

# THE REPORTER

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BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

## TI to hold Artist in Residence Weekend, March 14-16

Temple Israel will hold an Artist in Residence Weekend featuring musician Zach Mayer on Friday-Sunday, March 14-16. All four programs will be held at Temple Israel, 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal. The entire community is invited to attend. The events are free. For more information or to register, contact Temple Israel at 607-723-7461 or office@templeisraelvestal.org, or visit the temple's website at https://templeisraelvestal.org.



Zach Mayer (Photo by Nomi Willis)

On Friday, March 14, at 4:30 pm, there will be a Purim celebration that will include music, dancing and a *megillah* reading. Those attending are encouraged to wear costumes. A musical *Kabbalat* Shabbat and light meal will follow.

On Saturday, March 15, at 10:15 am, Mayer will lead a musical *tefillah* program in the Temple Israel chapel for children and their families. It will include songs, storytelling and games geared for children of all ages. The morning will culminate in a *hakafah*, where the children will march with their parents to the main service, while singing and dancing alongside the community. A *kiddush* will follow services.

On Saturday, March 15, at 7:30 pm,

Shabbat will conclude with Mayer leading *Havdalah*, which will be followed by a participatory concert event co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton. "The inspirational concert will include Mayer's original melodies, *nigunim*, Jewish songs and Hebrew chants designed to uplift, delight and heal," said organizers of the event. Community musicians wishing to play their instruments in accompaniment with Mayer are encouraged to reach out to Temple Israel for more information on how to obtain sheet music. Light refreshments will be served.

On Sunday, March 16, at 11 am, the weekend will conclude with a workshop exploring the art of harmony and the spiritual power of song. Participants will learn two melodies, a traditional *nigun* and one of Mayer's original compositions, "while discovering which elements are rooted in tradition and which are new." Light refreshments will be served.

"Mayer is a well-known musician who is part of a wave of new Jewish musical artists, composers and facilitators of communal song who intertwine love for traditional Jewish music with a contemporary style,"

said organizers. "He is known for his unique ability to bring people together through the power of *nigunim*, spiritual wordless melodies rooted in the Jewish tradition. Mayer channels his family lineage of the four generations of cantors before him as

he helps communities find their own joyous voices in songs."

The Artist in Residence Weekend is made possible thanks to a gift from The Community Foundation for South Central New York – The David and Virginia Eisenberg Fund.

## BU Hillel announces new director

Hillel at Binghamton announced that Chelsea Rego has been appointed as the organization's executive director. An e-mail from Hillel at Binghamton noted that "Chelsea brings a wealth of experience in leadership, nonprofit management and community building, and we are confident that her dynamic vision will guide us into an exciting future."

Starting as a volunteer EMT, Rego gained hands-on experience in crisis management, before working in education and nonprofit leadership. As an executive director of a Conservative synagogue,



Chelsea Rego (Photo courtesy of Hillel at Binghamton)

she led leadership transitions, strengthened finances through record-breaking fund-raising and sought to build strong community relationships. Now joining Hillel at Binghamton, Rego noted that she is excited to inspire the next generation of Jewish leaders with her strategic vision and community-building expertise.

Marc Lessner and Deborah Powsner, board chairmen at Hillel at Binghamton, said, "We are so excited to welcome Chelsea and her family into our Hillel community, and look forward to the incredible opportunities ahead."

## TC-TI adult ed. program to feature skits

The Adult Education Committee of Temple Concord and Temple Israel will hold a program and brunch on Sunday, March 9, at Temple Concord, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. The brunch will begin at 10 am and be followed by the performance of four skits taken from the collection called "Oy!" by Rich Orloff. The entire community is welcome to attend. There is a suggested donation of between \$5-20 per person. For more information and to RSVP, contact



Krista Guidici (Photo by Stephanie Willett, Beyond The Stage Photography)



Larry Guidici (Photo by Stephanie Willett, Beyond The Stage Photography)



Gary Hansen (Photo by Stefanie Willette, Beyond the Stage Photography)



Ted Major (Photo courtesy of Ted Major)



Deborah Williams (Photo by Gil Williams)

"Deborah Williams has put together a talented cast – with each actor playing several characters," said organizers of the event. "The settings include the Garden of Eden, a laboratory, a courtroom and a passionate couple's living room. We think you'll enjoy not only the laugh-out-loud humor, but the poignancy of these little scenes, performed by our area's skilled actors, including Ted Major, Krista and Larry Guidici, Gary Hansen, and Deborah Williams."

Temple Israel at 607-723-7461 or office@templeisraelvestal.org, or Temple Concord at 607-723-7355 by Thursday, March 6, so enough food can be prepared.

### Spotlight

## Lerman writes thriller about Israel

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Alan S. Lerman is best known as a medical specialist in gastroenterology and hepatology. However, he has long had another interest: writing. This interest began in high school. "When I didn't make the cut for the Erasmus Hall High School basketball team (being 6'3" tall and not being able to dunk probably predicted that outcome), I started writing for the sports section of our high school paper," he said in an e-mail interview.

In 2023, Lerman published a different type of work: his first novel, "Black Mossad" (Newman Springs). The book is a political thriller featuring Daniel Black, a Mossad agent, who becomes involved in a secret mission after an assassination attempt on the president of the United States. The work has been called "an expertly paced,

action-packed adventure that will leave readers in suspense as Agent Black's mission unfolds, and dark political secrets are revealed." This is only the first of many books Lerman hopes to publish: he noted that he has ideas for more than 20 others and is currently 25 percent through his next book, which is tentatively titled "The Cure."

"Black Mossad" is based on the real life story of Operation Solomon, when 14,325 Ethiopian Jews were saved from persecution in their homeland and flown to the safety of Israel over 36 hours from May 24-25, 1991. "In the novel, one of the Ethiopian Jews, who led his village to the safety of the airlift, Daniel Black, was found to have



Alan S. Lerman (Photo courtesy of Alan S. Lerman)

extraordinary physical and intellectual gifts, and is recruited by the Mossad," he said. "He is mentored by an African American, Isaiah Breadworth, who converted to Judaism and made *aliyah* from Brooklyn to Israel, eventually becoming the chief of Mossad."

One of the reasons Lerman wrote the book was to portray Israel in a positive light. "As the proud son of a Holocaust survivor (my father will be 101 years old on February 23, 2025, and still reads *The Wall Street Journal* everyday), I have watched the evolution of nearly universal admiration for Israel in the western world devolve into nearly universal condemnation," he noted. "The transformation has

been startling and frightening based on outright lies about Israel, as well as unmasked and accepted hatred of the Jewish people."

He still remembers the excitement that was felt during the Six-Day War, which took place in 1967 when he was a seventh-grader at Ditmas Junior High School in Brooklyn. "My very reserved and always impeccably dressed Israeli history teacher, Yehuda Steinberg, jumped into the air with joy, double pumping his right arm, as the news media reported Israel's decisive victory over her enemies," Lerman said. "Remember, the state of Israel was only 19 years old at the time, younger than many of the Binghamton University students who may be reading this article."

He saw different reactions during the 1973 Yom Kippur War when he was a

See "Lerman" on page 11

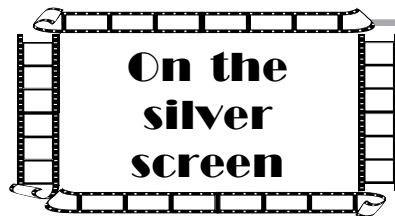
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## Fifth *yahrzeit*: Kid sister, roots and Izzy's final road trip

BILL SIMONS

Ida (Demskey) Sahr was a baseball fan and an active member of the Schenectady Jewish Community Center. On November 20, 2008, I gave a lecture on Jewish baseball slugger Hank Greenberg at the Schenectady "J" and remember some vibrant, older Jewish ladies. Perhaps Ida was one of them. During my research on the Demskys, the current owner of Ida's childhood home permitted me inside the property on 46 Eagle St., Amsterdam, giving me a connection to the family.

To pay my respects to Ida, the last of her generation of Demskys, I attended her April 2, 2024, funeral at Gates of Heaven synagogue in Schenectady. Family eulogists painted a warm and loving picture of Ida. Healthy, a prodigious eater and snow shoveler nearly until the end, Ida died in her own home, at the age of 105. Greeting customers with a smile, Ida's gregarious personality made her an iconic presence at the checkout counter of Loblaws Super Mar-

ket, and she was proud of her rise to the middle class. Ida felt blessed as wife to Hy, mother to Janet and Marilyn, grandmother and great-grandmother.

When Ida and twin Fritzie went to summer camp on scholarship, they were glad that their absence would give their siblings more food at the kitchen table. Although the seven Demsky children – six girls and a boy – experienced poverty, hunger and a tavern-brawling father, Ida had warm memories of her Amsterdam youth, making her adult home in nearby Schenectady. In contrast, her brother Izzy inherited a legacy of anger from his youth that propelled his ambition to leave Amsterdam and find success. When Ida finally got to see a ballgame at Yankee Stadium, the camera, scanning the crowd, put her on the scoreboard, prompting her to exclaim, "My brother is not the only one on the big screen!" In Hollywood, Izzy found stardom in the movies as Kirk Douglas. If Izzy was the ragman's son,

Ida was the ragman's daughter.

On the day that Ida was buried at Beth Israel Cemetery in Rotterdam, the PBS program "Finding Your Roots" broadcast an episode exploring the genealogy of the Demsky family, featuring host Henry Louis Gates Jr. and guest Michael Douglas, son of Izzy and nephew of Ida. Gates revealed to Michael that in 1911 his grandfather Herschel Danielovitch (Harry Demsky), father to Ida and Izzy, fled the Russian town of Chaussy for America to avoid imprisonment after running afoul of Tsarist law.

Izzy Demsky/Kirk Douglas died at age 103 on February 5, 2020. His fifth *yahrzeit* is a time to reflect upon his life.

Michael Douglas said of his father: "One of the things that I find most incredible about dad is the third act of his life." Despite a heart attack, plane crash, stroke and loss of his son Eric, Kirk Douglas remained active and relevant. See "Izzy" on page 8

## Opinion

### One Perspective from Israel

## A fight breaks out in *shul*... – part 1

JEREMY M. STAIMAN

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

When two families both needed to say *Kaddish* on the same day, what happened at *Mincha* took everyone by surprise.

My father taught us that you never tell someone you're going to tell them a joke. It raises people's expectations and takes away the whole surprise. So let me open with a story I heard long ago.

