

THE REPORTER

Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

January 24-February 13, 2025
Volume LIV, Number 2

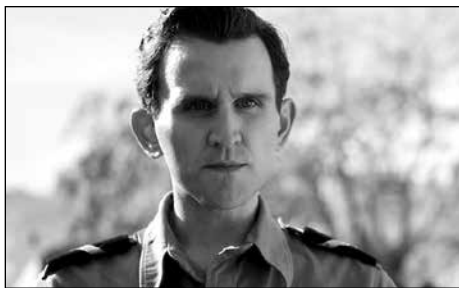
BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Time and Location Change: Jewish Film Fest to hold virtual showing of "Shoshana"

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 4 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



Thomas Wilkin (Douglas Booth) was a member of an anti-terrorist squad of the British Palestine Police Force. (Photo courtesy of Greenwich Entertainment)

be built through violence. His two main targets are Wilkin and Morton. Through 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."



"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."

Reminder: Film fest discussion on Jan. 26

By Reporter staff

The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold its discussion of "Golden Voices" moderated by Andy Horowitz, founder and director of the Galumph dance troupe, on Sunday, January 26, at 7 pm. 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, 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' attempt to use their distinctive talent in a country that doesn't need it turns the begin-



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

ning of the new chapter of their lives into "an amusing, painful and absurd experience."

For more information, visit www.jfgb.org/film-fest.

JLI to offer course on "Decoding the Talmud"

Registration is now open for the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute class "Decoding the Talmud," which will be 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. Ad-

ditional 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 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. 'Decoding the Talmud' aims to change that.

"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."

"I am very excited about this course,"

said Slonim. "JLI is all about granting access to all strata and components of Judaic study to the widest swath of interested participants. This is going to be edifying and great fun."

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.

BD Luncheon on Feb. 15 to feature talk about Jewish artists at Roberson

Beth David Synagogue's next 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 for all who attend.

Lindridge obtained her bachelor of sci-



At left: An exhibit at Roberson Museum (Photo courtesy of Roberson Museum)

ence 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 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 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 See "BD" on page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Talks around town

Historian to speak at BD Sisterhood; TI to host Musician in Residence weekend.

.....Page 3

Tu B'Shevat

A look at the traditional foods for celebrating the holiday of Tu B'Shevat.

.....Page 5

Friendship Club

The JCC Friendship Club will meet for a lunch in February, plans Purim parties in March.

.....Page 7

Special Sections

Book Review..... 4
Financial Planning 4
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planning 5
Classifieds 8

Opinion

“Journalism is not a crime:” The Jewish dimension of Evan Gershkovich’s imprisonment

By Bill Simons

As an undergraduate at Colby College in Waterville, ME, I attended on-campus Lovejoy Convocation ceremonies where annually a journalist, invariably well-known and impactful, was honored for excellence in craft and professional courage. Following the award ceremony, the recipient would deliver an address. During my sophomore year in 1968, Carl Rowan, then a syndicated columnist who wrote extensively about the Civil Rights Movement and had previously broken a color barrier as the first Black to serve on the National Security Council, received the Lovejoy award. In his speech, Rowan both thanked and challenged the audience: “I ask, what Black journalist of any era could be but honored to receive an award in the name of one who gave his life in defense of his belief that slavery was immoral – and in defense of this belief that he had the right to publish his views... As we look at a nation still bitterly divided over race, still shamed from time to time by ugly aberrations of violence, would Lovejoy view us as immensely more enlightened than the

Americans of his day?”

After graduating Colby, Rowan’s question and Lovejoy’s legacy continued to follow me. As part of my master of arts program in history at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, I studied under Leonard Richards, who had recently published “Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America.” From Richards, I developed a more granular knowledge of Elijah Parish Lovejoy.

An 1826 graduate of Waterville College, subsequently renamed Colby College, Lovejoy, initially immersed in theology, evolved into an abolitionist newspaper editor. Rejecting gradualism and colonization, he encountered threats and violent opposition in both St. Louis, MO, and Alton, IL, for his uncompromising demand for the immediate abolition of slavery. After mobs destroyed his printing press three times, Lovejoy and his supporters resolved to continue publication. On November 7, 1837, the mob returned, torched the building domiciling the new press and shot Lovejoy dead

as he attempted to save it. Outraged by the lawless assault, a young lawyer named Abraham Lincoln addressed the Young Men’s Lyceum of Springfield, IL, on January 27, 1838: “[T]he operation of this mobocratic spirit... is now abroad in the land... throw printing presses... shoot editors and... this Government cannot last.”

In 2023, the Lovejoy award went to Evan Gershkovich, a graduate of Bowdin (2014), a Maine college about 45 miles south of Colby. This precluded a speech by the recipient, then incarcerated in a Russian prison. “There rarely is a clear choice among selection committee members for the Lovejoy because we are fortunate to have so many journalists willing to put their lives and crawlers on the line for our indispensable craft,” said David Shribman, executive editor emeritus of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and former chair of the Lovejoy Selection Committee. “But Evan’s courage and his character are special even among those many courageous journalists.” Martin Kaiser, See “Evan” on page 8

One Perspective from Israel

Funny, you don’t look like a rabbi! (part 2)

JEREMY M. STAIMAN

This article originally appeared in the Times of Israel and is being reprinted with permission. See page 2 of the January 10-23 issue for part 1 of this column.

It’s always nice when a medical professional’s dire prognosis turns out to be wrong. Whether it was Yishai’s strength of character, his heavenly merits, the tears and prayers of his loved ones, the quick medical attention, or all of the above, Yishai soundly defied the medic’s prediction. He lived, and began his long journey of recovery.

His initial surgery was protracted, complex and risky. There were lengthy hospitalizations and seemingly endless rehab sessions. While the doctors and physical therapists focused on mobility, Yishai had another concern: His voice.

Yishai is, first and foremost, a teacher. For a long time after the explosion, he spoke only in a whisper. It was dif-

ficult to understand him. How could Yishai teach without a voice? On top of that, Yishai is also a singer and a *chazan* (cantor). His inspirational, uplifting *Neilah* prayer at the close of Yom Kippur has been a staple of the yeshiva’s services for years, with close to 400 people pouring out their hearts behind his soulful lead.

Several days before Yishai’s life was dramatically altered, he had put the finishing touches on a musical piece he recorded in memory of a stillborn son he and Tzofia had (www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtKFyqxs88). The lyrics, which date back to the 1600s, speak of appreciating the value of the soul. Eerily, the words he sang so sweetly on the song now took on a whole additional dimension. With Yishai’s new lease on life, the words applied not only to their late son, but to Yishai’s own existence.

