

THE REPORTER

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BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Save the date: January 31

Federation to offer program by David Rittberg on “Conversations about the Day After”

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold the Zoom event “Conversations about the Day After” with David Rittberg, senior director at the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, on Wednesday, January

31, at 7 pm. Rittberg will discuss life after the October 7 attack on Israel. He will speak about what is happening in southern Israel and how the war will affect Jewish communities and philanthropy in the United States. To register for the event, visit www.jfgeb.org/.

“David’s father, Howard Rittberg, texted me to let me know that his son was touring Israel and the *kibbutzim* affected by the war,” said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. “I wanted to know more about what he was learning and what his perspective

is on the future of both Israel and Jews in the United States. I also think it’s important for us to keep talking about what’s happening in Israel so we don’t forget.”

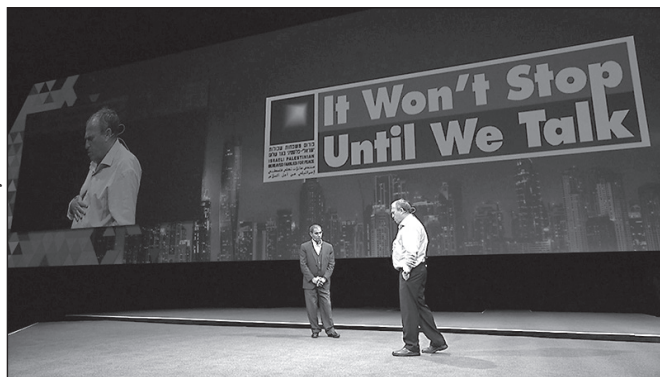
More information about the event will appear in future issues of *The Reporter*.

Film Fest to hold virtual showing of “The Narrow Bridge” in January

By Reporter staff

The Greater Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of the documentary “The Narrow Bridge” directed by Esther Takac in January. The film won the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival and the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival. A discussion of “The Narrow Bridge” will be moderated by Dr. Terence M. Keane, Ph.D., director of the Behavioral Science Division of the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, on Sunday, January 7, at 6 pm. The link to the film will be sent to those who register by 5 pm on Thursday, January 4. Registration can be made on the Federation website, www.jfgeb.org/film-fest.

At right: A session from “The Narrow Bridge” directed by Esther Takac (Used with permission of Filmoption International and Menemsha Films)



“The Narrow Bridge” has been called “an eye-opening journey into the souls of four people who, after searing pain, develop strengths they never had before. Bushra,

Rami, Meytal and Bassam, women and men who lost a child or parent in violent conflict, are creating a sacred space for change as they transform their grief into

a bridge for reconciliation. Takac follows their paths from devastating trauma to courageous activism as they become part of a controversial grassroots movement of broken-hearted people called Israeli Palestinian Bereaved Families, who stand side-by-side to end the violence and build a future based on dignity and equality.”

“It’s hard to imagine a more timely moment for this extraordinary documentary,” said Steve Lisman, a member of the Film Fest Committee. “Some have described ‘The Narrow Bridge’ as depicting the transformation of grief to healing. This powerful, enlightening film is worth the challenge it will pose to watch.”

See “Bridge” on page 7

TC/TI adult ed. brunch to feature Rabbi Talia Laster

The Temple Concord/Temple Israel Adult Education Committee will offer a brunch and presentation by Rabbi Talia

Laster on Sunday, January 21, from 10 am-noon, at Temple Concord, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. Laster will speak about

“Areyvut: What Responsibility Do Jews Have to One Another?” The brunch will be served at 10 am, and the presentation and Zoom session will begin at 10:30 am. The series is underwritten by the Eisenberg Foundation. There is no charge for the event, but donations will be appreciated.



Rabbi Talia Laster (Photo by Yehoshua Hooper)

RSVPs to the Temple Concord or Temple Israel office are requested by Wednesday, January 17, to help with planning; no one will be turned away at the door. To request the Zoom link or additional information, visit the Temple Concord website at www.templeconcord.com or contact Eve Berman at eberman@stny.rr.com.

In her lecture, Laster will discuss the

talmudic teaching found in Tractate Shevuot that says “all Jews are guarantors for one another.” She will explore applications of the principle and the underlying question: are all Jews really in the same boat?

Laster serves as the campus rabbi at Cornell Hillel. She received rabbinic ordination in 2022 from the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College in Newton, MA. Her interests include “spirited and playful” *tefillah* (prayer), Talmud study and the unfolding of *halachah* (Jewish law). Laster is a life-long member of the National Havurah community and noted that she is “passionately committed to its values of empowered lay-leadership, joyous ritual and deep Torah learning.”

The Reporter website relaunches

By Reporter staff

The Reporter website, www.thereportergroup.org, relaunched recently with an updated look. The new website offers new features and easier ways to find articles. The most recent articles can now be accessed from the home page.

“We realized that it could be difficult to find articles and columns,” said Rabbi

Rachel Esserman, executive editor of the paper. “Our home page is now filled with links to articles and columns, making it easier to find information about an upcoming event or read our editorials and columnists.”

“We’ve streamlined the website and made it much faster to navigate,” said Julie Weber, production associate for *The Reporter*” on page 11



A screenshot of The Reporter’s relaunched website.

BRONZE SPONSOR

The Reporter’s Editorial Committee and staff thank Neil & Sue Portnoff for sponsoring this issue of THE REPORTER in honor of Rabbi Rachel Esserman

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Opinion

From the Desk of the Federation Executive Director

With gratitude

SHELLEY HUBAL

I recently read a short article by Jacklin Kwan on the web magazine Live Science. The article details the findings of researchers studying the sprouts that Redwood trees grew after a devastating 2020 fire swept through the Big Basin Redwood State Park in California.

The trees, with charred trunks and burned canopies, were assumed to be dead, but surprisingly, just a few months after the fire, sprouts began to poke through. The researchers determined some of the buds that sprouted were up to 1,000 years old. Redwoods create “budlike tissue” under their bark. These ancient reserves combined with

decades-old stores of carbon and the process of photosynthesis created new life.

What I love most about this story is its description of renewal after devastation. Sometimes we are faced with circumstances that require us to dig down to the very depths of our strength and the very core of our being in order to begin again: To renew. To choose life. Perhaps, even over time, to thrive. Our Jewish traditions offer study of Torah and acts of *chesed* and *zedakah* as just some of the ways we can act to create a better world.

I pray for an end to the storm of war and hate and

antisemitism. I sincerely hope that we find in the charred remains of our shared humanity the strength and reserves we will need to begin a new course: to learn to respect one another, to share this planet in peace and to trust in the innate goodness that God has given each and every one of us. A tall order, I know, but if some of the tallest trees on our planet can begin anew, perhaps we can, too.

Kwan's article can be found at www.livescience.com/planet-earth/plants/california-redwoods-killed-by-wild-fire-come-back-to-life-with-2000-year-old-buds.

Israel, antisemitism and higher ed. in America

By Bill Simons

Antisemitism in higher education is not new. Prior to the Cold War, many of America's most prestigious universities employed student quotas, formal or de facto, and old-boy faculty hirings to limit the Jewish presence on campus. Although he failed to persuade the overseers to adopt direct quotas during the 1920s, Harvard University President A. Lawrence Lowell employed other strategies, including subjective character references, interviews and photographs to curtail Jewish enrollment, as well as that of other ethnic and racial minorities. Exclusionary higher ed. policies toward the outsider paralleled those of the immigration quota system adopted by Congress during the 1920s, which discriminated against Jews and other “new” immigrant groups.

The end of World War II ushered in a long golden age for Jews at elite universities and in higher education generally. There were several factors, amongst them: revelation and revulsion of intolerance's end game with the defeat of Nazi Germany, the need to recruit and train the best and brightest students so that the U.S. could maintain Cold War defense superiority, and a hiatus in mass immigration that promoted assimilation and conformity. Even the House Un-American Activities Committee and Joseph McCarthy inquisitions – that destroyed the lives of many left-leaning faculty, Jewish and Gentile alike – could not derail the new trajectory. Numbers of Jewish intellectuals flourished as

university superstars – Jonas Salk, Milton Friedman and Henry Kissinger, to cite a few. Jewish Americans founded Brandeis University in 1948, the same year as the rebirth of Israel. Unlike the yeshivas, Brandeis, despite its strong Jewish connections, was non-sectarian, a host to Jews and Gentiles, and committed to excellence. By the late 1960s, Jewish radicals, like Columbia's Mark Rudd, felt secure enough to lead campus protests.

Beyond the Ivy League, postwar American prosperity, dramatic expansion of state university systems and demographics jumpstarted by the GI Bill of Rights and then fueled by the coming of age of Baby Boomers grew campus populations. A college education became normative for Jews. When the brilliant, albeit quirky and controversial, Larry Summers, a Jew, was named president of Harvard in 2001, A. Lawrence Lowell must have been turning in his grave. That era of Jewish ascension in the most elite universities, however, may now face eclipse.

In reaction to the Israel-Gaza War, antisemitism has ratcheted up on several of the most prestigious campuses in the Northeast. Even before the conflict, the BDS, Cancel Culture and Progressive movements stigmatized Israel, making the Jewish state and its proponents one of their targets for boycotts, silencing speakers and censuring professors. To a generation that knows little of the Holocaust or the founding of the modern Jewish state by refugees from genocide, the shibboleth of Israel as a wealthy, militaristic,

colonizing power gained credence, even amongst some younger Jews, who mistook the authoritarian Benjamin Netanyahu for the face of Israel. With the advent of the Israel-Hamas War, distorted media coverage soon minimized focus on the murders, rapes, mutilations and abductions of Israelis by Hamas terrorists intent of the destructions of Israel and killing as many Jews as possible. The deaths of Palestinian civilians, augmented by Hamas employing them as shields, is horrible and tragic, but, despite the dominant media narrative, it is not the whole story. Canards, including misappropriation of the term genocide, find a constituency at several elite universities.

