

THE REPORTER

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JCC offers update on reopening

The Jewish Community Center has begun the process of opening its doors. Safety protocols are being put into place as the Center follows the New York state mandates for reopening.

The daycare program has been open during the pandemic in order to serve the families of essential workers. Camp JCC began on July 6. In order to run the two programs, the JCC needs to use the entire facility, indoors and out, from 6 am-5 pm daily in order to allow enough space to properly socially distance everyone, perform health checks on every person entering the building, and leaving enough time in between activities for staff to properly disinfect and clean all areas.

The JCC's goal is to offer programs off hours. It hopes to open the pool sometime in July in the evenings between 5-9 pm. "Due to the strict protocols we are required to follow, we are working on a plan through which we are hoping to offer socially distanced water exercise classes, as well as lap swimming, which would be done through one-hour reservations," said Sheryl Brumer, executive director of the JCC.

"We are thrilled to announce we just rehired our Physical Education Director Chris Ellerson, who has begun working with us creating mitigation plans to reopen the fitness center and pool," Brumer added. "The obstacles we are dealing with are in regards to the fact that we cannot have any

other programs present during the day until Camp JCC ends and we've had an additional week to properly clean before opening new programs during the day, bringing us to August 24."

The pickleball league will also open in the evening on the outside tennis courts at 5 pm, which will allow people to play with appropriate social distancing. Sign-ups are required. For more information, contact Ellerson at 724-2417.

The JCC is also looking into getting permission to possibly run some of its fitness classes outdoors after 5 pm. More information will be forthcoming when available.

"Governor Cuomo just announced he will not be allowing gyms or fitness centers to open at this time due to the high risk of contamination if proper cleaning protocols are not strictly adhered to," Brumer said. "In anticipation of this, we have purchased several EvaClean Protexus Electrostatic Spray cleaners, which is a new technology that attacks microbes and decontaminates facilities using environmentally friendly products in an extremely efficient and effective manner. We are putting together our fitness mitigation plans in the hopes that we will be ready to reopen once the governor says it's OK."

Brumer noted that opening the building is not an easy task: "To give you an idea of what's involved in re-opening programs, See "Reopening" on page 7

Beth David opens for indoor services

With Broome County already in Phase 4 of reopening, which includes the New York state guidelines allowing indoor religious services to resume at 33 percent of capacity, Beth David Synagogue has begun holding indoor Shabbat morning services. There is limited seating available, less than the permitted 33 percent, and all open seats are more than the required six foot distancing from each other in all directions. The wearing of face masks is required anywhere in the building, services are held only in the main sanctuary and social distancing is required at all points in the building.

"Communal religious services are very important for our spiritual life and growth.

Sadly, we have had to suspend these services in order to preserve our safety and health for an extended period of time," says Rabbi Zev Silber, spiritual leader of Beth David. "Now that our community is successfully containing the spread of the deadly virus, we are cautiously and deliberately beginning the process of resuming this communal activity."

There have been modifications made to the services in order to always keep social distancing. For example, the Torah reader is the only one who touches the scroll, which is carried directly to the reading table from the ark, without passing through See "Services" on page 3

Esserman takes first place in Rockower Awards

By Reporter staff

Rabbi Rachel Esserman, executive editor of The Reporter Group, won first place in the American Jewish Press Association Rockower Awards for her book review "Turning Jews into Americans" in the Award for Excellence in Arts and Criticism News and Features – Critical Analysis/Review category for newspapers with a circulation of 14,999 and under. The judges' comment on the review was "very well written and gives a good insight into narratives about Jews in the U.S. and the myths that have been passed down." The review can be found by visiting <https://cdn.fedweb.org/fed-131/2/march29%252C2019.pdf?v=1570827190> and looking at page 4 of the PDF.

"I'm very excited to have won a Rockower," Esserman said. "This is only the third time I've won that award and the first time I took first place."

The two scholarly works featured in the review were Jessica Cooperman's "Making Judaism Safe for America: World War I and the Origins of Religious Pluralism" and "A Rosenberg By Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America" by

Kirsten Fermaglich. In her review, Esserman noted that "together, the two books offer insights into American Jewish history and the changing perception of Jews by their fellow citizens."

"I love reviewing books on related subjects in the same article," Esserman said. "That gives me an opportunity to learn more than if I reviewed the books at different times. The works in this review offered a glimpse of how Jews and Judaism became part of mainstream America. The authors' research also showed how popular conceptions of Jewish life – even within the Jewish community – are not always true."

