

THE REPORTER

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BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Federation to sponsor community hockey event on Jan. 18

By Reporter staff

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

January 18, at 7 pm. Tickets will be available at the discounted rate of \$9. The deadline to purchase tickets is Sunday, January 12. Tickets can be purchased on the Federation website, or by contacting



the Federation office at 607-724-2332 or director@jfgb.org. A limited number of seats are available, so those interested are asked to reserve early.

"This event is for people of all

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

TC/TI Jan. 12 talk to feature Professor Dina Danon

The Adult Education Committee of Temple Concord and Temple Israel will hold a program and brunch on Sunday, January 12, from 10 am-noon, at Temple Israel, 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal. Professor Dina Danon will offer a talk called "The Transformation of the Marriage Market in the Eastern Sephardi Diaspora." The entire community is welcome to attend. There is a suggested donation of between \$5-20 per person.

Danon will speak about transformation of the Jewish marriage market in the Ladino-speaking Diaspora during the modern age. Her talk will provide an overview of the traditional marriage market and discuss the various ways in which it changed in the late Ottoman period (late 19th and early 20th centuries), focusing specifically on forms of bridal capital such as dowries and trousseaux. Danon's talk will draw on the

research that she conducted last academic year at the National Library of Israel and the Ben Zvi Institute in Jerusalem, and will showcase Ladino-language sources such as matchmaking registers, trousseau inventories and press articles.

Danon is an associate professor of Judaic Studies at Binghamton University where she teaches courses on Sephardi Diasporas, Jews and Muslims, modern Jewish history, and gender and Jewish history. Her research focuses on the eastern Sephardi Diaspora during modern times and draws heavily on previously unexplored Ladino language archival material. Danon is particularly interested in social history and how its tools help revise prevailing scholarship not only on the Sephardi world, but on Jewish modernity as a whole.

Her first book "The Jews of Ottoman Izmir: A Modern History" (Stanford Uni-

versity Press, 2020) was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award in Sephardic Culture. She has begun work on her second book, which explores the marketplace of

matchmaking, marriage and divorce in the modern Ottoman Sephardi world as a fellow at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

JLI course on "Decoding the Talmud" starts Feb. 3

The Rohr Jewish Learning Institute will hold the new class "Decoding the Talmud" taught by Rivkah Slonim on six Mondays beginning February 3, at 7 pm. The course aims to "demystify the intricate world of the Talmud, the monumental classic that has shaped Jewish learning for centuries."

For more information or to register, contact Chabad Center at 607-797-0015, rshea@Jewishbu.com or www.myJLI.com.

The cost for the course is \$90 or \$150 per couple, which includes one textbook. Additional textbooks are available for \$30 per book. Participants who register after Friday, January 24, will incur an additional fee to cover shipping for the textbook. The class is also accessible via Zoom; login information is made available to participants.

"Despite being one of the most essential See "JLI" on page 8

Jewish Film Fest to hold virtual showings of films "Golden Voices" "Shoshana"

By Reporter staff

The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of the film "Golden Voices." Andy Horowitz, founder and director of the Galumph dance troupe, will moderate a Zoom discussion of the film. To register for links to the film and discussion, visit www.jfgb.org/film-fest. The film will be available for viewing from Thursday-Sunday, January 23-26. The discussion will be held on Sunday, January 26, at 7 pm. The film is in Russian and Hebrew with subtitles. The film fest is co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton and the Ithaca Area United Jewish Community.

"Golden Voices" tells the story of Victor and Raya Frenkel (Vladimir Friedman and Mariya Belkin) who were the golden voices of Soviet film dubbing. In 1990, with the collapse of the U.S.S.R., they decided to immigrate to Israel, just like hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews. The Frenkels' attempts to use their distinctive talent in a country that doesn't need it turns the beginning of the new chapter of their lives into "an amusing, painful and absurd experience."

"Golden Voices" has won numerous awards and nominations at film festivals, including being the 2019 winner of the Israeli Film Competition Award for director Evgeny Ruman; and the winner of the 2019 Nominee Grand Prize for Best Film at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, along with jury prizes at that festival for best director, best cinematog-



Vladimir Friedman and Mariya Belkina in "Golden Voices" (Photo courtesy of Music Box Films)

rapher, best music and best script. It was also the Best Film Director in 2020 Winner International Competition Award at BIFEST – Bari International Film Festival for Evgeny Ruman and the 2020 Dorfman Best Film Award Winner at the UK Jewish Film Festival.

Glenn Kenny at *The New York Times* called the film "a winning comedy-drama." Gary Goldstein at the *Los Angeles Times* wrote that it is a "bittersweet, heartfelt comedy." Tablet noted that it is "a sensitive and heartwarming film about immigration, growing old, love, and new beginnings."

"Join us for this well acted, touching film, that also contains moments of humor," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "The insights into the lives of these immigrants offers a different picture of life in Israel."

By Reporter staff

The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of the film "Shoshana." Shay Rabineau, Ph.D., chairman of the Judaic Studies Department and director of the Center for Israel Studies at Binghamton University, will moderate a Zoom discussion. People can register for links to the film and discussion at www.jfgb.org/film-fest. The film will be available for viewing from Thursday-Sunday, February 6-9. Virtual screening is available for those living in New York state only. The discussion will be held on Sunday, February 9, at 7 pm.

The film is in English, Hebrew, Russian and Arabic, and includes subtitles.

The film fest is co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton and the Ithaca Area United Jewish Community.

Inspired by real events, "Shoshana" is a political thriller set in the 1930s in Tel Aviv, a brand new European, Jewish city being built on the shores of the Mediterranean. Thomas Wilkin (Douglas Booth) is in love with the city and with Shoshana Borochoy (Irina Starshenbaum). Wilkin works with Geoffrey Morton (Harry Melling) in the anti-terrorist squad of the British Palestine Police Force, chasing the charismatic poet and underground leader Avraham Stern (Aury Alby). Stern believes Israel can only be built through violence. His two main targets are Wilkin and Morton. Through



Shoshana Borochoy (Irina Starshenbaum) lived in pre-state Tel Aviv. (Photo courtesy of Greenwich Entertainment)

the relationship of Wilkin and Shoshana, the film explores the way extremism and violence pushes people apart, forcing them to choose one side or the other.