A woman went to her doctor early in her pregnancy. He informed her that she was carrying twins. In addition to the usual advice, he recommended that she take a pill which would guarantee that her children would be well-mannered. "Of course," she replied excitedly. "Who wouldn't want gracious children?"

The doctor gave her a prescription for Polite Pills and instructed her to take one pill a day – and no more than

that – for the duration of her pregnancy. She figured that if one tablet was good, two would be even better (and maybe three, once in a while), so despite her doctor's admonition, she increased her dose.

In due time (pun intended), her expected birth date came...and went. Nine months went by, then 10 and 11. The years passed, and her swollen belly just kept getting bigger and bigger. Many decades later, the gray-haired lady with the inordinately-distended abdomen passed away. The doctors couldn't wait to find out what had occurred, so they brought her body to the autopsy room and opened her up.

Much to their surprise, there were two middle-aged men with salt-and-pepper beards, bowing to one another and debating back and forth: "You first!" "Oh no, I couldn't possibly. *You go first!*" "No, no, no. I insist. After you!"

\*\*\*

We recently celebrated my mother's third *yahrzeit*.

Perhaps "commemorate" would be a more natural word than celebrate, but it truly was a celebration of her life and lessons. It's a rare treat to have all of my siblings and their spouses together, but everyone made sure to be in Israel at the same time for the observance her *yahrzeit*. There were numerous memorable moments along the way.

One of them took place at the cemetery. As we gathered during the afternoon of the *yahrzeit* and congregated around her monument, we noticed that someone had taken the stones, which had been left there by visitors, and arranged them into a heart. It was truly touching, since my mother had put her heart not only into us, but into everything she touched.

One of my siblings (actually a sister-in-law, but my mother never distinguished between her children and their spouses – they were all her children – so I can call her a sibling) revealed the identity of the culprit. Her eldest, who See "*Shul*" on page 8

### In My Own Words

## Two important things to remember

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

This is a contentious time in the United States. While I am not happy with the actions of our new president, I feel it is important to reflect on two things when reading the many executive orders and potential legislation coming from the White House. Some people will find my thoughts controversial, but they in no way discount the actions of the current administration with which I disagree. But many commentators have been writing about those, while others have offered excellent ways for people to deal with the upsetting emotions they currently feel. However, given what happened during the administrations of Presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden, I feel it is important for us to remember these two things.

1) Do not automatically assume that everything the Trump administration does will be objectionable. Yes, I've had difficulty with almost all of the executive orders that have been issued by the White House, but I realize that I need to look at each of them separately and objectively. In addition to allowing me to decide which issues need my immediate focus, I may discover ones with which I do not disagree.

Before you claim that will never happen, please remember what occurred during the Obama administration. When some people were asked if they supported Obamacare, they

said, "No." When asked if they supported the "Affordable Care Act," which was its real name, they said, "Yes." The first reaction came because some people refused to believe that anything that Obama did could be worthwhile. They risked losing something important because they could not believe the president had anything to offer them.

The same was true of many actions done by Biden. For example, some people objected to his attempts to reduce student loans by saying that financial forgiveness should have focused on reducing medical debt. One does not preclude the other, especially if we had national healthcare like almost every other first world nation. That meant that once again two groups in need were being pitted against each other, rather than working together to help everyone.

2) Make certain that any quotes you post on Facebook or other social media sites are correct. "It sounds like something he would say" is not good enough. Newspapers fact check Trump and often find that something he said is inaccurate or simply false. We can't call him or his administration on those inaccuracies if we are not going to do the same for our statements.

Snopes, [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com), is an excellent resource for those looking to fact check a quote or article. Sometimes

the answer is that a statement is simply true or false. But where Snopes does its best work is when what occurred is open to debate. It's those nuances to which we need to pay attention, particularly because the current administration tends to paint everything with a large brush, for example, refusing to make distinctions between different members of a group. You can also sign up for its newsletter, which offers information about controversial events currently occurring. To be truly effective, we have to know the real facts and be willing to admit when something is more complex than we first thought.

I know this is not what many people want to hear. Please remember, I am not suggesting that there isn't a great deal of work to be done to support what I see as the true ideals of our country and I'm sure I'll be writing about that in future issues of the paper. (I already have a folder with potential oped topics.) I also know that I am asking us to be better than those who turn and twist the truth or are willing to make up stories in order to support their ideas. But if we want to help our country, we must do it the right way: by being willing to admit when someone else has a good idea, even if we don't like them, and to hold our speech to the highest ethical standards possible.



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# Beth David luncheon speakers for Feb. and March

## Feb. 15: talk about Jewish artists in Roberson collection

## March 8: Prof. Lior Libman

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 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 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 art-



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

ists 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!"

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.



Lior Libman (Photo courtesy of Lior Libman)

Beth David Synagogue's next Shabbat Luncheon will be held on Saturday, March 8. Binghamton University's Judaic Studies Department faculty member Lior Libman will speak about "The Kibbutz Passover Haggadah." 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.

"We will be ushering in Pesach in April," organizers say, "and Professor Libman's research is both timely and fascinating!"

Investigating Passover haggadahs from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the 1960s, Libman found that approximately a fifth of those printed were those of *kibbutzim* and their affiliated youth movements. What were the distinctive features of the *kibbutz* haggadah? How was the story of the Exodus and salvation imagined and interpreted by Socialist-Zionist settlers? What role did Hebrew literature and contemporary events play in modifying the traditional Jewish text? "I look forward to exploring these

See "Libman" on page 5

## Rockwell Museum exhibit features Minna Citron's works

The Rockwell Museum, 111 Cedar St., Corning (www.rockwellmuseum.org), is holding the exhibit "Minna Citron: Color and Shape," featuring works by the Jewish artist,

through Monday, March 24. The exhibit explores the use of color and shape in the painter and printmaker's abstract work. "A core group of 16 prints, donated to the museum by Christiane H. Citron, celebrate the artist's embrace of chance and improvisation to uncover deeper psychological truths in her imagery," said organizers of the exhibit.

For biographical information about Citron (1896-1991), see her entry in "The Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women," which is located in the Jewish Women's Archive at <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/citron-minna>.

### OF NOTE

## Sussman

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman, Ph.D., former spiritual leader of Temple Concord, has published the third and last book in his "Portrait" series: "Portrait of a Rabbi-Historian: How Did We Get Here?" (Xlibris Us). In his latest collection of articles, Sussman explores the history and thought of American Reform Judaism. It offers his views on American Jewish history before 1865, Jewish history from 1865 to the present, and community and regional studies. The previous books in the series are "Portrait of an American Rabbi: In His Own Words" and "Portrait of a Reform Rabbi: Continuity and Change."

## 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:

- ◆ February 27
- ◆ March 14
- ◆ March 27
- ◆ April 9
- ◆ April 24

To RSVP and for more information, visit [www.JewishBU.com/Tea](http://www.JewishBU.com/Tea) or call 797-0015.

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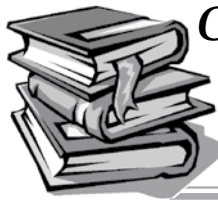
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Off the Shelf

# A Southern Jew during the Civil War

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Did Jews own slaves in the antebellum American South? Did these same Jews support the Confederate cause? While it may be distressing to contemporary American Jews to learn that their co-religionists supported slavery and the Confederacy, Jews were found on both sides of the slavery debate and the Civil War. In fact, for some Jews, there was no question that God supported the Confederacy's cause. Examples of this belief can be found in "The Civil War Diary of Emma Mordecai" edited and with an introduction by Dianne Ashton with Melissa R. Klapper (New York University Press). While the majority of the work features Mordecai's diary, it's the 80-plus page introduction – originally written by Ashton, but revised by Klapper after Ashton's death – that is the most interesting portion of her book.

During the time the diary was written, Mordecai was living with her sister-in-law Rosina in a farmhouse near Richmond, VA. When the family home in Richmond proper was closed, Mordecai had little choice but to find a relative to give her lodging. At age 51 and never married, it would have been considered improper for her to live on her own. Although Mordecai remained connected to Judaism, including acknowledging Shabbat and attending synagogue services when she was in Richmond, her sister-in-law was a practicing Christian. In fact, many members of Mordecai's family either married a Christian or converted to Christianity. Writing about her religious practice in her diary was one way she expressed her Judaism in a Christian household that might not welcome the outright practice of her faith.

While the Jewish population in the South was extremely small and antisemitism did exist, life for Jews was much easier there than it had been in Europe. That was because Jews were considered white: the authors note, "Scholars of the tiny Jewish population of the antebellum South have

shown that although Jews like the Mordecais generally were seen as white from the start, they made sure to cement their racial privilege by absorbing – and performing – the racism on which much of Southern culture was based. Whether or not they embraced slavery in an instrumental fashion, in order to solidify their whiteness, at least some of them became, like Emma, true believers in white supremacy." The most cringe-reading parts of the diary show this everyday racism, although, on the whole, Mordecai ignored the presence of those whose hard work made her life of relative ease possible.

The authors trace Mordecai's family tree, positing that her grandfather arrived in the United States in the late 1700s. This was unusual: in 1864, the majority of Jews living in the U.S. had been born in Europe. The fact that the family had been in the country since before the American Revolution may have made them feel truly American and truly white. With the exception of one relative, all the Mordecais supported succession and truly believed in the Southern cause. Mordecai believed that God had sanctioned the social order of the Confederacy and that it went against God's wishes for the slaves (whom she normally refers to as servants) to be free. The authors note that "Emma believed not only that the system of slavery suited the inferior abilities of Black people, but also that it was actually beneficial because owners took care of their slaves when they were babies, ill, infirm, old, or otherwise unable to work." Yet, she was willing to sell disobedient slaves without thinking about the effect that would have on them and their family and friends.

The authors note that Mordecai was not alone in keeping a diary. Diaries written by Protestant women were common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even though public school systems were not often found in the South, most women – at least, well-to-do, white women – were taught to read and write.

However, women were not the only ones recording their thoughts about the Civil War. The authors write that the war "proved to be a diary-making machine. A basic search of the Library of Congress's online catalog turns up thousands of such diaries, written by both men and women in both the North and the South. Generals and ordinary soldiers published memoirs, military units produced collective reminiscences, and women wrote personal reflections and accounts of their experiences. Dozens of Civil War-era Southern women's diaries have been published to date, and many more lie unpublished in historical societies, libraries, and private collections. An untold number have been lost to the passage of time."

