doubleday Books for Young Readers). It’s the first night of Hanukkah and a mixed racial family brings goodies and gifts for an extended family celebration. The pan used to fry foods once belonged to a great-grandmother known as bubbe and is now used by grandparents known as savta and saba. The family makes traditional foods – latkes and sufganiyot (jelly filled doughnuts) – in addition to a more contemporary treat: edible dreidels made from marshmallows, chocolate kisses and pretzel sticks. The drawings create a holiday mood since they make it clear this family is having a wonderful time. There are also explanations on many pages about the words and customs mentioned with which readers may not be familiar.

Chanukah Greetings

Wishing you a Happy Chanukah light • peace • love




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HAPPY CHANUKAH!



HOWARD FISHER

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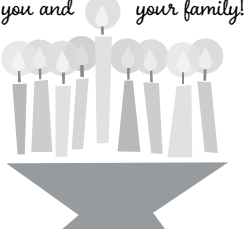
Terri Bennett

Wishing the community a Happy Chanukah!




Rabbi Rachel Esserman

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The Coker Family

Happy Chanukah



Chanukah

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Rhona and Richard Esserman

Maria & Bob Kutz wish all their friends a Happy Chanukah



Chanukah

Wishing The Entire Community A Happy Chanukah




Rebecca Kahn & Richard Birchard

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From Jean & Lew Hecht and Family

Warm Chanukah wishes to you and your family!




Kathy Brown, Advertising Representative

CELEBRATE CHANUKAH



Marilyn Bell & Family

Happy Chanukah!



Ann C. Brillant

HAPPY CHANUKAH



Ethiopian Jews mark Sigd in Jerusalem with prayers for peace and freedom

By JNS staff

(JNS) – Thousands of Ethiopian Jews gathered in Jerusalem on November 28 to celebrate Sigd, an ancient holiday that has taken on renewed meaning amid Israel’s ongoing war against Hamas. The celebration, held annually on the 29th of the month of Cheshvan (50 days after Yom Kippur), saw worshippers converge on the Armon Hanatziv Promenade – which overlooks the Temple Mount from the south – and the Western Wall for prayers and festivities.

Sigd, which means “prostration” in Ge’ez (aka Classical Ethiopic), has been observed by Ethiopian Jews, the Beta Israel, for centuries as a day to renew their covenant with God and express their longing for Zion. Traditionally in Ethiopia, community members would ascend a high mountain to pray, symbolizing the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Now in Israel, the community continues this tradition with a focus on unity and cultural pride.

This year’s prayers focused on the safe return of the 101 hostages held in Gaza, including Avraham Mengistu, a member of the Ethiopian community. President Isaac



Ethiopian Jews took part in prayers on the Sigd holiday at the Armon Hanatziv Promenade overlooking the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on November 28. (Photo by Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

Herzog, who attended the ceremony, emphasized the holiday’s relevance to current events, saying, “Our brothers and sisters have not yet returned home from Gaza. Their

voices cry out to us from underground, reminding us that there is no greater mitzvah than the redemption of captives.”

The day began with fasting and prayers, led by spiritual leaders known as Kessim, who are parallel to the rabbis found in other Jewish communities. Many worshippers wore traditional white garments. The Kessim carried the Orit, the Ethiopian Torah written in the ancient Ge’ez language, and recited passages including parts of the Book of Nehemiah.

Deputy Knesset Speaker Moshe Solomon, a rabbi and a lieutenant colonel in the IDF reserves who made aliyah from Ethiopia via Sudan in 1983, highlighted the dual nature of this year’s prayers, focusing on traditional themes and current national concerns. “The prayer was said for the success of the security forces at the front,” he noted. “It was said for the unity of Israel and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, for the return of the hostages, and for the healing of the wounded in body and soul.”

Sigd became an official Israeli state holiday in 2008 and continues to serve as a bridge between Ethiopian Jewish traditions and the wider Israeli society.

Qes Efraim Zion Lawi, the first Israeli-born qes (spiritual leader) of the Ethiopian Jewish community, emphasized the holiday’s significance: “Sigd is about hope. The hope of living in Israel and rebuilding the temple. Until the day that happens, we need to keep our Jewish and Ethiopian identities alive and thriving.”

The celebration included an exhibition at the Western Wall, showcasing the history of the Ethiopian Jewish community from biblical times. Later in the day, the fast was broken with festive meals and dancing, reminiscent of the traditional celebrations in Ethiopia.

Sigd stands as a reminder of the power of faith, unity and cultural heritage in the face of adversity. The holiday’s observance in Israel has evolved since the community’s immigration, with celebrations now lasting for an entire month leading up to the 29th of Cheshvan. This extended period provides an opportunity to raise awareness about Ethiopian Jewish culture and educate Israeli society about Beta Israel customs.