Would this be the end of his singing, his leading of the prayers, his teaching?

Yishai’s recovery continued, though his voice lagged behind other aspects of his improvement. Eventually, he could be found at the piano in the hospital lobby, his fingers frolicking upon the ebonies and ivories once more – though still unaccompanied by his singing.

Over time, to everyone’s great relief, his voice began to gain strength, catching up with the rest of his body. This was due, in large measure, to the unflagging encouragement of Tzofia, who refused to allow him to give up. His rigorous vocal exercises and regular voice coaching paid off. Yishai was able to leave the hospital for several days at a time. He returned to the yeshiva to present a special guest *shnur*. See “Rabbi” on page 4

In My Own Words

Countdown

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

My last day as executive editor of *The Reporter* is scheduled to be December 31 of this year. As of the date of this issue (January 24), I have 11 months and one week remaining before I retire. (When I talk to people, I usually add the number of hours and minutes, but, since I don’t know when you’ll be reading this, there is no way to give you an exact count.) Before people start bemoaning what they might see as the end of the paper, they should note that while I am its public face, its workings should be compared to an iceberg: I’m the part you see, but the majority of the work (layout, advertising, bookkeeping, graphics and more) is done by others. I’ve also promised to continue writing my columns if that’s OK with whoever becomes the next executive editor (the writing is the fun part of the job).

I am proud of the paper we put out, but it’s more than time to pass the baton to someone new for a variety of reasons, some of which are personal. I’ve been facing additional health issues this year that make sitting at a computer all day difficult. I’m also tired: I’ve never had a ton of energy, but have known how to conserve it and use it best. That is getting more difficult as I age, especially as we increasingly face financial issues, such as making payroll and paying our bills. In fact, the only reason I didn’t retire at the end of 2024 is because I don’t have a

pension and it makes a real difference in the amount of Social Security I’ll receive if I wait until I’m eligible for the maximum amount.

I’ve been encouraging *The Reporter* Editorial Committee to consider a variety of options for the future of the paper. Although I prefer hard-copy versions of almost everything, the world is changing and leaving me behind. The idea of the paper someday being completely online leaves me cold. I doubt I’ll read it any more than I used to read the e-mailed version of my synagogue newsletter. So, while I know digital is the future, it’s not my future. The paper needs someone who can believe in, and uses, devices as a matter of course. It also wouldn’t hurt to have someone who hears well enough to do in-person or phone interviews, something I can’t do with my hearing impairment.

There is also something else the committee needs to consider: There is no way that *The Reporter* can compete with other online newspapers. They update articles daily, so there are almost always new things to look at. We simply don’t have – and can’t afford – the staff for that. That means looking for sponsors for the website, rather than advertisers, because I don’t think our numbers can compete with other websites. It’s possible, though, that an executive editor with a different vision of the future

can change that: it just won’t be me. As for other aspects of the paper (bookkeeping, advertising, etc.), I am trying to educate the Federation and committee members about just how much work goes on behind the scenes, something that still surprises most of them. Plus, our bookkeeper/advertising representative is planning to retire at the same time I do. To keep things moving, there absolutely has to be a plan in motion to replace us well before we both vacate our desks.

Will there continue to be a *Reporter*? Will the paper become a monthly one or appear only online with periodic e-mail blasts to tell readers when new material appears? Will the Federation just hire someone to handle its publicity? I won’t be the one to determine that and that’s OK. I don’t have the vision for that. That is the job of the committee members; they need to think about the future in those terms.

As for my retirement... If you’re thinking I’ll get bored, that’s highly unlikely. I plan to keep my chaplaincy work and would love to do some serious study for which I don’t have the energy after a long day. I also have a bucket list: I want to read all the books on the bookcases I haven’t had a chance to read yet. That could take years! But seriously, decisions need to be made *before* I step down and, again, I am not the one who should be making them.



Jewish Federation
of Greater Binghamton

Shelley Hubal, Executive Director

607-724-2332 ~ www.jfgeb.org

The Reporter Editorial Committee

TBA, chairman

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

HOW TO REACH THE REPORTER

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

E-mail ~ TReporter@aol.com

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

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

THE REPORTER
Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

BINGHAMTON, NY

OPINIONS

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

LETTERS

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

ADS

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

DEADLINE

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

Executive Editor Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Layout Editor Diana Sochor

Advertising Kathy Brown

Bookkeeper Kathy Brown

Production Associate Julie Weber

Columnist Bill Simons

Proofreaders

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



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

www.thereporter.org

Roger Luther to speak to BD Sisterhood on Feb. 12

The Beth David Sisterhood will host a Zoom meeting featuring Roger Luther, Broome County historian and president of the Broome County Historical Society, on Wednesday, February 12, at 2 pm. The topic of his presentation will be "Votes for Women – The Story of Women's Suffrage in Broome County."

"You will learn where and when the first woman legally cast a vote in New York state (hint: the program is titled 'The Story of Women's Suffrage in Broome County'),"

said organizers of the event. "You will also learn about the search for surviving artifacts from that event and information about local suffragettes whose activities resulted in women's right to vote."

Flyers, which will include the Zoom link, will be sent to everyone who is on Beth David Sisterhood's e-mail list or who receives Rabbi Zev Silber's weekly e-mail newsletter.

The meeting is open to anyone in the community and everyone is welcome to attend. Anyone who is not on one

of the above mentioned mailing lists should contact the Beth David Synagogue office at bethdavid@stny.rr.com or call the office at 607-722-1793 Tuesday or Thursday mornings to request that the Zoom link.

Save the date

TI to host Musician in Residence weekend March 14-16

Temple Israel will host Zach Mayer as its Musician in Residence during the weekend of March 14-16. Programs will be held Friday evening, Saturday morning, Saturday evening and Sunday morning. More details will be provided in future issues of *The Reporter*. The Eisenberg Fund and the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton have provided financial support for the event. Additional donors are welcome. Musicians who would like to participate in

the Saturday evening concert are encouraged to contact Temple Israel for more information.

"Zach is a well known musician recognized for his unique ability to bring people together through the power of *nigunim*," said organizers of the event. "Zach channels his family lineage of the four generations of cantors before him as he helps communities find their joyous voices in song."

JFS Corner

Jewish Family Service is sharing information it believes may be helpful to community members.

- ◆ Free transit for vaccines
The Broome County Health Department and Broome County Transit are offering free rides to anyone going to or returning from a flu, COVID or RSV vaccine through the end of March. Vaccines are available at pharmacies and doctors' offices. "Just let your driver know and enjoy the ride to good health," said organizers of the free rides.
- ◆ Free lunch for veterans and military families
The Broome County Mobile Canteen will host a free lunch for veterans, military members and their families at the American Legion Post 1645, 177 Robinson St., Binghamton, on Thursday, February 13, from 11 am-1 pm.