Most of the diary entries are not particularly exciting: Mordecai wrote about daily life, including what they ate, who came to visit and whether members of the household were able to travel into Richmond. The entries that stand out were those related to the war and the fighting that periodically occurred near them. Life at the farm was relatively safe, though, and, except for food shortages and some nearby fighting, the war didn't directly affect them on a regular basis. Living on the farm also meant that they didn't go hungry, even if they were lacking some staples and luxuries. The biggest worry was for the safety of Rosina's sons, who were fighting for the Confederate army, and that of other relatives who were also serving.

"The Civil War Diary of Emma Mordecai" offers a lesser known view of Jewish American life. Jewish Civil War buffs will definitely be interested in this personal look at the war. Those interested in American Jewish women's history will also appreciate reading what they may see as a not-so-flattering portrait of the past. However, Mordecai was a product of her times, and reading the introductory essay and her diary shines a light on a part of American Jewish history that is often not discussed.



Off the Shelf

# A pragmatic approach to Jewish life

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

There are different approaches to discussing rabbinic law and how those laws affect Jewish practice. An objective scholarly look at their development can be found in Elana Stein Hain's "Circumventing the Law: Rabbinic Perspectives on Loopholes and Legal Integrity." (To read *The Reporter's* review of Hain's book, visit [www.thereporter.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-legal-fictions-and-loopholes](http://www.thereporter.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-legal-fictions-and-loopholes).) A different approach can be found in "Yochanan's Gamble: Judaism's Pragmatic Approach to life" by Rabbi Marc Katz (The Jewish Publication Society), which offers a religious perspective on the subject, one that seeks to influence readers' Jewish practice. Katz writes that his focus is on the way "the Rabbis came to view moral decision making as an imperfect dance. Ethical decisions were to be tempered by practical constraints. Laws would not only embody the Rabbinic understanding of God's truth, but at times yield to the people's needs and thereby encourage the masses to follow it." He hopes readers will not only appreciate what the rabbis were able to do, but follow that path in their own lives.

Katz begins with the story of Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakai, who escaped the Roman siege of Jerusalem and told Vespasian, the Roman commander, that he would become emperor of Rome. When that prediction came true, Vespasian offered Yochanan the opportunity to request a favor. Rather than ask the commander not to attack Jerusalem

(something Yochanan knew wouldn't be granted), he asked that the small town of Yavneh be spared and two other rabbis – one of whom was part of a rival rabbinic group – be allowed to live. While Katz notes the story might not be historically accurate, he sees it as offering an important message for future generations: the rabbinic project began by showing how communities must compromise in order to survive and thrive.

According to Katz, the ancient rabbis were more concerned with practical matters than they were with an abstract search for truth. While rabbinic texts state that God sees both sides of many disputes, they also make it clear that only God can do this. For society to function, lawmakers must pick a side. This includes when holidays will be celebrated, the contents of communal prayer, the rules of *kashrut* (the dietary laws), the laws of family purity and much more. But the genius of the rabbis is in realizing that people must be able to follow their decisions – that the laws' financial and practical obligations don't create too great a burden on the community. They recognized that if a particular law is too difficult to follow, then members of the community may feel that there is no point in keeping other laws.

Different chapters of "Yochanan's Gamble" offer the methods the rabbis used to decide laws from a pragmatic point of view. They include "Upholding Compromise," "Not Leading Too Far Out in Front," "Abiding by the Wisdom

of the Masses," "Keeping Peace with the Neighbors," "Avoiding Infighting" and "Sinning for the Greater Good." Katz also notes how the rabbis tried to prevent the misuse of pragmatism. It's impossible in a short review to discuss all his interesting ideas, but a few include:

- ◆ The use of legal fictions and loopholes if they are beneficial to the community. These include selling *hamatz* (leavened products) to a non-Jew before Passover, using an *eruv* (a wire or string around a city) so people to carry or push baby carriages on Shabbat and allowing a woman to testify about the death of her husband so she can remarry.
- ◆ Avoiding burdening people, both in time and money. That means not lengthening the amount of time spent in public prayer, limiting communal expenses so as not to saddle people with the cost of expensive, but unnecessary, items and allowing for less than perfect practice in order for people to fulfil a *mitzvah* (commandment).
- ◆ Noting the times that sinning can be done for "The Sake of God." This section includes several biblical stories: Lot's daughters having sex with their father because they believe they are the only humans remaining in the world; Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, sleeping with her father-in-law after he refuses to allow her to marry his third son as required by Jewish law; and Yael, who breaks the laws of hospitality to a guest by (possibly sleeping with and then) killing Sisera, a Canaanite general.

Katz notes that pragmatism "allows us to get things done, to sacrifice the perfect so that the good may blossom. It is pursuing the best *possible* path you can foresee even as you wish you could walk the best *imagined* one." This makes "Yochanan's Gamble" interesting reading since it offers an approach to Jewish practice of which people may not be aware. The prose is easy to read and the explanations well done so that even those unfamiliar with rabbinic writings will be able to follow their reasoning. The book is perfect for classes or discussion groups, in addition to being excellent reading for synagogue leadership.

## Quick Reference Guide to Planned Giving

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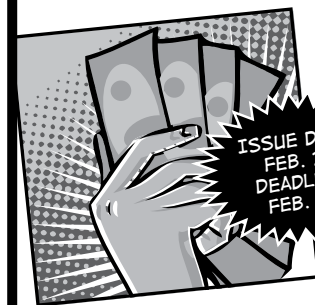
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# TC Sisterhood held annual book review



At left and below: The Temple Concord Sisterhood held its annual book review with Rabbi Rachel Esserman (at left and standing below) on January 26. After a brunch, Esserman discussed three books with Jewish themes. (Photos by Rachel Coker)



# Federation sponsored hockey game



At right, l-r: Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation of Broome County, and Eileen Miller attended a Binghamton Black Bears hockey game on January 18. The event was sponsored by the Federation. Twenty-two people attended the event.

# Film Fest held discussion of "Golden Voices"



The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest held a discussion of "Golden Voices" on January 26. Andy Horowitz led the discussion and 27 people attended.

## Wedding and engagement photos wanted

The Reporter is looking for photos of couples who became engaged or married in 2024 for the annual Wedding, Prom and Party Guide issue (coming March 14).

Please e-mail these photos with the names of all those in the photo (including maiden names), date of wedding and photographer. Please do so by Tuesday, March 4. Photos can be e-mailed, in TIF or JPG format, to TReporter@aol.com; please note in the subject line that a wedding/engagement photo for The Reporter is attached and include the necessary information in the message.



## Libman. . . . . Continued from page 3

questions with Beth David attendees," Libman says, "as we examine together several examples from different periods."

Libman is associate professor of Israel studies and the director of the Center for Israel Studies at Binghamton University's Judaic Studies Department, which she joined in 2016. She earned her undergraduate and advanced degrees at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. A literary scholar and cultural historian specializing in Modern Hebrew, and Israeli literatures and cultural studies, Libman is a member of the Executive Committee of the European

Association of Israel Studies, and co-directs the "Literature and Culture Section" of its annual conferences.

At Binghamton University, she teaches courses that include an "Introduction to Israeli Literature," "The Israeli Palestinian Conflict in Literature" and "The Kibbutz in Israeli Culture." Her research interests and publications include articles on the imagery and political imagination of the kibbutz. Her book, "State of Shock: The Kibbutz in Israel from Avant-Garde to Fetish, 1948-1955," was published in November by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

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# Don't let Trump's theatrics distract from the true horror of his plans for Gaza

By Emily Tamkin

This story originally appeared in the Forward. To get the Forward's free e-mail newsletters delivered to your inbox, visit [forward.com/newsletter-signup](http://forward.com/newsletter-signup).

President Donald Trump's new proposal for Gaza – namely, to have the United States take it over and develop it into a “riviera of the Middle East,” an idea he announced during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to the White House this week – is outlandish and ill-conceived.

It is right and appropriate to be gobsmailed by the ridiculous proposal. But I hope that, when we strip away the attention-drawing theatrics of this announcement, we remember that the cruelest and most ridiculous part of it is an idea Trump floated last month to far less fanfare: forced displacement of Gaza's entire Palestinian population.

It is not difficult to see why Trump's February 4 comments generated so much more interest and pushback than his previous statements on Gaza. There was much about them that was eye-popping: the blithe suggestion of a new era of U.S. imperialism; the echoes of past callous comments by Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, about the potential for Gaza waterfront property; the president's record as a real estate developer with dubious business practices; the immediate questions of practicality, like how exactly the U.S. would run Gaza, particularly given that the Trump administration just went to war with USAID.

Even Trump officials have tried to walk back elements of the plan, and Trump himself stressed that he doesn't mean there would be U.S. boots on the ground. But he also doubled down on his proposal on his social media network, Truth, on February 6.

“The Gaza Strip would be turned over to the United States by Israel at the conclusion of fighting,” he wrote. “The Palestinians, people like Chuck Schumer, would have already been resettled in far safer and more beautiful communities, with new and modern homes, in the region. They would actually have a chance to be happy, safe, and free.”

But the slew of outrage – and less-prominent applause for Trump's plan, including from the rightwing Zionist Organization of America and various Israeli leaders along the political spectrum – risks keeping us from understanding just how brutal and inhuman the core of his plan, forced displacement, is.

Trump has, since his first week in office, spoken repeatedly about the idea that the nearly two million people in Gaza should simply be moved somewhere else (no matter whether they would like to or not).

“You're talking about a million and a half people, and we just clean out that whole thing,” the president said in late January. “Almost everything's demolished, and people are dying there, so I'd rather get involved with some of the Arab nations and build housing in a different location where I think they could maybe live in peace for a change.”

This idea did not garner the same flurry of headlines, coverage, or outraged statements. It wasn't announced dramatically, with Israel's leader standing next to Trump and contentedly smirking. But the core element is the same: Trump has decided that displacement of Palestinians from Gaza – which my fellow Forward columnist Dan Perry

noted could constitute ethnic cleansing – is the path forward. A statement by several Arab nations' leaders said such plans “threaten the region's stability, risk expanding the conflict, and undermine prospects for peace and coexistence among its peoples.”

And even as some Trump officials say that the plan only really entails temporary displacement – a dubious claim, given that there is hardly an abundance of historical precedent for whole populations being moved out of and then back into an area – others have alarmingly suggested they don't really understand why Palestinians need to be in Gaza at all.