Brigade.....Continued from page 10

All the courses and training for soldiers in the brigade will be conducted internally to avoid mixing with non-Orthodox units, a nod to a concern of many ultra-Orthodox, who view it as a violation of the IDF’s obligation to preserve their strict lifestyle.

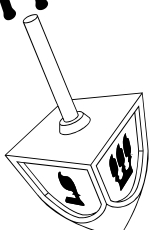
Brigade commander Col. Avinoam Emunah said: “I am privileged to be the commander of the ultra-Orthodox brigade and to be part of this special project that can bring about a change in Israeli society and the entire people of Israel. “We established a brigade, which for the first time since the establishment of the IDF and the establishment of the state, will allow the ultra-Orthodox public to enlist and serve in combat according to their lifestyle and preserve their identity.”

At right: Haredi men who decided to join the IDF arrived at the army’s recruitment office at Camp Yaakov Dori in Ramat Gan’s Tel Hashomer neighborhood on October 23, 2023. (Photo by Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90)




Chanukah Greetings

Happy Chanukah



Arieh Ullmann and Rhonda Levine

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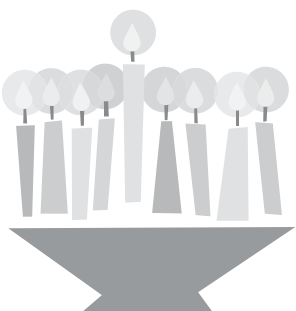
Rabbi Barry and Jill Baron

Wishing the Community a Happy Chanukah



Merri & Tony Linka, Alexander, Anna, Maya, Dora, Ari, Max & Samuel Preus

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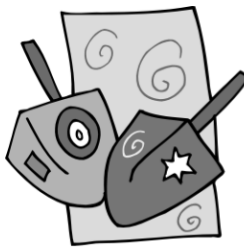
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Hon. Hollie S. Levine

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Like the Maccabees, we need to light our candle and our world, looking toward the future when this pandemic will be a story we will tell.



Neil and Sima Auerbach

We wish everyone a happy Chanukah!



Harold & Toby Kohn and Family

Warm Chanukah wishes to you and your family!



Shelley, Mark, Josh & Rae Hval

איחולים לבניי לחג האורים



Our Best Wishes for a Bright Festival of Lights

Susan & Ben Kasper

Jewish online resources

By Reporter staff

A variety of Jewish groups are offering educational and recreational online resources. Below is a sampling of those. *The Reporter* will publish additional listings as they become available.

◆ The Yiddish Book Center is offering a variety of Yiddish courses for those with a variety of levels. For information about specific courses and costs, visit www.yiddishbookcenter.org/educational-programs/adult-learners/register-online-class.

◆ The Sandra Seltzer Silberman HBI Conversations Series will hold several events: Kerry Wallach, author of "Traces of a Jewish Artist: The Lost Life and Work of Rahel Szalit," will speak on Wednesday, January 22, at 7 pm; and Tova Mirvis, author of "We Would Never," will speak on Wednesday, February 26, at 4 pm. For more information or to register, visit www.brandeis.edu/hbi/events/index.html.

◆ ALEPH will hold a virtual "Jewish Renewal New Year's Eve" on Tuesday, December 31, at 8 pm. The cost to attend is "pay what you can." To register for the event, visit <https://aleph.org/civCRM/event/register/?reset=1&id=578>.

◆ The Shalom Hartman Institute has a YouTube channel that can be found at www.youtube.com/@ShalomHartmanInstituteENG. The videos are part of its mission to "strengthen Jewish peoplehood, identity, and pluralism; to enhance the Jewish and democratic character of Israel; and to ensure that Judaism is a compelling force for good in the 21st century."

◆ UNPACKED Jr. is a website that offers children information about "Israel's history, culture and its connection to the Jewish people in a balanced, fun way." To view the material, visit <https://jewishunpacked.com/tag/junior/>.

◆ Ayin Press will hold the virtual book launch of Levins Morales's new book of poetry "Rimonim" on Wednesday, December 18, at 6 pm. A recording will be posted on Ayin's YouTube channel after the event. To register for the event, visit <https://ayinpress.org/rimonim-virtual-book-launch/>.

◆ The Jewish Grandparents Network will hold the virtual program "Filling the Empty Chair: Honoring and remembering grandparents and loved ones who have died" on Wednesday, January 15, from 7-8 pm. For more information or to register, visit https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/ydzeGmh9NYS3wX6_CAFMcA.

◆ Literary Modiin's January 2025 virtual author event will take place on Sunday, January 19, at 1 pm. The event will feature Benjamin Resnick ("Next Stop"), Galina Vromen ("Hill of Secrets") and Judy Gruen ("Bylines and Blessings"). For more information or to register, visit www.juliezuckerman.com/event-info/literary-modiin-january-2025-author-event.