At Cooper Union in Manhattan's East Village, an October 25 “Free Palestine” rally turned volatile. A group of Jewish students previously in the library sheltered in place as protesters roamed the hallways shouting anti-Israel slogans, calling for the killing of Jews and banged upon metal doors. After protesters entered the library, staff locked the building doors. Tense, nervous and intimidated, Jewish students, some wearing *kippot*, remained barricaded in a secure space for approximately half an hour and made several 911 calls for assistance. A Jewish student asserted that the anti-Israel protesters were “very aggressive in those spaces where outwardly Jewish students were sitting.” There was no immediate response to the incident from the Cooper Union administration.

See “Higher” on page 8

In My Own Words

Kissinger and the Cambodian genocide

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

If you are an admirer of Henry Kissinger, you might not want to read this column because it will tarnish his image for you. But after his recent death, I feel compelled to share what I have long thought: Kissinger should have stood trial as a war criminal for the illegal bombing of Cambodia that he and President Richard M. Nixon authorized. The bombing was not an accident: they knew the destruction they caused was illegal.

I first learned about this when reading “Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia” by William Shawcross, which was originally published in 1979. The Vietnam War was a formative event in my life. I was opposed to the war because it was a civil war between two dictatorships (no matter what they claimed). The French, who had previously had troops in Vietnam, were savvy enough to leave before they lost more lives.

We Americans were not as smart.

According to the in-depth research and numerous people Shawcross talked to, Kissinger admitted that the bombing was illegal, but didn't care. Those bombings and American aid to overthrow the neutral government of Cambodia led to the Khmer Rouge government under Pol Pot and genocide. Estimates of the deaths Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge were responsible for range from more than 1.25 million to as many as three million. The general consensus is that at least two million members of the Cambodian population (said to have been about seven and a half million at the time) were murdered by this government.

From what I've read, President John F. Kennedy had planned to remove American troops from Vietnam after his re-election. Unfortunately, after he was assassinated, President Lyndon B. Johnson instead increased the number of troops and the U.S. became involved in a war it could not win. If not for the war, Johnson might have gone down in history as one of the greatest U.S. presidents for his work on civil rights. Unfortunately, his legacy was greatly tarnished by the huge waste of human life he caused.

Yet, from 1969-73, it was Nixon and Kissinger who expanded the war to Cambodia – a war that was clearly illegal. Shawcross quoted fellow Harvard University

professors who spoke to Kissinger because they could not believe he knew about the bombings. But he did and he approved of them. The president, the head of the executive branch and leader of our government, and Kissinger, his secretary of state, were fine with illegally carrying out a war and had no concern about its effect on the Cambodian population.

Why do I take this so personally? Because Nixon and Kissinger make me responsible for the deaths of at least two million Cambodians who were murdered by the Khmer Rouge government. Yes, we Americans *are* responsible for those deaths because we voted into office someone who allowed that to happen. Why am I more upset about Kissinger than Nixon? Because Kissinger was a Jew whose family escaped from Nazi Germany. He should have been different; he should have been better.

For those who think this is ancient history, remember that we Jews carry our history and legacy with us, even centuries after events occurred, such as the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem. The Vietnam War and the genocide in Cambodia are part of my American legacy, one of which I am not proud. That means I felt no sorrow when Kissinger died. What I still feel is sorrow for the country that was almost destroyed by his folly.

Correction

In the December 15 issue of *The Reporter*, the page 1 article announcing Dr. Howard Warner would be discussing his trip to Spain and Portugal at the next Beth David luncheon should have said his trip was to Portugal only.



Jewish Federation
of Greater Binghamton

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OPINIONS

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

LETTERS

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

ADS

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

DEADLINE

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

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www.thereporter.org

The Reporter matches matching grant for fourth year

By Reporter staff

For the fourth year, *The Reporter* announced that it matched its matching grant from the David and Virginia Eisenberg Fund. This year's grant was for \$5,000. A portion of the matching funds were received through Visions' online donation platform, Givio, on Giving Tuesday. The total received was \$5,322.56.

"We are thrilled to receive a matching grant again this year and grateful for the larger amount offered this year," said Rabbi Rachel Esserman, executive editor of *The Reporter*. "We owe a special thank you to the David and Virginia Eisenberg Fund that was gracious enough to offer the grant. We also want to thank Visions for its

matching grant through its Givio program. Of course, we are always grateful to readers of the paper who generously donated money."

Esserman noted that this support is even more important now than it was in the past. "It's more and more difficult to find businesses willing to advertise in the paper," she said. "That makes readers' and foundations' donations even more important."

She also noted the difference between *The Reporter* and the local secular newspaper. "We offer a service to the Jewish community by giving them a one-stop place filled with news and features they won't find anywhere else," she said. "Those include Bill Simons' articles and

our award-winning book reviews and editorials."

Esserman offered thanks to Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, for helping to arrange the grant and *The Reporter's* production associate, Julie Weber, for creating the ad that appeared in the paper and on *The Reporter's* website.

Although the matching grant is over, Esserman noted that the paper is still accepting donations. "Every penny is appreciated to help keep our paper going," she said. Donations can still be made online through The Reporter Group's website, www.thereportergroup.org, or by mailing donations to The Reporter, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

Film Fest to hold virtual showing of "Our Almost Completely True Story" in February

By Reporter staff

The Greater Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of "Our Almost Completely True Story" in February. The film is a romantic comedy of "love discovered in the golden years." A discussion of the film will be moderated by Richard Mattson on Sunday, February 4, at 6 pm. Mattson is an associate professor and director of the undergraduate program in psychology at Binghamton University. The link to the film will be sent to those who register by 5 pm on Thursday, February 1. People can register for the film and the discussion by visiting www.jfgeb.org/film-fest. Donations are appreciated; the suggested donation is \$10.



Jerry Sroka and Bernie Kopell in "Our Almost Completely True Story."

"Our Almost Completely True Story" tells a fictional version of the real life romance of actress Mariette Hartley and voice actor Jerry Sroka; both star in the film. It offers "over-the-top bits about the perils of online dating, wistful remembrances of the old days of Hollywood and awkward run-ins with exes." The film was the winner of the Audience Award, Best Feature Comedy, at the Sedona International Film Festival and the winner of the Outstanding Achievement Award at the Indie Fest Film Awards.

See "Fest" on page 7

TC Sisterhood to hold annual book review on Jan. 8

Rabbi Rachel Esserman will discuss three books at the annual Temple Concord Sisterhood book talk on Sunday, January 28, at 11 am, at Temple Concord, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. This will be an in-person only event and will be held in the Kilmer Mansion. The snow date is Sunday, February 4. The community is invited to attend. Brunch will be served at no cost to Sisterhood members. The cost for non-members is \$5. Reservations must be made by contacting Phyllis Kellenberger at pweinste@stny.rr.com or 607-727-8305 by Wednesday, January 24.



Rabbi Rachel Esserman

this than with Sisterhood members."

"Kunstlers in Paradise" is about 93-year-old Mamie Kunstler who escaped Vienna in 1939 when she was 11. Her family made its way to Los Angeles where they joined a colony of distinguished Jewish musicians, writers and intellectuals also escaping Hitler. In 2020, Mamie is joined by her 20-something grandson, Julian, who wants to make good in Hollywood, but the pandemic shut down the world. Mamie tells Julian of her early years and the famous people she knew, giving him a view of a very different world.

The books to be reviewed are "Kunstlers in Paradise" by Cathleen Schine, "Abomination" by Ashley Goldberg and "Loving Our Bones: Disability Wisdom and the Spiritual Subversiveness of Knowing Ourselves Whole" by Julia Watts Belser.

"I am once again looking forward to reading these books for what is one of my favorite events of the year" said Esserman. "It's always a pleasure to read and discuss interesting books and no better place to do

"Abomination," winner of the Debut Fiction Prize at the 72nd National Jewish Book Awards, is a novel that tells the story of two friends whose lives are changed by a scandal at their ultra-Orthodox day school. The two men go in very different directions, but are forced to look at their lives when they meet again.

In "Loving Our Bones: Disability Wisdom and the Spiritual Subversiveness of Knowing Ourselves Whole," See "Book" on page 11

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to Goldie Ohana on the death of her father,
Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok ben Meir Itkin

DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
January 12-25.....	January 3
January 26-February 8.....	January 17
February 9-22.....	January 31
February 23-March 7.....	February 14

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

JLI lit. course "Book Smart" to begin Jan. 30

The Jewish Learning Institute will hold a six-week class, "Book Smart," which will look at 33 centuries of Jewish literature. The class will be held on Mondays at 7 pm beginning January 30 in person at the Chabad Center and virtually. It will be taught by Rivkah Slonim. An 8:45 pm section of the course will be offered if there are a minimum of 10 registries for that time. The course will explore the history, authors and content of Judaism's writings subdivided in eight general genres.

To register, write to Rshea@ChabadofBinghamton.com, call the Chabad Center at 607-797-0015 or visit www.myjli.com. The course fee is \$79 (\$150 for a couple) and includes the course text book. "Please register sooner rather than later if you are planning to join so we can order the correct number of text books for all interested participants," said Slonim.

"To study the history of most cultures, you need to learn about wars and empires, warriors and city builders, and great works of art," said organizers of the class. "But the history of Judaism is overwhelmingly a history of books. Books form the core of Judaism's culture. But even if they're known as the 'People of the Book,' much of Judaism's classic literature remains closed to contemporary Jews."

"It's an ambitious undertaking," said Slonim, "I'm excited because I think the course will give us a richer understanding of what Judaism meant throughout the centuries and what it can mean for us today."

The 90-minute sessions will offer a survey of traditional Jewish literature, covering Torah, Talmud, *midrash*, *halachah*, ethics and philosophy, as well as Kabbalah and Chasidic mysticism. "We'll meet the authors behind the big ideas of Jewish history over a period of 33 centuries," explained Slonim.

The history of Jewish literature is a broad subject, but Slonim says the course will also go deep: "We're not just going to learn why these works were written. We're actually going to get a taste of what it's like to participate in a talmudic debate, unpack a philosophical conundrum and decipher a kabbalistic text from the Zohar."