“Peace in the region means a better life for the Palestinians. A better life is not necessarily tied to the physical space that you are in today,” Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, said after the announcement. “A better life is about better opportunity, better financial conditions, better aspirations for you and your family. That doesn't occur because you get to pitch a tent in the Gaza Strip and you're surrounded by 30,000 munitions that could go off at any moment.”

With respect to Witkoff, he is talking about a piece of land as contested as any in the world. People have fought and died for it – and been killed for it – for almost eight decades. Surely this is the last part of the world in which a people's ties to a land needs to be explained: As the creation of Israel itself attests, the drive to live in a place you consider to be your homeland – even if, as for Palestinians in Gaza, it's only a piece of that homeland – is an exceptionally powerful one.

In fairness, sort of, to team Trump, it's not as though his is the first plan for Palestinians that doesn't take into account practicalities, generally, or how Palestinians might feel about them, specifically. For example, former President Joe Biden's administration insisted that Israel's war in Gaza would somehow lead to the establishment of a two state solution, even as Netanyahu publicly said he would never allow a Palestinian state.

The United States built and then dismantled a \$230 million pier to get aid into Gaza at least in part because Israeli leadership was frustrating Biden in limiting humanitarian aid.

Even the Abraham Accords of the first Trump administration advanced the idea that peace in the region would come from normalizing relations between Israel and its neighbors – not from finding a long-term solution to the dispossession and statelessness of Palestinians.

Still, since Trump is the president now, it is essential that rather than rehash the past, we focus on the plans he is currently pushing – not the flourishes with which he presents them. He wants to forcibly displace a population that has already survived extreme violence and deprivation. A drama doesn't need theatrics to be a tragedy.

Emily Tamkin is a global affairs journalist. She is the author of “The Influence of Soros and Bad Jews: A History of American Jewish Politics and Identities.”

The views and opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Forward. Discover more perspectives in Opinion. To contact Opinion authors, email [opinion@forward.com](mailto:opinion@forward.com).

# Short-term visions, long-term realities for Gaza

By Paul Rotenberg

(JNS) – It is easy to understand President Donald Trump's proposal regarding Gaza. For years, all of the ideas from authoritative sources that offer peace with the Palestinians there have included removing the terror civilization, but none have hit the mainstream media, which makes this appear to be a total rethinking of a solution to the perpetual violence emanating from the Strip. This plan – that the United States adopt an active role in the form of control – does separate Trump from the rest.

It took the political and the media worlds by storm, and produced acres of print for and against the idea. By and large, the perspective taken has been immediate and short-term, as the idea has itself been. However, it is a long-term proposal. Gaza will not be rebuilt in two years – it will take 10 or 20 – and an American presence will be equally long, so it must be considered in that context.

Trump's proposal is a no-brainer. He loves game-changing strategies. For all the right reasons, they destroy the restrictive encumbrances of repeatedly recycled failed efforts. This plan also gives the United States a coveted

goldmine in international power brokerage in the form of a port on the Mediterranean Sea. The Russians have tried for decades to secure such a prize – first in their losing efforts in Egypt before 1967 and then with similar tactics in Syria. America lost its purchase in Haifa when Israel signed port management over to China. The Gaza resettlement plan, coupled with a Gaza port, is part of a serious global strategy.

It is also highly inappropriate.

There is nothing in Israel's history that would preclude Israel from overseeing the future of Gaza. In fact, everything Israel has ever done there indicates that Jerusalem best understands the natural, economic and social potential and realities of Gaza better than anyone. Israel has a history and the potential to make Gaza blossom as it never has under any other sovereignty. The Jewish state has also paid for Gaza, yet again, in absolute terms with the lives of Israeli soldiers and civilians, making it perfectly reasonable for it to retain control and sovereignty there. After Israel has worked for 16 months to eliminate the scourge that has

See “Visions” on page 7

# Thoughts on the plan for Gaza

## Take Trump's Gaza-a-Lago plan seriously, not literally

By Jodi Rudoren

This story originally appeared in the Forward. To get the Forward's free e-mail newsletters delivered to your inbox, visit [forward.com/newsletter-signup](http://forward.com/newsletter-signup).

There are a million reasons that we should not be taking President Donald Trump literally when he talks about the United States taking over the Gaza Strip and turning it into the “Riviera of the Middle East.” Two million, actually – for each of the Gaza residents whose forced displacement would be a war crime under international law. It's seems unlikely that Trump has actually spoken to a single Palestinian about what home means to them or what they hope for their future.

Billions of reasons, really, not to take literally a plan that would cost billions of dollars from a man hellbent on eviscerating U.S. foreign aid. Thousands more for the thousands of American troops the isolationist MAGA movement would never approve of sending to Gaza.

And, perhaps most importantly, 79 reasons we desperately need Hamas not to take the president literally, one for each of the 79 hostages still in Gaza – some corpses; many living, breathing, suffering Israeli human beings.

None of which means we can dismiss the hare-brained scheme. As we all should have learned years ago, we must take Trump seriously, not literally; that's what his supporters generally do. So I've spent the past few days wrestling with what taking Gaza-a-Lago seriously looks like for the Middle East and for American Jews.

It was a few months before the 2016 election that a Republican strategist named Brad Todd and a campaign-trail reporter named Salena Zito coined the concept that the fundamental disconnect between media elites and Trump voters was that reporters took him literally but not seriously and the voters did the inverse.

The pair, co-authors of the 2018 book “The Great Revolt: Inside the Populist Coalition Reshaping America's Politics,” argue that frenzied fact-checking Trump's literal words often make us miss the serious sentiments or big ideas behind them.

The billionaire Trump-endorser Peter Thiel invoked the same idea in a speech at the National Press Club, saying that when voters hear Trump talk about banning travel from Muslim-majority countries or making Mexico pay to build a wall along its border with the U.S., “What they hear is we're going to have a saner, more sensible immigration policy.” The Columbia Journalism Review published a 2020 piece exploring how the seriously vs. literally framework played out over Trump's first term, and smart people have continued to apply it to Trump 2.0 proposals to buy Greenland, take over the Panama Canal, make Canada the 51st state and, yes, gentrify Gaza.

Taking Trump's impossible Gaza dream seriously not literally does not mean seeing it as a well-planned strategic gambit that reflects deep diplomatic thinking; it's clear there was virtually no substantive discussion of the wild idea before the president proffered it at a White House news conference with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Taking it seriously, not literally, means ignoring the specifics of what he said in hopes of gleaning insights into how he thinks.

Three serious takeaways from Trump's plan:

◆ The first and clearest signal is about paradigm shift. As others have said, Trump is not just thinking outside the box, but throwing out the box, blowing it up. This could, actually, be good for all involved.

Trump is telling us that he looks at the decades of stalemate and cyclical violence, at the Republican and Democratic administrations who have promoted basically the same policies, at the generations of Middle East experts who broadly agree on parameters for peace but make no progress toward it – and he calls foul. He's saying he doesn't want to hear the same old story of what won't work, he wants to actually write a new chapter. Taking him seriously, then, means he wants to hear other unboxed ideas that would have been rejected outright by any previous leader. And when people pitch them, we should not take them too literally, either.

◆ The second “serious” thing I see is the normalization of fringe ideas and influencers. The two main people embracing the “Riviera” literally are Bezalel Smotrich, Israel's far-right finance minister, and Mort Klein, the longtime leader of the Zionist Organization of America, who has for years been a thorn in the side of the American Jewish establishment and has been sued for racism, sexual harassment and an “ego-driven jihad” by his own staff and board members. This one is scary; a Middle East shaped by extremists like Klein and Smotrich is not going to be peaceful.

◆ My third “taking it seriously” takeaway is that Trump – and, probably, most of his supporters – has zero under-

standing of the yearnings, cultural histories, narratives, identities, norms or needs of actual Palestinians or, for that matter, Jewish Israelis. He seems to have neither sacred cows nor a north star for the Middle East, neither clear boundaries nor a fixed goal.

Sure, this president, like many before him, would like to win the Nobel Peace Prize. He dreams of doing the mother of all deals with the Saudis, and would likely sacrifice any number of things along the way. Does Trump actually care deeply about Israel being a Jewish homeland? About it remaining a democracy? About Palestinian national aspirations?

Nope, nope and nope. He cares about winning, and he's always happy to change the rules of the game.

To help me parse the serious-not-literal meaning of the Gaza plan, I called up two true experts who sit in different places on the political spectrum and always have sharp insights: Daniel Shapiro, who served as U.S. ambassador to Israel during the Obama administration, and Michael Oren, who was his counterpart, Israel's ambassador to Washington, from 2009 to 2013.

Both first went to the tactical. Oren said Trump was “creating a ladder” for various hostile parties “to climb down.”

“He can say to the Saudis, ‘OK, I won't invade the Gaza Strip but you've got to give up your demand for Palestinian statehood,’” explained Oren, who went on to serve as a minister in Netanyahu's government and hosted Trump during his 2017 visit to the region. “He can say to Hamas, ‘OK, I won't relocate all of Gaza's people but you've got to give up control of the territory.’”

Shapiro, who until Trump's inauguration was deputy assistant defense secretary for the Middle East, used the same metaphor for a different constituency. “At the simplest and most utilitarian and shortest-term level, it might create a ladder for Netanyahu and his coalition to go to Phase Two of the agreement,” Shapiro said, referring to the precarious Israel-Hamas ceasefire and hostage-release deal. “Tell Smotrich, ‘You can't say no to Trump because he's giving us this golden opportunity.’ Maybe he bought them some space by putting out this cockamamie proposal.”

Smart points all, but I pushed them to go deeper on “seriously.” Again, they said much the same thing, if in different ways: That Trump's blow-up-the-box approach is actually on point, because the box – the two-state solution – has proven empty.

“It is correct that a lot of the old ideas have failed and don't seem to be going anywhere, and that repeating ideas that have failed and aren't going anywhere doesn't make sense,” Shapiro told me.

“If you're trying to be disruptive and generate new ideas, and get some of the Arabs to come forward with ideas,” he added, maybe throwing out something outlandish can help. “Just rip the cover off and look at the whole thing differently than they have before.”

And here's Oren: “The nostrums that these last 30 years – two-state solution, we have to nurse Palestinian statehood – is not what he's about. They haven't worked; don't get me started, they haven't worked.”