◆ The American Jewish University will hold the virtual talk "From Exile to Embrace: The Exodus of Jews from Arab Lands" on Tuesday, December 17, at 3 pm. It will offer a "personal exploration of the Arab Jewish exodus

through the eyes of one of the 850,000 Arab Jewish refugees." For more information or to register, visit <https://open.aju.edu/event/from-exile-to-embrace-the-exodus-of-jews-from-arab-lands>.

◆ The New York Jewish Week will offer a virtual showing of the film "Kafka's Last Trial" on Tuesday, December 17, from 8:30-9:30 pm. The cost to attend is \$18. For more information or to register, visit www.eventbrite.com/e/exclusive-world-premiere-kafkas-last-trial-tickets-1010044619647?aff=mjlpromo.

◆ The 2025 YIVO-Bard Winter Program on Ashkenazi Civilization will be held from January 7-24 and will delve into the literature, history and culture of East European Jewry. To learn more about the different classes, teachers and costs, visit <https://yivo.org/Winter-Program>.

◆ Unpacked is offering the eight-episode limited podcast series "Stars of David with Elon Gold," which can be found at <https://jewishunpacked.com/podcast-series/stars-of-david-elon-gold/>. In the podcast, Elon Gold and his sidekick Eli Leonard talk with guests to "explore the highs and heartfelt lows of being Jewish."

◆ Roundtable will hold a variety of courses: "From City to Kingdom: The Archaeology of Ancient Jerusalem" on Thursdays, January 16-February 6, from 10-11

am, \$176 (<https://roundtable.org/live-courses/history/from-city-to-kingdom-the-archaeology-of-ancient-jerusalem>); "Jewish Immigrant Life in Early Twentieth-Century New York" on Thursdays, January 23-February 6, from 1-2 pm (<https://roundtable.org/live-courses/history/jewish-immigrant-life-in-progressive-era-new-york>); "Gems of the Zohar" on Mondays, February 3-24, from 3-4pm, \$132 (<https://roundtable.org/live-courses/history/gems-of-the-zohar>); "The Jews of Renaissance Florence: From Tuscany to Ghetto, 1400-1650" on Thursdays, February 6-20, from 11 am-noon, \$132 (<https://roundtable.org/live-courses/history/the-jews-of-renaissance-florence-from-tuscany-to-ghetto-1400-1650>); and "Jewish GIs and the Post-War Cultural Boom: Battlefield to Broadway" on Wednesdays, February 26-March 12, from 7-8 pm, \$132 (<https://roundtable.org/live-courses/history/jewish-gis-and-the-post-war-cultural-boom-battlefield-to-broadway>).

◆ The Yiddish Book Center will hold two virtual programs: "The Art of Jewish Papercutting with Deborah Ugoretz" on Thursday, January 9, at 7 pm (www.yiddishbookcenter.org/events/upcoming-public-programs/art-jewish-papercutting-deborah-ugoretz); and "Translator Talk: A Conversation with Professor Samuel Kassow, translator See "Online" on page 15

Election.Continued from page 2

Nonetheless, prominent Jews did endorse and contribute to the Trump campaign, amongst them former congressman and 2022 New York gubernatorial candidate Lee Zeldin. Chabad leaders accompanied Trump on his October 7, 2024, visit to the gravesite of the revered Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. Moreover, Trump's daughter Ivanka and her own children identify as observant Orthodox Jews.

And, as Trump pointed out, he has a strong record of support for Israel. During his first term, the U.S. relocated its embassy to Jerusalem, approved Israel control of the Golan Heights and portions of the West Bank, and abrogated the nuclear pact with Iran. In fact, Trump may give Netanyahu a freer hand in dealing with Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis and the Iran paymaster than Harris would have.

Israel and domestic antisemitism were issues for Jewish American voters, but not the only ones and, for most, not the final determinant of their 2024 vote. Approximately 78 percent of the Jewish electorate voted for Harris and 22 percent for Trump. While Harris exceeded the percentage of the Jewish vote received by Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden, she fell far short of the massive 90 percent accorded FDR and Lyndon Johnson. In 2024, the post-New Deal affinity of Jews for the Democratic Party endured, but not primarily for ethnic reasons.

A Democrat by registration, an activist documented by 16 years as a union chapter president, and a liberal centrist by temperament, I have voted Republican when conscience and candidates so dictated. FDR is my hero, but I found Harris unclear on the issues and bereft of a strong record. However, by reason of Trump's role in the January 6, 2021, insurrection, dismissal of environmental imperatives, neo-isolationist posture toward NATO and retributive rhetoric, I campaigned for Harris in the swing state of



Friendly rivals: Bill Simons (left, wearing Harris-Walz hat) and friend (right) posed with a congenial Trump campaigner in Carbondale, PA. (Photo courtesy of Bill Simons)

Pennsylvania, knocking on doors in the hallowed-out cities of Carbondale and Lebanon. A smiling lady campaigning for Trump was very friendly, posing for a photo op with me and friend Denis Brennan despite our Harris-Walz hats. Others were less congenial, including the homeowner who threatened to unleash his angry Rottweiler and the three young men who brought their car to a screeching halt to condemn Harris for runaway inflation and the debacle at the border, announcing their departure by screaming a sexual obscenity to describe Harris. In a Dominican neighborhood, residents appeared hesitant to speak candidly. And many folks failed to answer their doors.