Slonim says she isn't promising students overnight expertise on the works discussed in the course. "But I See "JLI" on page 4

Binghamton Philharmonic

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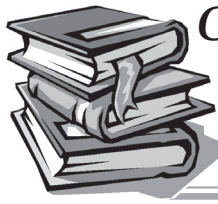
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Ad Deadline: January 18

Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton



Off the Shelf

Jewish paths for improving your life

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

At first glance, the two books in this review have little in common. After all, one focuses on rational Talmud study, while the other uses a variety of sources to identify miracles. Yet, “How the Talmud Can Change Your Life: Surprisingly Modern Advice from a Very Old Book” by Liel Leibovitz (W. W. Norton and Company) and “Taking Miracles Seriously: a Journey to Everyday Spirituality” by Rabbi Michael Zedek (Sutherland House) are similar in one way: they offer two distinct, but very Jewish, paths to improving one’s life.

It’s difficult to describe “How the Talmud Can Change Your Life” because it’s not a history of the Talmud, although it does offer background on how the Talmud developed. It’s also doesn’t focus on the different divisions of the work and the *halachah* (legal ruling) they offer, although it does discuss them. For Leibovitz, the most important thing is what it does *not* offer, which are “facile self-affirmations or treacly simplifications. It can’t be reduced to pithy maxims, like love yourself or be kind or spark joy. No sooner has it raised a piercing question than it proceeds to complicate it further, often leaving readers confounded.” The author sees it as a self-help book that teaches people how to deal with a complex, difficult world and make better real-life decisions.

Readers looking at the opening of each chapter might be excused for wondering about the author’s approach to his subject. Each chapter opens with a real-life story that doesn’t seem to relate to the Talmud, at least at first. The author then shows how the Talmud can offer lessons relevant to the biographies offered. For example, in a chapter called “Romance in the Dark, or How to Win in Love and Marriage,” Leibovitz tells the sad tale of Billie Holiday and her musician friend, Lester Young. He then segues into the story of Beruriah and her husband, Rabbi Meir, to show how a true marriage is a meeting of different minds.

In “Our Bodies, Ourselves, or How Having a Snack, Taking a Bath and Pooping Can Save Your Soul,” the biography of Jean Nidtech, the founder of Weight Watchers, leads into a discourse on ancient Egyptian and Greek ideas

about the body before offering a discussion concerning the body and soul as explained by several rabbis in the Talmud. The friendship between writers C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien is explored in “Thank You for Being a Friend, or How Fighting Can Bring You Closer,” before the chapter offers talmudic suggestions about the importance of acquiring a friend and exactly what that phrase may be referencing.

Underlying Leibovitz’ discussions is the idea that the Talmud demands those who study to think deeply about the world – that they explore every possibility seriously in order to truly understand the answer to a question. The questions – or rather the process of discussion and reason – often matter more than the answers. The author notes that the Talmud “demands that we question – everything, everyone, always – and that we cobble together whatever answers we’ve collected into the mental mosaic we call the self. And then it demands that we apply this self of ours to navigate our way through life, refusing to succumb to anything, from mass movements to collective delusions to religious fanaticism, that might distract us from the hard and essential task of reading our own life’s story, in real time, with a critical eye.”

Leibovitz attempts to show how studying the Talmud serves as a way to understand “a world rife with moral and emotional complexities and ambiguities.” It’s not clear that he completely succeeds in this task, although his work is interesting and well written. While it does not serve as a primer for religious talmudic study – since there is little discussion of its ritual and legal implications – it does show the complexity of the Talmud and how it can be used to understand today’s world. “How the Talmud Can Change Your Life” would make an excellent text for a study group looking to explore contemporary life through talmudic eyes.

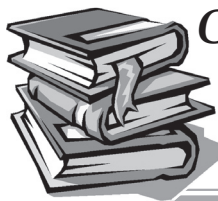
While Leibovitz focuses on rational discussion, Zedek appeals to readers’ emotions and spirituality. The author is clear in his purpose: he notes his book “embrace[s] the conviction that there are teachings, stories, suggestions, and actions that can assist us more fully to realize, embrace, and

rejoice in the gift of life – more specifically the gift of our lives.” Zedek wants readers to stop and appreciate awesome moments and, even more important, look for them in their daily lives, rather than waiting for something overwhelming to happen before appreciating the beauty that surrounds them. According to the author, this training – taking the time to pause and notice – allows one to appreciate the miraculous in the world that surrounds them daily.

Zedek use biblical stories, prayer and poetry to show how one can better appreciate the miracles he sees as hidden in plain sight. He tries to demystify the miracles in the Bible by not demanding that his readers take them literally, but, rather, to see the meaning underlying them. For example, when writing about Moses and the burning bush, he says, “I do not believe that bushes talk – in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, or English. But I do think we may hear ourselves addressed and experience a sacred dimension in a multitude of encounters, be they with persons, moments, arts, and the environment. In fact, I would argue such is possible with all things and in all experiences.”

Zedek notes that the difficulty one faces when trying to appreciate daily miracles is that words are usually inadequate when it comes to describing them. However, the author is less interested in what actually happens than in people’s reactions – their responses – to what occurred. To help readers on their path, he offers questions to ponder at the end of each chapter, which give additional ways to ponder what was discussed. For Zedek, this will help readers with what he sees as their life task: “to bring a spiritual dimension into our lives and, then, to share that presence and its consequence with others.” The purpose of his work is to help readers live “a meaning-filled life.”

In addition to Zedek’s discussions of the topic, “Taking Miracles Seriously” offers prayers and poetry to inspire its readers. The book is hard to summarize because it appeals to readers’ emotions, but those searching to add a spiritual dimension to their lives can find a Jewish path to spirituality in its pages. It would also be an excellent guide for study groups that are interested in exploring spirituality.



Off the Shelf

Friendship, the Nobel Prize and one minor difficulty

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

It’s difficult to write about some novels without giving away part of the plot. I don’t feel bad in this case because anyone reading the book jacket of “Stockholm” by Noa Yedlin (HarperVia) already knows what happens. In fact, it’s one of the novel’s selling points: Avishay, an Israeli professor, is in the running for a Nobel Prize in economics. There’s only one problem, as his four close friends discover: you have to be alive at the time it’s awarded and one of them just discovered Avishay in his bed dead. This group of 60-somethings debate what they should do and their decision jumpstarts a novel that is part farce and part careful study of the ramifications of friendship.

The group decides they will pretend that Avishay is alive until after the Nobel Prize is announced. That means not telling anyone – that includes his mother, sister and their spouses and/or boyfriend – that he is dead. That also means monitoring his phone and e-mail so people don’t suspect anything is wrong. Oh, and cranking up the air conditioning in his apartment to keep the body from decaying – well, as much as they can. Their desire is complicated by the fact that the novel takes place in Israel, where most burials occur the same day someone dies. Of course, numerous

complications occur – ones that will make readers laugh out loud at Avishay’s friends’ attempts to keep anyone from discovering the truth.

But the other part of the novel – the more serious part – focuses on each of the four friends, their personal idiosyncrasies, insecurities and connections to each other. There’s Zohara, who has been having a long-term affair with Avishay, although she believes that no one else knows about their relationship. Yehuda has been friends with Avishay since they were children, while Amos met Avishay after their army service and influenced his choice of career: both men are economics professors, although they focus on different aspects of the field. Nili is the most recent member of the group: the other four had been friends with her ex-husband and, to her surprise, maintained their friendship with her after the divorce.

Each member of the group suffers from insecurities that affect not only their relationship, but their decision to keep Avishay’s death a secret from his family and the general community. Yehuda, who made a fortune with a labor saving device early in his life, has written an autobiography for which Avishay has composed a forward. How wonderful it would be, he thinks, if the cover could say that forward was written by a Nobel prize winner. Amos has mixed feelings about their decision and admits – at least to himself – that he is jealous of the attention his friend is receiving. At the beginning of their careers, he and Avishay attained the same amount of honors, until Avishay somehow became far better known and admired. Zohara is

now facing both career problems and her desire to have a successful long-term relationship. She also resents having had to pretend that she and Avishay were just friends. Nili, a retired pediatrician, believes that she is still not completely accepted by the others, especially when they disparage her latest relationship. Of course, there are secrets that are not really secrets; there are also realizations that turn out to have unexpected consequences.

Yedlin does acknowledge the absurd situation the friends find themselves in. At one point, they hold a wonderful discussion about what would occur if they were characters in a novel. They ponder what would be the best ending. Would a happy one – for example, Avishay winning the Nobel – cheapen the book? From a literary point of view, would that make it a bad book? Are sad endings more realistic? But, as another character notes, good things do happen to people in real life. While their dialogue in itself is not funny, the situation is extremely humorous.

The real ending of the book? That part of the plot won’t be revealed here. On the one hand, it felt almost unsatisfactory until it suddenly seemed the only solution, at least as seen through the eyes of one character in particular. “Stockholm” manages to successfully balance its farcical elements with its character studies and its view of the ups and downs of long-term friendships. The author’s note mentions that an Israeli TV series was made of the Hebrew version of the book. I looked online to see if I could find it, but saw that it is currently unavailable in the United States. While I rarely want to view a film/show of a book I’ve enjoyed, this one does sound tempting.

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JLI Continued from page 3

can assure them it will be an enjoyable and intellectually engaging journey, giving us valuable context for all our future Jewish learning.”

“Book Smart” was developed by the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute, headquartered in Brooklyn, NY. More than 400,000 people have participated in JLI’s courses since the organization was founded in 1998.

JLI offers programs in 11 languages at more than 1,600 international locations in 41 U.S. states and 28 countries on five continents. JLI uses cutting-edge pedagogical techniques to create content that communicates Jewish teachings, observances, and history to Jewish audiences of all backgrounds and affiliations, across a wide range of formats and media.