Esserman noted that she doesn't expect most people to read the books, but thinks her reviews of scholarly works serve an educational purpose. "I have a friend who said she likes to read these reviews, even though she knows she'll never read the books," she added. "It gives her a chance to learn about a topic she would otherwise not know about. And I love having the opportunity to learn something about Judaism or Jewish history I might never had known."

Camp JCC kicks off summer



A group of campers relaxed in the JCC's upper field on the first day of Camp JCC on July 6. (See more camp photos on page 7.)

Spotlight

Meeting virtually during the pandemic

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Editors's note: Four people responded to a request sent out by The Reporter to leaders of Jewish community organizations about their experiences using virtual meeting places. This article is based on the answers of the four who responded. The Reporter staff invite other members of the community to write to us about their experiences – good or bad – with Zoom and other virtual online meeting places for a future article. The information can be sent to Treporter@aol.com with "virtual experiences" in the subject line.

One person loves it. Another has mixed feelings. A third had never heard of the virtual programs before this began. The fourth

notes how it has become essential to keep the community institutions running smoothly. All wrote about dealing with technological problems, although they also noted that practice makes the process smoother.

Lani Dunthorn, the president of Temple Concord Sisterhood is the most enthusiastic about virtual meetings. "I love it!!!!" she wrote in an e-mail. "I don't have to get dressed up, don't have to drive when it's dark or in inclement weather, and don't have to find a parking spot, etc. All I have to do is walk in to my home office, turn on the computer and sit back and enjoy."

Although many people miss meeting in person, Dunthorn noted the advantages of using virtual means. "I don't have to look at

the back of people's heads – I can see their faces and make their faces as large or small as I'd like," she added. "I can also control how loudly or softly people are speaking, which is quite a relief to me. When we're divided into small groups after a service, as we are on Friday nights at Temple Concord, we have an opportunity to speak with people we may not usually speak with."

She also mentioned that those attending have had to learn some of the technological aspects of the programs and make certain everyone who wants the opportunity to speak can do so. "We're all getting better at putting ourselves on mute, though we need a bit more practice in making sure that we aren't talking over one another and making

sure that the quieter ones among us have an opportunity to speak," she concluded.

Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, is less enthusiastic, but recognizes the need for virtual meetings. "I have mixed feelings about Zoom," she wrote. "On one hand, Zoom has made meetings and events more accessible to people that live out of town, in an assisted living setting, can't travel etc. However, it is harder to get feedback. Not everyone wants to speak up in a zoom meeting, for example."

She also noted the challenges and the good points of using the new technology. "Zoom has features such as spotlighting and See "Meeting" on page 7

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TC to hold Tisha B'Av event on July 29

Temple Concord will hold a virtual, interactive Tisha B'Av commemoration on Zoom on Wednesday, July 29, at 8 pm. Rabbis Barbara Goldman-Wartell and Rachel Esserman will lead the program. Those interested in attending can contact the temple office at TempleConcord-Binghamton@gmail.com for the link via e-mail or use the following link: <https://binghamton.zoom.us/j/94889708306?pwd=cERXMjJEMFhFQmQ1d2ppUzZlZl1hZDZ09>.

"In a few weeks on July 29-30, Jews around the world will gather together on the ninth of the Hebrew month of Av (in Hebrew: Tisha B'Av) for a day of mourning," said organizers of the event. "Tisha B'Av is a major public fast day that commemorates manifold Jewish national tragedies. Among the events traditionally associated with the ninth of Av are God's punishment of the Israelites with 40 years of wandering, the failure of the Bar Kokhba rebellion, the declaration of the Crusades, the beginning of deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto and, most prominently, the destruction of the First and Second Temples."

The organizers noted that "this year, we also mourn for the losses suffered during the pandemic. Our lives have been changed, many people have died, and our congregations and communities have had to learn to do things differently. Join us as we commemorate past and current events."

BD to hold virtual lecture on "Connecting Archeology and the Bible" on Aug. 6

Beth David Synagogue will hold the virtual lecture "Connecting Archeology and the Bible" on Thursday, August 6, from 2-3 pm. Eitan Morell will be the speaker in this second lecture in memory of his father, Samuel (Shmuel) Morell, who passed away in April. Members of Beth David will receive the Zoom meeting information from Rabbi Zev Silber, but all are welcome to attend. Those not on the Beth David listserv can contact Morell for the information at eitan.morell@gmail.com.



Eitan Morell (Photo courtesy of Eitan Morell)

delighted that he has graciously offered to treat us to another illustrated talk, this time on a topic that was dear to his father's heart and that continues to fascinate and inspire visitors to Israel."

Born and raised in Binghamton, Eitan and wife, Varda, moved to Israel in 1991. He received his B.A. in Middle Eastern and Jewish history from Bar Ilan University and served in the Israeli Army Tank Corps. He has been a licensed Israeli tour guide for the last 10 years. The Morells are parents to six children and two grandchildren.