Through my union, UUP, I reserved a campus room, organized and publicized a November 5 election night watching of the returns, open to all SUNY Oneonta employees and students. Although attendance was modest – five staff and 15 students – interaction was upbeat, thoughtful and instructive as we flipped the TV dial intermittently between MSNBC and Fox News.

On November 18, my wife Nancy and I attended a lecture at Oneonta's other college, Hartwick, by David Shribman, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* managing editor emeritus, examining the 2024 presidential election. Following his formal presentation, which identified serious potential perils to American democracy posed by a second Trump presidency, I asked Shribman, a co-religionist, to assess the significance of the election for American Jews and Israel. He responded that Jews had voted overwhelmingly for Harris, but most had done so for reasons unrelated to their ethnicity. As for Israel, supporters of Netanyahu probably welcome Trump's victory. I concur – and that makes me apprehensive.

Happy Chanukah!

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Merryl Wallach
She/her, Director

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Protesters denounce U.N. Women's silence on female hostages in Gaza

By Vita Fellig

(JNS) – Some 80 people gathered outside of United Nations headquarters in Manhattan on December 2 to demand that U.N. Women take action for female hostages in Gaza. Dana Cwaigrach, co-director of the New York branch of the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which organized the gathering, told JNS that the protest marked International Women Human Rights Defenders Day on November 29 and highlighted the inaction of U.N. Women, which is part of the global body.

“The United Nations can condemn and acknowledge what Hamas has done to female hostages in Gaza,” Cwaigrach said. “U.N. Women has not said a single thing – not the organization, not the executive director, have made a single statement about what happened on October 7 and about the fact that there are still 13 women held hostage in Gaza who are enduring sexual threats every day.

“We know for certain there was sexual violence that occurred during captivity, and U.N. Women has done absolutely nothing,” she added.

U.N. Women commented publicly last December about the right of Israeli women, among others, to live in safety free of violence and about “accounts of gender-based atrocities and sexual violence” during the October 7 attacks.

Liana Weinstein, a relative of Israeli hostage Arbel Yehoud, who was abducted from her home in Kibbutz Nir Oz on Oct. 7, told attendees that they must continue to call on international organizations to advocate for Israeli



Dana Cwaigrach, co-director of the New York branch of the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, spoke at a gathering of some 80 people outside of United Nations headquarters in Manhattan to demand that U.N. Women take action for female hostages in Gaza on December 2. (Photo by Vita Fellig)

women. “We are gathered here because silence is not an option right now, when at this very moment women in Gaza are enduring unspeakable horror, abuse, starvation and deprivation of their very humanity,” she said.

After several chants of “bring them home,” protesters held a moment of silence for Omer Neutra, a Long-Island

native and lone soldier. Israel said on December 2 that Neutra, whose body remains in Gaza, was killed on October 7. Cwaigrach told JNS that news of Neutra’s death was a devastating blow to the New York Jewish community.

“This is a very difficult day,” she said. “Omer was a Long Island native and his entire family has been part of our efforts to advocate for the hostages since day one. Just yesterday, they were at our weekly protest in Central Park optimistic that their son might return through a negotiated deal.

“We will continue to stand by their side as their son’s body is still held hostage,” she said.

Orna Simkhai, a Manhattan resident and dual Israeli-American citizen, told JNS that she joined the protest because she cannot relax as Israelis remain captives in Gaza. “I’m not going to celebrate life until all the hostages are home,” she said. “It’s very important for our voice to be heard as women in the United States. We need to do something to help.”

Daniella Abbott, of San Diego, told JNS that she joined the demonstration to express her disappointment in the lack of U.N. action in helping to free the hostages. “It’s important, as a non-governmental organization, to be talking about things in a non-partisan way, which is just not what the U.N. has been doing,” she said.

“This is not a political issue,” she added. “It’s about people wanting to go home to their family, whether alive or dead at this point, which is horrible and unfortunate, but you can still speak up. It’s not too late.”

Record number of religious women enlist in IDF's Shlav Bet

By JNS staff

(JNS) – More than 120 Orthodox women aged 26-50 recently enlisted in the Israel Defense Forces as part of the Shlav Bet (“Phase 2”) program track for religious women over the usual recruitment age. This third and largest cohort of previously exempt religious women arrived at the Bakum recruitment center at Tel Hashomer in Ramat Gan, ready to serve their country.