Alissa Simon, who reviews films for *Variety*, noted that the film "uses Britain's post-World War I administration of Palestine as a backdrop for this compelling historical romance. Based on real people and events, the film employs the fraught, cross-cultural relationship between a ranking member of the British Palestine Police Force and a young Jewish woman." Rich Cline, on the *Shadow* on the Wall website, wrote that the director's "astute use of newsreel clips grounds the film remarkably, although this almost makes the romance feel like a distracting plot point. But the film's real strength is in Shoshana's arc, because where she ends up is heart-stopping."

See "Film" on page 3

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On the silver screen

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JCC Friendship Club

The JCC Friendship Club will meet on January 15 at the JCC to watch a movie.

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Opinion

From the Desk of the Federation Executive Director

With gratitude

SHELLEY HUBAL

Generosity of time, attention, talent or resources: there are many special ways to give. As Federation director, I am lucky to witness acts of generosity with frequency.

Because of its dedicated Board of Directors and Executive Committee, many of whom have been giving generously of their time and energy to the community for years, Federation is able to create a vibrant, safe and compassionate community. I have said it many times, but it is worth repeating: each and everyone of them brings a unique perspective to the table and, for this, I am so grateful.

Suzanne Holwitt, Federation president, is a shining example of generosity. In her seventh year as president – that's right, seventh year – she continues to amaze me with how she gives of her time. She truly knows the meaning of showing up. Whether it is a special Shabbat service, a lecture, a *shiva* call, a holiday program or a committee meeting, Suzanne is there. She goes above and beyond. I am grateful for her generosity. She has taught me that showing up is one of the most important things you can do.

If you want to be inspired by stories of generosity, I sug-

gest the podcast "My Unsung Hero." These short vignettes, usually three to five minutes in length, illustrate how small acts of giving and kindness can change the world.

Even better, if you want to give of your time or talents, please consider joining a Federation committee. We need leaders! I promise you, you will get more than you give.

With gratitude for all the volunteers who made our community special in 2024, I am sending my best wishes to everyone for the year to come. May it be a year of healing and peace, a year of *chesed* and a year of generosity.

One Perspective from Israel

Funny, you don't look like a rabbi!

JEREMY M. STAIMAN

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

What was the rabbi doing in combat, and how did his friends answer the call?

I was walking down the street this morning in my son's community when suddenly, I saw a head pop out from a staircase. There he stood on the sidewalk, one hand grasping that of his 5-year-old, the other navigating an 11-month-old in a stroller. He was on his way to take the kids to *gan* (preschool).

Just another beautiful, sunny day in paradise.

When I first laid eyes on Yishai several years ago, he was standing under the shade of a rustic wooden pagoda on a hot Shabbat afternoon, teaching a *shiur* (class) to my granddaughter and her friends. He was engaging and lively, and the girls were giving him as much attention as you could expect from a group of young children. I sized him up as a handsome, charismatic 15- or 16-year-old, probably a Bnei Akiva (youth group) counselor, assigned to speak to the girls that week.

I guess there's a reason I never worked at the "Guess

Your Age" booth at the carnival. While I was right about the handsome and charismatic part (and, as I later learned, also poetic, brilliant and musical), I was off by close to 20 years. His baby-faced, clean-shaven look hid the reality that Yishai was actually in his 30s, a father of several children, including one or two of the girls in that afternoon class. To top it off, I found out Yishai was actually a popular rabbi at the prestigious local yeshiva.

Funny, he didn't look like a rabbi!

A true "*chevra* man" (a man of the people), Yishai and his wife Tzofia had become close with some of the local couples their age. My son and daughter-in-law consider themselves privileged to be among their dearest friends.

When the war broke out, Yishai was called to his reserve combat unit.

"You're a rabbi. Why didn't you join one of the Rabbanut (Israeli Rabbinat) units?" he was often asked. With a smile, he would answer them sincerely: "I want to be with the people." His modest demeanor earned him the respect and admiration of everyone around him. He was so well-liked that another neighborhood friend, Avi G., transferred into Yishai's unit just to have the privilege of

serving alongside him.

From near the front, Yishai sends a video *shiur* to his yeshiva, on the subject of sanctifying God's name and one's life in wartime.

"Unfortunately, a friend was critically injured last night. We can't elaborate."

That early-morning text from our son and daughter-in-law on July 2 hit us like a punch to the gut. But our reaction must have been nothing compared to the nightmare Yishai's family and friends were living. Was it Avi G., my son's best friend since high school? Was it someone else?

It was hard to imagine the maelstrom which must have been frantically churning in their lives. But until the information was officially released, our kids couldn't share more with us.

It seemed like days, but it was only hours before we received the follow-up: "Now it's public knowledge. It's Yishai."

It was bad. An explosion had taken the lives of several soldiers, including the son of my high school classmate. Others were seriously injured, Yishai among them.

See "Rabbi" on page 4

In My Own Words

Personal life, crime and privacy

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Recent events have left me puzzling the connections between several things that, at first, may not seem connected. They are the results of the U.S. House Ethics Committee's report on former Florida Congressman Matt Gaetz, the increasing restrictions being placed on the LGBTQ community and the right to privacy. The first of these is connected to the right of privacy because that report offered information about Gaetz' personal life that, in other circumstances, might have remained private. The LGBTQ community is connected because various state governments are passing laws restricting their lives, although their right to privacy would mean that their sexual identities and actions are none of anyone's else's business.

Of course, anyone entering politics should know their actions will come under scrutiny. That's the job of the press: to make certain people are worthy of the positions to which they aspire and have no connections that will

prevent them from working for the good of the people. A simple example is that you shouldn't be making decisions about a company/group that is paying you or whose stock you own. You should also not be doing anything illegal or immoral because, as a servant of the people, you need to be held to a higher standard. The same is true of those Congress investigates, especially before appointing someone to a position of power.

If Gaetz had not been a congressman, I doubt anyone would be interested in his actions. Perhaps, if they are considered illegal in Florida (his home state) and someone entered a complaint, he might have been arrested, but it certainly would not have made national news. If what occurred was consensual and legal, then those actions are no one's business. Gaetz might then have some standing to sue those writing about him, but, as far as I'm concerned, he had no standing against the Ethics Committee. Its members did their job. If he didn't want people learning about his behavior, he had several options: he could either have not paid for sex and drugs, or not run for public office.