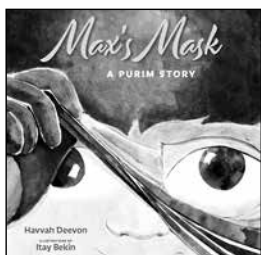
New in Books

Kalaniot Books to release new children's books for spring

Kalaniot Books announced that it will release three new children's picture books for the spring 2025 season:

◆ "Max's Mask: A Purim Story" by Havvah Deevon and illustrated by Itay Bekin (Release date: February 4): Max is nervous because this is his first day at a new school. He hopes his superhero costume will help him get through the day. However, when he learns about the holiday of Purim, he realizes that being true to himself is the real super power.

◆ "Yes, We'll Do It!" by Dafna Strum, illustrated by Shahr Kober and translated by Ilana Kurshan (Release April 8): Based on ancient Jewish teachings, this story shows the power of community, when friends try to help each other out and a simple task gets more complex.



(Book covers used with permission of Kalaniot Press)

◆ "Noah and His Wagon" by Jerry Ruff and illustrated by Katrijn Jacobs (Release date: May 6): It's difficult when your best friend moves away. Paloma is lonely, but during a morning walk, she makes a new friend, who introduces her to new people, and makes her feel less lonely.

BD. Continued from page 1 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!"

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. 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.

DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
February 14-27	February 5
February 28-March 13	February 19
March 14-27	March 5
March 28-April 10	March 19

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

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

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

Laura Melville Team
of Warren Real Estate

WARREN REAL ESTATE

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

Binghamton Philharmonic

Little Symphonies
Saturday, Feb. 1, 2025 at 3:30pm • Forum Theatre

Béla Bartók: Romanian Folk Dances • Mozart: Sinfonia Concertante with Uli Speth, violin & Victoria Miskolczy, viola • Quinn Mason: Petite Symphonie Franz Schubert: Symphony No. 5

Tri-City HEARING Season Sponsor M&T Bank Symphonic Series Sponsor

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

Binghamton Philharmonic

10th Annual Mac & Cheese Fest
Thursday, February 13, 2025 from 6:00PM – 8:00PM

DoubleTree By Hilton Hotel Binghamton
225 Water Street, Binghamton

\$25 All You Can Eat • Over 20 Restaurants
607-723-3931 • www.bingmacfest.com

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

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

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

parsonsfuneral@yahoo.com
www.ParsonsFuneral.com
HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

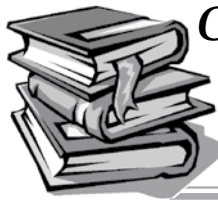
THE REPORTER

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

130th ANNIVERSARY

WEST LAWN CEMETERY
FOUNDED 1895

Needs YOUR Support for Perpetual Upkeep & Maintenance.
Send your caring contribution to Ron Sall
52 Court St., Binghamton, NY 13901



Off the Shelf

The intimate lives of Jews

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

“Oh, the subtitle is a pun,” I thought after receiving a copy of “Sex: Jewish Positions” edited by Miriam Goldmann, Joanne Rosenthal and Titia Zoeter (Hirmer Publishers/University of Chicago Press). Then I realized that “Sex” was not a book of essays offering different ideas about sex from major branches of Judaism, but rather a catalogue with essays based on art exhibits that appeared in the Joods Museum (which is located in Amsterdam) and the Judisches Museum Berlin. In addition to 12 essays on four different topics (“Procreation and Pleasure,” “Desire and Control,” “Sexuality and Power” and “Erotism and the Divine”), the book features 80 color plates of artwork, a large portion of which cannot be printed in a family-friendly newspaper.

A short essay by museum directors Hetty Berg (Berlin) and Emile Schrijver (Amsterdam) notes that “most of what we know about Jewish sexuality today comes from movies and TV shows – and unsurprisingly, that knowledge rarely rises about stereotypes. Disrupting these stereotypes is the goal of our exhibit.” Using old and new artworks, and some very unexpected objects, they attempt to show that Jewish sexuality is “not set in stone” and, in fact, is far more adaptable and flexible than one might expect. I’m not sure if they completely succeed in their goal, but many of the essays offered interesting ideas about Jews and sex.

The fact that there are two major traditional approaches to Jewish sexuality can be found in Evyatar Marienberg’s essay “Traditional Sexual Instruction.” Although he discusses sex found in the Bible, the most interesting section looks at the different approaches to sex in the Talmud and Kabbalah. The talmudists’ texts focus on the practical aspects of privacy or procreation. The kabbalists, on the other hand, saw sex as a way to “imitate divine realities.” For

example, he writes, “If the Talmud spoke about Friday night as an appropriate time for relations, rationalists explained this by referring to the burdens of weekdays, while mystics saw it as related to the cosmic movement of souls.”

In an interview with Talli Rosenbaum, “Sex is Force,” Rosenbaum offers three different ways that rabbis have spoken/written about sex. The first seems to fall on the side of asceticism, what she calls “minimiz[ing] the experience. Other sources speak to the pleasures of sex, seeing it as divine gift and holy obligation.” Rambam (Maimonides) suggests moderating between these two positions. Rosenbaum notes that “this approach recognizes that Jews have sex, just as all humans do, and engage in sex for pleasure as well as procreation.”

Different and controversial approaches to sexuality can be found in Jay Michaelson’s “The Eruption of Eros in Jewish Messianic Heresies.” Michaelson looks at the sexual transgressions that occurred in the Jacob Frank and Shabbetai Zevi messianic

movements. Both men are considered false messiahs who believed the way to bring about the messianic age was to transgress traditional rabbinic approaches to sex. Most interestingly, the author believes that a remnant of those movements still lives today: “As benign as the chanting of a Hasidic *niggun* may seem today, it was, at its inception, understood as an ecstatic, (spiritually) erotic ritual, a new, normative translation of Sabbatean religious grammar. The logic of eroticized mysticism remains, but sublimated into spiritual practices that are today so commonplace as to be scarcely recognizable.”

Other essays focus on women’s sexuality, sexual sciences (with essays about Sigmund Freud and Magnus Hirschfeld), sex in the “Song of Songs,” sex and gender, and reproductive ethics. As with many anthologies, some sections will be of more interest than others.