The majority of these women will undergo a two-week basic training before being assigned to roles that align with their professional backgrounds, including nursing, social work and programming. Some recruits will be immediately integrated into units awaiting their expertise, bypassing basic training. These direct placements include as media representatives for the IDF Spokesperson’s Unit, emotional support specialists for IDF Resilience Centers, and a podiatrist to care for soldiers returning from Gaza.

Yehudit Yeres-Weinstein from Otniel, who championed the project, expressed enthusiasm for the pro-



A soldier taught a woman how to wear and use a gasmask during the Second Intifada, October 30, 2001. (Photo courtesy of Flash90)

gram’s success. Yiska Dekel, enlisting as a casualties intelligence officer after her brother Sgt. Maj. (res.) Yishai Greenbaum was mortally wounded in Southern Lebanon in October, embodies the “spirit of determination” among the recruits.

The integration of religious women into the IDF has been gaining momentum. In 2019, the Supreme Court ruled that the Education Ministry must create pre-army programs for national-religious girls, paving the way for increased participation. In 2022, the IDF launched a company for women soldiers only, to cater to female religious women who wish to serve. In August 2023, Ohr Torah Stone launched an initiative called Maaminot BeMadim (“Believers in Uniform”) to provide Torah-observant women with spiritual, halachic and practical support during their service in the Israel Defense Forces.

Hila Gonen, who manages a Resilience Center in Sderot and is enlisting to provide therapeutic interventions and See “Women” on page 15

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Weekly Parasha

Vayishlach, Genesis 32:4-36:43

Jacob remained alone

RABBI SUZANNE BRODY, DIRECTOR, ITHACA BEIT MIDRASH

Whenever my family went on vacation when I was younger, there were always certain things we had to take care of before checking out of the hotel room, or driving away from our hosts' house. My mom would make us check the bathroom, including the tub, to make sure no one was leaving a toothbrush, wet bathing suit or anything else behind. We also had to open all the drawers in the room and the closet to verify that they were empty of anything of ours. We even had to take a thorough look (and even feel) both in the sheets and under the beds before we could leave.

As it turns out, my mother's end of vacation routine is something that our sages knew about 2,000 years ago. It once happened that Rabbi Hiyya Rabba and Rabbi Shimon ben Rabbi were negotiating the sale of some silk fabrics.

They entered Tyre and did their business. When they exited the city gates, they said, "Let's do what our ancestors did. We should return and see if we forgot something." They returned and found a package of silk fabrics. Others who saw them do this were curious about where they got this practice of going back to check that nothing has been forgotten. The rabbis said: "From Jacob our ancestor, as it is written in the Torah: 'Jacob remained alone.'"

To understand what the rabbis were thinking when they said that, multiple commentators explain that in preparation for seeing his brother Esau for the first time since Jacob had fled his murderous rage, Jacob sent off all of his family, followers, livestock and possessions. He himself, however, remained behind on the far bank of the Jabbok River, to

check if any insignificant item had been overlooked when they took all their belongings across. It's possible that this is what the verse means. After all, it's important not to leave things behind, creating litter and waste. While Jacob himself showing this care for both the people and the environment is a great role model for us to follow, if the goal were simply to check for any stray belongings, it seems to me that the task could have been delegated to a servant and the same lessons could be gleaned.

I was therefore somewhat heartened to discover that checking to make sure we haven't left anything behind isn't the only possibility the rabbis had of what this phrase is trying to teach us. Through some clever wordplay, our See "Alone" on page 15

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, December 14, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Genesis 32:4-36:43 and the haftarah is Obadiah 1:1-21. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 5:30 pm.

There will be a Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, December 17, at 7 pm.

Hebrew School will be held on Wednesday, December 18, at 4 pm.

On Saturday, December 21, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Genesis 37:1-40:23 and the haftarah is Amos 2:6-3:8. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 5:30 pm.

A Temple Concord/Temple Israel Adult Education program will be held at Temple Israel on Sunday, December 22, at 10 am. For more information, see the article on page 5.

The temple office will be closed Tuesday-Thursday, December 24-26.

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.

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, December 13, light candles before..... 4:14 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, December 14 5:15 pm
Friday, December 20, light candles before..... 4:16 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, December 21 5:17 pm
Friday, December 27, light candles before..... 4:20 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, December 28 5:22 pm

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Rabbi: Leiah 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, December 13: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Leiah Moser in person, on Zoom or Facebook. 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 14: At 9 am, Shabbat school; at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87897900994?pwd=bOMvwx-DuovoaBInB4aVfHoTlSyamj.1>, meeting ID 878 9790 0994 and passcode 743506. To dial in, call 646-931-3860.

Tuesday-Thursday, December 17-19, at 5:30 pm: Evening prayers with Rabbi Leiah Moser, in-person only.
December 19-January 4: Winter Religious School break.