You may be wondering about Gaetz' connection to the LGBTQ community. Since the November election, the LGBTQ community has been fearful about how the new presidential administration will affect their lives. But their desires are different from those of Gaetz in one very

important way: they want to be open about their lives and families. What they now fear is that they will once again be punished or targeted for who they are. If you think this is not a worry, there are states where it is illegal for a child to mention they have two fathers or two mothers, as if somehow those statements bring sexuality into the grade school classroom. Why they are more sexual than a child noting they have a mother and a father is beyond my understanding, but some find anything about the LGBTQ community deeply disturbing.

I'm fine if someone wants to keep their sexuality private. I grew up with a mother who felt people should keep that knowledge private. I would argue with her, though, that heterosexuality was on display everywhere; we were just so used to it that we didn't, and still don't, see it. For me, it's important to celebrate love in its many forms as long as it's consensual. (And before you complain about sex with children, children are unable to give consent. Plus, most sexual abuse is heterosexual in nature.) The irony of all this is that Gaetz, who, according to the ethics report, paid for sex and drugs, was given a zero rating by the LGBTQ rights organization Human Rights Campaign for his lack of support. I guess heterosexual debauchery is OK, but loving LGBTQ families are not. I'm still trying to make sense of that puzzle.

Correction

On page 1 of the December 27 issue of *The Reporter*, the date of the TC/TI adult ed. talk was printed incorrectly. The date should have read Sunday, January 12. *The Reporter* apologizes for the error.



Jewish Federation
of Greater Binghamton

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

LETTERS

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

ADS

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DEADLINE

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

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www.thereporter.org

Beth David luncheon speakers for Jan. and Feb.

Jan. 11: Shelley Hubal

Feb. 15: talk about Jewish artists in Roberson collection

Beth David Synagogue's next Shabbat Luncheon will be held Saturday, January 11. The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton's Executive Director Shelley Hubal will speak on "Why the Jewish Federation Matters: Executive Director Shelley Hubal Leads the Way." The community is invited to attend. Morning services will begin at 9:30 am, with the luncheon and program following the conclusion of services. The luncheon is free and open to the public.



Shelley Hubal
(Photo courtesy of Shelley Hubal)

"May will mark the sixth-year anniversary of Shelley's tenure," organizers said. "She is looking forward to sharing the history of Greater Binghamton's Federation, as well as giving us a solid sense of what she and her dedicated team have accomplished in that short period of time. She will also offer a view of future endeavors and challenges."

See "Hubal" on page 8

Beth David's luncheon speaker series takes place the second Saturday of the month after Shabbat morning services, and is open to the community. There is no charge for the luncheon. Since the monthly series' continuation depends on the generosity of contributors, Beth David welcomes and appreciates donations to the Luncheon Fund in order to keep the program going. Donations can be made in honor of, or in memory of, someone, or to mark a special occasion. Those wishing an acknowledgment to be sent to the person being honored, or to the family of someone being remembered, can indicate that, along with the necessary information. Donations can be sent to Beth David Synagogue, 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905, Attention: Luncheon Fund.

Beth David Synagogue's February Shabbat Luncheon will be held on Saturday, February 15. Shannon Lindridge, collection director at Roberson Museum, will speak about "Jewish Artists in the Roberson Museum Collection." The community is invited to attend. Morning services will begin at 9:30 am, with the luncheon and program following the conclusion of services. The luncheon is free and open to the public.

Lindridge has been researching Jewish artists in the museum's collection. Her focus will be on 20th-century works by Jewish artists from this region, as well as from elsewhere. Handouts will be made available to all who attend.

Lindridge obtained her bachelor of science degree from SUNY Cortland with a dual major in art history and studio art, with a concentration in textiles, and a minor in chemistry. She has worked in a variety of departments at The Dowd Fine Arts Gallery, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, The Herbert F. Johnson Museum and The History Center of Tompkins County before joining Roberson as its collections director in 2010.

When organizers of the



An exhibit at Roberson Museum (Photo courtesy of Roberson Museum)

Beth David Luncheon speaker series reached out to Roberson's Executive Director Michael Grasso with their request for a presentation on Jewish artists, he indicated that this data point had not previously been recorded, but that it was a valuable one. "Given the research that Shannon is See "Artists" on page 4

TC Sisterhood to hold annual book review on Jan. 26

Temple Concord Sisterhood will hold its annual book review by Rabbi Rachel Esserman on Sunday, January 26, at 11 am, at Temple Concord, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. The event is open to the public. Esserman will speak following a brunch. The snow date for the event will be Sunday, February 2. The suggested donation is \$5 to cover the cost of the brunch. Reservations are due by Wednesday, January 22, to Phyllis Kellenberger at 607-727-8305 or pweinste@stny.rr.com.



Rabbi Rachel Esserman

"I am once again looking forward to what is one of my favorite things of the year," Esserman said. "It's always a pleasure to talk to Sisterhood members about books and I'm certain that this year will be no exception. My book choices this year should offer something of interest to most members."

Esserman will review "Operation Bethlehem" by Yariv Invar, a spy thriller that won the National Jewish Book Hebrew Fiction in Translation Jane Weitzman Award in 2023. The author (whose name is a pseudonym) was a former Israeli intelligence officer. In addition to being an espionage-archeological thriller, it looks at moral dilemmas that its characters face.

The second novel will be "Long Island Compromise" by Taffy Brodesser-Akner. Brodesser-Akner's first novel, "Fleishman is in Trouble," was a big hit and was turned

Film Continued from page 1

"I hope you will join us for this film. It is both beautiful, heartfelt and distressing," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "It explores an interesting moral dilemma and offers a view of pre-state Israel."

into a TV series. Her second novel looks at how an American family tries to overcome a trauma that took place decades before. It also focuses on Jewish American life.

Esserman will also review the nonfiction work "Third Ear: Reflections on the Art and Science of Listening," by Elizabeth Rosner. Rosner is a novelist who previously wrote about being the daughter of Holocaust survivors. Her new work reflects on growing up in a home where six languages were spoken. The book contains personal reflections, along with a scientific discussion of the art of listening.