BD Jan. 13 luncheon to feature Dr. Howard Warner

Beth David Synagogue's Luncheon Speaker Series will continue with Dr. Howard Warner speaking on Saturday, January 13. Warner's talk, "A Look at the Jewish Experience in Iberia," was inspired by a trip to Portugal taken in the spring of 2019. People are encouraged to attend the morning service, which begins at 9:30 am. There is no charge for the luncheon.

"Because of my daughter Shelley's study

abroad architectural fellowship, sponsored by Rensselaer Polytech Institute," Warner said, "I was able to pursue my passion for history by joining her during the two-and-one-half weeks that were spent in Portugal. While there, we were able to visit two synagogues, but because of security reasons were unable to gain entrance into Lisbon's main synagogue."

Warner noted that the Sephardic expe-

rience in the Iberian Peninsula is a "complicated one," comprising a period known as "The Golden Age" in which Jews prospered and attained high governmental positions, as well as a time when persecution of Jews was extraordinary under Christian and Muslim rule. He also said that one normally thinks only of the Spanish Jewish experience as it relates to Sephardim, without consideration of the experiences of Portuguese Jews. Warner aims to look at Portugal as a way to better understand the survival of the Jewish heritage and religion in those areas, as well as their influence on other regions of the world. His talk will include visual materials.

Warner has practiced dentistry in Kirkwood since 1988, and in Bainbridge and Greene from 1985-88. He has served as the president of the Sixth District Dental Society of the New York State Dental Association. He presently serves as a delegate to the House of Delegates, as a member of NYS-DA Governmental Council, and a member



Dr. Howard Warner

of the Executive Council of the Sixth District Dental Society. He is past president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, a past president of Temple Israel and a Temple Israel board member. "I am a proud alumnus of the Me'ah Program," Warner added, "which was subsidized by Jewish Federation."

Beth David's Luncheon Speaker Series takes place the second Saturday of the month. Since the

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

TI/TC held adult ed. program on Dec. 10

On December 10, the Temple Israel/Temple Concord Adult Education Committee sponsored a talk by Rabbi Micah Friedman. He discussed how the Chasidic movement has influenced many rituals and approaches to modern practice of Judaism in America. About 45 people attended the event held at Temple Israel. The refreshments included holiday food for Hanukkah.

"This neo-Chasidim has enlivened

and invigorated multiple denominational synagogue practices through more song and lively spirituality," said organizers of the event. "Although we commonly see Chasidim through appearance and dress, we were introduced to their love of Judaism, which has attracted adherents in Eastern Europe in past centuries and now is appealing to younger Jews throughout the world."



About 45 people attended the Temple Israel/Temple Concord Adult Education program on December 10. (Photo by David Channin)

PBS to stream "Nazi Town, USA"

The Public Broadcasting Service's "American Experience" program will offer the show "Nazi Town, USA," which will premiere on Tuesday, January 23, from 9-10 pm, on PBS stations, PBS.org and the PBS App. (To see if the show is being presented on a local PBS station, visit the station's website.) The director of "Nazi Town, USA," Peter Yost, said that the program "traces the rise and fall of the German American Bund and the threat posed by domestic fascism in the 1930s. There's a

resonance in the film with today's fractured times and I hope the story can serve as a reminder of both the fragility - and resilience - of American democracy."

"Nazi Town, USA" tells the largely unknown story of the Bund, which had scores of chapters in suburbs and big cities across the country and represented what many believe was a real threat of fascist subversion in the United States. The Bund held joint rallies with the Ku Klux Klan and See "PBS" on page 7

Annual Campaign 2024

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Federation 2023:



The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton Yom Ha'atzmaut (Independence Day) celebration on April 23 included Israeli dancing.

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton held more than 20 in-person and virtual events during 2023. It also looked for ways to help the community, including awarding grants to help with organizations' security needs.

"This has been a very busy year," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "When I look back at this year, I'm pleased and amazed by the number of events we've held. We try to reach people of every age - from children and families, adults in their 20s and 30s, and to seniors. I think we've succeeded in improving the lives of Jewish community members."

◆ The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest held a virtual showing of the Israeli comedy "Greener Pastures" in January. A discussion moderated by Neisen Luks took place on January 15.

◆ The Jewish Federation, in cooperation with Beth David, Temple Concord and Temple Israel, held an adult education brunch program, "Chevrah Kadisha - Sacred Mitzvah," on January 22.

◆ The Jewish Federation co-sponsored Tea and Talk programs, hour-long gatherings for local Jewish seniors, with Chabad of Binghamton. The programs were held January-June of this year.

◆ The Jewish Federation held a L'Dor V'Dor - Next Generation event at a Binghamton Black Bears hockey game on February 4.

◆ The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest held a virtual showing of the Israeli drama "Incitement" in February. A discussion took place on February 5 with Rabbi Geoffrey Brown.

◆ The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest held a virtual showing of the Israeli comedy "Tel Aviv on Fire" in March. Dora E. Polachek, Ph.D., a BU associate professor of Romance languages and literatures, led a virtual discussion on March 12.

◆ The Jewish Federation held a L'Dor V'Dor Next Generation trivia night on March 22 at the Beer Tree.

◆ The Jewish Federation held a hybrid Yom Hashoah program on April 17, which included recorded excerpts from the survivor testimony of the late Ruth



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A MESSAGE FROM
THE REPORTER GROUP



The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton held a security program "Countering Active Threat Training" on June 6.

DON'T LET ALCOHOL GET BEHIND THE WHEEL

When alcohol is the driver, nobody's safe! It doesn't take a large amount to do a lot of damage. Even one drink can cloud judgment and slow reflexes enough to hamper fast thinking and total control at the wheel. At holidays when many people celebrate "to the limit," steer clear of disaster. If you take a drink, don't take the driver's seat... and make it a safe and happy holiday weekend!

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The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton and Chabad of Binghamton held a "Farewell Gathering for Michael Wright" on September 13. Attending the event (clockwise from left) were Richard Lewis, Lee Schechter, Arieh Ullmann, Howard Warner and Rabbi Zev Silber.



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

the year in review

Buschman and the participation of local rabbis. Buschman's children, Suzanne Buschman-Erez and Steve Buschman, joined the program on Zoom.

- ◆ The Jewish Federation held a Yom Ha'atzmaut (Independence Day) celebration celebrating Israel's 75th anniversary on April 23. The event included a virtual live tour of Jerusalem's Old City, Israeli dancing led by the Roberson International Folk Dancers and a kosher "Happy Birthday Israel" cake.
- ◆ The Jewish Federation held the security program "Countering Active Threat Training" on June 6. Mark Henderson, the director of community security for the Jewish Community Federation of Greater Rochester, led the session.
- ◆ The Jewish Federation held a L'Dor V'Dor – Next Generation event on June 29, which featured pizza and board games, at a member's house.
- ◆ Jewish Federation held a Jewish night at the Rumble Ponies baseball game on July 18.
- ◆ The Jewish Federation formed a Needs Assessment Workgroup. The group was focused primarily on identifying local community needs and to determine their relative priority as part of its mission "to create a caring, vibrant,



The Binghamton Jewish Film Festival held a discussion of the film "Incitement" led by Rabbi Geoffrey Brown on February 5.

enduring community locally."

- ◆ The Jewish Federation awarded grant money from the LiveSecure program to help Beth David Synagogue, Chabad of Binghamton, Temple Concord and Temple Israel offset their security costs for the High Holidays.
- ◆ The Jewish Federation's PJ Library program held a Rosh Hashanah family event on September 10, which was co-sponsored with Beth David Synagogue, Hillel Academy, the Jewish Community Center, Temple Concord and Temple Israel.
- ◆ The Jewish Federation and Chabad of Binghamton held a "Farewell gathering to honor Michael Wright" event on September 13, at 7 pm.
- ◆ The Jewish Federation held a memorial service at the Holocaust Memorial Monument in the Temple Israel Cemetery in Conklin on September 24, which was led by area rabbis. The monument was one of the first memorial stones in the United States to acknowledge the Holocaust.
- ◆ The Jewish Federation held a L'Dor V'Dor – Next Generation event on September 27 at the Beer Tree for trivia night.
- ◆ The Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Center held a community Sukkot event on October 4 at the JCC. Award-winning author Lisa Wiemer read from her new book "Out and About: A Tale of Giving." The event also included yard games, snacks and crafts.
- ◆ The Jewish Federation held a Vigil for Israel on October 10. The vigil included prayers and readings by local readers and synagogue leaders.
- ◆ The Jewish Federation kicked off its Campaign 2024 on October 15 with a Super Sunday devoted to Campaign calls.
- ◆ The Jewish Federation was one of the sponsors of the Global Day of Jewish Learning on November 5.
- ◆ The Jewish Federation held a "Countering Active Threat Training" on November 30. Mark Henderson, the director of community security for the Jewish Community Federation of Greater Rochester, led the session.
- ◆ The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest held a virtual showing of "Farewell, Mr. Haffman" in December. A virtual discussion of the film was moderated by Dora



More than 30 young Jewish professionals attended the Federation's L'Dor V'Dor – Next Generation group event on February 4. The group watched a Binghamton Bears hockey game. L-r: Kurtis Parker, Harris Weiss, Jessica Prusinowski, Eris Rouse, Rose Shapiro-Rouse and Melissa Wolff attended the event.

Polachek, Ph.D., on December 3.

- ◆ The Jewish Federation held a PJ Library "Discover Hanukkah" event on December 10 at the Discovery Center. The event was co-sponsored by the PJ Library, the Jewish Community Center and the Discovery Center.

Bar/Bat photos needed

Can we have your mug? Kids mugging for the camera, that is. For *The Reporter's* annual Bar/Bat Mitzvah issue (coming January 26), we need photos of all teens who became bar/bat mitzvah during the calendar year of 2023.

Please e-mail these photos with identification, including name, date and place of the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony. Please send them by Tuesday, January 16. Photos can be e-mailed, in TIF or JPG format, to TReporter@aol.com; please note in the subject line that a bar/bat photo for *The Reporter* is attached and include the necessary information in the message.