Until his retirement in 2007, Samuel Morell was a professor of Judaic studies at Binghamton University. His wife, Audrey, was the director of the Binghamton Jewish Community Center's preschool. Both were active members of the Jewish community. Their children, Avi, Sima and Eitan, grew up in Binghamton and graduated from Hillel Academy.

"Beth David looks forward to the time when the monthly luncheon series can resume," said organizers. "In the meantime, contributions to the Luncheon Fund are always appreciated." 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.

Hillel Academy held graduation



On June 25, Hillel Academy of Broome County held a virtual graduation ceremony on Zoom. Mika Friedman and Aaron Sambursky were the 2020 graduates. Shown is a screen shot of the evening.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

U. of Wisconsin Hillel discovers "Free Palestine" spray-painted on building

The outside of the Hillel building at the University of Wisconsin in Madison was vandalized on July 7, according to the organization. The words "Free Palestine" appeared on the concrete structure that welcomes people to the building, also known as the Barbara Hochberg Center for Jewish Student Life. "We view this act of vandalism as targeting the Jewish community and as an incident of bias," said Greg Steinberger, UW Hillel president and CEO, in a Facebook post on July 7 on the UW Hillel Foundation page. Steinberger said Hillel has contacted the Madison Metropolitan Police Department and the University of Wisconsin Police Department, in addition to notifying UW Hillel's student leaders and Board of Directors. "Our campus community is resilient and strong, and we will clean up the graffiti, work with the community on the investigation and move forward leading with our commitment to empowering students to build vibrant community based on values of love, respect, justice and peace," said Steinberger. Out of 44,411 students at the university, 5,200 of them are Jewish or around 12 percent, according to Hillel International.

Senators call for kosher, halal food in federal emergency coronavirus programs

U.S. Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) have called on U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to ensure that kosher and halal food are included in federal emergency food programs in response to the coronavirus pandemic. In a letter sent on July 8, Gillibrand and Stabenow, whose states represent large Jewish and Muslim populations, respectively, called on Perdue "to ensure that kosher and halal food are being included in the Farmers to Families Food Box Program, and what steps USDA has taken to receive feedback from Jewish and Muslim communities to ensure their religious dietary needs are met by the program. ... Americans of all backgrounds and faiths are experiencing increased hunger during this pandemic, and many programs have been put forth to alleviate some of these issues," stated the letter. "However, many in the Jewish and Muslim community only eat kosher or halal food and have not been able to benefit from these programs if they do not provide these options." Citing Gillibrand's office, JTA, which first reported the letter, wrote: "Across New York City, Westchester County and Long Island, about 222,000 Jewish households keep kosher. An estimated 51,700 poor and near poor Orthodox households and 144,400 other poor and near poor Jewish households would benefit from the inclusion of kosher options in the Farmers to Families Food Box program."

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the congregation for attendees to kiss. The person honored with an *aliyah* stands more than six feet away from the scroll, and recites the blessings before and after the *aliyah* without being able to see the words of the Torah or kissing it. He also returns to his seat before the next *aliyah* approaches. There is no *kiddush* after the service, since that is considered an invitation to ignore social distancing and face mask requirements.

Weekday services remain suspended except for Thursday mornings. Those services

began on July 9 in the main sanctuary and follow the same rules as Shabbat services. The synagogue also plans to hold a service on the evening of Tisha B'Av, Wednesday, July 29, to commemorate the destruction of the Holy Temples in Jerusalem. The service will begin at 9 pm. The Thursday morning service will held be at 7 am with *Mincha* at 7:55 pm. Since there is limited capacity, anyone interested in attending may contact Silber at rabbisilber@stny.rr.com in order to assure that there is room.

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to the family of **Herbert Neil Cohen**

Moving?
Whether you're moving across town or across the country, please e-mail treporter@aol.com with "Reporter Address change" in the subject line, or call 607-724-2360, ext. 254, to let *The Reporter* know about your new address.

DEADLINES
The following are deadlines for all articles and photos for upcoming *REPORTER* issues.

ISSUE	DEADLINE
July 31	July 22
August 14	August 5
August 28	August 19
September 11	Sept. 2

TRIPLE CITIES FAMILY DENTAL, P.C.

Triple Cities Family Dental, P.C. is pleased to announce that Dr. Michael D. Carman and the staff of Carman Family Dental will be joining our practice beginning July 13, 2020.

We look forward to welcoming and continuing to provide excellent dental care to their patients at our Binghamton west side office, 18 Leroy Street, Binghamton, New York.