Esserman is the executive editor and book reviewer for The Reporter Group, and has won numerous American Jewish Press Club Rockower Awards and Syracuse Press Club awards for her opinion columns and book reviews.

In addition to her work at *The Reporter*, she serves as a See "Book" on page 4

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 24), we need photos of all teens who became bar/bat mitzvah during the calendar year of 2024.

Please e-mail these photos with identification, including name, date and place of the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony. Please send them by Tuesday, January 14, 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.

Tea and Talk

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

Upcoming dates are:

- ◆ January 16
- ◆ January 30
- ◆ February 13
- ◆ February 27
- ◆ March 14
- ◆ March 27
- ◆ April 9
- ◆ April 24

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

THE REPORTER

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Kathy Brown for all your advertising needs at 724-2360, ext. 244, or advertising@thereportergroup.org

DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
January 24-February 13	January 15
February 14-27	February 5
February 28-March 13	February 19
March 14-27	March 5

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

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Off the Shelf

Golems and antisemitism

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

That the number of novels featuring golems—creatures of dirt/clay brought to life by means of a magical formula—has been increasing with the rise of antisemitism is no surprise. Having a creature to protect us from those who would do us harm is something most people can appreciate. However, many golem stories include an additional lesson: golems can also be dangerous to those they are protecting as they increase in strength and power. These themes are explored in two recent novels: “Golemcrafters” by Emi Watanabe Cohen (Levine Querido) is aimed at tween audiences, while “I Made It Out of Clay” by Beth Kander (Mira) is definitely for adults. Both novels, though, have much to offer for those who are intrigued by the legend of the golem.

“Golemcrafters” is narrated by 11-year-old Faye, whose brother, Shiloh, recently celebrated his bar mitzvah. A present—a box of clay—from their little-known paternal grandfather arrives the same day that Shiloh returns from school bruised and bloody. They don’t know what to make of the present, although that changes when Zeyde arrives at their apartment to take them to New York City with him, so they can learn the family’s ancient tradition of golemcrafting. Their father, who is Jewish, is reluctant to let them study the heritage he’s rejected. However, their mother, who is ethnically Japanese, has made certain that the two received a Jewish education, and believes it is important for them to spend time with Zeyde and learn the craft that has passed down through the generations: the making of golems.

Faye finds she has a talent for their creation; in fact, she is far better than Shiloh, which feels strange because he is the intellectual one whom her Japanese grandparents

celebrate. But Zeyde appreciates her ability and understands the dangers that come with being so powerful—a power it becomes difficult for her to control. In addition to learning about golems, the children are introduced to the horrific events that have occurred to Jews throughout history. They also learn about their Japanese heritage, one that is rarely spoken about and almost lost in time. However, the two are no strangers to prejudice: both have suffered from teasing and ill treatment at school. In fact, Shiloh was beaten after reporting an antisemitic incident. Learning how to deal with prejudice without denying your heritage is a difficult lesson for Faye to learn. That lesson means that this unusual story packs a powerful punch for tweens and adults.

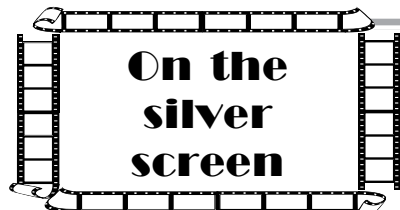
The fear caused by antisemitism is not restricted to the young. Eve, the narrator of “I Made It Out of Clay,” already has a great deal on her plate: her beloved father died a little over a year ago, she feels alienated from her mother and sister, and her 40th birthday will take place the same weekend her sister, Rosie, is marrying. To complicate matters, there are rumors of layoffs at work. She also has no date for the wedding, even though she promised to bring someone. She had hoped that her new neighbor, whom she privately refers to as Sexy Josh, might accompany her, but she would actually have to ask him, rather than remaining tongue-tied in his presence.

Life takes an even more unpleasant turn when Eve is subjected to an antisemitic incident, something that makes her fear for her life. Learning of bomb scares at her family synagogue, and viewing antisemitic incidents on the news, ramps up her fear, so much so that she is reminded of something her late Holocaust survivor grandmother

once told her: how she wanted to create a golem to save her family from the Nazis—only she wasn’t able to make one in time. Perhaps, thinks Eve, a protector would help her and her family. Of course, the results of her actions are not exactly what she expects.

This description oversimplifies the plot of “I Made It Out of Clay,” which offers complex relationships and emotions. While it could have been a simple rom-com, the fear—actually, the terror—that Eve experiences becomes real to readers, even as it warps her view of the world. That adds a great deal of depth to the work and will engage readers. Eve’s ultimate decision about how to deal with her fear is both well done and bittersweet.

Reading these books together shows the many different approaches an author can offer when describing the creation and actions of a golem. While the craft is passed down through many generations to Faye in “Golemcrafters,” in “I Made It Out of Clay,” Eve has no one to teach her. Instead, she looks to legends about their creations. When Faye creates golems, they bring forth the memories of her ancestors, something that connects her to Jewish and Japanese history. Eve, on the other hand, creates a creature who has no memory and no personal connection to her other than the knowledge that he must protect her. What Faye and Eve share—and what helps them create their golems—is fear: fear of being hurt, fear of loved ones being injured and the fear that history is repeating itself. That fear is what makes both works so powerful. Both characters must find ways to embrace who they are and let go of their fears, something that is not an easy lesson for either, but definitely a worthy one.



Jewish movies for winter nights

BILL SIMONS

The winter nights are cold and dark. Compelling Jewish-themed movies, laced with the sardonic wit of our tribe, can brighten the season. From that genre come endorsements for three recent films depicting present-day Jewish life. The trio is available on streaming services.

Set in contemporary Hungary, “All About the Levkoviches” (2024) deals with serious and difficult topics—death and mourning, family alienation and oppositional approaches to Judaism—that are leavened by sharp humor. For several years, Tamás (Zoltán Bezerédi), a 70ish boxing coach living in suburban Budapest and still a *shtarker*, has not spoken to his son, Ivan. Pained by the generational rift, Zsuzsa, beloved by husband Tamás and son Ivan, dies suddenly as she prepares to travel alone to visit Ivan and his family in Israel. A secular Jew, Tamás reluctantly agrees that Ivan can hold *shiva* in the parental house, setting the stage for conflict.