Friday, December 20: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Leiah Moser in person, on Zoom or on Facebook. 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 21: No Shabbat school; and at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87897900994?pwd=bOMvwx-DuovoaBInB4aVfHoTlSyamj.1>, meeting ID 878 9790 0994 and passcode 743506. To dial in, call 646-931-3860.

Tuesday, December 24, at 5:30 pm: Evening prayers with Rabbi Leiah Moser, in-person only.

Wednesday-Thursday, December 25-26: Evening prayers with Rabbi Leiah Moser, immediately followed by the lighting of the menorah in front of Temple Concord. In-person only.

Norwich Jewish Center

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

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.

Portugal launching Parliamentary Israel Caucus

By Etgar Lefkovits

(JNS) – The Portuguese Parliament (Assembleia da República) in Lisbon launched an Israel Allies Caucus recently, seeking to build political support for Israel as part of an international network of faith-based diplomacy. The move in a country that has often been critical of Israel comes amid an uptick in hatred directed against Jews in Portugal, as in other countries across the globe, in the wake of Israel’s war in Gaza, triggered by the October 7, 2023, Hamas-led terrorist onslaught on the northwestern Negev.

The bipartisan Lisbon caucus is part of a network of Israel Allies Caucuses in 54 parliaments around the world, stretching from Jerusalem to Washington, founded on Bible-based backing.

“At a time when support for Israel is more vital than ever, this initiative broadcasts the voices of parliamentarians who stand with Israel,” Deputy Foreign Minister Sharren Haskel told JNS from Lisbon, speaking on her maiden voyage abroad since being appointed in November. “This is a critical tool for building global support for Israel.”

Last year, both the Porto Synagogue, aka the Kadoorie Mekor Haim Synagogue, and the Jewish Cultural Center in Lisbon were vandalized, while businesses and universities linked to Israel have also been targeted. One publication, Esquerda.net, went so far as to publish a list of Israeli-Jewish businessmen in the country.

Last winter, Israeli Ambassador Dor Shapira and Jewish leaders spoke out against the silence of political leaders

against hate. In February, even the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was vandalized with pro-Palestinian graffiti.

The new parliamentary group aims to foster change by providing a formal and influential platform in the seat of government to advance a strong relationship with Israel. “In Portugal, we stand with the Jewish people, who will no longer accept being unjustly blamed or targeted,” said Portuguese MP Pedro Frazão, co-chairman of the Israel Allies Caucus, Portugal.

“The Jewish people will no longer tolerate being the scapegoat of humanity, targeted as a lightning rod for social frustration,” said Madelena Barata, director of the Portuguese Parliamentary Israel Allies Caucus.

“Israel stands as the guarantor that no Jew will ever be without defense or a home. That’s why it’s crucial to build networks that support and protect Israel, including now in Portugal to further strengthen this global effort,” she said.



MP Pedro Frazão, co-chairman of the Israel Allies Caucus, Portugal (Photo by Duke of Winterfell via Wikimedia Commons)

The caucus will include parliamentarians from the center-right ruling Social Democratic Party, which took office this spring, and the right-wing Chega Party.

Founded in 2007, the Washington-based Israel Allies Foundation, which operates the caucuses, has emerged as a faith-based powerhouse, with a global network of caucuses that mobilize political support for Israel based on shared Judeo-Christian values.

“Our mission is to shift politicians from anti-Israel rhetoric to fact-based dialogue,” said Leo van Doesburg, Europe director of the Israel Allies Foundation. “With our 20th European caucus now in Portugal, we are expanding our reach across the continent.”

Israel Allies Foundation President Josh Reinstein said, “Faith-based diplomacy is the greatest tool in Israel’s diplomatic arsenal, and the new Portugal caucus will be a powerful addition to this network.”

Israeli researchers claim progress in Parkinson’s study

By JNS staff

(JNS) – A team of Tel Aviv University researchers claims to have made progress in the path to treating Parkinson’s disease. The team found that a variant of a protein, caused by a genetic mutation, enhances the spread of Parkinson’s pathology through nerve cells in the brain.

“Researchers have long tried to discover how the protein *α-synuclein* spreads through the brain, affecting one cell after another, and gradually destroying whole sections of the brain,” said TAU doctoral student Stav Cohen Adiv Mordechai in a press release on November 12. “Since *α-synuclein* needs to cross the cell membrane in order to spread, we focused on the protein TMEM16F, a regulator

situated in the cell membrane, as a possible driver of this lethal process.”

About 10 million people worldwide suffer from the brain disorder that causes unintended or uncontrollable movements, such as shaking, stiffness and difficulty with balance and coordination.

The researchers also looked for mutations or variants in the TMEM16F gene that might increase the risk for the disease.

See “Study” on page 16

OnlineContinued from page 12

of Rokhl Auerbach’s “Warsaw Testament” on Thursday, January 23, at 7 pm (www.yiddishbookcenter.org/events/upcoming-public-programs/translator-talk-conversation-professor-samuel-kassow-translator).