“I think what we can say is that he's serious about changing the discourse,” Oren added. “He has changed the discourse.”

The problem with the seriously not literally framework, both of these veteran diplomats warned, is that it's not just about how journalists or members of the American public regard Trump's statements. It's about how Hamas, for example, takes them.

The risk of putting out “this cockamamie proposal,” Shapiro said, is that it makes Hamas “pull out” of the ceasefire deal – or, worse yet, “puts targets on the backs” of American private security officers currently on the ground in Gaza helping screen Palestinians for weapons as they return to their destroyed homes.

For Oren, “the problem with the Trump plan is not getting America involved in rebuilding Gaza” or even the prospect of relocating the Palestinians.

“The big problem is Hamas – Hamas still has the guns and the hostages,” Oren said, adding that hostage families “were very, very upset” by Trump's surprise announcement. “What are you going to do about the guns when they're holding the hostages?”

He's asking literally – and seriously.

Jodi Rudoren has been editor-in-chief of the Forward since 2019. She previously spent 21 years at The New York Times, including a stint as Jerusalem bureau chief. Twitter: @rudoren. Email: [rudoren@forward.com](mailto:rudoren@forward.com).

The views and opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Forward. Discover more perspectives in Opinion. To contact Opinion authors, email [opinion@forward.com](mailto:opinion@forward.com).

# Trump is ready to upend the status quo in Gaza

By Farley Weiss

(JNS) – U.S. President Donald Trump's groundbreaking idea about Gaza shows concern about the well-being of both the Palestinian Arabs and Israel. The rules of war say that those wanting to flee a war zone for their safety should be given refuge. In the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, for instance, some seven million Ukrainians fled the war zone and found refuge in other countries.

There is a real wish among Palestinian Arabs to leave Gaza; some polls before the Hamas-led terrorist attacks on October 7, 2023, found that as many as 40 percent wanted to leave – and that was before the war. Arab countries, however, with the support of U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres (and against international law), have refused to offer refuge to Gazans. Instead of finding safe harbor in a neighboring country, they have been used as human shields by Hamas, making it difficult for Israel to take the actions necessary to defeat the terror group.

Once the war ends – with the hostages back home, Hamas defeated and Israel victorious – it is estimated that it will take 10 years or more to make the coastal enclave habitable once again. Where, then, should the Palestinian Arabs live? Trump rightly said that Arab states need to absorb them. Those who oppose his position show a disregard for the welfare of the very people they so desperately claim they want to help.

Trump believes that the United States should financially benefit by putting money into Gaza and rebuilding it. To ensure that the terrorists do not return and see a return on their investment in the Strip, the United States must maintain control even as it becomes a cosmopolitan city with a diverse population. For an idea of what could be, look at Monaco, which is even smaller than Gaza and remains highly desirable.

Interestingly, Trump's critics say that if the Gazans leave voluntarily, they must be allowed to return, given that many people have left countries they have lived in for decades without any right of return. Ironically, some of the countries that oppose Trump's plan are the same ones that

# Visions. . . . . Continued from page 6

been Gaza – at its own “expense” – it is a bully move for the United States to step in and say, “We'll take that now.” That is the short term.

In the long term, it is also potentially explosive for at least two reasons.

First, friends across the ocean are one thing, but friends on the same small piece of property are another. It may work well in the cleanup, but tensions change significantly when decisions need to be made as to what will be built there and who will be planning and building it, along with who will be living and working there. It's not a good idea to put an American elephant beside the Israeli menagerie even, or especially, if it is led by the Lion of Judah.

Secondly, the entire situation becomes more fraught and even intolerable when the elephant changes its ideas or becomes the donkey of a Barack Obama fourth term in a future U.S. election. In the past 16 years, 12 have been Obama administrations that have shown that American elections or electors can be very fickle, and so the more distance Israel can maintain from the United States the better. Israel cannot afford to give away the long term with a hateful American administration in Gaza. As an easy path in the very short term, however, the idea remains on the table.

At the same time, it would be just as short-sighted not to recognize the advantages of an American presence in Gaza. The possibility is that Israel's greatest threat coming out of the present war against Iran could be Egypt, which has managed a cold peace brilliantly, if hostilities with Israel are the plan. Their troops have trained simulated attacks on Israel, constructed multiple tunnels big enough to drive tanks through under the Suez Canal, a highway road network across the Sinai to Israel with a major fuel depot along the way – all in the demilitarized Sinai that has become thoroughly militarized under the guise of stopping illegal drug and migration activities in Gaza. And that continues unabated, even as Egypt has profited handsomely by supplying Hamas in Gaza with massive quantities of arms to fight Israel through a second extensive network of tunnels under the blockaded Philadelphi corridor. Some peace partner.

Surely, Israel could benefit greatly from having America with boots on the ground in Gaza, smiling southward. But not as a sovereign power.

Leadership is challenging, as there are many big and small decisions to be made every day. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is faced with that very publicly.

There are people suggesting that the proposal to make Gaza American is so radical that it should be dismissed out

kicked out their Jewish citizens after hundreds of years – seizing their homes, property, money, goods – with no hope of ever returning and no compensation.

It may be no surprise that Trump supports Israel and its leader, given that he and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have faced similar experiences in the last few years, strengthening an already strong bond. Both men have faced political prosecutions on ridiculous charges; those against Trump have largely been dropped while Netanyahu's trial continues to drag on, and the International Criminal Court in The Hague has issued a warrant for his arrest.

Trump and Netanyahu have triumphed against enormous adversity. For Trump, it was a battle for voters to win the U.S. election and presidency. For Netanyahu, it has been the battle against Hamas, the obliteration of Hezbollah, the pulverization of the Syrian military and the crushing of Iran's air defenses. Netanyahu and Trump respect each other's tenacity, so it was fitting that the Israeli prime minister was the first foreign leader to visit him at the White House.

Those who oppose Trump's plan have failed to present an alternative that would provide the Palestinian Arabs with a place to live while Gaza remains uninhabitable. They have also not provided sound reasons for why the United States should not help rebuild Gaza and ensure that it will not once again become a hotbed of terrorism.

Trump understands that Israel is America's best ally, and that his actions and policies will strengthen that alliance, greatly benefiting both countries. He has also brought in a fresh new approach to the region – one that can bring peace to Israel's southern border and provide better lives for Palestinian Arabs.

Farley Weiss is chairman of the Israel Heritage Foundation and former president of the National Council of Young Israel.

The opinions and facts presented in this article are those of the author, and neither JNS nor its partners assume any responsibility for them.

This “Thoughts on the plan for Gaza” section is sponsored by an anonymous sponsor.

Want to stay in the know? Send your e-mail address to [treporter@aol.com](mailto:treporter@aol.com) (with “e-mail blast” in the subject line) to stay up-to-date on the latest news between The Reporter's bimonthly issues! We promise not to share it with anyone and we won't send you junk, just good stuff!



On the Jewish food scene

Sauerkraut and coleslaw

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Am I the only one who didn't know that cabbage is having a "moment"?

Alas, two of my favorite cabbage dishes are ones I'm not supposed to eat for health reasons.

to eat the whole container's worth. I've put other dressings on cabbage, some of which I like, but it's not the same as old-fashioned coleslaw.

As for sauerkraut, when I was growing up, we always had cans of sauerkraut in the cupboard.

I remember two other recipes that contained sauerkraut that frequented our table.

remember. We never ate it the first day because it was one of those foods that improve the longer they sit.

Another favorite cabbage recipe was one we learned from the late Anne Pelter.

The cabbage cooked until it was translucent and melt-in-your-mouth delicious.

I don't know if this means my family was ahead of or behind the curve.

Jewish online resources

By Reporter staff

A variety of Jewish groups are offering educational and recreational online resources.

The Qesher Book Club will hold a virtual discussion of "Shoham's Bangle," a picture book by Sarah Sassoon.

The Jewish Book Council will hold the virtual program "Unpacking the Book: You Don't Own Me: Queer Discovery Within the Jewish Community"

The Jewish Grandparents Network will hold several virtual events: "The Art of Becoming: Finding Creativity, Meaning, and Identity as Grandparents"

Melton will hold the virtual lecture "Mystery and History: Washington's Letter to the Jews"

ALEPH will hold the virtual class "Another Way to Be: Cultivating Self-Compassion" led by Alison Cohen

The Jewish Grandparents Network will hold several virtual events: "The Art of Becoming: Finding Creativity, Meaning, and Identity as Grandparents"

Izzy.....Continued from page 2

during his extended bonus round. After the age of 70, he wrote several books, acted, guided philanthropic projects, studied Torah, celebrated a second bar mitzvah and remained at the center of a multi-generational family.

He was also a realist. Rather than allow the end of his leading man days on the big screen to keep him from his passion for acting, Douglas turned to television.

The 1994 television film "Take Me Home Again," later distributed as "The Lies Boys Tell," is a dramedy. It reflects Douglas' own feelings about aging, mortality and a life well lived.

Ed sends for his prodigal son, the rebellious Larry (Craig T. Nelson), whom

he has not seen for 20 years. Larry comes and helps his father flee the concerned but constraining endgame run by the rest of the family.

So, Ed and Larry, father and son, transverse about 2,000 miles from the Midwest to the Pacific Coast in a secondhand van, and they do have some memorable times even as they fight, laugh and reconcile.

John Naple, a native of the Demsky's Eagle Street and helpful in so many ways, shared with me a John Steinbeck passage that captures the essence of the journey of Izzy, Ida and the rest of the Demskys:

Shul.....Continued from page 2

had loved her Savta dearly, had created the touching the rock formation.

The actual date of the *yahrzeit* was a Thursday, which is both a school day and work day, precluding any major family get-togethers.

We immortalized the day by organizing a park clean-up on Friday. Allow me to explain the significance of this activity.

My mother always left a room in better condition than she entered it. She was incapable of passing a piece of garbage without picking it up and disposing of it.

I remember back to my childhood. There was a busy street called North Shore Drive in the small city of Binghamton, where I grew up.

This did not make my mother happy. So she would regularly call the mayor's office to implore them to send a cleaning crew to rid the road of the offending filth.

My mother grew up in Brooklyn. She liked to tell people that she studied at Erasmus Hall High School, where Barbra Streisand would later attend.

also knew how to stand tall and take care of business, when necessary. So one fine day, a police vehicle stopped in the middle of North Shore Drive, where they found some lady with a broom and dustpan, cleaning the dirt from the road in the middle of all the traffic.