Tamás has little sympathy for Ivan’s decisions to make

aliyah, embrace Orthodox Judaism and raise his own children within strict traditionalism. For his part, Ivan resents Tamás for relentlessly pushing him during adolescence to assume the mantle of older brother Marci, a budding boxing champion who drowned at age 18. Tamás ridicules Ivan’s abandoning boxing, immigrating to Israel and donning black hat and suit with *tzitzit* as demonstrations of cowardice. As a consequence, Tamás is shocked and hurt when he discovers a combat wound that Ivan received, and kept from him, while serving with the Israel Defense Forces.

While Ivan attempts to observe a traditional *shiva*, Tamás’ mourns by imperfectly building a cabinet that Zsuzsa had wanted. Ariel, Ivan’s 6-year-old son, accompanied his father from Israel for the *shiva*; the boy hides in the cabinet, claiming that he must remain with his grandmother because an evil spirit is preventing Zsuzsa from following the eternal light. The evil spirit is the enmity between Tamás and Ivan. Loud escalating confrontations between father and grandfather heighten Ariel’s distress.

During a turbulent lightning storm, Ivan, prodded by Ariel, dons boxing gloves to forcefully battle the unseen evil spirit, driving it from the house and into the night. Then, in a tableau of catharsis, grandfather Tamás, son Ivan and grandson Ariel stand together in euphoria as the rain beats down upon them. In the final scene, Tamás and Ivan argue about rebuilding the cabinet from scratch. But this is simply kvetching, not battling over defining values.

Everyone will enjoy “All About the Levkoviches” for its warmth, humor, authenticity and reconciliation. Although spoken dialogue is in Hebrew and Hungarian, superb acting and English subtitles render this memorable movie accessible.

In contrast to the mordant wit of “All About the Levkoviches,” the humor in “Between the Temples” (2024) is often broad and raucous. In one such vignette, a cantor, the

tale’s co-protagonist, rendezvouses with a young woman encountered on a Jewish dating site, who confesses to being Protestant, but justifies her ploy based on aversion to Gentile foreskins. And the *kashrut*-observant cantor creates a spectacle of expulsion in a diner when he discovers that cheese is buried in the thick hamburger he was previously enjoying. As with all quintessential Jewish humor, however, the wit in both films is revealing and purposeful.

At the center of “Between the Temples” is the evolving relationship between a 70ish retired music teacher, Carla Kessler O’Connor, played by Carol Kane (who is brilliant, as in past performances) as a quirky, adorable, distinctively expressive woman, and mid-30s Cantor Ben Gottlieb, portrayed by Jason Schwartzman, an actor gifted at displaying the intersection between the ludicrous and the tragic.

Establishing shots and dialogue place the story in a small town in upstate New York. At the film’s onset, Ben suffers severe depression brought on by the accidental death of his wife more than a year before, resulting in his inability to perform cantorial duties at Conservative Temple Sinai, residing in the basement of his two lesbian mothers’ home and making a failed attempt to commit suicide by laying down in the path of an 18-wheel truck.

Ben and Carla meet in a bar after the cantor has his nose bloodied in an altercation. They soon realize that—decades before—“Mrs. O’Connor” was “little Benny’s” elementary school music teacher. As dialogue and plot accelerate, the widowed Mrs. O’Connor reveals her Jewish maiden name, Carla Kessler, and persuades the reluctant cantor to prepare her for the bat mitzvah that her Communist parents denied their “red-diaper” daughter. By steps, the relationship between Ben and Carla evolves from casual, reversal of the student-teacher roles, friendship and ultimately profound love. Ben officiates at Carla’s unconventional bat mitzvah, its timing accelerated by her health problems.

Opposition to the Ben-Carla relationship ignites disbelief and anger from Carla’s adult son, an atheist, and Ben’s two mothers, as well as from Rabbi Bruce, whose daughter See “Movies” on page 8

Rabbi Continued from page 2

Avi G. was right there at the scene, helping tend to his battle-buddy’s—and real-life-buddy’s—extensive injuries, desperately trying everything he could to keep his friend alive. While they awaited the helicopter for emergency evacuation, Yishai prayed from his stretcher: “Please, God, we work together. Don’t let our partnership end here.” The medic soberly shared his grim assessment with Avi G.: “I don’t think Yishai is going to make it.”

The days that followed were a frenzy of activity. Friends and family rallied to provide support. Tzofia made frequent trips to the out-of-town hospital, her newborn in tow, while the older children were cared for by grandparents and friends. Errands needed to be run; meals had to be cooked; emotional support needed to be generously and continuously given.

Part two of this column will appear in a future issue of The Reporter.

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Book Continued from page 3

chaplain for the Broome Developmental Disabilities Service Office. Her writing has been published in “The Women’s Torah Commentary” and “The Women’s Haftarah 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, Esserman sees her position at *The Reporter* as an opportunity to educate the public about Judaism. She also serves as a freelance rabbi for lifecycle 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. In 2023, she was awarded an honorary doctor of divinity degree from RRC for 25 years of service.

Artists Continued from page 3

engaged in for this project,” organizers say, “we hope that at a future date Roberson will consider having an exhibit focusing on these artists—that would be truly wonderful. With this lecture, we are excited to get the ball rolling in that direction!”

To date, Lindridge has found at least a dozen Jewish artists in the Roberson collection. Among them is William Zorach (1887-1966), whose “Three Graces” statue can be found in the museum’s courtyard. Called a leading figure in the art world, his works are part of collections that include the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC.

“We are sure,” organizers say, “that Shannon’s presentation will open our eyes to what is right here in our community in that gem of a museum that is Roberson!”

NY governor hosted Hanukkah party



Governor Kathy Hochul with students from Grinspoon Hillel at Cornell. (Photo courtesy of the Office of Governor Kathy Hochul)

New York Governor Kathy Hochul hosted a Hanukkah party on December 17 at the New York State Executive Mansion in Albany. Binghamton City Council President Hadassah Mativetsky, Hillel at Binghamton students, Grinspoon Hillel at Cornell students and Cornell Campus Rabbi Talia Laster were in attendance.