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Off the Shelf

Righteous and evil men

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

According to the website Masterclass (www.masterclass.com), “thrillers are dark, engrossing, and suspenseful plot-driven stories.” Why was I looking for a definition of the thriller genre? Well, the two books featured in this review – “The Accomplice” by Joseph Kanon (Atria Books) and “36 Righteous Men” by Steven Pressfield (W. W. Norton and Company) – seemed like thrillers, but had such different plots that at times it was difficult to believe they belonged to the same genre. However, both novels fit this definition, even though one takes place in the past and the other in the future. What they do have in common are Jewish themes: one uses Jewish history and the other Jewish folklore.

“The Accomplice” opens in 1962 Germany, a time when people want to think of World War II as the distant past – a time to forget about those who once were part of the Nazi regime. Well, that’s not true everyone: Max Weill has dedicated this life to finding Nazis who escaped justice. Although a doctor before the war, Max is unable to practice since he was forced to help Dr. Otto Schramm perform experiences on children and adults in Auschwitz. Max, who still lives in Germany, wants Aaron, his American nephew, to continue his life’s mission.

After all, Aaron works for the CIA, so Max believes he is more than up to the task. When Max becomes ill, Aaron finds himself unable to refuse his uncle’s last request. That request takes him to Buenos Aires and tangles him in a complex mission that makes Aaron ponder his own brand of morality.

Kanon’s novel is easy to read with more than enough fast-paced action and twists and turns to keep readers turning pages. However, what really stands out are the moral questions: How much do we owe our family? Must we right all wrongs, or is it better to let some remain buried in the past? And perhaps most importantly: what is the difference between justice and revenge? These questions make the novel perfect for book clubs whose members are interested in moral issues. Those who enjoy a good thriller – regardless of moral dilemmas – should also enjoy this work.

While “The Accomplice” is a fictional take on real-life Nazi hunters, “36 Righteous Men” focuses on *lamed vovniks* – the 36 unknown righteous men found in Jewish folklore, whose existence is said to sustain the world. This is not the first thriller’s plot to focus on someone trying to murder all the *lamed vovniks* and destroy the world, but it’s the first to take place in the future.

The year is 2034 and the United States is a mess. Global warming has created massive flooding, which has left New York City filled with homeless displaced by the rising waters. Hurricanes occur throughout the year. When several men are killed in unusual ways, police detectives James Manning and Covina “Dewey” Duwai are at odds with their supervisor, who believes the killings are connected to those trying to stop global warming. However, Manning and Dewey find themselves intrigued by another idea, especially when an unknown woman warns them that the 36 righteous are being killed. With the help of a rabbi and a Jewish anthropologist, the two police officers try to stop the killer before he can destroy the world.

Pressfield has written a thriller disguised as a police procedural, something that works really well. Readers see all the action through Dewey’s eyes, which means that the prose is crisp and the drama fast paced. The action is almost nonstop and the characters are interesting, but don’t detract from the action. Once the plot began, it was hard to put the book down. Its ending packed a powerful punch and events took a far different turn than I expected. This was one impressive thriller.

Play Ball! Jews in the outfield (and the infield, too)

The enigmatic Moe Berg: Jewish baseball catcher and wartime spy

By Bill Simons

On Monday, January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany, setting in motion a trajectory that would soon enable him to declare a national emergency and seize dictatorial powers. In his book “Mein Kampf,” Hitler had previously identified his objectives – remilitarizing the German nation, pursuing territorial expansion and eliminating the Jewish menace. With fiery torches ablaze, Nazis marched through the cold winter streets of Berlin on the night of Hitler’s ascension. Improbably, a Jewish baseball player, Moe Berg, arrived in Berlin on January 30.

Berg (1902-72) was perhaps the most brilliant and enigmatic individual to ever play Major League Baseball. In contrast to the isolationist and appeasement policies of

Western democracies during the 1930s, Berg was concerned about the threat of international aggression in Europe and Asia. Following the 1932 MLB season, Berg, along with two other major leaguers, had accepted an invitation to conduct baseball clinics in Japan to upgrade the proficiency of university players. Upon completion of his baseball responsibilities in Japan, Berg, now alone, undertook travel adventures in Asia and Europe, bringing him to Berlin on January 30, 1933.

Named to a major league all-star that toured Japan in the autumn of 1934, Berg returned to Asia. Unlike Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and Jimmie Foxx, there were non-baseball reasons for the inclusion of Berg on this all-star team that played exhibition games in Japan. Berg, under ambiguous circumstances, absented himself from the Friday, November 29, 1934, American-Japanese all-star game. Instead, dressed in a black kimono, Berg traveled incognito to St. Luke’s International Hospital in Tokyo, climbed the steps to the hospital rooftop and surreptitiously filmed industrial, fuel, military, transportation and government facilities – footage that General Jimmy Doolittle, eight years later, may have employed during his inaugural air raid of the Japanese mainland.