Incredulously, they confronted her: "Lady, what are you doing?"

"Well, no one from the city seems to want to do it. So I'm doing it."

It should now be abundantly clear why we chose, for her *yahrzeit*, to clean up a park. This activity was unique and memorable, watching our ever-growing Israel-based family contingent blanketing the mountain-side with an industrious, multi-generational sanitation crew.

She would have loved it! She would have been *kvelling*, seeing three dozen of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren beautifying a piece of the Holy Land.

My mother also would have *shepped nachas* at the prizes we found to give out to the kids as a perk for gathering the garbage. She would have loved that we ordered the games from a *miliunnik* family, whose husband has spent so many days in the IDF that their business is now in bad straits.

At this point, we must reluctantly return to the day before and attend to the fight in *shul*. After all, when the headline promises, we have to deliver!

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

Create a Jewish Legacy
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724-2332 or director@jfgb.org
Jewish Federation
of Greater Binghamton

# New “Yad Vashem Way in NYC “will trigger reflection,” Dani Dayan says

By Vita Fellig

(JNS) – The way Dani Dayan figures it, many people will walk along 67<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues, and notice the new sign for “Yad Vashem Way” and have no idea what the first two words mean.

“Some of them, not all of them, but some of them will Google ‘Yad Vashem’ and learn about the Shoah,” Dayan, the chairman of Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, in Jerusalem, told JNS at the street naming on January 30. “Yad Vashem is

the vehicle, not the purpose,” he said. “This is one more way to accomplish the goal of bringing people to learn about the Shoah.

“I think that we have an obligation towards the victims of the Shoah, to remember them,” he added. “The street sign is a kind of monument to the Shoah that will trigger reflection—reflection about the past, reflection about the present and reflection about the future.”

A dedication ceremony for the new street name was held across the street from the new sign, at Park East Synagogue. Ofir Akunis, the consul general of Israel in New York, was on hand, as were local officials, including Rep. Jerry Nadler (D-NY), New York City Council member Keith Powers and Mark Levine, the Manhattan borough president.

Rabbi Arthur Schneier, the rabbi of Park East and a Holocaust survivor, told attendees that he hopes the sign will inspire people to visit Yad Vashem in Israel. “This is a very personal moment,” he said. “I was liberated in Budapest in January 1945, and Auschwitz was liberated on August 27. Millions of Jews were still under the yoke of the Nazis, and thanks to the Allies, the United States, France and England who were united at the time with the Soviet Union, we were liberated. I could have been one of the one-and-a-half million children who never made it.”



Rabbi Arthur Schneier, the rabbi of Park East Synagogue, and Dani Dayan, chairman of Yad Vashem, alongside New York and Israeli officials at a ceremony marking Yad Vashem Way on Manhattan’s Upper East Side on January 30. (Photo by Vita Fellig)



A ceremony marked the designation of Yad Vashem Way on Manhattan’s Upper East Side on January 30. (Photo by Vita Fellig)

“I have stressed Holocaust remembrance for 63 years,” he added. “Never forget. It can happen again. Hatred is taught. We are not born with hatred. Children are born with love, and so we have to be the bridge builders to remember never again.”

Powers, who represents the city’s 4<sup>th</sup> district, told attendees that there are deep ties between New York City and Israel. “For us in New York, it is extremely painful now to see that in 2025 the scale of the Holocaust is being downplayed,” he said. “Outright Holocaust denialism is on the rise, and the ancient beast of antisemitism is rearing its ugly head, not just around the

world, but here in New York City, on the streets of Manhattan.

“The language and symbolism of the Holocaust is now being weaponized against the Jewish people here in New York, around the world and in Israel,” he said. “It’s extremely painful for us and it is important now that we are standing up and saying as New Yorkers that this memory will not be erased.

“This institution of Yad Vashem, which is more necessary than ever, is now going to have a rightful place on the streets of New York,” he added.

See “Way” on page 12

## Online.....Continued from page 8

Early Childhood Programs: Partners in Building Jewish Family Life” on Wednesday, March 5, from 4-5:15 pm (<https://jewishgrandparentsnetwork.org/event/grandparents-and-jewish-early-childhood-programs-partners-in-building-jewish-family-life/>); and “Navigating Your Relationship with Your Adult Children (the Parents of Your Grandchildren)” on Tuesday, March 18, from 7-8 pm (<https://jewishgrandparentsnetwork.org/event/navigating-your-relationship-with-your-adult-children-the-parents-of-your-grandchildren/>).

◆ The Qesher Book Club will hold a virtual discussion of Julie Zuckerman’s “The Book of Jeremiah,” a novel-in-stories, on Tuesday, March 25, at 4 pm. The novel takes place over eight decades and focuses on one family’s American Jewish experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For more information or to register, visit [www.qesher.com/the-book-of-jeremiah/](http://www.qesher.com/the-book-of-jeremiah/).

◆ Uri L’Tzedek will hold the virtual program “Renewing the Old, Sanctifying the New” with Dr. Marc Shapiro, on Wednesday, February 19, at 4 pm. The cost to attend is \$18. Shapiro will discuss his new book on Rav Kook. For more information or to register, visit [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_xFhAGdJsTOG1TAHozprLIg#/registration](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_xFhAGdJsTOG1TAHozprLIg#/registration).

◆ Melton will hold the virtual lecture “Seeing Through Jewish Eyes: Responses to Christian Art” on Monday, February 24, from 7-8 pm. The cost to attend is a sliding scale. The lecture will look at how medieval and early modern European Jews who lived in communities surrounded by Christian imagery perceive and respond to these symbols of Christian sanctity. For more information

or to register, visit <https://events.org/events/calendarcourse?tid=69235f8a-a48d-46fa-a-c59-c89b5ef16268>.

◆ 18 Doors will hold the virtual four-part program “Couples and Conversation: Antisemitism Edition (National)” on Thursdays, March 20-April 10, from 7-8:30 pm for interfaith couples. The cost to attend is \$54. The program will discuss what “antisemitism is, how to care for each other, for yourself, your extended family and your community, and how to stand up to anti-Jewish hate.” For more information or to register, visit <https://18doors.org/event/couples-conversation-antisemitism-edition-national-online-3/>.

◆ The Stanley D. Ginsburg USC Shoah Foundation Lecture Series will hold the virtual lecture “Jewish Languages Today: Endangered, Surviving, and Thriving” on Friday, February 21, at 3:30 pm. Professor Sarah Bunin Benor will discuss various Jewish languages and make a case for the need for documentation and reclamation. For more information or to register, visit <https://sfi.usc.edu/events/jewish-languages-today>.

◆ ALEPH will hold the virtual class “Seasons of the Soul: A Beginner’s Guide to Jewish Holidays,” led by Rabbi Sandra Lawson, on Tuesdays, March 11-April 1, from 7-8:15 pm. The cost to attend is \$54. The class will “explore the rhythms of the Jewish calendar, dive into the traditions and stories of each holiday.” For more information or to register, visit <https://aleph.org/civCRM/event/register/?reset=1&id=583>.

◆ The Yiddish Book Center will hold the virtual “Litvaks in Love,” a conversation with Prof. David G. Roskies, on Thursday, February 20, at 7 pm. Roskies will speak

about his memoir, “Yiddishlands,” in which “a son acts as his mother’s medium as they conjure up Vilna, the Jerusalem of Lithuania. Armed with his mother’s stories and Yiddish songs, [he] sets out to discover traces of Vilna throughout the Diaspora, from New York to Krakow, Moscow to Jerusalem.” For more information or to register, visit [www.yiddishbookcenter.org/events/upcoming-public-programs/litvaks-love-conversation-prof-david-g-roskies](http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/events/upcoming-public-programs/litvaks-love-conversation-prof-david-g-roskies).

◆ Roundtable will hold the virtual course “The History of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire” on Wednesdays, March 5-19, from 1-2 pm. The cost to attend is \$132. Mary Anne Trasciatti, labor studies professor and president of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition, will discuss the “historic tragedy of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, its impact on the immigrant workers who lived and worked in the area, and the recent efforts to memorialize the event with.” For more information or to register, visit <https://roundtable.org/live-courses/history/the-triangle-shirtwaist-factory-fire-and-its-memorial>.

◆ The Library of the Hebrew Union College will hold several hybrid/virtual events: “Royal Women at Ugarit: Reconceiving the House of the Father” on Thursday, February 20, at 12:30 pm; “Behind the Laughter: How the Purim Shtetl Came to America” on Tuesday, March 11, at 12:30

pm; and “The Moral Dilemma Created by a Religious Canon: Reflections on How to Read, How to Teach, How to Live” on Tuesday, April 29, at 12:30 pm. For more information or to register, visit <https://huc.edu/libraries/library-events/>.


◆ The Jewish Publication Society and Wisdom Without Wall will present several programs: “A Spiritual Response to Crisis: Inviting God into the Conversation” with Yiscah Smith, on Wednesday, March 2, from 3-4:30 pm; “Jewish Ethics In Complicated Times” with Rabbi Elliot Dorff, on Wednesday, March 19, from 7-8:30 pm; “Exile and Empathy” with Nancy Berg, on Wednesday, April 2, from 7-8:30 pm; and “Who Are the Jews – And Who Can We Become? Reflections on a Post-October 7<sup>th</sup> World” with Donniel Hartman on Sunday, April 27, from 2-3:30 pm. There is a cost of either \$18 or \$25 to attend the programs. For more information or to register, visit [https://jps.org/public\\_programs/](https://jps.org/public_programs/).

◆ My Jewish Learning will offer the virtual course “Judaism 101: An Intro to Jewish Life and Practice” on Wednesdays, February 19-March 26, at noon. The cost to attend is \$72. For more information or to register, visit [www.myjewishlearning.com/judaism-101-an-intro-to-jewish-life-and-practice/](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/judaism-101-an-intro-to-jewish-life-and-practice/).

For additional resources, see previous issues of The Reporter on its website, [www.thereporter.org/jewish-online-resources](http://www.thereporter.org/jewish-online-resources).

## We Remember You 2025

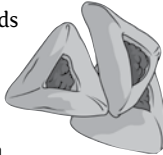
### JFS Accepting Purim Donations



Jewish Family Service will once again be collecting funds to fulfill the Purim mitzvah of *matanot le'evyonim* (gifts for the poor). These donations will be distributed to more than 16 local Jewish families who are experiencing extreme financial difficulties. In order to assure a timely distribution of these gifts, please be sure your contribution reaches our offices by March 14, 2025.