At right: Governor Kathy Hochul and Secure Community Network Regional Security Advisor Mark Henderson. (Photo courtesy of the Office of Governor Kathy Hochul)



Above: Governor Kathy Hochul with students from Hillel at Binghamton. (Photo courtesy of the Office of Governor Kathy Hochul)

At right, l-r: Binghamton City Council President Hadassah Mativetsky, Governor Kathy Hochul and University of Rochester Hillel Executive Director Joy Getnick. (Photo courtesy of the Office of Governor Kathy Hochul)



L-r: Cornell University Hillel Campus Rabbi Talia Laster, Southern Tier Regional Representative for the New York State Executive Chamber Harris Weiss and Binghamton City Council President Hadassah Mativetsky. (Photo courtesy of Hadassah Mativetsky)



TC first night Hanukkah



A group gathered on December 25, the first night of Hanukkah, to light the outdoor menorah at Temple Concord. L-r: Rabbi Rachel Esserman, Ross Mattio, Rabbi Leah Moser, Howard Fisher and Jon Burgman.

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

TI/TC adult ed. held Dec. 22



The Temple Israel/Temple Concord Adult Education Committee sponsored a brunch and talk on December 22. Rabbi Micah Friedman of Temple Israel (at left) presented two contemporary midrashim written by Israeli women after the tragedy of October 7, followed by a discussion and reflections. Thirty-five people were in attendance.



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Weekly Parasha

Vayichi, Genesis 47:28-50:26

Going up and going home

RIVKAH SLONIM, EDUCATION DIRECTOR, THE ROHR CHABAD CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDENT LIFE AT BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY

Parashat Vayechi begins with our patriarch Jacob putting his affairs in order before his demise. Jacob calls for his son Joseph, the second most powerful individual in Egypt, and extracts a promise that, after his death, he be carried out of Egypt and laid to rest with his forefathers in Israel. Although Joseph indicates that he will do as his father requests, Jacob is not satisfied until Joseph takes an oath in which he reiterates his commitment. Likewise, on his deathbed, Jacob speaks to Joseph and his grandsons Menashe and Ephraim concerning their inheritance of the land of Israel.

Clearly, Jacob is very focused on his connection with the land and the reader of these verses cannot help but remember the words of God to Jacob just before his descent

to Egypt: "I am the Almighty God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will surely bring you up" (Genesis 46:3-4). In his classic commentary, Rashi interprets these words as God's promise to Jacob that he would be buried in the land of Israel. If this is so, what reason was there for the apparent anxiety of Jacob concerning this matter as evidenced above? Or was his last exchange with Joseph, and then his grandsons (both of whom were born in Egypt), an allusion to something more?

With Jacob's exhortation to Joseph and his sons, he sought to underscore why and how it was that he came to live in Egypt at all. He wanted to impress upon them

that Egypt was a necessary, but temporary, stepping stone toward "going up and going home." Jacob wanted his children and grandchildren and their children never to forget that their forefather had come to Egypt upon the command and explicit promise of God – that the descent was for the purpose of ascent. Only with this perspective could Jacob and his descendants live in Egypt. It was not a place for them to settle down and get comfortable. On the contrary, their experience there would be – of necessity – one of strangeness, difficulty and even pain. But he knew and saw the good in it. For it was there that they were meant to grow in ways which they never could have had they remained in the Holy Land.

See "Home" on page 8

Congregational Notes

Temple Israel

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

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

On Saturday, January 11, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person. 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.

There will be an adult education program at Temple Israel on Sunday, January 12, from 10 am-noon. For more information, see the article on page 1.

A Ritual Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 15, at 10 am.

On Saturday, January 18, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Exodus 1:1-6:1 and the haftarah is Isaiah 27:6-28:13 and 29:22-23. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 6 pm.

The temple office will be closed on Monday, January 20.

There will be a Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, January 21, at 7 pm.

Congregation Tikun v'Or

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

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

Education Director/Admin. Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky
Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator: Michael Margolin

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

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

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

E-mail: president@tbeithaca.org, secretary@tbeithaca.org
Website: www.tbeithaca.org

Presidents: Melanie Kalman and Alexis Siemon
Sisterhood President: Gail Zussman

Director of Education: Calle Schueller
Services: Friday 8 pm; Saturday 10 am, unless otherwise announced. Weekly 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.

Synagogues limit face-to-face gatherings

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

Beth David Synagogue

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

Rohr Chabad Center

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

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

Temple Brith Sholom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated
Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045
Phone: 607-756-7181
President: Nick Martelli
Cemetery Committee: 315-696-5744
Website: templebrithsholomcortland.org
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Temple-Brith-Sholom-114006981962930/
Service leaders: Lay leadership
Shabbat services: Either Friday evening at 7:30 pm or Saturday at 10 am from Rosh Hashanah to Shavuot. Holiday services are also held. Check the Facebook page or weekly e-mail for upcoming services. Contact the president to get on the e-mail list.

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

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

Friday, January 10, light candles before..... 4:33 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, January 11 5:35 pm
Friday, January 17, light candles before..... 4:41 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, January 18 5:43 pm
Friday, January 24, light candles before..... 4:50 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, January 25 5:52 pm
Friday, January 31, light candles before..... 4:59 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, February 1 6:01 pm

Temple Concord

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

Some services and programs are online only.
Friday, January 10: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Leah Moser in person, on Zoom or on Facebook. Join via Zoom at https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, dial in at 646-931-3860 or watch on Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Saturday, January 11: At 9 am, Shabbat School; at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom at https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87897900994?pwd=bOMvwx-DuovoaBlnB4aVfHoTLsyamj.1, meeting ID 878 9790 0994 and passcode 743506. To dial in, call 646-931-3860.

Sunday, January 12: From 10 am-noon, Temple Israel and Temple Concord Adult Education Committee will present Professor Dina Danon on "The Transformation of the Marriage Market in the Eastern Sephardi Diaspora." For more information, see the article on page 1.

Tuesday-Thursday, January 14-16, at 5:30 pm: Evening prayers with Rabbi Leah Moser, in-person only.

Tuesday, January 14: At 7 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.

Friday, January 17: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Leah Moser in person, on Zoom or on Facebook. Join via Zoom at https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330, dial in at 646-931-3860 or watch on Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

See "TC" on page 8

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.

Norwich Jewish Center

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

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.