Fest Continued from page 3

Sammie Purcell, Reporter Newspapers, called it "a delightfully sincere romantic comedy about the trials and tribulations of love, dating, and romance past middle age." Herbert Paine, *Broadway World*, wrote, "Here's a film wrapped in moments of genuine hilarity – repartee, one-liners, and situations that shine and resonate with comic brilliance" and noted that it is "a brilliantly paced and cleverly written account of love discovered in the golden years [and] is in itself a pure work of gold."

"Our Almost Completely True Story" is a charming film," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, which sponsors the Film Fest. "This is the perfect movie for a cold winter night."

Bridge. Continued from page 1

"We are grateful that Terence Keane, an expert in PTSD, will lead our discussion," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton. "I hope the film and the conversation will be healing for our community."

On www.filmink.com.au/reviews/the-narrow-bridge, Annette Basile wrote, "This documentary about people connecting across a chasm of political and religious differences is profoundly moving." Esta Rosevear wrote that "The Narrow Bridge" is an amazing film about what could be once people come together. It is compelling and needs to be seen by all war-torn nations" on <https://spoilerfreereviews.com/post/the-narrow-bridge/>.

PBS. Continued from page 5

ran dozens of summer camps for children centered around Nazi ideology and imagery. Its melding of patriotic values with virulent antisemitism raises thorny issues that the U.S. continues to wrestle with today.

"American Experience" has been television's most-watched history series. Its documentaries have been honored with every major broadcast award, including 30 Emmy Awards, five duPont-Columbia Awards and 19 George Foster Peabody Awards. For more information about the show, visit pbs.org/americanexperience.



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BLAST FROM THE PAST...**First person – My love life: high school**

By Ruth Hein

Introduction by Mark Schmitt: Ruth Hein, my mother, moved to Binghamton with her family in 1940 when she was 12 years old. She, her parents and her two brothers were German refugees who were fortunate to be able to get past the many barriers to immigration to the United States after three years in Italy, and then came to Binghamton after a year in New York City. Her father, my grandfather Siegfried Hein, was a doctor who opened a practice on Main Street, where he and my grandmother lived until the late 1960s.

Ruth left Binghamton for college at Barnard at 16 (just four years after arriving in New York speaking only German and Italian) so her time in Binghamton was limited to high school. While she made her career as an editor and translator of books from German to English, her own writing consisted of a few dozen short pieces of memoir – such as the one below – about the social and dating life of a group of Jewish teens in Binghamton, in what feels like – and evidently felt to her, in retrospect – a very different time, interrupted and ended by World War II.

Ruth lived in New York until 1964 and the rest of her life in New Haven, CT, until her death just a few weeks before what would have been her 95th birthday in 2022. She was married to Wayland Schmitt, who was also from Binghamton, from 1960 until his death in 1975, and to Joan Channick, her partner of 30 years, from 2010 until her death.

Ruth Tanenhaus decided that we needed boyfriends, and she organized a dinner at her house. This was in the spring of our junior year. I was surprised, and grateful, to be included in the party. We did not, after all, know each other well, unlike the others, who had been close all their lives. It seemed to me that she had noticed my somewhat isolated state and was taking pity on me – what a kind girl she was, lively and pretty, too. My more cynical self of today thinks that her plan required a certain number of girls and I would do to make up the numbers. In the event, there were 10 of us, five girls and five boys.

I remember very little of that dinner. I have a vague idea that her mother cooked and served the meal, but then she disappeared and Ruth was definitely the hostess. Of the girls I remember only Evvie Melamed, Ruth's best friend, but I have no idea what she looked like. Light-haired? Small? I have a better memory of some of the men. There was Bernie Klionsky, dark and serious; he planned to be a doctor. And Norm Paris, the shortish, stoutish, already-balding funny guy everybody liked; he would be good for me. The prize was Ruth's brother Joe – already a college sophomore while the rest of us were still in high school – tall, not terrible looking, an intellectual.

When we had finished eating (I so wish I remembered the menu; hamburgers? pasta? what did people eat that year after Pearl Harbor?), we put our coats back on and wandered downtown in a group to go to the first-run (as opposed to casual – cheap – neighborhood houses) film running that week. The 15-minute walk was intended to sort us into couples, and it succeeded. As we moved along, Ruth darted among us, somewhat like a sheepdog, herding one over here, nudging that one over there; she had strong ideas about suitable coupling. It became clear that she intended her brother to go with Evvie, her best friend, and in this plan she was frustrated: Joe picked me and was deliberately unaware of any efforts to place him elsewhere.

And so, for the next year and a half, we formed a solid social group. Since Joe was for the most part away at college, our courtship was mainly conducted by mail



Above: Ruth Hein in 1944 when she was in college.

At right: The Hein family in 1940 in Binghamton.



– long, earnest letters discussing the deeper meaning of short stories and novels. But it was not far from university to home, and he made frequent weekend appearances. Then we might go out as a couple, just the two of us, usually to the movies and then a long walk back to my house during which I was careful to keep some distance between us, then a final handshake before I disappeared into the building. Though I wore Joe's ROTC pin – he was too studious to belong to a fraternity, if there even was a Jewish one on campus – on my lapel, my devotion to him was far, far less than his love for me, and between my lack of physical attraction and his timidity, our chastity was unbreached.

Other times, the group went out in a herd. Most of the time we would also go to the movies, but to round off the evening, we descended on the Community Coffee Shop, a genteel cocktail lounge. We would each have one drink (as I recall, I would usually have a daiquiri – I was just 15), and thus fortified, we would break up into couples again, and the long walk home began.

The summer offered some variety. The weekend remained our time to explore our options. We bicycled out to Lily Lake, a swarm of no-gears cycles, different for girls and boys, with our towels and lunches in the baskets. There were rowboats, there was a beach, the sun was hot and the water cool – these days were magic. To improve on this life, I tried my best to make time with Bernie Klionsky, who clearly returned my passion, but was resolutely loyal to Joe, his cousin. What I learned that summer is that women were parceled out according to men's agreements: they were not free to exercise a choice.

On Saturday nights, we would go, as a group, to the George F. Pavilion, one of those dance halls where the back of your hand was stamped with an invisible sign – visible under ultraviolet light – to let you back in if you had gone out for a smoke or a sip from a flask, though the latter was not part of our group ethic; we all smoked, though, we were sophisticates. Then we went back in and shuffled around the floor some more, moving to the premier big bands of the day – Benny Goodman, Jimmy Dorsey – though now that I think about it, only the white ones, never Cab Calloway, never Count Basie.

Our clique was shockproof; we lasted through our whole senior year. On prom night, Norm Paris made all the arrangements so that we had a grown-up dinner in a private room at the local hotel before the dance. Afterward, we gathered in someone's apartment and dutifully stayed awake until sunup. That was how it was done, I'm sure there were similar groups dotted all through the town.

After that night we broke apart. The boys disappeared into the army, all of them promptly conscripted. I did not see any of them again for many years.

Joe died a few months after my husband; he was a professor of political science. *The New York Times* carried a small obituary, allowing me my bitter joke that if I had married him, I'd now be a widow.

Bernie Klionsky did go to medical school and retired as a pathologist at the University of Pittsburgh Medical School. In his 2011 Facebook picture, he is still lean and handsome.

There is also a picture of Norman Paris on Facebook, still chubby, still cheerful and now completely bald, seated amid five beaming women, presumably wife and daughters. There is no other information available on him. I am itching to get in touch with both, just to see what they remember; so far I have resisted such a foolish idea.

Final thought: As I call up the events of that long-ago year, I am struck by how typical we were; urban and Jewish, we deviated so little from the pastoral childhood lyrically recounted in second-rate fiction and movies. But we had little self-awareness then.

Higher. . . . Continued from page 2

Jonathan Frieden, a Harvard Law School student, recounted anti-Israel protesters disrupting classes and study sessions. According to Frieden, there were security concerns: "Jews took off their *kippot* ... [F]riends ran up to the dean of students and DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) office, but they had locked their doors for their own safety." Initially, the senior Harvard administration regarded the episode as an expression of free speech.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology President Sally Kornbluth is Jewish. Nonetheless, administrative response to campus antisemitism at MIT has been tepid. Jewish MIT student Tahlia Kahn claims that when she grieved to a DEI officer that a post-doctoral fellow admonished her that "Jewish Israelis want to enslave the world in a global apartheid system [and] falsely claimed that Israel harvests Palestinian organs," the DEI official responded that those comments did not constitute hate speech and bore some truth, leaving Kahn feeling unsafe and insecure at MIT.

When asked, "Does calling for the genocide of Jews violate Penn's rules or code of conduct," University of Pennsylvania President Elizabeth Magill, who subsequently resigned under duress, responded, "If the speech turns into conduct, it can be harassment." One wonders how Magill would characterize the false cry of fire in a crowded theater. The line between lethal threats and action is thin. At Cornell University, an antisemitic post on a fraternity website threatened to shoot and rape Jewish students. And Jewish students at Columbia endured several antisemitic volleys – death threats, physical assault on an Israeli student, swastika graffiti, social media harassment, and professors circulating and signing a letter terming the October 7 Hamas terrorist murder mutilations in southern Israel a "military action."

Despite the preceding litany, most students are not antisemitic, and the vitriol directed against Israel has disrupted only a minority of campuses. However, the growth of campus antisemitism is a reality with the potential to metastasize. According to some reports, certain institutions – sites of recent antisemitic episodes – face a decline in Jewish donors and applications. With the veiled threat of cutting federal appropriations, the House of Representatives Committee on Education and Workforce has grilled MIT, Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania presidents as to why campuses sensitive to microaggressions respond ineffectually to blatant antisemitism. Congressional witch hunts, speech codes that abridge free speech and boycotts are not the answer. However, unless administrators, faculty, students, alumni and media summon the moral courage to call out antisemitism for what it is, our campuses face broadening turmoil.

Quick Reference Guide to Planned Giving

Use this planned giving quick reference guide to help determine the best strategy for achieving your philanthropic and financial goals.