Even after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Berg felt a great affinity for Japan and its people. On February 24, 1942, by powerful shortwave radio, Berg – purportedly at the request of the U.S. government – addressed the Japanese people in their own language “as a friend” who “found much to admire” in their history, character and culture, but who, now in the midst of military conflict, called upon them to reject their misguided warlords.

Despite intellectual gifts that potentially provided more lucrative options, Berg, secretive and mysterious, chose to devote 15 seasons (1923, 1926-39) to MLB as a weak hitting, but good defensive backup catcher on five different teams, as well as serving a stint as a Boston Red Sox bullpen coach (1940-41). In addition to the Red Sox, Berg played for the Brooklyn Robins, Chicago White Sox, Cleveland Indians and Washington Senators. With a career batting average of .243, the “good field, no hit” journeyman set the American League record, since eclipsed, of catching 117 games without an error.

A gifted intellectual, Berg numbered Albert Einstein amongst his discussion partners. From foreign-language newspapers to scholarly monographs, he was an omnivorous reader. As an undergraduate at Princeton, Berg won acclaim for baseball and linguists, yet remained a loner. He continued his linguistic studies at the Sorbonne, gaining mastery of diverse languages, and earned a law degree from Columbia University. Displays of erudition, burnished by stellar appearances on the popular radio quiz show “Information, Please!” and authorship of a literary and insightful baseball article, “Pitchers and Catchers,” for the highbrow Atlantic Monthly magazine, granted Berg a certain niche celebrity, the catcher as intellectual.

During World War II, Berg served as a spy for the United States Office of Strategic Services, the precursor to the CIA. Under its legendary founding director, “Wild Bill” Donovan, the OSS recruited talented intelligence agents with unconventional backgrounds, including the young historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., future celebrity cooking guru Julia Childs and a former baseball catcher, able to keep secrets and possessed of linguistic expertise.

Berg’s highest priority OSS assignment was to determine Nazi Germany’s progress in developing an atomic bomb. Possession of nuclear weapons would have potentially enabled Hitler to reverse Nazi fortunes, inflict massive destruction and win World War II.

Monitoring German and Italian scientists to secure information exposed Berg to peril, at times bringing him into militarily contested areas amidst hostile fire. His espionage activities yielded significant data and important contacts. Berg’s relationship with the Italian scientist Antonio Ferri culminated in the latter’s relocation to the United States, where he became an important asset to the Allied cause.

The physicist Werner Heisenberg directed Germany’s nuclear research. It was essential for U.S. intelligence to know how close Heisenberg was to presenting Hitler with an operational atomic bomb; Berg was charged with this task. When Heisenberg lectured at Zurich’s Federal Institute of Technology in neutral Switzerland on December 18, 1944, Berg sat in the lecture hall in the guise of a graduate student and then eavesdropped on the scientist’s post-presentation chats at the university and at a dinner party. Berg even managed to accompany a solitary Heisenberg on a nocturnal stroll. Concealing a pistol to assassinate Heisenberg should the scientist suggest that completion of Germany’s atomic project was imminent, Berg also carried a lethal cyanide tablet to commit suicide to preclude his own capture. Once Heisenberg privately acknowledged his assessment that Germany would lose the war, Berg knew that Nazi atomic research was not near completion. Ultimately, neither the pistol nor the cyanide was necessary.

The stress of his wartime espionage work contributed to changes in Berg’s personality. During the final 27 years of his life, Berg grew more reclusive, eccentric, aberrant and financially insecure. Sworn to secrecy concerning his OSS heroics, Berg rejected the Medal of Freedom; the accompanying certificate noted “exceptionally meritorious service of high valor to the war effort.” During his lifetime, the specifics of Berg’s dangerous spy assignments were not known to the general public.

Familial antecedents, history and identity, rather than theology or institutional affiliation, defined Berg’s Judaism. His father, Bernard, distanced the family from Judaism through residence in a Gentile neighborhood, assertive assimilation and non-ethnic association. This left Berg to be identified – and discriminated against – as a Jew by the world without giving him a clear sense of what it meant to be a Jew. At age 7, Berg played baseball for a church team under the name Runt Wolfe. At Princeton, Berg refused an invitation to join an elite eating club when told that a condition of membership was that he would not nominate another Jew for membership. Berg’s implacable commitment to the defeat of the Third Reich related both to his American and Jewish identities. As a Jewish spy in wartime Europe, he confronted mortal danger. At journey’s end, Berg’s cremated ashes were deposited in Israel, proximate to Mount Scopus, overlooking Jerusalem.