◆ The American Jewish University will hold the virtual talk “October 7: 100 Human Stories of Tragedy” on Wednesday, January 8, at 3 pm. Lee Yaron, *Haaretz*’s investigative journalist, discusses her new book, “10/7: One Hundred Human Stories.” For more information or to register, visit <https://open.aju.edu/event/october-7-100-human-stories-of-tragedy/>.

For additional resources, see previous issues of The Reporter on its website, www.thereporter.org/jewish-online-resources.

Alone.Continued from page 14

sages posited a vastly different reading. The Da’at Zekenim bases his argument on the hypothesis that there was a scribal error (the ancient version of a typo). He teaches that the letter *bet* in the word spelled *lamed bet dalet vav* (alone) is supposed to be exchanged for the letter *kaf*, so that the word is to be read as *lamed kaf dalet vav* (for his small cans). A fun bit of wordplay, but not particularly meaningful until finding that expanding on this idea, the Ein Yaakov says what we learn by switching the letters is that Jacob was left on the opposite river bank of the Jabbok because of little pitchers he wanted to personally take along. With Hannukah approaching, it seems fitting that some say these little pitchers are ones in which small quantities of olive oil would be stored and hidden easily. Knowing how precious olive oil is in keeping the eternal light burning, protecting these small containers of oil would be a commendable action. Moreover, keeping the oil separate from all of his other possessions is a way of protecting that which he holds holy, an action that increases in importance when one is afraid of a possible attack.

As we ourselves now contend with increased antisemitism around the world, this lesson of holding our own sacred items and teachings close to us resonates strongly for so many of us. Some of us have taken to wearing signs of our Judaism on our bodies in the form of jewelry, *kippot* or t-shirts. We clutch our identity and our ideas of how to be God’s partners in this world close to our hearts. Jacob remained alone, taking care of others and the environment, in safeguarding the sacred oil, and holding on to that which was holy. We can, too.

WomenContinued from page 13

rebuild resiliency for those suffering from trauma, highlighted the importance of their contributions: “Today, I’m actualizing a dream. I’m enlisting in the IDF, albeit 30 years too late, but I have the excitement of an 18-year-old. When people teach the history of the Iron Swords war, they will also talk about the fact that we were here and we enlisted. Us women, some with four children at home, or six, or eight, some who are pregnant, others who are nursing, we all came and we all took part. We are here.”

Dekel is a teacher from the Golan Heights. Originally, she wasn’t going to be allowed to enlist because the army didn’t have a job for her. She fought for her position and asked what was needed until she received the answer that there was a need to fill positions as soldiers who notify family members of casualties.

She responded, “Wherever there is a need, I will serve,” and that is what she will be doing for her service.

“My friends thought that I was crazy and told me that there is no way they would ever do that job,” she told the *Srugim* news site. “I will be doing this holy work with as much passion and compassion as humanly possible. I feel that it is my mission to serve, we all do. We look like a high school trip as everyone is so excited, but no one here knows anyone else. Not yet. But we are now a part of history and that is exciting.”

The Shlav Bet program isn’t the only program bringing in religious women to serve in the IDF. Many who are younger are enlisting on their own or in smaller groups. An administrator from the Aish Seminary program, a Jerusalem-based religious women’s seminary catering to students and young professionals, reported that several students and alumnae from the seminary’s Aspire program have enlisted in the military over the past year, while some current students are seriously considering doing so in the future.

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THE REPORTER
Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

Earliest known Chinese inscription found in Jerusalem

By JNS staff

(JNS) – The earliest known Chinese inscription in Israel from about 500 years ago has been uncovered in Jerusalem, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced on December 3. The rare 16th century C.E. Chinese inscription, unearthed in a dig on Mount Zion and discovered on a porcelain bowl fragment, reads: “Forever we will guard the eternal spring,” the state-archaeological body said.



The fragment of the colorful bowl originating in China. (Photo by Emil Aladjem, Israel Antiquities Authority)

Ancient Chinese porcelain vessels were previously found in Israel, but this is the first to bear an inscription. Most of the findings from the excavation date from the Byzantine period and earlier to the Second Temple period, well over 1,500 years ago. As a result, according to the IAA, when the archaeologists stumbled upon the more recent colorful object during this summer’s dig, they were surprised. The bowl was

subsequently dated to 1520-1570, and originated in the Ming Dynasty, the IAA said. The 16th century saw close trade relations between the Chinese Empire and the Otto-

man Empire, which ruled the Holy Land at the time explaining how a dish from China ended up in Jerusalem. During that period, there were colonies of Chinese merchants in Beirut and Tripoli who likely had trade interests in Jerusalem, Cairo and Aleppo.

“In archaeological research, evidence of trade relations between merchants in the Land of Israel and the Far East is known even from earlier periods – for example,

of various spices,” said Israel Antiquities Authority Director Eli Escusido. “But it is fascinating to meet evidence of these relations also in the form of an actual inscription, written in the Chinese language, and in an unexpected place – on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.”