Business Profiles



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 Name: Joseph Fritsch
 Phone: 607-724-1336
 Fax: 607-724-1337
 E-mail: parsonsfuneral@yahoo.com
 Website: www.parsonsfuneral.com
 Hours: 24/7/365

The Ernest H. Parsons Funeral Home, located at 71 Main St., Binghamton, has been a landmark since 1928 and is located in the J. Stewart Wells Mansion, built by renowned architect Isaac Perry, who completed construction in 1867.

Ernest H. Parsons owned and operated the funeral home from 1928 until his death in 1976. Charles Mills purchased the funeral home after Ernest's death and continued the tradition until his retirement in 2012. The current owners – J. Fritsch, R. Fynboe, S. Pitkorchemny and K. Vakiener – strive to uphold the original motto of the founder: "Let Us Serve You with Understanding." Parsons Funeral Home offers distinctive service with respectful attentiveness to the ceremonial rites and the utmost consideration of families' desires to accord a last tribute of affection and esteem to their departed loved ones.

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Specialty: Funeral services, burials and cremation
 Location: 483 Chenango St.
 Binghamton, NY 13901
 Name: Kurt M. Eschbach
 Phone: 607-722-4023
 E-mail: hoplereschbachfh@aol.com
 Website: www.hefuneralhome.com
 Hours: 24-hour service, 365 days a year

When faced with the death of a loved one, Hopler & Eschbach Funeral Home invites you to turn to its caring staff to help guide you through the funeral process. Deeply experienced and knowledgeable in the performance of Jewish burial customs, Kurt Eschbach and his staff are the most qualified professionals in the community to help plan and carry out your funeral or memorial services. They provide services at your synagogue, the funeral home or cemetery, and also provide cremation services and funeral pre-planning.

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The Reporter

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

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

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

The Pad Climbing

Specialty: Rock climbing, fitness, community
 Location: 2220 Vestal Rd.
 Vestal NY 13850
 Names: Yishai and Kristin Horowitz, owners;
 Clint Sanderson, manager
 Phone: 844-254-6287, ext. 7
 E-mail: service@thepadclimbing.org
 Website: www.thepadclimbing.org
 Facebook/Instagram: @thepadbing
 Hours: 12-7 pm for non-members, 24/7 for members

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Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

Jewish Community Center

JCC Friendship Club

The JCC Friendship Club met on December 18 and 26 to participate in Hanukkah parties at Hill Top Nursing Facility and Castle Garden Nursing Facility. We decorated the rooms with Hanukkah decorations and distributed dreidels to all who came. After explaining the significance of the dreidel, Rabbi Leah Moser, from Temple Concord, and Rabbi Micah Friedman, from Temple Israel, told the story and customs of the holiday.

Music sheets were passed out and we sang Hanukkah songs. We had fun singing "I Have a Little Dreidel." The lyrics are "I have a little dreidel, I made it out of clay, When it's dry and ready, Then dreidel I will play." We made up our own words: "I have a little dreidel, I made it out of tin, And when it was finished, I watched it, Spin, spin spin." Another made-up verse was, "I have a little dreidel, I made it out of glass, and when I went to spin it, I fell on my behind." Yet another made-up verse was, "I have a little dreidel, I made it out of cheese. It had lots of pepper, And made everybody sneeze."

We had a lot of fun singing these songs while latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly donuts) were being passed out. Before leaving, everyone had the opportunity to take a 2025 calendar. We are looking forward to celebrating Jewish holidays together in the future.

The JCC Friendship Club will meet on Wednesday, January 15. Bruce Orden will show the movie "Cast A Giant Shadow," starring Kirk Douglas. Come join us at the JCC at 1:30 pm.

Sylvia Diamond
President

Movies . . . Continued from page 4

Gabby, misled by Ben, made herself sexually available to the cantor. Although Ben and Carla come to share a bed, there is no implication of sexual consummation between them.

Eschewing the didactic and the judgmental, "Between the Temples" is ribald and thoughtful. It depicts love as complicated, transcending logic, and potentially providing a place for profound sharing, wholeness and sacred expression. The title suggests the separation between the physical synagogue and Judaism outside those parameters. "Between the Temples" comes highly recommended.

So, too, does "You Are So Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah" (2023), a laugh-out-loud satire and telling observation about bar/bat mitzvahs, Hebrew day schools, adolescent angst, assimilation and generational conflict as experienced by comfortable Jewish families. Co-producer/star Adam Sandler cast his daughters and wife in central roles, and they turned in strong performances, as did the rest of the cast. The film pivots around the upcoming bat mitzvah of Stacy Friedman (Sunny Sandler) and the clash between her emphasis on the event video, the party and the launch to future success, and her parents' prioritizing her *haftarah* reading, mitzvah project and speech. Also, central is the relationship between Stacy and Lydia Rodriguez Katz as they move from best friends through bitter antagonism over a boy to loving reconciliation and a happy ending. Completed and released just before the Hamas-Israel War, "You Are So Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah" captures Jewish American confidence at its peak before Mideast carnage and resurgent antisemitism revitalized venerable threats.

Enjoy Jewish movie nights.



On the Jewish food scene

It's the wrong holiday!

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

When Broome Developmental Center held Jewish holiday parties, one of the staff requested that we have latkes for every Jewish celebration. I told him no because, even as much as I love latkes, that food belongs to Hanukkah. Even though we no longer hold those parties, one staff person regularly asks when Purim is coming so he can have his hamantaschen. It's become a running joke as I tell him how many months he has to wait. (To be fair, you can now find hamantaschen in stores at other times of the year. However, I refuse to buy and/or eat them except during Purim.) Never before, though, have I had people want to have both foods served at the same holiday event.

The arrangements had been made for a Hanukkah lunch at one of the day programs that I visit for my chaplaincy work. The meal was to feature latkes and salad. When I arrived, I learned one of the two classrooms involved had requested a specific dessert: hamantaschen. I was surprised since I never think of combining the two at one meal. And,

when it comes to the hamantaschen versus latkes debate, I come down *firmly* on the side of latkes. (I can easily live without most hamantaschen, but will not turn down a chance to eat latkes.)

The person telling me this looked to see what my reaction would be and, of course, I said that was unexpected, but fine. I think she was relieved because she'd already made the dough for the cookies. I was just glad that people liked the hamantaschen enough to want to eat it again.