Bill Simons is a professor of history at SUNY Oneonta, whose course offerings include sport and ethnic history. He is also the co-director of The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture, and served as a speaker for the New York Council on the Humanities.

Social. . . . Continued from page 2

- ◆ Videos of the Rosh Chodesh Virtual Lunch ‘n Learn Series offered by the Orthodox Union’s Women’s Initiative can be found at www.ou.org/women/video/.
- ◆ The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism will hold a “Summer Book Discussion Series with Park Avenue Synagogue: Houdini: The Elusive American.” The free virtual events will take place on Wednesday, August 12, from noon-1:30 pm. Author Adam Begley will explore the life of Houdini. For more information or to register, visit <https://uscj.org/connect/jewish-lives-summer-with-park-avenue-synagogue-houdini-the-elusive-american>.
- ◆ The Jewish Lives is a prizewinning series of interpretative biographies that explore Jewish identity. Individual volumes seek to illuminate the imprint of Jewish figures upon literature, religion, philosophy, politics, cultural and economic life, and the arts and sciences. The website offers videos of its authors talking about their books, which can be found at www.jewishlives.org/video.
- ◆ Jewish Book Week will hold the virtual program “The Sanest Guy in the Room: Don Black in conversation with Michael Grade” on Thursday, July 23, from 2-3 pm. Don Black, who is one of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s frequent collaborators, has won an Oscar, a Golden Globe, a Tony and an Ivor Novello Award, as well as platinum, gold and silver disks. He will talk to Michael Grade about working with Michael Jackson, Quincy Jones, Henry Mancini, Lulu and Lloyd Webber. To register for the program, visit <https://mailchi.mp/jewishbookweek/the-sanest-guy-in-the-room>.
- ◆ Kivunim Online is offering several weeks of classes aimed at “challenging people intellectually, philosophically and spiritually – to face the present armed with the wisdom of the past – and build a future on pillars of critical thought and sustainable coexistence.” Classes are on Mondays and Thursdays at 1 pm. The second week of four weeks of classes takes place July 20-23. For information about specific classes and to register, visit <https://www.kivunimonline.org>.
- ◆ ALEPH will hold “Erev Shel Kochavim: An Evening of Stars | ALEPH Virtual Cabaret Fundraiser” on Sunday, July 19, at 7 pm. The program fee is “pay what you can.” The event will feature the teachers and performers from the ALEPH Movement. For more information, visit <https://aleph.org/virtualcabaret>.

For additional resources, see previous issues of *The Reporter* on its website, www.thereporter.org.



On the Jewish food scene

Honoring biblical women with food

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

When I graduated from college and was given a monetary gift and told to buy something for my new, non-student apartment, I, of course, chose books. In the years before the Internet, some books were vital. Since I already had a dictionary, the other necessities were my own copy of “The Reader’s Encyclopedia” and a book containing opera plots. (I’ve never been a fan of listening to opera on CD or radio, but I loved the stage performances – and, in those pre-supertitle days, a basic understanding of the story felt necessary.) I also had one cookbook: “The Settlement Cookbook.” Why? Because in addition to recipes, it also told you how to do the basics, for example, the time it takes to cook a chicken or how to cook every imaginable kind of egg.

That was the only real cookbook I had for years. Since I was on a medically restricted diet, I learned to adjust and adapt recipes to fit my needs. For example, I used to make Bisquick impossible pies from recipes I found in magazines, only I did it without the Bisquick – substituting whole wheat flour and other ingredients. I also managed

to make whole wheat biscuits from scratch by adapting a recipe that used white flour. In those days, there were few books that catered to those on specific diets. In fact, in those days, being on a healthy diet was considered weird. I even had people feel insulted when I said I couldn’t eat their food. (My motto, that I usually didn’t say out loud, was: You’ll feel bad about it, but I’m the one who’ll be sick and I hate being sick.)

It would have been wonderful in those days to have had a cookbook like “Feeding Women of the Bible. Feeding Ourselves: Uplifting Voices of Hebrew Biblical Heroines and Honoring Them With Simple Plant-Based Recipes” compiled by Kenden Alford (Turner Publishing Company). Alford is best known for her website Jewish Food Hero, <https://jewishfoodhero.com/>. I might not have been as interested in the sections on Jewish women then as I am now, but I would have appreciated the recipes and beautiful photographs that accompany them.