As for the artwork: Much of it is difficult to describe in a family-friendly newspaper. My favorite drawing makes use of the

T-shirts that say, “I’m with stupid,” but which points to a part of the anatomy I’m not allowed to describe. However, I would not have understood the message being delivered by much of the artwork without the explanations that accompanied them. That doesn’t mean they aren’t well done or interesting to look at. But, for example, I would not have thought the photo of an Israeli soldier showed “hypermasculinity and homoeroticism to challenge normative Israeli constructions of the ideal Jewish man” if its caption that hadn’t mentioned that. Some artists’ works feature *mezuzot*, *teffilin* and *ketubot* to offer their commentary about sexual aspects of Judaism.

Readers interested in sex, gender and Judaism will find something of interest in “Sex: Jewish Positions.” I know that others might be offended by the ideas and images offered, but the scholarship is excellent and the artwork intriguing and, at times, thought provoking. It will be interesting to see if an American museum offers its own version of these exhibits someday.



Off the Shelf

The stories of Felicity and Ruth

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

The reason I didn’t ask for a review copy of “From Sun to Sun” by Kenneth Wishnia (PM Press) was due to its dual nature: while part of the novel is a revised version of the biblical Book of Ruth, other chapters take place in contemporary New York City and feature a Latina private investigator, Felicity Ortega Pérez. That meant there didn’t seem to be enough Jewish content for a review. Fortunately, the publisher sent me a copy, which has far more Jewish content than I expected. Even better, both sections of the

novel proved to not only be exciting and challenging, but feature the absorbing stories of women struggling to find a place in a world that would prefer to deny them entry.

Wishnia moves the time period during which Ruth’s story takes place from that of the biblical judges to when Israelite exiles were allowed to return to Palestine after the Babylonian conquest of Judah. (Some scholars date the actual writing of the biblical book of Ruth to that time period, although not all agree.) What does matter is that even though Ruth is married to a Yehudim (as the Jewish population is known) and has taken on the trappings of her husband Makhlon’s religion, she is still not accepted by many of the Yehudim. After her husband mysteriously dies, Ruth decides to accompany her mother-in-law, Naomi, back to the family’s ancestral lands. Wishnia’s Ruth is without a family so, unlike her sister-in-law Oprah, she has nowhere else to return. To make her life even more complicated, Ruth is still learning Yehudim ways and finds it difficult to leave behind the gods she has worshiped her entire life for a God who asks for so many unusual things.

The trip to Jerusalem is not an easy one and, although the Yehudim returning from



Babylon are generally welcomed, Ruth is still treated as an outsider. Her skills differ from most women’s: before her marriage, she was a slave to ironworkers and is skilled in using a knife, rather than being proficient in womanly skills such as cooking or sewing. Her relationship with Naomi is difficult: this is not the story of two women who are in love or who care deeply for each other. Instead, Ruth wants to find out the truth about the death of her beloved husband. She believes the murder has something to do with an inheritance Naomi refuses to discuss. Those familiar with the biblical tale know that Ruth marries a kinsman of her late husband, Boaz, so she can have a baby to keep Makhlon’s name alive. But her marriage to Boaz – at least in “From Sun to Sun” – is not a love match.

The best parts of the novel are those that expand on the biblical text. For example, when “From Sun to Sun” opens, Makhlon is still alive. The loving relationship between him and Ruth makes his death more real and sadder than in the traditional story. Since Makhlon not only married Ruth, but freed her to be his bride (rather than treating her as a concubine or slave), this makes her See “Ruth” on page 8

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Cheever's Hand & Angeline LLC
 Square Deal Place
 111 Grant Ave., Suite 107, Endicott, NY 13760
 607-754-7550 • 1-800-999-7550
Cheever's, Hand & Angeline, LLC
is a full service firm
Our staff of professionals
would be happy to assist you
with all your investment needs.
 Matthew B. Adler, President
LOCALLY OWNED & OPERATED SINCE 1974

Piaker & Lyons
 CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS
 Tax Planning & Preparation
 Accounting & Auditing
 Estate Planning
 Janeen F. Schrann, CPA - Richard Lynch, CPA
 Allison Gunther, CPA -Katie Kirk, CPA
 Kyle Miesfeldt, CPA - Eric Rouse, CPA
 Thomas Shanahan, CPA
 92 Hawley Street • P.O. Box 1330
 Binghamton, NY 13902-1330
 www.pnlcpa.com
 Other Office:
 Syracuse


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


Rabbi Continued from page 2

and spoke for over an hour. The room was overflowing with students and friends, all of whom came to honor him, to hear his words, to cry and to smile.

At one point, two of Avi G.’s girls and Yishai’s 5-year-old daughter, Hallel, were heading to school. They were talking about how their fathers were serving in the army together. Hallel remarked: “Your father saved our father’s life.” One of the G. girls answered: “If our father wasn’t there, your father would no longer be here.” She was probably right. Even in their youthful innocence, they had an inkling about the eternal bond of blood their fathers had forged that day.

In time, the local couples sent out invitations to a quasi-*seudat hodayah* (thanksgiving meal) to give thanks to God for allowing their beloved friend the rabbi to remain in the world of the living. In reality, it was more of a barbecue and beer fest, but that informal celebration is a hallmark of the simple, salt-of-the-earth love this group shares. It’s what makes their friendship so unique.

With the High Holidays approaching, the question loomed heavy in the air: would Yishai be able to take his place at the front of the congregation again, leading the large assembly in prayer? Increasingly, it appeared that the answer would be yes. And when those hallowed days arrived, the

normal emotions of this special time of year increased exponentially. Yishai stepped up to the *bima* and began the prayers.

His voice was strong and transcendent, with his mellifluous supplications elevating the worshippers straight to the clouds.

Only the Heavens could count the tears that flowed that day.

I was walking down the street this morning in my son’s community when I suddenly saw Yishai’s head pop out from a staircase. There he stood on the sidewalk, one hand grasping that of his 5-year-old, the other navigating the 11-month-old in a stroller. The living miracle stood in front of me.

“I asked my rabbi if I could make a *bracha* (blessing) when I see you for the first time,” I told him.

“Many people have,” he answered with his charismatic smile. We spoke for a minute. “You have no idea what amazing people our friends are,” Yishai said. “They haven’t stopped for a second, making sure we have everything we need. Not for a second.”

And then I was off and he was off – on his way to take the kids to *gan*. Just another beautiful, sunny day in paradise.

Funny, he still doesn’t look like a rabbi. But despite his boyish appearance, I will always look at Yishai and see the face of a hero.