For further information or assistance, please contact Shelley Hubal at 724-2332 or director@jfgb.org

If Your Goal is to:

Make a quick and easy gift

Avoid tax on capital gains

Defer a gift until after your death

Receive guaranteed fixed income that is partially tax-free

Avoid the two-fold taxation on IRA or other employee benefit plans

Make a large gift with little cost to you

Reduce taxable income from IRA Required Minimum Distributions

Then You Can:

Simply write a check now or use a credit card

Contribute long-term appreciated stock or other securities

Put a bequest in your will (gifts of cash or a share or the residue of your estate)

Create a charitable gift annuity

Name a charity as the beneficiary of the remainder of the retirement assets after your lifetime

Contribute a life insurance policy you no longer need or purchase a new one and designate a charity as the owner

Make a qualified charitable donation directly from your IRA (after age 70½)

Your Benefits May Include:

An income tax deduction and immediate charitable impact

A charitable deduction plus no capital gains tax

Exemption from federal estate tax on donations

Current and future savings on income taxes plus fixed stable payments

Tax relief to your family on inherited assets

Current and possible future income tax deductions

Reducing taxable income

Hanukkah celebrated throughout community



Almost 70 people attended the "Discover Hanukkah" event on December 10 at the Discovery Center. The event was co-sponsored by the PJ Library, the Jewish Community Center and the Discovery Center. Shown is Josh Hubal, who performed during the program.

The Temple Concord Religious School celebrated Hanukkah on December 9. The students put on a play about the holiday. (Names held on request)

Those attending the Beth David Hanukkah party on December 13 enjoyed the refreshments and a chance to catch up with friends. (Photo by Stacey Silber)



Those attending the Beth David Hanukkah party enjoyed latkes prepared by Charles Manassee and sufganiyot prepared by Stacey Silber. Photo by Stacey Silber)

Rose Shapiro-Rouse brought her niece and nephew, Bennett Eggleston and Elyza Eggleston, to the "Discover Hanukkah" event.

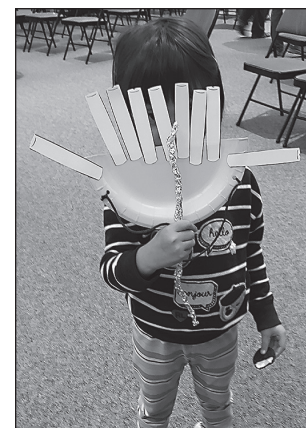
Children had the opportunity to play with dreidels during the "Discover Hanukkah" event. (Names held on request.)



Dreidels and other fun was available for the younger crowd at the Beth David Hanukkah party. (Names held on request) (Photo by Stacey Silber)

A student showed the menorah she made during the Temple Concord Religious School event. (Name held on request)

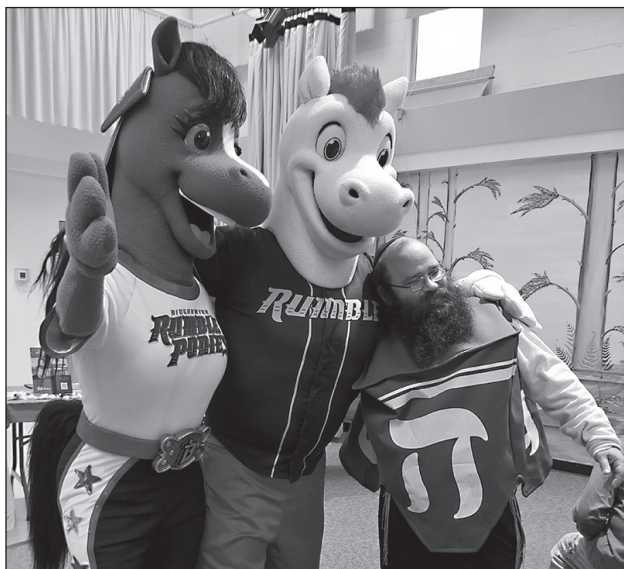
A menorah lighting was held during the party at Beth David Hanukkah party. Jonny Prachter (on stage) played Hanukkah songs on the piano. (Photo by Stacey Silber)



The Temple Concord Religious School Hanukkah event included traditional foods, games and craft activities.

Students played with dreidels during the Temple Concord Religious School Hanukkah celebration. (Names held on request)

A student showed the menorah she made during the Temple Concord Religious School event. (Name held on request) Yvie Schiffres made a menorah during the crafts part of the "Discover Hanukkah" event.



The Rumble Ponies mascots came to the "Discover Hanukkah" event and posed with Rabbi Zalman Chein, who wore a dreidel costume.

Create a Jewish Legacy
Strengthen the Jewish community you care about for generations to come. Consider a gift to the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton in your estate.
For further information or assistance, please contact Shelley Hubal at 724-2332 or director@jfgb.org





Weekly Parasha

Vayichi, Genesis 47:28-50:26

Making preparations, clear communication

HAZZAN ABBE LYONS, JEWISH CHAPLAIN, HILLEL AT ITHACA COLLEGE

In *parashat Vayechi*, as Jacob prepares for the end of his life, he makes his wishes clear to his sons about what he wants from them after he is dead. He makes Joseph promise not to bury him in Egypt. He adopts Joseph's sons, who were born in Egypt, so that there will be no question of their lineage. He blesses them, but in the reverse order, referring back to the generational pattern of the younger taking precedence over the older, but this time without deception. He calls all of his 12 sons to his bedside and speaks to each in turn, reordering their succession as well and "blessing each one with a blessing that befit him." Then he charges them all to bury him in the cave of Machpelah, naming all the patriarchs and matriarchs who are buried there: his wife Leah, his parents Rebecca and Isaac, and his grandparents Sarah and Abraham.

As in the previous generations, competition and conflict among brothers are put aside when it is time to bury their father. Isaac and Ishmael came together to bury their father Abraham, and Jacob and Esau also reunited to bury their father Isaac. Joseph is still in charge, since, as a very public figure, he needs to satisfy Pharaoh and the Egyptians' expectations while also honoring his promise to his father. All 12 brothers travel to bury Jacob in the Cave of Machpelah to fulfill the mitzvah accompanying the dead for burial (*levaya*). Then they return to Egypt.

Burying a loved one is one of the early steps on the mourner's path, and yet our experience as mourners can vary widely depending on the circumstances surrounding a death – not only the age of a person, whether the death

is sudden and shocking or after a long illness – but also in what kind of advance preparations the person has made. It can also be influenced by relationships and past interactions among the various mourners.

It's not so easy to think about one's own death and yet doing so can be a tremendous gift to our loved ones. This was underscored for me recently when I got a call from someone whose parent had just died after a long illness, but without having clarified their wishes. In addition, one of the mourners revealed a longstanding, but never before expressed, desire to distance from the rest of the family. Both the lack of clear arrangements and the previously unresolved conflict led to many painful moments and will continue to have ripple effects for some time.

See "Making" on page 11

Congregational Notes

Temple Israel

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

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

On Saturday, December 30, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required for unvaccinated participants). The Torah portion is Genesis 47:28-50:26 and the haftarah is I Kings 2:1-12. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 5:45 pm.

The temple office will be closed Friday, December 29, and Monday, January 1.

There will be an Executive Board meeting on Tuesday, January 2, at 7 pm.

On Saturday, January 6, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required for unvaccinated participants). The Torah portion is Exodus 1:1-6:1 and the haftarah is Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 5:45 pm.

Temple Beth El of Oneonta

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

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

Temple Brith Sholom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated
 Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045
 Phone: 607-756-7181
 President: Nick Martelli
 Cemetery Committee: 315-696-5744
 Website: templebrithsholomcortland.org
 Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Temple-Brith-Sholom-114006981962930/
 Service leaders: Lay leadership
 Shabbat services: Either Friday evening at 7:30 pm or Saturday at 10 am from Rosh Hashanah to Shavuot. Holiday services are also held. Check the Facebook page or weekly e-mail for upcoming services. Contact the president to get on the e-mail list.
 Religious School: Students are educated on an individual basis. Temple Brith Sholom is a small equalitarian congregation serving the greater Cortland community. Congregants span the gamut of observance and services are largely dependent on the service leader. The Friday night siddur is "Likrat Shabbat," while the Saturday morning siddur is "Gates of Prayer." The community extends a warm welcome to the Jewish student population of SUNY Cortland, as well as the residents of local adult residences.

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

Synagogues limit face-to-face gatherings

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

Beth David Synagogue

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

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 Beth-El of Ithaca

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
 Rabbi: TBA
 Rabbi Emeritus: Scott L. Glass
 Address: 402 North Tioga St. (the corner of Court and Tioga streets), Ithaca, NY 14850-4292
 Phone: 607-273-5775
 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: TBA
 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.

Friday, December 29, light candles before..... 4:21 pm
 Shabbat ends Saturday, December 30 5:23 pm
 Friday, January 5, light candles before..... 4:28 pm
 Shabbat ends Saturday, January 6 5:33 pm
 Friday, January 12, light candles before..... 4:35 pm
 Shabbat ends Saturday, January 13 5:40 pm

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
 Rabbi: TBA
 Address: 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905
 Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm
 Phone: 607-723-7355
 Fax: 607-723-0785
 Office e-mail: TempleConcordbinghamton@gmail.com
 Website: www.templeconcord.com
 Regular service times: Fri., 7:30 pm; Sat., 10:35 am, when religious school is in session.
 Hebrew school: Hebrew school meets at 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm on Tues. and Thurs. during the school year unless otherwise noted.

Some services and programs are online only.
 Friday, December 29: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat services with Suzanne Holwitt, Rabbi Rachel Esserman and Robin Hazen. Join via Zoom at https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Saturday, December 30: At 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom (http://bit.ly/3XDnVRE, meeting ID 825 1226 2831 and passcode 743892).

December 29-January 2: The religious school will be on winter break.