Thank you for your support for your neighbors in need.

Please mail or bring your donation to Jewish Family Service, 500 Clubhouse Road, Vestal, NY 13850. Contact Merryl Wallach, JFS Director, at 607-724-2332, ext. 339, with any questions.



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Yitro, Exodus 18:1-20:23

# Two pathways to Sinai

CHANA SILBERSTEIN, THE ROITMAN CHABAD CENTER AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY

This week's *parasha* includes the accounts of two different kinds of approaches to spiritual development. The first is the story of Yitro, the father-in-law of Moses, who had been the high priest in Midian. The *midrash* relates that he was a seeker of truth and that he had full knowledge of every idol in the world, for he had worshiped them all. Yet, when he heard about the miracles of the Exodus and the splitting of the sea, he chose to join the Jewish people, convinced that their faith was superior, proclaiming, "Now I know that God is greater than all gods." (Exodus 18:11)

Conversely, the *midrash* describes the commitment of the Jewish people very differently. True, they had seen signs and wonders during the Exodus, but, ultimately, their desire to receive the Torah was not so much a rational calculation,

but a response of love, passion and commitment. In the words of our sages, they proclaimed, "We wish to see our King." And they declared, "*na'aseh venishma*" – we will do whatever God wants of us – and accept his covenant sight unseen.

Which pathway is superior? The carefully argued, reasoned pathway to spirituality, in which we only commit to what we fully investigate and understand? Or does all true love ultimately demand a leap of faith, and a commitment to be there through thick and thin, even at times when it seems more reasonable to move on?

All journeys to faith start with exploration. Abraham in his youth worshiped idols and only over time came to know the true Creator of the universe. But having made that

discovery, he resolved to pass on his monotheistic faith to his descendants. But Yitro found value in the journey and wanted to share the pathway of discovery with his offspring.

Moses had two sons. When they were born, Yitro made him promise that "one would be consecrated to God and one to idol worship." He set up a "clinical trial of sorts." One son would be raised in the faith, totally committed to the service of God, while the other would be encouraged to explore and arrive at his devotion to God on his own.

In our own post-enlightenment day and age, Yitro's path often seems to resonate more strongly. Indeed, his exploration led him to visit the Jewish people in their moment of glory and, furthermore, he was able to give Moses See "Sinai" on page 11

## Congregational Notes

### Temple Israel

Orientation: Conservative  
Rabbi: Micah Friedman  
Address: 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal, NY 13850  
Phone: 607-723-7461 and 607-231-3746  
Office hours: Mon.-Thurs., 8:30 am-3:30 pm; Fri., 8 am-3 pm  
E-mail: 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, February 15, 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 Isaiah 6:1-7:6 and 9:5-6. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 6:30 pm.

"Torah and Our Times" discussions with Rabbi Micah Friedman will be held on Tuesdays, February 18 and 25, at 4:30 pm.

"The Whole Megillah" program with Rabbi Micah Friedman will be held on Wednesdays, February 19 and 26, at 10:30 am.

On Friday, February 21, at 5:30 pm, there will be a Scout Shabbat and dinner.

On Saturday, February 22, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Exodus 21:1-24:18 and the haftarah is Jeremiah 34:8-22 and 33:25-26. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 6:30 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](http://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](http://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, February 14, light candles before..... 5:17 pm  
Shabbat ends Saturday, February 15 ..... 6:19 pm  
Friday, February 21, light candles before..... 5:26 pm  
Shabbat ends Saturday, February 22 ..... 6:28 pm  
Friday, February 28, light candles before..... 5:34 pm  
Shabbat ends Saturday, March 1 ..... 6:36 pm  
Friday, March 7, light candles before..... 5:43 pm  
Shabbat ends Saturday, March 8 ..... 6:44 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.  
Shabbat services: Zoom link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86996998146?pwd=RIVMTHFQYIVVNGFHdmJLVUcvQ3JNQTO9>, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330; dial-in number 646-931-3860; and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/templeconcord](http://www.facebook.com/templeconcord).  
Torah study: Zoom link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87897900994?pwd=bOMvwxDuovoaBlnB4aVfIH0TL5yamj.1>, meeting ID: 878 9790 0994 and passcode: 743506; and dial-in number 646-931-3860.

Some services and programs are online only.  
Friday, February 14: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service in person, on Zoom or on Facebook.

Saturday, February 15: No Shabbat School; at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom.

Tuesday-Thursday, February 18-20: At 5:30 pm, evening prayers with Rabbi Leah Moser, in-person only.

Tuesday, February 18: At 6 pm, Social Action Committee meeting. Contact the temple office at 607-723-7355 or [templeconcordaa@gmail.com](mailto:templeconcordaa@gmail.com), or Phyllis Weinstein at [pweinste@stny.rr.com](mailto:pweinste@stny.rr.com) for additional information.

Wednesday, February 19: At 6 pm, "Adult Education: Jewish Mysticism." This is a weekly class that will focus on different topics over the coming months. The first sections will focus on Kabbalah. No prior experience is necessary to attend.

Friday, February 21: At 7:30 pm, Repro Shabbat in person, on Zoom or on Facebook.

Saturday, February 22: At 9 am, Shabbat school; and at 9:15 am, Torah study in person and on Zoom.

Tuesday-Thursday, February 25-27: At 5:30 pm, evening prayers with Rabbi Leah Moser, in-person only.

### 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.

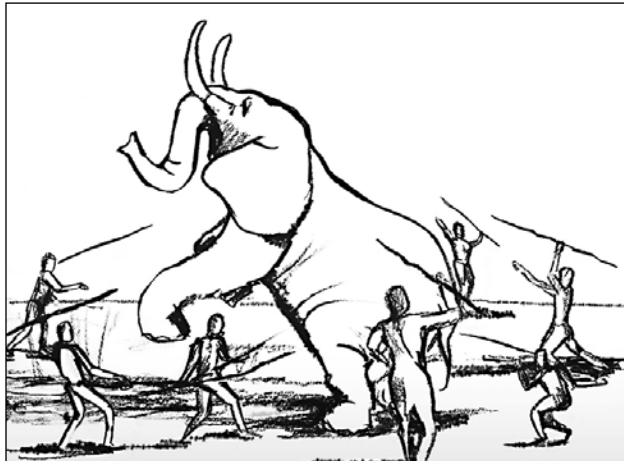
### Temple Beth El of Oneonta

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.

# Have Israeli archaeologists solved the mystery of missing Levant cave art?

By JNS staff

(JNS) – Archaeologists from Tel Aviv University have proposed an explanation for the absence of Upper Paleolithic



Reconstruction of elephant hunting using spears (Illustration by Dana Ackerfeld/Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University)

cave art in Israel and the greater Levant. They argue that the extinction of large animals in the region explains why prehistoric humans did not engage in cave painting there, a practice prevalent in Western Europe.

In their study, published in the Journal of the Israel Prehistoric Society, the researchers suggest that the large animals frequently depicted in European cave art, such as woolly mammoths and rhinoceroses, were already extinct in the Levant when modern humans arrived.

The team – Professor Ran Barkai, Ilan Dagoni, Miki Ben-Dor and Yafit Kedar from Tel Aviv University’s Department of Archaeology – propose that European cave paintings were part of shamanic rituals conducted in response to the dwindling populations of large game, a crisis that prehistoric humans in the Levant did not experience.

“This is a century-old mystery in Israeli archaeological research,” said Barkai. “The first prehistoric cave excavation in Israel took place in 1925, but frustratingly, not a single cave painting has been found since.”

“Hundreds of spectacular cave paintings have been discovered in other parts of the world, such as Spain and France. Here, nothing,” he added.



A scene from the Upper Paleolithic Chauvet-Pont-d’Arc Cave in France. (Photo by Jean Clottes)

This is despite the fact that humans inhabited caves in Israel during the same period in which cave paintings were created in Western Europe – 35,000 to 30,000 years ago.

“Moreover, according to all material evidence, the people in both regions belonged to the same culture – the Aurignacian culture,” he said. “Their tools were similar, and their artistic objects, beads and pendants for example, were also similar. There is no doubt that humans here had the cognitive ability to paint and were no less capable than their European contemporaries,” he said.

## Huge Second Temple-era quarry unearthed in Jerusalem

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – A massive quarry dating to the Second Temple period has been uncovered in Jerusalem, offering a new glimpse into the capital’s ancient past, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced recently. The quarry, which was unearthed in the city’s present-day Har Hotzvim industrial park, is one of the largest ever found in Jerusalem, the state-run archaeological body said. Two stone vessels,

impervious to ritual defilement according to Jewish law, were uncovered at the site. According to the IAA such vessels always signal the presence of a Jewish population.

During the excavation, the archaeologists also uncovered scores of various-sized building stones, as well as quarrying and cutting trenches whose outlines indicate the size of the blocks being produced. “Most of the building stones extracted were huge rock slabs, whose length reached about 2.5 meters. Their width was 1.2 meters and they were 40 centimeters thick,” said Michael Chernin and Lara Shilov, See “Quarry” on page 12



Archaeologists excavated a 2,000-year-old quarry in northern Jerusalem. (Photo courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority)

## Lerman . . . . Continued from page 1

sophomore at Binghamton University, then called Harpur College. “Israel was unprepared for the invading armies, and, after grievous losses, Israel was able to turn the tide of the war,” Lerman noted. “General Ariel Sharon encircled the Egyptian Sixth Army, leading to the end of hostilities, negotiated by Henry Kissinger. I recall sitting in the Kosher Kitchen at Binghamton University, commiserating with other students as Israel survived this existential threat. One student protested Israel’s ability to thwart her enemies again. Wearing the requisite peace button (1973 was the height of the Vietnam War), this upper classman decried the ‘brutality’ of Ariel Sharon’s treatment of the Egyptian army.”

Lerman noted that this was his “first exposure to wokeism, before there was an official wokeism. Israel was being attacked by a Jewish student, because of her success in surviving an existential threat. General Sharon did not obliterate the Egyptian army, although he had the power to do so. Ariel Sharon cut off their supplies, food and water until hostilities had ended. The Egyptian army was then allowed to retreat to the safety of their homeland.”