On the Jewish food scene The fallow period

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Hanukkah is over, and Purim and Passover are still months away. What's a Jewish girl to do if she wants some special holiday food? Well, there is one holiday coming up: Tu B'Shevat, the New Year of the Trees, begins the evening of Wednesday, February 12, this year, but, when I was growing up, there wasn't any real celebration of the day. Sure, we were encouraged to purchase trees in Israel and, once in awhile, given tooth-breaking carob pods to

chew on, not that those were anyone's idea of a holiday food. My first real introduction to Tu B'Shevat seders was in rabbinical school. During a class my first year there, a professor gave us four different seders to read. He liked to begin the class by asking for questions, whose answers he would then very cleverly weave into a lecture. My question had to do with whether these seders were still being developed because, while most had participants move from

white wine to red wine, one went in the opposite direction. I'm going to pat myself on the back here because I was the only one in the class who noticed that. But the point is that, unlike the Passover haggadah, there is no traditional, age-old version of the Tu B'Shevat seder.

I am a big fan of fruit. (My mother and I could polish off a dozen oranges in a day and I've been known to See "Fallow" on page 8



Bar & Bat Mitzvah Planning Guide



Mazel tov to these 2025 b'nai mitzvah

B'nai mitzvah	Parents	Date	Synagogue
Ryan Freed	Lara and Clayt Freed	April 5	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Channi Sacks	Amanda Garris and Gavin Sacks	April 26	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Liam Ash	Rachel and Ethan Ash	May 3	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Nathaniel Elia	Melanie Lefk and Anthony Elia	May 17	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Ally Eisenstadt	Carolyn and Scott Eisenstadt	May 24	Temple Concord
Sandy Goldberg	Elizabeth Parr and Jesse Goldberg	May 31	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Zohar Friedman	Randy Friedman and Brenda Schlaen	June 7	Temple Israel
Lila Jablonski	Becca Jablonski and Kevin Jablonski	June 14	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Isaac Kizelshteyn	Jeanette Devita and Boris Kizelshteyn	June 21	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Micah Yarkoni	Alon and Joy Yarkoni	June 21	Temple Israel
Harley Lane	Jennie Cramer and David Lane	August TBA	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Louisa Holt	Alysa Apsel	October 11	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Jonah Lyons	Colin Lyons and Andrea Kastner	October 18	Temple Concord
Will Kleinberg	Miranda Phillips and Bobby Kleinberg	November 8	Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Violet Krasno	Amy and Jon Krasno	TBA	Temple Concord
Jacob LaRusch	Danielle and Richard LaRusch	TBA	Temple Concord

Mazel tov to the 2024 b'nai mitzvah



Sander Herzog
May 11, 2024
Todd and Kerry Herzog
(Photo courtesy of the Herzog family)



Eli Green
July 20, 2024
Wendy and Brett Green
Temple Israel
(Photo courtesy of the Green family)



Shira Green
July 20, 2024
Wendy and Brett Green
Temple Israel
(Photo courtesy of the Green family)



Noah Grills
June 8, 2024
Sara and Brian Grills
Temple Concord
(Photo by Jen Pecka)



Ariela Kweller
October 26, 2024
Temple Israel
Alice and Yaron Kweller
(Photo by Alice Kweller)



Brody Evan Rosenthal
May 18, 2024
Lonni and Andrew Rosenthal
(Photo by Wendy J Studio)



Sloane Weinstein
September 7, 2024
Kerri and Jonathan Weinstein
Temple Israel
(Photo by Leia Grace Photography)

Bar/bat mitzvah planning timetable

At birth:

When the child is born start saving! Only joking. But if you can, it's not a bad idea to start a "bar/bat mitzvah club" savings account. If you don't use it, put it toward college.

1-3 years ahead:

- ✦ Set bar/bat mitzvah date
- ✦ Set a budget
- ✦ Reserve synagogue hall for kiddush
- ✦ Reserve hall for additional receptions
- ✦ Arrange for caterer/party planner and band/music for occasion (if desired)
- ✦ Buy a loose-leaf binder with dividers, or start a filing system for keeping business cards, estimates, notes, lists, etc.

10-12 months ahead:

- ✦ Begin bar/bat mitzvah lessons
- ✦ Begin attending weekly Shabbat services
- ✦ Arrange for photographer and/or video
- ✦ Book hotels and investigate transportation for out-of-town guests

6 months ahead:

- ✦ Plan color scheme and/or theme
- ✦ Arrange for florist and/or decorations' coordinator
- ✦ Make guest list

4-5 months ahead:

- ✦ Order invitations, thank you notes, imprinted napkins and personalized party favors
- ✦ Shop for clothing and shoes
- ✦ Purchase tallit, tefillin, etc.
- ✦ Choose a calligrapher, if desired

3 months ahead:

- ✦ Plan Sunday brunch (if applicable)
- ✦ Order printed yarmulkas, if desired

2 months ahead:

- ✦ Meet with photographer
- ✦ Meet with florist and/or decorations' coordinator
- ✦ Mail out-of-town invitations

6 weeks ahead:

- ✦ Order tuxedos (if applicable)
- ✦ Take care of clothing alterations
- ✦ Order wine for kiddush
- ✦ Mail in-town invitations

4 weeks ahead:

- ✦ Prepare bar/bat mitzvah speech
- ✦ Finalize hotel reservations and transportation
- ✦ Meet with caterer(s)
- ✦ Make up welcome gifts for out-of-town guests (if desired)

- ✦ Arrange aliyot
- ✦ Send honorary gift to synagogue
- ✦ Meet with rabbi
- ✦ Make up seating charts for reception

2 weeks ahead:

- ✦ Give final count to caterer
- ✦ Check with florist and/or decorations' coordinator
- ✦ Meet with rabbi
- ✦ Order bar/bat mitzvah cake, etc. for Friday night oneg

A few days ahead:

- ✦ Have bar/bat mitzvah rehearsal and take bima photographs
- ✦ Xerox copies of speeches, room and table layout, etc. and give them to a friend to hold or drop off at synagogue and reception hall, in case you forget to bring your copies that day.

Special Day:

- ✦ Prepare to enjoy your simcha!

Judaica Shop

Tallit for all B'nai Mitzvot
Kippot in many colors and fabrics
Guest registers,
Havdalah candles,
Long ceremonial candles & more

9 Riverside Drive • Binghamton, NY 13905
Monday - Friday 607-723-7355

Celebrate the Simcha!

Engagements • Weddings • Births
Birthdays • Graduations • Moves
Promotions • Retirements • Anniversaries
★ and much more! ★

For information or to place your simcha,
contact Kathy Brown at 607-724-2360, ext. 244,
or advertising@thereporter.org

THE REPORTER
Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

If you can celebrate it, we can make an ad for you!