The work is really a group effort: different women write about the 20 biblical women Alford features. Each section features the

story of the woman, a few relevant verses from the Bible, different themes found in the story and the writer’s commentary on those themes. The sections conclude with questions readers can ask themselves or debate with others. Following this are two recipes – from a variety of individuals or from the Jewish Food Hero website – that connect to the biblical story. The recipes range from appetizers to desserts, with some beverages included. One could stage several meals by combining the different recipes. There are too many to list, but some of the ones that appealed to me are “Curried Winter Squash and Apple Soup,” “Roasted Eggplant with Tomato, Onion, and Za’atar,” “Galette with Pesto, Summer Squash, and Cherry Tomatoes” and “Chinese Tofu Matzo Balls in Tianjin Sweet and Sour Sauce.” Even though I’m not familiar with all the spices used in them, they are definitely something I would try if offered them in a restaurant.

The beauty of these recipes is that they are vegan, meaning they are all kosher *pareve* (neither meat, milk or fish-based

and can appeal to Jews from all branches of Judaism. Some of the writers come from liberal Jewish backgrounds, while others are Orthodox. All profits from the work are being donated to Jewish non-profit organizations each year.

I enjoyed reading the sections about the biblical women, which offered interesting and sometimes unusual ideas, and looking at the recipes. I have to confess that I haven’t made any of them yet, although I would love to try them – meaning I would be happy to eat the result of someone else’s cooking. It’s not that they’re difficult: it’s more that I tend to stick to the recipes I already know. OK, I also don’t do much complex cooking. However, this book would make a perfect gift for a friend who loves to cook. It could also be used as part of a cooking club, where people read sections of the book and discuss them while eating the food relevant to those biblical women. I imagine that would be great fun. If you enjoy vegan recipes or are interested in biblical women, Alford manages to combine the two in a book that’s beautiful to look at and fun to read.



Off the Shelf

Imagining and re-imagining biblical characters

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

One answer to the question of why there are so many different interpretations of the biblical text is that people are intrigued by the gaps in the stories – the parts that are either not clear or left out. Everyone from the ancient rabbis to contemporary novelists wants to fill in these gaps by answering such questions as, why did the character do or say that? What was he feeling or what was she thinking? The best works challenge the way we view the text and give us new ways to explore not only the lessons the text offers, but the way we think about our own lives. Two recent non-fiction works offer unusual approaches to their biblical subjects. While “Cain V. Abel: A Jewish Courtroom Drama” by Rabbi Dan Ornstein (The Jewish Publication Society) uses a trial format to explore the world’s first killing, Jean-Christophe Attias offers an exploration and meditation on the life of Moses in “A Woman Called Moses: A Prophet for Our Times” (Verso).

Ornstein believes the story of Cain and Abel can help readers – Jews and non-Jews – better understand “what it means to be human, how we might control our worst impulses, and what responsibilities we bear for one another.” For readers unfamiliar with the text, he outlines the basic story: Cain and Abel offer sacrifices to God. Abel’s is accepted; Cain’s is not. God sees that Cain is upset and warns him against sinning. Then the two brothers are in the field together. Something happens, although the text doesn’t say exactly what, and Cain kills Abel. When God comes looking for Abel, he asked Cain about his brother’s whereabouts. Cain answers with one of the most famous lines in the Bible: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” God then hears Abel’s blood cry from the ground and condemns Cain to wander the earth forever.

In order to explore different interpretations of what occurred in the field, Ornstein offers a trial whose purpose is to determine a) whether or not Cain should be held solely responsible for Abel’s death and b) what would be a just punishment for the world’s first killing, especially given that God has not yet explicitly outlawed murder. Although the biblical story speaks only of the two brothers and God, Ornstein offers a wider range of those who could be responsible for what occurred. That means that a character known as Sin, in addition to Adam and Eve, are called to that stand. Also speaking are ancient rabbinic sages and medieval rabbis who offer their own interpretations, even when they contradict each other.

While not everyone will agree with the

way that the trial is presented, this difference of opinion offers readers their first opportunity to come to their own conclusions about the case. For example, the choice of Sin as a character, rather than an internal part of a person, is interesting: Sin is presented as ugly and deformed, an interpretation from other Jewish texts, although some might believe Sin should be beautiful and seductive. God, who is also called to the stand, walks out of the courtroom – refusing to answer questions. God’s refusal to explain decisions is discussed in other *midrash*. (The details of this *midrash* can be found in “A Woman Called Moses.”) Cain refuses to speak – remaining mute through the trial, although the reason for this is questioned by the court.