Lerman believes that “Israel’s standing in the world may have reached its zenith after the miraculous rescue of 102 of the 106 hijacked hostages from Entebbe, Uganda, in July 1976. Since that time, it seems there has been a steady erosion of Israel’s reputation in the world, carefully and skillfully cultivated by the enemies of Israel and the Jewish people.”

According to Lerman, “the portrayal of Israel as a colonial, repressive, apartheid state is without merit or truth, but [which is] widely accepted. My book is a minuscule attempt to reverse that tide.”



Alan Lerman (center) and Joyce Prindle (right) presented a copy of “Black Mossad” to Beejhy Barhany, the Ethiopian born and Israeli raised chef and proprietor of the Harlem based kosher vegan Ethiopian-Israeli restaurant Tsion Café in December. (Photo courtesy of Alan S. Lerman)

## Sinai . . . . . Continued from page 10

excellent advice about delegation so he could better meet the needs of the people.

But history also points out the risks and pitfalls of this approach. Yitro eventually goes home. One of the grandsons designated to follow Yitro’s path eventually reverts to idol worship. His grandchildren remain friends of the Jewish people, living in close proximity. But it is unclear if they actually commit to being Jewish.

We live in an age strong in choice and opportunity, but weak in constancy and commitment. Often, family members become estranged not because they have wronged one another, but because they did not make the decision to unconditionally prioritize the relationship, no matter what else is going on in their lives.

And our spiritual connections are the same. We expect our community, our synagogue and our faith to be there to bolster us during difficult times. But if we do not commit to showing up on a regular basis even while other attractions pull at us, we may find it difficult to reclaim that powerful connection when we most desire it.

In terms of raising the next generation, we must also weigh carefully the approach of Yitro. Our children will be exposed soon enough in our multicultural society to alternate philosophies and perspectives on life. In the past year, as antisemitism has abounded on our college campuses and beyond, Jews without a strong grounding in their faith have been greatly challenged.

But we have the opportunity, particularly in early childhood, to immerse them totally in a Jewish environment. The power of Jewish pre-school or day school experience – with time revolving around Shabbat and the Jewish holidays, with exposure to Jewish values and language – lasts a lifetime. The same can be said of Jewish camping. We are fortunate that our local federations assist in making this possible for our families.

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# ADL poll shows nearly half of adults worldwide harbor antisemitic views

By Mike Wagenheim

(JNS) – A new survey released by the Anti-Defamation League shows nearly half of the global population holds elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes. The Global 100 poll found that an estimated 2.2 billion people, representing 46 percent of the world’s adults, “harbor deeply entrenched antisemitic attitudes,” the ADL stated. That figure is double the level from a decade ago and the highest on record since the group monitoring Jew-hatred began examining worldwide trends.

Through its polling partners, including Ipsos, the ADL surveyed more than 58,000 adults from 103 countries, covering some 94 percent of the world’s adult population, with responses solicited between July 23 and November 13, 2024.

Alarming, the survey revealed that one-fifth of respondents have not heard about the Holocaust, with only 48 percent recognizing the historical accuracy of the mass-murder operation to eradicate European Jewry. That figure of recognizing the accuracy of the Holocaust fell to just 16 percent among respondents in the Middle East.

That figure falls under 40 percent among 18- to 34-year-olds – a demographic among which some 50 percent overall hold antisemitic sentiments. Forty percent of that age category also agreed that “Jews are responsible for most of the world’s wars.” The antisemitic figures among the younger generation were noticeably worse than their elders in many categories.

“We live in a world in which a literal modern-day pogrom can take place in the streets of a major Western European capital, unchecked for hours, and in the aftermath, we are gaslit and told that what happened was something we imagined or blamed for the act in the first place,” Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL national director and CEO, said on a recent conference call coinciding with the survey’s release.

“While tracking antisemitic incidents is an essential way to measure antisemitism, it’s by no means the only way negative attitudes towards Jews – in agreement with age-old antisemitic tropes – have been a crucial pillar that the ADL uses to assess overall levels of anti-Jewish prejudice within a country,” Greenblatt added. “It is a key factor that impacts how free a Jewish person feels to live openly and express their identity, whatever that looks like for them.”

## Quarry. . . . .Continued from page 11

excavation co-directors on behalf of the IAA. “Each such quarried block weighed two and a half tons.”

They noted that the impressive size of the stones produced at the site likely attests to their intended use in one of Jerusalem’s many royal construction projects in the late Second Temple period, beginning under King Herod the Great’s reign between 37-4 B.C.E.

Stone vessels identified with Jerusalem’s Second Temple-period Jewish population, discovered in a quarry in the northern part of the Israeli capital. “It is reasonable to assume, with due caution, that at least some of the building stones extracted here were intended to be used as pavement slabs for Jerusalem’s streets in that period,” they said.

Herod’s construction projects in Jerusalem included, first and foremost, the expansion of the Temple Mount area and the Temple itself. In addition, during his reign, a series of impressive public buildings – palaces and fortifications – were built throughout the city, requiring a huge supply of high-quality construction stones. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E.

“Revealing this huge quarry, just before... the time of year when the Jewish people the world over mourns the Jerusalem that was lost in these days, is symbolic and very moving,” said IAA Director Eli Escusido.

Twenty-nine percent of those younger than 35 expressed favorable opinions of the Hamas terror group in the Gaza Strip, higher than the overall mark of 23 percent.

The survey shows Palestinian-controlled territories in Judea and Samaria, and Gaza, with a 97 percent index score, placing them with Kuwait (97 percent) and Indonesia (96 percent) as the most antisemitic populations. Those with the lowest index scores are Sweden (5 percent), Norway (8 percent), Canada (8 percent) and the Netherlands (8 percent). That may seem surprising after Norway approved Palestinian statehood last year; Canada saw higher instances of antisemitic instances over previous years; and Amsterdam was rocked by what many construed as a modern-day pogrom in November.

The Middle East and North Africa (76 percent) received particularly high index scores, with Asia (51 percent), Eastern Europe (49 percent) and Sub-Saharan Africa (45 percent) not far behind. The Americas (24 percent), Oceania (20 percent) and Western Europe (17 percent) showed lower levels of antisemitic sentiment, though the ADL says even those raw figures are concerning.

The Global 100 data serves to inform governments about what actions they can take to reverse worrying trends, according to the ADL, as the survey measured the number of respondents who believe in six or more of 11 negative stereotypes about Jews to be definitely or probably true.

“Governments need to speak out clearly and forcefully – need to speak out repeatedly – and leaders must call out antisemitism wherever and whenever it occurs, particularly when it happens within the ranks of their own

party or partisan group,” Greenblatt said, advocating for additional protections for Jewish communities, stronger hate-crime laws, and more widespread and diversified Holocaust education.

The survey also posed other questions related to Jews and Israel with 71 percent of respondents saying their country should have diplomatic relationships with Israel and 75 percent encouraging their countries to welcome Israeli tourists. A little more than two-thirds said they don’t think that their country should boycott Israeli products and businesses.

“Governments can count on the support of an encouraging majority (57 percent) of respondents globally who recognize that hate toward Jews is a serious problem in the world. This also holds true for a majority of respondents across all seven geographical regions, age groups, education levels, and political orientations,” the ADL said.

JNS asked Greenblatt whether the ADL anticipated some figures to fall after the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza or whether that was unlikely given the upward trends among younger respondents.

“I don’t think we know the answer to that. Antisemitism was rising, so in some ways, it’s fair to say that we created a pretext for bigots,” he replied, referring to the many who used the Hamas-led terrorist attacks and atrocities in southern Israel on October 7, 2023, to “throw fuel on the fire.”

“I think we need to reserve judgment and take a bit of a wait-and-see approach, even as we, as they say, hope for the best and prepare for the worst,” he said.

# Netanyahu: Israel will not “repeat mistake” of Oslo vision

By JNS staff

(JNS) – U.S. President Donald Trump has proposed a “new and revolutionary vision” for Gaza’s future, that will ensure it never again becomes a terrorist state, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on February 10.

In a speech to the Knesset plenum, Netanyahu rejected the opposition’s call to return the Palestinian Authority to Gaza, condemning Ramallah for promoting hate and glorifying terrorists.

He reiterated his vision of a future for Gaza without

either Hamas or the P.A., emphasizing that Trump’s plan ([www.jns.org/no-return-to-gaza-for-palestinians-who-leave-trump-says/](http://www.jns.org/no-return-to-gaza-for-palestinians-who-leave-trump-says/)) was a creative solution that would not repeat the mistakes of the Oslo process.

“President Trump’s vision is new, creative and revolutionary – and he is determined to implement it. You spoke about ‘the day after’ – well, now you have ‘the day after!’” said the Israeli premier. “It just does not align with the Oslo vision. Because we will not repeat that mistake again and again, as you have.”

## Way. . . . .Continued from page 9

Dayan told JNS that the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Auschwitz’s liberation means that Yad Vashem must prepare for the time that it will have to continue to memorialize the Holocaust without access to survivors. “We are in the doorsteps of what we call ‘the crossroads of generations,’” he said, “Unfortunately but also inevitably, we have to prepare the world for the post-survivor era, in which there will not be

witnesses left for us to speak to.

“I think survivors are a kind of bridge,” he told JNS. “One side of the bridge is in front of you, and the other end of the bridge is in Auschwitz. There is nothing that can compare to that.”

Yad Vashem will be developing immersive audio and visual projects to bolster education initiatives, according to Dayan. “We are opening a Yad Vashem theater and have commissioned four monodramas, each one telling the story of one object in our collection in a way that engages the audience,” he said. “We will fail if we are not zealous about authenticity.”


Dayan told JNS that Holocaust denialists cannot “present authenticity, because they lie, and we therefore should use the advantage of our authenticity to educate.”

“We have to find innovative ways to spread knowledge, to tell the story of the Shoah, through education, through museums, through exhibitions, through films, through all kinds of ways that engage new audiences,” he said.

But Holocaust education alone is insufficient to combat Jew-hatred. “It is important to support legislation, at the city, state and federal levels, to support Holocaust education, but I’m not claiming that Shoah education is a silver bullet and the cure for antisemitism,” Dayan told JNS. “It’s an integral part in fighting antisemitism, but one of the most important things is really to be an involved citizen at all levels of government.”



Rabbi Arthur Schneier, the rabbi of Park East Synagogue, spoke at a ceremony marking the designation of Yad Vashem Way on Manhattan’s Upper East Side on January 30. (Photo by Vita Fellig)



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