Tuesday, January 2: At 1 pm (note the earlier start time), the Tuesday Morning Book Club on Zoom only: "One Hundred Saturdays: Stella Levi and the Search for a Lost World" by Michael Frank. Tony Preus will speak about the history of the Jews of Rhodes. E-mail Merri Pell-Preus at merrypell.preus@gmail.com for the Zoom link since the link is different for the January meeting.

Wednesday, January 3: At 7 pm, Sisterhood board meeting on Zoom only. Nancy Dorfman will provide the Zoom link. Those who don't have her e-mail address, or have questions, should contact Carol Herz at 607-222-7144.

Friday, January 5: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat services with Suzanne Holwitt, Rabbi Rachel Esserman and Robin Hazen. Join via Zoom at https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.
 See "TC" on page 11

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.

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
 Rabbi: Shifrah Tobacman, rabbishifrah@tikkunvor.org
 Presidents: Sue Merkel and Laurie Willick, presidents_22@tikkunvor.org
 Education Director/Administrative Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky
 Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator: Michael Margolin
 Services: All services currently on Zoom. E-mail info@tikkunvor.org for the times and links. Contemplative morning services every Tuesday from 8:30-9:30 am. Saturday mornings, Gan Shabbat and other special services at least once a month. Call for the weekly schedule.
 Jewish Learning Experiences (JLE) for second through seventh grade classes meet on Sunday mornings. Sixth and seventh grades also meet on Wednesday afternoons. Family programs for kindergarten and first grade held monthly.
 Adult Education: Offered regularly throughout the year. Check the website for details.

“It reminded me of the Holocaust,” says grandma freed from Gaza

By Etgar Lefkovits

(JNS) – Terrified, hungry and all alone in captivity in Gaza for over a month, Argentinian-born Ofelia Roitman hoarded small pieces of pita bread from the meager rations she received from her Hamas terrorist captors. “It reminded me of the Holocaust,” said Roitman, 77. “I thought I was going crazy.”

On the morning of October 7, the veteran educator had just settled into her safe room in Kibbutz Nir Oz, after sirens warned of incoming rockets from the Gaza Strip. She was home alone that holiday weekend, as her husband was recovering from a recent surgery. Suddenly, armed terrorists barged into her home.

Her last phone message to her daughter Natalie Madmon at 9:37 that morning was: “They are here, please please.”

The attackers sprayed the steel door of the safe room with bullets, with one hitting her arm. One of them used a shoelace as a tourniquet to tie up her arm before she was thrown face down in a tractor for the ride to Gaza.

Israeli soldiers who finally made it to her house saw no signs of her body or of a struggle, Madmon told JNS. Days later, her family was notified she was a hostage in Gaza.

When she got to Gaza, Roitman was brought to a tunnel where a Palestinian woman doctor initially refused to bandage her wound. “I don’t treat Jews,” she replied in English.

Her captor insisted the physician tend to her as needed.

Roitman was then driven in a wheelchair through the streets of Gaza for 20 minutes. She was taken to an apartment where she would be held alone for the next 46 days with almost no food. Periodically, she would be taken to a doctor to tend to her injuries, dressed in a full Muslim



Ofelia Roitman was released in Gaza on November 28. (Photo by Ashager Araro/X)

head covering for women with only a slit for her eyes. Her captors warned her not to speak a word.

Once, captors asked her for the phone numbers of her family members in Israel, but, not wanting to reveal them, she said they were in her cellphone back home.

For the next month and a half, Roitman did not know if it was day or night. “I was really afraid, and without barely any light or food I felt that I was going crazy,” she recounted.

The grandmother decided she needed some way to keep her wits so she started to pace around the small apartment in circles. The days were endless, and always with growing hunger. She was given a pita with zaatar during the day – which she would tear in small pieces and save part for later – and some dry rice at night.

See “Freed” on page 12

Jewish Community Center

JCC Friendship Club

The JCC Friendship Club met on December 20. Rabbi Micah Friedman was our guest speaker. He joined us at the opening of the meeting when we said the “Pledge of Allegiance” and sang “Hatikvah.” Those present were introduced to Rabbi Friedman. We had an informal meeting. Everyone sat around the table and spoke casually. We talked about ourselves.

I found out that Rabbi Friedman came from Boston and Dan Zelman was born in Israel. He came to America when he was 2 years old.

Then Rabbi Friedman asked, “What is the message of Hanukkah?” Some of the answers were: the miracle of the candle burning for eight days, perseverance, faith, good over evil and more. Rabbi Friedman showed us a map of the Tree of Life. He went on to explain about perseverance, faith and beauty. He then described the Maccabees as a group of rogue soldiers who triumphed over their oppressors. He stated that the story of Hanukkah was not written in the Jewish Bible, but is written in the Catholic Bible. It is also written in the Apocrypha. We then continued talking about our memories about lighting the menorah, spinning dreidels, eating latkes and getting gelt.

Join us on Wednesday, January 17, at the JCC at 1:30 pm. Brenda Cave-James will tell us about the Underground Railroad in this area. Come and find out how African Road, in Vestal, got its name.

Sylvia Diamond
President

Book

Belser offers insights from biblical stories through the eyes of disabled, feminist, Black and queer thinkers.

Esserman, the executive editor and book reviewer for The Reporter Group, noted that, in 2022, she won three Syracuse Press Club awards and one Rockover award from the American Jewish Press Association.

The year before that she won two Syracuse Press Club awards and two Rockovers.

In addition to her work at *The Reporter*, she serves at the Jewish chaplain for Broome Developmental Disabilities Service Office. Her writing has been published in “The Women’s Torah Commentary” and “The Women’s Haftarah

Continued from page 3

Commentary” both by Jewish Lights Publishing. She also has had a book of poetry, “I Stand by The River,” published by Keshet Press of Temple Concord. A Reconstructionist rabbi who says her first love is teaching, she sees her position at *The Reporter* as an opportunity to educate the public about Judaism.

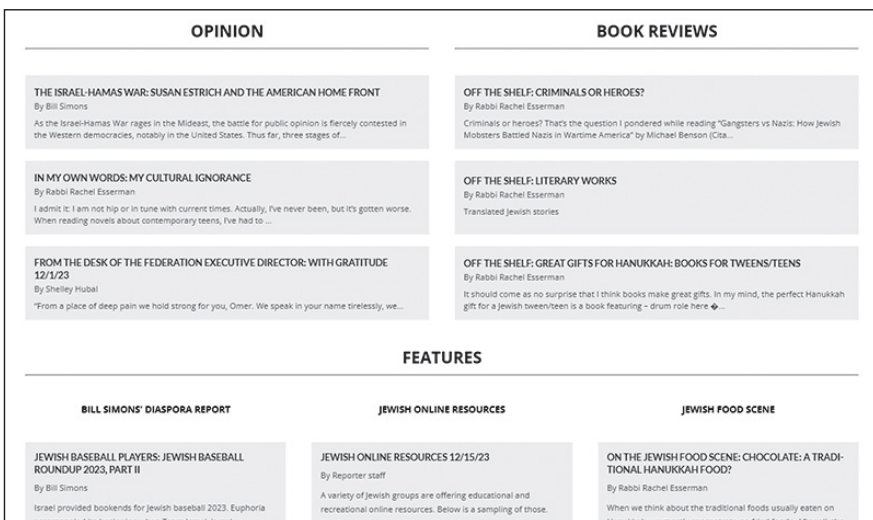
Esserman also servers as a freelance rabbi for life-cycle events, hospital visits and chaplaincy and has been a rabbi-on-call when needed by local Reform and Conservative synagogues. Her education includes a bachelor of arts degree in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania, and rabbinic ordination and a master of arts in Hebrew Letters from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Wyncote, PA. She was also awarded an honorary doctor of divinity degree from RRA for 25 years of service.

Reporter

Reporter. “There’s the addition of an archived page, which makes it easier to look up past articles, especially special edition ones like ‘Celebrating Jewish Literature’ and Community Guides.”

Weber added, “We have updated several pages, including revamping the ‘Online Jewish Resources’ page to look sleeker and show the latest editions. The ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ page has been condensed to make it easier to find answers to some popular questions. The image navigation for the feeds have been removed to make navigating the website easier and less clunky. We’re also including links to other websites that we think will be of interest to readers.”

“The Federation is proud to showcase the work of our talented and award-winning writers in one streamlined webpage,” said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton. “By adding feeds from other Jewish papers/websites, the new site makes the *The*



A screenshot of The Reporter’s relaunched website.

Reporter’s website your one-stop for everything Jewish.”

“Please take a look at our new website and let us know what you think,” Esserman said. “You can e-mail us at Treporter@aol.com with ‘Reporter website’ in the subject line or write to us at 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.”

TC

Saturday, January 6: At 9 am, Shabbat school; at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom (<http://bit.ly/3XD-nvRE>, meeting ID 825 1226 2831 and passcode 743892); and at 10:35 am, Shabbat family service.

Sunday, January 7: From 10 am-2 pm, Sisterhood Rummage Sale in the basement. Shoppers are asked to use the Oak Street entrance. Masks are optional, but encouraged.

Tuesday, January 9: At 8 pm, general (Board of Trustees) board meeting. Board meetings are open to members of Temple Concord. For the meeting link, contact the synagogue at 607-723-7355 or templeconcordaa@gmail.com.

Making

One could see Jacob as being overly involved and micromanaging the relationships among his sons. He elevates Judah, his fourth born, as the lasting ruler, skipping over the elder three who have shown serious errors in judgment. He does not stint words about his disappointment or praise. For some of his sons, he highlights their character traits or the successes they will have. He again shows special favor to Joseph, saying, “the blessings of your father surpass my parents’ blessings.” His harsh criticism of Reuben, who slept with Jacob’s wife Bilhah while Jacob was traveling after Rachel died in childbirth, and of Shimon and Levi, who deceived and then took bloody revenge on the men of Shechem after Shechem raped their sister Dinah, may be justified. He does not, however, keep his rebuke private, but rails at them in front of all their younger brothers. Nor does he take responsibility for how his undisguised favoritism for Rachel and for her sons Joseph and Benjamin affected the rest of his family. However, he does make clear what he wants of them, both in terms of their hierarchy and in terms of his after death arrangements. Decades later, at the end of the portion, it is Joseph’s turn to make his wishes known – for his bones to travel with the children of Israel

when they finally return to Canaan.