Weekly Parasha

Vaera, Exodus 6:2-9:35

Human hubris

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR, THE REPORTER GROUP

According to Jewish tradition, every word in the Torah was chosen for a specific reason. The use of a particular word or phrase is not arbitrary; there was a purpose behind each choice. Mystics search for the hidden meaning behind the text; lovers of *midrash* use words to teach moral or ethical lessons. Those interested in biblical history try to learn about the culture of our ancient ancestors. Anyone who reads the text as a spiritual endeavor looks to find some type of lesson or meaning in the words.

Of course, as human culture and civilization have evolved over time, different Jewish civilizations have read different meanings into the text. While I'm not suggesting that the text can be made to mean anything, the way we view any text changes because we have changed. That's the reason

why people continue to study Torah even if they know it well: there is always something new to learn as we evolve ourselves. Sometimes what we learn tells us more about ourselves than it does about the text.

In both last week's *parasha*, Shemot, and this week's *parasha*, Vaera, the text tells us that God "heard the groaning of the Israelites" and their suffering made God "remember my covenant" with the descendants of Abraham. One of my early reactions to this was recorded in a poem I wrote where I stated: "And God remembered?/ Remembered?/ Does that mean that God forgot?/ Forgot a promise./ A solemn vow/ A holy covenant?/ Is this the same God/ Who forced Abraham/ Through a living hell/ By ordering the sacrifice?/ Of his son Isaac?/ The same God/ Who wres-

ttled with Jacob/ To prove escape from Canaan/ Meant no escape/ From the covenant/Of his father and grandfather?/ How could this God forget?"

I then used the idea of God's forgetting to suggest what we could learn from the way God treated the Israelites and how we should deal with the possibility of God's lack of involvement with the world: "How could God forget the Israelites?/ Weren't their groans loud enough,/ Their pain severe enough?/ Was God working, eating, sleeping?/ What, what could be so important?/ What could be so important now/ For the sounds of despair and pain and hunger/ Sing through the heavens like a holy choir./ Perhaps God always forgets./ Becomes involved with another project/ See "Hubris" on page 7

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 25, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Exodus 6:2-9:35 and the haftarah is Ezekiel 28:25-29:21. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 6 pm.

On Saturday, February 1, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Exodus 10:1-13:16 and the haftarah is Jeremiah 46:13-28. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 6:15 pm.

There will be a "Torah and Our Times" discussion with Rabbi Micah Friedman on Tuesday, February 4, at 4:30 pm.

There will be an Executive Board meeting on Tuesday, February 4, at 7 pm.

"The Whole Megillah" program with Rabbi Micah Friedman will be held on Wednesday, February 5, at 10 am.

On Saturday, February 7, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Exodus 13:17-17:16 and the haftarah is Feb 8: Judges 4:4-5:31. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 6:15 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 Schueler
Services: Friday 8 pm; Saturday 10 am, unless otherwise announced. Weekday morning minyan 7:30 am (9 am on Sundays and legal holidays).

Religious School/Education: September-May: Classes meet on Sunday, 9 am-12:30 pm and Wednesday afternoons, 3:45-5:45 pm. The teen No'ar program meets twice per month (every other Sunday from 5-7 pm) and is designed with the flexibility to accommodate busy student schedules.

Adult Ed.: Numerous weekly courses, several semester-long courses and a variety of mini-courses and lectures are offered throughout the year. Call the temple office for more details.

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

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: Leo Searfoss
Cemetery Committee: 315-696-5744
Website: templebrithsholomcortland.org
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Temple-Brith-Sholom-114006981962930/>

Service leaders: Lay leadership
Shabbat services: Services are usually on the third Friday of the month and led by a variety of leaders. 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." The community extends a warm welcome to the Jewish student population of SUNY Cortland, as well as the residents of local adult residences. The Board of Trustees meets on the second Tuesday of the month.

Services and programs are held by Zoom usually on the third Friday of the month.

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
Friday, February 7, light candles before..... 5:08 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, February 8 6:10 pm
Friday, February 14, light candles before..... 5:17 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, February 15 6:19 pm

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Rabbi: Leiah Moser
Address: 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905
Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm
Phone: 607-723-7355
Fax: 607-723-0785
Office e-mail: TempleConcordbinghamton@gmail.com
Website: www.templeconcord.com
Regular service times: Fri., 7:30 pm; Sat., 10:35 am, when religious school is in session.
Hebrew school: Hebrew school meets at 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm on Tues. and Thurs. during the school year unless otherwise noted.
Shabbat services: Zoom link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86996998146?pwd=RIVMTHFQYIVVNGFHdmJLVUcvQ3JNQOT09>, meeting ID: 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330; dial-in number 646-931-3860; and Facebook at www.facebook.com/templeconcord.
Torah study: Zoom link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8789790994?pwd=bOMvwxDuovoaBlnB4vflHoTlSyamj.1>, meeting ID: 878 9790 0994 and passcode: 743506; and dial-in number 646-931-3860.

Some services and programs are online only.
Friday, January 24: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Leiah Moser in person, on Zoom or on Facebook.
Saturday, January 25: At 9 am, Shabbat School class service; and at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom.
Sunday, January 26 (snow date: Sunday, February 2): At 11 am, Temple Concord Sisterhood's Annual Book Talk by Rabbi Rachel Esserman, who will be reviewing "Operation Bethlehem" by Yariv Inbar; "Long Island Compromise" by Taffy Brodesser-Akner; and "Third Ear: Reflections on the Art and Science of Listening" by Elizabeth Rosner. Brunch will be served; the program is open to the community.

Tuesday-Thursday, January 28-30, at 5:30 pm: Evening prayers with Rabbi Leiah Moser, in-person only.

Friday, January 31: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Leiah Moser in person, on Zoom or on Facebook.

Saturday, February 1: At 9 am, Shabbat school; and at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom.

Sunday February 2: From 10 am-2 pm, Sisterhood Rummage Sale held in Temple Concord's basement. Shoppers are asked to use the Oak Street entrance.

See "TC" on page 7

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.