The latkes were a huge success and we shared them with other folks in the building. We never did eat the hamantaschen – at least, not while I was there. There wasn't time to fill and cook them before I had to leave. I wouldn't have turned one down, but, at least, this way, I didn't have to confuse which food went with which holiday. At least, if they request this next year, it won't come as a surprise! But maybe it's time to introduce them to sufganiyot (Israeli doughnuts). Of course, then we might be eating those on Purim, too!

Hubal . . . Continued from page 3

Raised in Syracuse, Hubal obtained her B.A. in studio art from the University of Buffalo and a master's in art therapy from The George Washington University. A longtime resident of Binghamton, she and her husband, Mark, have always been actively engaged in the Jewish community. In her role at the helm of the Federation, Hubal emphasized how inspired she remains by the work of Sima Auerbach, her predecessor. "Sima left a wonderful legacy," Hubal said, "including the Jewish Film Fest and the Holocaust Memorial commemoration at the Temple Israel Cemetery. These important events keep our community connected."

Hubal said she strives to continue to build upon and enhance that legacy. She is particularly proud of some of her accomplishments. "With the help of Dr. Steve Malkin, I am super proud," she noted, "of our security initiative and the work we have done to educate the community, and to raise funds for security infrastructure." Hubal also mentioned the challenges that COVID posed, and how grateful she is to her team of devoted board members and volunteers. She said that they succeeded in pivoting, so that the community could continue to be connected virtually – something she feels continues to this day.

"Shelley has a remarkable gift for bringing the various members of the community together," organizers said.

"Everyone loves working with her. All of us have events or services that we consider memorable, be it Hanukkah celebrations, Community Hockey Night, Tea and Talk (which is co-sponsored with Chabad), the Super Sunday Campaign Kickoff brunch and guest speaker, the gathering of all synagogues and community members after the October 7 attacks, or this summer's visit by Eitan and Varda Morell to share their story of their son Maoz's heroic actions in Gaza."

Organizers also mentioned that Hubal "is modest to the core, doing everything in her quiet and caring way." "I am not in it for accolades," Hubal said. "Having a positive impact on the community is what sustains and fulfills me. What I love most about being Federation director is creating meaningful opportunities to bring people together and to witness the generosity of our small and compassionate community!"

"Beth David's Committee is excited to have the community get to know more about Shelley, the Federation's mission and the awe-inspiring work she is doing as its executive director," organizers added. "Come and feel free to bring friends to what is sure to be a great event!"

TC . . . Continued from page 6

Saturday, January 18: No Shabbat school; at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87897900994?pwd=bOMvwxDuovoaBlN-B4vFHoTSLySyamj.1>, meeting ID 878 9790 0994 and passcode 743506. To dial in, call 646-931-3860.

Sunday January 19: At noon, a Sisterhood BYO lunch and, at 12:30 pm, the game of "Left Center Right." RSVP by Wednesday, January 15, to Roz Antoun at rantoun77@stny.rr.com or 607-644-0107.

Tuesday-Thursday, January 21-23, at 5:30 pm: Evening prayers with Rabbi Leah Moser, in-person only.

Tuesday, January 21: At 7 pm, Social Action Committee monthly meeting to discuss the temple's initiatives. For more information, contact the temple office at 607-723-7355 or templeconcordaa@gmail.com.

JLI . . . Continued from page 1

texts in Judaism, many Jews struggle to explain what the Talmud really is," said class organizers. "When asked about the Talmud, they find themselves at a loss for a clear answer. For a new learner, the Talmud can be intimidating and inaccessible, remaining a closed book for the masses.

"Participants will meet the Talmud's main characters, explore its dynamic history and engage in authentic talmudic study," organizers continued. "They will learn the key terms, logical principles and historical context required to decipher the text of this 1,500-year-old work, and discover how it has survived and thrived, continuing to fill Jewish study halls to this day. 'Decoding the Talmud' aims to change that."

Dr. Leib Moscovitz, professor of Talmud at Bar Ilan University, explained that the course addresses a critical need: "The Talmud is a difficult work, one which is extremely different from modern works of the law, yet at the same time, it has exerted a decisive influence on Jewish life and practice throughout the generations."

Moscovitz further highlighted the importance of the course: "'Decoding the Talmud' seeks to open the door to this remarkable work for students of all ages and backgrounds. As such, it makes an educational contribution of the highest importance for anyone who is, and who should be, interested in understanding and appreciating the Talmud."

"The Talmud is the beating heart of Jewish scholarship – maddening, fascinating, even addictive. It's a world of self-contained logic where questions are more important than answers, and no premise goes unchallenged," said Rabbi Shmuel Phillips, author of "Talmud Reclaimed." "The chance to partake in an introductory course in Talmudic literacy is an opportunity that should be grasped with great enthusiasm!"

Like all JLI programs, the course is designed to appeal to people at all levels of knowledge, including those without any prior experience or background in Jewish learning. All JLI courses are open to the public and attendees need not be affiliated with a particular synagogue, temple, or other house of worship.

JLI, the adult education branch of Chabad-Lubavitch, offers programs in more than 800 locations in the U.S. and in numerous foreign countries, including Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Panama, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Uruguay and Venezuela. More than 400,000 students have attended JLI classes since the organization was founded in 1998.

Home . . . Continued from page 6

For much of our long and tumultuous history, the Jews, as a people, have been separated from our land. The Jewish experience has, by and large, been an Egypt experience: exile in various forms and permutations. But always there is the promise of God to Jacob: Do not be afraid. There is a great destiny, God promises, and it is precisely in your journeys – as strangers in a strange land – that you will achieve true splendor. Those words include assurance that wherever the children of Jacob find themselves, God is with us and that, at the appointed time, He will bring us up. We must, however, never lose sight of the paradoxical nature of our journey: even as Jacob lives in Egypt, he lives for Israel – in both its physical and spiritual dimensions – and so it is with his children of all time. We are certainly in this world and have much to accomplish, but we must not allow ourselves to be of this world.

This very moment in Jewish history is difficult, most certainly for our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land, and for all whose hearts are in the East. But our eyes must ever be raised upward, and our minds and hearts attuned to God's promise as passed on from Jacob to his children in this *parasha*: I will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.

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