Even when there are clear arrangements, unacknowledged or unresolved family conflicts can also arise during the mourning process. In Vayechi, after Jacob’s death, Joseph’s older brothers become worried that Joseph may decide to renew his anger at them now that their father is gone. They get together and make up an additional deathbed story: that Jacob said they should tell Joseph that he wanted Joseph to forgive his brothers, and that they will be subservient to Joseph. Whether or not Joseph sees through this, he reassures them that he will continue to support them and their families. Joseph speaks directly to their real fears. “Thus did he comfort them and speak straight to their hearts.”

Perhaps we can consider that addressing end of life arrangements and unresolved or hidden family conflicts can help us prepare for the mitzvah of *levaya* – accompanying the dead for burial. Certainly they can be important ways to express our love for ourselves and one another. May Vayechi inspire us to think about practical steps we can take to make clear our wishes with loved ones, and looking underneath our conflicts to speak straight to the heart.

JCC Friendship Club

Wednesday, January 17, 2024

1:30 pm program at the JCC

Brenda Cave-James, storyteller, will be discussing the history of the underground railroad in the Binghamton/Vestal area.

All are welcome to attend.

Sacha Baron Cohen: TikTok “creating biggest antisemitic movement since Nazis”

By JNS staff

(JNS) – More than 30 people participated in a video call on November 15 with Adam Presser, TikTok’s head of operations, and Seth Melnick, the company’s global head of user operations. Included were actors Sacha Baron Cohen, Debra Messing and Amy Schumer.

Cohen said “shame on you” to executives, demanding that they “flip a switch” to stop the flow of hate. “What is happening at TikTok is it is creating the biggest antisemitic movement since the Nazis,” he noted.

Melnik and Presser disputed that ending bigotry on the platform could be done with the ease of pushing a button.

The creator of “Borat” pointed out that indoctrination starts young, alluding to the fact that TikTok is the most popular social platform for kids, according to studies across the board.

“If you think back to October 7, the reason why Hamas were able to behead young people and rape women was they were fed images from when they were small kids that led them to hate,” Cohen said.

When Messing urged TikTok to stop the use of the Israel-eliminationist phrase, “From the river to the sea,” she received pushback from the executives, who claimed that was open to interpretation.

Presser said TikTok’s “approach up until October 7 (and continuing today), has been that for instances where people use the phrase where it’s not clear, where someone is just using it casually, that has been considered acceptable speech.”

This suggestion of “casual” use of the phrase drew objections. Messing urged TikTok to reconsider its position. “It is much more responsible to bar it at this juncture than to say, ‘Oh, well, some people, they use it in a different way than it actually was created to mean,’” said the former “Will and Grace” star. “I understand that you are in a very, very difficult and complicated place, but you also are the main platform for the dissemination of Jew hate.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Singapore’s first ambassador to Israel presents credentials

Singapore’s first ambassador to Israel, Ian Mack, presented his credentials to Israeli President Isaac Herzog on Dec. 19. Although the two countries have had diplomatic relations since 1969, the Southeast Asian city state has never posted an ambassador to Israel. After presenting his credentials, Mack will oversee Singapore’s embassy in Tel Aviv, which opened in 2022. The current Israeli Ambassador to Singapore is Elyahu Vered Hazan. Bilateral trade between the two countries has expanded in recent years. In August, Israeli Economy and Industry Minister Nir Barkat visited Singapore, where he discussed bilateral relations and trade with Singapore’s Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat. The main topics of discussion were technological innovation, support for entrepreneurship, research and development, medical research, solutions in the field of water, tourism and education. New envoys from Ecuador and North Macedonia also presented their credentials to Herzog on Dec. 19.

Most Israelis believe antisemitism driving Gaza war protests

A majority of Jewish Israelis believe that antisemitism is driving international criticism of the Gaza war, according to an Israel Democracy Institute survey published on Dec. 19 (<https://twitter.com/IDIIsrael/status/1737115288196567363>). Asked about the mass demonstrations and public outcry against Israel’s military campaign against Hamas, 62 percent of Jewish residents said it was due to hatred of Israel and antisemitism, compared to only 7.5 percent who said it was due to civilian casualties and destruction in Gaza and 22 percent who said both are equal drivers. In contrast, only 10.5 percent of Arab Israelis believe that the protests are due to antisemitism, while 52 percent believe that they are because of the devastation in Gaza and 11 percent said both equally. The poll also found that over two-thirds of Israelis (69 percent) believe elections should be held as soon as the war is over, including 66 percent of Jewish Israelis and 84 percent of Arab Israelis. Among Jewish Israelis, 98.5 percent on the left, 85 percent in the center and 51.5 percent on the right support elections

immediately after the war. In addition, two-thirds of Israelis believe the government does not have a plan for after the war. Also, about two-thirds of Israelis think that the goal of toppling Hamas is achievable, but only 35.5 percent believe that it is possible to bring back all of the hostages.

Malaysia bans ships headed to Israel from using its ports

Malaysia’s government announced on Dec. 20 that it will block all Israeli-owned and -flagged ships, and any vessels headed to Israel, from docking at its ports. Malaysia’s Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim’s office said the ban would take effect immediately, CNN reported. The decision is in response to the Gaza war. “This sanction is a response to Israel’s actions that disregard the basic humanitarian principles and violate international law through the ongoing massacre and continuous cruelty against the Palestinian people,” according to a government statement. An over 80 percent Muslim country (in fact, it boasts the world’s largest Muslim population), Indonesia has long been hostile to the Jewish state. It has seen massive anti-Israel rallies following Oct. 7.

“Unofficial boycott of Israeli researchers” since Oct. 7

A “quiet unofficial boycott of Israeli researchers” is taking place in Western academia, warns an Israeli government report. The National Council for Civilian Research and Development released the study during an emergency discussion that was held at the start of December. It was forwarded to the Knesset’s Science and Technology Committee ahead of a discussion on Dec. 18 about the challenges of research and development during the war. Council Chairman Professor Peretz Lavie and policy adviser Debbie Kaufman co-authored the paper. “Israel is being subjected to an unusual wave of antisemitism, and there is a rise in hatred toward Jews and Israelis. Since Oct. 7, a sort

of quiet boycott of Israeli researchers has begun, of the kind that has never been seen before. This boycott is reflected in the cancellation of invitations to joint conferences, the rejection of articles for publication, the rejection of grants to Israeli researchers, and more,” the authors write. This de facto boycott “could harm the Israeli economy, which relies on scientific capabilities as a start-up country,” the study warns. The council is calling on the government to take immediate steps to address threats to Israel’s scientific standing internationally. The council recommends to “not cut research budgets of the Ministry of Science and the Council for Higher Education; strengthen the binational foundations that support joint research with researchers from countries around the world; call for Israeli and leading Jewish scholars abroad to move to Israel and strengthen support for their absorption; and allocate designated funds for the purposes of international scientific conferences in Israel for the hosting of foreign scientists and for Israeli scholars to travel to conduct research abroad.”

Top Nazi hunter to retire after 38 years at U.S. Justice Department

The U.S. Department of Justice’s longest-serving prosecutor Eli Rosenbaum, who is also one of the world’s top Nazi hunters, intends to retire after 38 years at the department by the end of 2023. Rosenbaum serves as counselor at the War Crimes Accountability Team, which the department launched last year to “centralize and strengthen” its “ongoing work to hold accountable those who have committed war crimes and other atrocities during Russia’s invasion of Ukraine,” according to U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland. Christian Levesque, the team’s lead prosecutor, will serve as its director beginning in January. “A year and a half ago, I asked Eli Rosenbaum to lead a team of Justice Department prosecutors working to identify and prosecute individuals involved in war crimes and atrocities committed during Russia’s invasion of Ukraine,” Garland said. “I am deeply grateful to Eli for postponing his retirement to stand up and lead that team, and for his decades of service to our country and to the cause of justice.” “Recently, the Justice Department filed the first-ever charges under the U.S. war crimes statute against four Russia-affiliated military personnel for heinous crimes against an American citizen,” he added. In an interview published in April in the Harvard Law Bulletin, Rosenbaum, who is Jewish, said that the war in Ukraine is “the largest-scale perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity in armed conflict since World War II.” “Nicknamed ‘the Nazi hunter,’ Rosenbaum spent much of his 40-year career at DOJ pursuing and prosecuting Nazis living in the U.S., racking up 119 court victories, more than the prosecutors in all other countries combined,” per the publication.

After plan to attack Ohio shul, OH teen must pen Holocaust book report

Having been read his rights, an Ohio teen now must read about the rights of Jews. The unnamed 13-year-old, who was arrested in early December and accused of sharing a “detailed plan” to attack Temple Israel, a Reform congregation in Canton, reached a plea agreement on Friday with a juvenile court. He had been due in court on Dec. 20. Under the agreement, the teen – who served 10 days – had the other 170 days to which he was sentenced suspended. He will now reportedly be on probation for a year and must undergo counseling and pen a book report about Carl Lutz, a Swiss diplomat who saved thousands of Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust. The latter must be submitted to the probation department. Yad Vashem, which recognized Lutz among the “Righteous Among the Nations” on March 24, 1964, states that the diplomat risked his life and “brought thousands of Hungarian Jews under Swiss protection, thus saving them from deportations to Nazi death camps.” “It is impossible for the human brain to comprehend the impact of Lutz’s efforts. How many artists would never have existed if he had not saved their father? How many doctors would not have been born if Lutz had not saved their grandmother? How many farmers, scientists, teachers, mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers would have been lost to history without the efforts of this one individual?” said David Pressman, U.S. ambassador to Hungary, on Sept. 8, 2022, during a U.S. Embassy reception honoring Lutz.

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