Sisterhood and Men's Club of Beth David Synagogue hosted Hanukkah party



Rabbi Zev Silber lit the Beth David menorah for the community during the Beth David Synagogue Hanukkah party on December 29. (Photo by Stacey Silber)



Attendees helped themselves to food at the Beth David Hanukkah party on December 29. (Photo by Stacey Silber)



Stacey Silber and Gina Santiago stood behind the display of gifts that were part of the holiday grab bag. (Photo by Dora Polachek)



Steve Gilbert entertained at the Beth David Hanukkah party on December 29. (Photo by Stacey Silber)



On December 29, the Sisterhood and Men's Club of Beth David Synagogue jointly hosted a Hanukkah party. L-r: Stacey Silber, Judy Silber, Charlotte Witter, Charlie Manasse and Gina Santiago worked in the kitchen to prepare food for the party. (Photo by Cathy Velenchik)

Jewish Community Center

JCC Friendship Club

The JCC Friendship Club met on January 15. After saying the Pledge of Allegiance and singing "Hatikvah," Sylvia Diamond gave the treasurer's report. Then Bruce Orden connected his equipment and showed the film "Cast a Giant Shadow," starring Kirk Douglas. It is the story of the beginning of Israel's independence in 1948 when the British army was departing and the U.N. declared the state of Israel. It showed how the surrounding Arab countries attacked and how Israel responded. We were so engrossed in the movie that we decided to stay another hour until it ended.

For the next meeting on Wednesday, February 12, we decided to eat out. We will meet at the Lost Dog Café in Binghamton at 1 pm. Come join us.

The holiday of Purim is on March 14. Purim parties are planned for the residents of nursing facilities on March 10, 11 and 12 at Hill Top, Good Shepherd Fairview and Castle Gardens. I hope to see you at a party. For more information call Sylvia at 607-772-0726.

Sylvia Diamond
President

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 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.

TC.....Continued from page 6

Tuesday, February 4: At 10:30 am, Tuesday Morning Book Club: "The Hebrew Teacher" by Maya Arad, translated by Sondra Silverston. For more information, contact Merri Pell-Preus at 607-222-2875 or merrypell.preus@gmail.com. To join via Zoom, visit <https://bit.ly/3CXVd9b>, meeting ID 881 6469 4206 and passcode 653272.

Tuesday-Thursday, February 4-6, at 5:30 pm: Evening prayers with Rabbi Leah Moser, in-person only.

Friday, February 7: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service.

Saturday, February 8: At 9 am, Shabbat School Tu B'shevat program and at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom.

Tuesday, February 11: At 7 pm, General (Board of Trustees) Board meeting. Meetings are open to members of Temple Concord. For a meeting link, contact the synagogue at 607-723-7355 or templeconcordaa@gmail.com.

Moving any time soon?

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



Hubris.....Continued from page 6

Or planet or galaxy./ Perhaps we can no longer wait/ For God to remember./ Perhaps we need to act/ As if human hands alone will suffice./ Perhaps we need/ To create our own miracles/ Instead of waiting./ Waiting for a forgetful deity/ To remember we exist."

This interpretation of text—actually, most interpretations of the Torah—assumes that human beings are at the center of God's activities. What hubris! We stand guilty of declaring ourselves as the most important thing in the universe. This is true not only of Judaism, but of Christianity, which once declared that not only the sun and planets revolved around the Earth, but that the whole universe did. We can't imagine anything more important than ourselves. Some of us believe our every action receives God's attention, that when something bad happens, it's a punishment from God or when something good happens, it's a reward from God. Even our anger at God when evil happens in the world or our declarations that God had deserted us show that we expect God to be there, like a parent who watches a baby's every move.


I still believe that we shouldn't wait for God to perform miracles for us; waiting for them is just an excuse for human inaction. We could solve many of the world's problems if we would only look past our political, social and religious differences, and remember our common humanity. However, I now wonder if the Torah wasn't trying to teach us this lesson in the first place. This hint that God could be occupied elsewhere is the Torah's way of saying our human-centric view of the world is wrong. Perhaps we need to get past our hubris and recognize that we are only a small piece of a vast universe. That may seem frightening, but it might teach us to band together, to work together, instead of waiting for outside forces to rescue us.

The Reporter is offering sponsorships!

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

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

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



Jewish Family Service is collecting donations to support those affected by the Los Angeles wildfires. Funds will be sent to Jewish Family Service LA. Checks made out to JFS and earmarked "LA" should be sent to JFS, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850. Deadline to give is February 28.

HOPLER & ESCHBACH FUNERAL HOME

"A new family tradition"

Personal Service
Professionalism
Experience You Can Trust

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

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

Birthright celebrates 25th anniversary

By Roni Shkedy

(Israel Hayom via JNS) – Birthright Israel commemorated its quarter-century milestone, with approximately 6,500 young participants scheduled to arrive this winter to support the

recovery of Israel’s tourism sector.

More than 300 international groups will engage in volunteer programs and diverse internships across Israel. Since November 2023, all tours have incorporated war-re-

lated elements, including visits to “Hostage Square,” tours of Gaza border communities, volunteering initiatives, and encounters with October 7 survivors.

In addition to the standard visits showcasing Israel’s character to young Diaspora Jews, the organization is preparing to welcome about 10,000 volunteers throughout 2025. These volunteers, predominantly Birthright alumni, will support the rehabilitation of Gaza border *kibbutzim* and northern communities as residents return to rebuild.

This expansion builds on volunteer programs established in November 2023, which

brought approximately 8,500 volunteers to Israel over the past year. Responding to strong interest, Birthright has now extended the age eligibility for these programs to 50.

The project’s cumulative economic impact on the Israeli economy since its inception amounts to approximately 8.5 billion shekels, covering expenses for flights, accommodations, attractions, dining, transportation, tour guides and more. The organization generates a fourfold return on every government dollar invested, directly benefiting the Israeli economy.

It has more than 850,000 alumni.

Originally published by Israel Hayom.

Ruth. Continued from page 4

desire to travel to a foreign country to learn the truth behind his death understandable. The section relating to her relationship to Naomi shows how the two have not come to any real understanding of each other. Plus, Ruth’s feelings about Boaz – which the biblical text never discusses – makes her a more rounded, three-dimensional character.

While Ruth’s position in Yehudim was precarious because she had no husband or child, the same is not true of Felicity, although, unfortunately, most of the men she interacts with treat her like a second-class citizen. The boyfriend with whom she shares an apartment expects her to do all the household chores, even though she also works full time. Although money is tight, he frequently forgets to put food back in the refrigerator, leaving it to spoil on the counter, yet later complains about what is served for dinner. He considers his work as a political activist to be more important than hers and expects her to cater to his colleagues when he brings them to the apartment. Felicity’s father is also more than happy to let her shop and cook for him since her mother died years ago in an accident.

When Felicity is hired by Silver Bullet Security to discover the whereabouts of a former employee who has been accused of stealing an ancient scroll in Iraq, she learns there is far more to the story than she’s been told. Felicity soon realizes that Silver Bullet is desperately trying to keep its own actions in Iraq from being brought to light. Balancing working for the corporation and her personal life – in addition to uncovering what really occurred in Iraq – is not easy. That’s what makes Felicity so impressive,

though: she won’t stop until she knows the truth, even if it’s not the truth Silver Bullet Security wants her to discover.