The multi-year dig underway at the site is being carried out together with the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology.

Study Continued from page 15

“The incidence of Parkinson’s among Ashkenazi Jews is known to be relatively high, and the Institute conducts a vast on-going genetic study on Ashkenazi Jews who carry genes increasing the risk for the disease,” said TAU’s Dr. Avraham Ashkenazi. “With their help, we were able to identify a specific TMEM16F mutation which is common in Ashkenazi Jews in general, and in Ashkenazi Parkinson’s patients in particular.”

The research was published in the scientific journal Aging Cell. Earlier this year, Israeli researchers discovered a novel method to detect protein aggregation in cells – a hallmark of Parkinson’s disease – which might enable diagnosis up to 15 years before the first symptoms appear. Although there is no cure as of yet for Parkinson’s disease, there are medications that help alleviate symptoms.

Beignets Continued from page 8

cooked with.
2 to 3 medium leeks, white and 2 inches of green part

Boiling water to cover
1 cup parsley, cut coarsely, rinsed and packed

3 large eggs, lightly beaten
1½ tsp. sumac
1 tsp. each salt and freshly ground pepper or to taste

¾ to 1 cup matzah meal
Vegetable oil for frying
Place cleaned leeks in a large pot. Cover with boiling water. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes or until just beginning to soften. Drain well.

Place in a food processor. Pulse 4 to 5 times to chop coarsely. Transfer to a mixing bowl.

Add parsley to the food processor (no need to wash the processor). Chop coarsely.

Add to leeks along with eggs, sumac, salt and pepper. Stir in enough matzah meal to make a soft mixture. If too stiff, add another beaten egg.

Heat about a quarter-inch of oil in a heavy skillet. The oil is ready when a 1-inch bread cube toasts in 30 seconds. Drop by tablespoons into the hot oil. Press with a wooden spoon to flatten.

Fry over medium-high heat for 2 to 3 minutes on each side until nicely browned. Do not crowd; allow about a half-inch space between each fritter.

Drain on paper towels. Serve warm.

New Orleans Yeast-Free Beignets (Dairy or Pareve)

Makes 18-20
Cook’s tips:

- ◆ If using a deep-fry thermometer, the temperature should reach 360° to 375°F, or use the bread test: A 1-inch cube should brown in 30 seconds.
- ◆ Make sure baking powder is not outdated.
- ◆ Dredge with confectioners’ sugar instead of granulated sugar.

3 large eggs
¼ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. nutmeg
½ cup (1 stick) very soft butter or margarine
3½ tsp. baking powder
1½ cups all-purpose flour
1½ tsp. vanilla extract
2 to 3 Tbsp. granulated sugar, divided
Vegetable oil for frying

Using an electric hand mixer, beat together the eggs, salt, nutmeg, butter or margarine, flour, vanilla and 1 tablespoon sugar until the mixture comes together to form a sticky ball.

Turn out onto a well-floured board and knead for a minute or two until the mixture forms a smooth ball. Wrap in plastic wrap.

Refrigerate for 1 to 2 hours. Divide the dough in half. Roll into a rectangle about ¼-inch thick.

With a sharp knife, cut into squares or triangles. Repeat with the remaining dough.

Heat 2½ to 3 inches of oil in a heavy pan over medium-high heat to 360° to 375°F. Line a baking sheet or large dish with paper towels. Slide pastry pieces into hot oil, a few at a time. Do not crowd. Fry for 1 to 2 minutes to golden brown.

With a slotted spoon, flip over and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes. Both sides should be nicely browned. Drain on paper towels.

Dredge with remaining sugar and serve hot.

Cocktail Cheese Beignets (Dairy)

Makes 15-18
Cook’s tips: Any finely grated cheese will do or a mixture of cheeses. Crisp on the outside, softly melted inside.

1 cup water
¼ cup (4 Tbsp.) butter
1½ cups all-purpose flour, divided
½ tsp. salt
4 to 5 drops hot sauce
2 rounded tsp. Dijon-style mustard
3 eggs, lightly beaten
2 cups grated Parmesan cheese
Vegetable oil for frying

Place water and butter in a medium pot and bring to a boil. Stir to blend in the butter.

Add ¼ cup flour, salt, hot sauce and mustard. Stir until the mixture forms a sticky ball.

Transfer to a food processor. Add the eggs, processing to a smooth mixture. Add the cheese and process until blended. Cover and chill for 1 hour.

Roll into bite-sized balls and toss in the remaining ¼ cup flour. Deep-fry in hot oil for 2 to 2½ minutes, turning with a slotted spoon to brown evenly.

Drain on paper towels. Serve warm.

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



Beignet (Photo by Pixabay)



Doughnuts. (Photo by Pixabay)

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