Felicity’s sections do have several connections to the Ruth story. One is that the missing scroll may be a previously unknown version of the book of Ruth that significantly differs from the biblical book. A second is... well, that would spoil the novel’s surprises and won’t be revealed here. What also ties Felicity and Ruth is their determination to discover the truth about the puzzles they face, even when that puts their lives in danger.

Both women’s stories were equally exciting. Sometimes it was difficult to switch between them because the suspense left me wanting to know what was going to happen next. However, it only took a page or two for me to become equally absorbed in the other character’s life. Readers should note that the contemporary sections are definitely anti-establishment, with violent police actions occurring, even when protestors were peaceful. That is not a surprise considering that the novel was published by PM Press, which, according to its website, is “an independent, radical publisher of critically necessary books for our tumultuous times. Our aim is to deliver bold political ideas and vital stories to all walks of life and arm the dreamers to demand the impossible.” Wishnia’s novel offers vital stories and characters, along with political ideas that challenge our way of thinking. I am grateful that the press sent me a copy of the novel: Somehow, the author managed to create a work that contains intellectually interesting plots and page-turning excitement.

Fallow. Continued from page 5

overindulge on cherries when they are available.) However, the traditional foods for Tu B’Shevat – pomegranate, grapes, dates, figs, olives, wheat and barley – are not among my favorites, well except for pomegranates. However, I still connect that fruit to Rosh Hashanah. I do love olives – especially all the exotic kinds you can now find in olive bars in stores – but I wouldn’t want to make a complete meal of them.

Of course, if you look up Jewish food online, you’ll find recipes for main courses containing these traditional foods. (Hey, if you have a website, you have to find

new things to publish or people won’t visit you anymore.) But even these are limited. However, gathering with friends and family to celebrate holidays is not just about the food – even if it sometimes seems to play a major role. I’m always happy to attend a Tu B’Shevat seder at my synagogue, whether it’s for the religious school or adults. While not a major holiday in the grand scheme of things, do treat yourself to one of the traditional foods for Tu B’Shevat, and take a moment to be thankful and grateful for all that trees offer us.

Evan. Continued from page 2

the current Lovejoy Selection Committee chair, also shared with me information about the award, which ratcheted attention to Gershkovich’s plight at a time when his fate remained uncertain.

A Jewish dimension threads through the Gershkovich story. Vladimir Putin, like Soviet and Russian autocrats before him, finds antisemitism a tool for redirecting discontent with government. Both of Gershkovich’s parents were among the Jewish emigres who fled repression in the Soviet Union and found refuge in America. Beyond family and history, the ethnic connection features the prominence of Jews in the fight for Gershkovich’s release. Through letters, petitions, lobbying, demonstrations and publicity, Jews, starting with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, were central to Gershkovich’s cause. A massive advocacy campaign commenced on Rosh Hashanah 2023, and many Jewish families left an empty seat for Gershkovich at the Passover 2023 seder table.

Growing up in a Russian-speaking home, Gershkovich developed a fascination with the language, history and culture of his ancestral home, albeit certainly no affinity for its government. Already an experienced reporter by his early 30s, Gershkovich found satisfaction in traveling, observing and meeting diverse people on assignment in Russia for *The Wall Street Journal*. From medical students to punk band musicians, his contacts were diverse. With the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Putin’s tolerance for no narrative but his own, foreign journalists increasingly departed and domestic media genuflected before the official line. Gershkovich understood the danger, but chose to remain in Russia to document the realities of wounded soldiers, food shortages and rising discontent. In a collaborative article, Gershkovich pierced Putin’s claims of success: “Shortages of artillery shells are hampering Russia’s grinding advance in eastern Ukraine.” Under Putin, unbiased reporting constitutes an offense against the

state. On March 29, 2023, Gershkovich, despite his legal status as an accredited journalist, became the first American reporter arrested since the fall of the Soviet Union.

A fallacious charge of espionage was lodged against Gershkovich. In addition to demonstrating the cost of dissent from the official state narrative, Putin may have also ordered the arrest to gain a pawn for a future prisoner exchange. Protesting Gershkovich’s wrongful detention, President Joe Biden asserted, “Journalism is not a crime, and Evan went to Russia to do his job as a reporter – risking his safety to shine the light of truth on Russia’s brutal aggression against Ukraine.”

On June 26, 2024, Gershkovich’s secret trial commenced, resulting in a 16-year sentence. Under brutal conditions entailing 23 hours a day in solitary confinement, Gershkovich was incarcerated in Moscow’s notorious Lefortovo Prison. Neither journalist Viktoria Roschchyna nor dissident Alexei Navalny survived Putin’s gulag.

On August 1, 2024, a complex, multinational prisoner exchange involving a Russian hitman secured Gershkovich’s release. Physical changes and the pain evident in his face suggest that Gershkovich’s ordeal is not over.

Throughout American history, principled journalists have faced reprisals, dangers and death.

Intimidating libel lawsuits against media by incoming president Donald Trump are meant to silence critics. The proliferation of unhinged social media and the demise of print newspapers pose unprecedented challenges to journalistic legitimacy, factors not unrelated to the resurgence of antisemitism and demonization of Israel. To preserve the legacy of Lovejoy and Gershkovich, it is well to keep in mind the words of Thomas Jefferson: “[W]ere it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”

Annual Campaign 2025
this year it's different

MAKE YOUR PLEDGE AND PAY NOW!

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

You can make your pledge 3 ways:

- 1) Visit the Federation website at www.jfgeb.org and click on “make a pledge.”
- 2) E-mail Federation Executive Director Shelley Hubal at director@jfgeb.org with “pledge” in the subject line.
- 3) Fill out the form in this ad and mail it to the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

Mail this form to:

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

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____


State/ Zip Code: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone Number: _____

Amount Pledge: _____

this year it's different.

 **Jewish Federation**
of Greater Binghamton

Eye-Catching
Classifieds

YOUR HEATING & PLUMBING SPECIALISTS

BAKER'S PLUMBING & HEATING

We Also Do Natural Gas Conversions & All Plumbing Work
Free Estimates • Fully Insured • Residential & Commercial

We Install, Service & Repair...
Furnaces • Air Conditioners
Water Heaters • Gas Fireplaces

SERVING BROOME & TIoga COUNTIES

754-6376

pbaker927@yahoo.com

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

To advertise, contact
Kathy Brown at
607-724-2360, ext. 244 or
advertising@thereportergroup.org.