The most controversial decision Ornstein makes is that of Cain’s parentage: his version has Eve conceiving Cain not with Adam, but with an angel. (There are *midrash* that support this idea.) Eve’s marked preference for Cain is said to have soured his relationship with Abel, as did Adam’s refusal to treat Cain as his son. This was the most difficult idea for me to accept, but it made me consider the relationship – or lack of relationship – the first couple had with their children. There are no tales of their early childhood; there is also no mention of Adam and Eve in the text that describes the sacrifices their sons made and the aftermath. This also led me to consider what happened to this family and the lessons we can learn from their story. This is why I loved Ornstein’s suggestion about the mark God placed on Cain at the jury’s request: “We would like the mark of Cain to be mirrors. This way, every time one of us encounters Cain, we will stop. We will look closely and see a reflection... of ourselves.”

“Cain V. Abel” also contains a question and activities guide to help readers reflect on the story. The book would be perfect for study groups or use in a classroom setting. Some readers might want to act out the dramatic scenes: I imagine they would be quite powerful if heard aloud. For those looking for a different take on the biblical story of the first human family will find much of interest.

While Ornstein’s work has a clear focus and purpose, the same cannot be said for Attias’ meandering, but sometimes fascinating, look at Moses. The English title is misleading: the French title “Moshe Fragile” – which can be translated as brittle, fragile or delicate Moses – better suits his work. Attias is not interested in the heroic version of Moses, but rather the humble, insecure man. In addition, he doesn’t care whether or

not Moses actually existed. He borrows an idea from the writer Ahad Ha’am about the biblical character: “Even if scholars proved that ‘Moses the man’ never existed, or was never as taught by the Tradition, the ‘ideal’ Moses – ‘our Moses,’ as [Ha’am] called him – would remain the central figure in the Jewish collective imaginary.”

Attias also uses *midrash*, but, in his case, it serves as a springboard for his own ideas. He seems to most enjoy when he finds rabbinic tales that support his fragile version of Moses. What he really wants is understand Moses as a human being – as a real, flesh and blood human being – one in whom

See “Biblical” on page 8

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Mattot-Masei, Number 30:2-36:13

Journeys

RABBI LEVI Y. SLONIM, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND CHABAD DOWNTOWN,
ROHR CHABAD CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDENT LIFE AT BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY

Days, weeks, months, and seasons: They all kind of blend together in this new reality we have all been thrust into with the COVID-19 outbreak. As always, we turn to the Torah for timeless and timely wisdom to help us navigate the situation and find some meaningful lessons.

In the first 50 verses of chapter 33 in this week's Torah portion, there is a lengthy description and delineation of the travels by the Jewish people over the course of almost 40 years in the desert.

The majority of the *parasha*, however, seems to be addressing the future – what is to happen when the Jewish people cross the Jordan into the promised land, how they

should conquer and then divide the land, the boundaries of the land, etc. The lengthy enumeration of all 42 encampments of the Jewish people in the dessert would seem to be more appropriately placed in the previous *parasha* rather than in this one that is forward looking in focus.

Yet that seems to be exactly the lesson we are meant to glean: every now and then – and especially before embarking on a significant change such as entering the land of Israel – we need to take a step back and reflect on our past – on our various “encampments” – and recognize the blessings inherent in everything that transpires.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that the 42 journeys of the

Jewish people through the desert correspond to the 42 “spiritual journeys” that we must each undertake throughout life. If we choose good over evil, we will indeed live through these phases of life in the way that God intends. If, like the generation of the desert, we make some mistakes along the way, we will experience them as temporary setbacks and recognize that even the setbacks can be transformed into positive, growth oriented experiences.

As we reflect on the past few months, just as the Jews reflected on their 42 journeys through the dessert, it is important to appreciate the blessings of God – all that God has **See “Journeys” on page 8**

Congregational Notes

Temple Israel

Orientation: Conservative
Rabbi: Geoffrey Brown
Address: 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: 723-7461 and 231-3746
Office hours: Mon.-Thurs., 8:30 am-3:30 pm; Fri., 8 am-3 pm
E-mail: titammy@stny.twcbc.com
Website: www.templeisraelvestal.org

Service Schedule: Tues., 5:30 pm; Fri., 5:30 pm; Sat., 9:30 am
On Fridays and Tuesdays at 5:30 pm, services will be led by Rabbi Geoffrey Brown via Zoom.

On Saturday, July 18, Shacharit services will be held at 10:30 am via Zoom. The Torah portion is Numbers 30:2-36:13 and the haftarah is Jeremiah 2:4-28 and 3:4. At 9:30 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom. Both will be led by Rabbi Geoffrey Brown.

On Sunday, July 19, at noon, Rabbi Geoffrey Brown will lead Torah study services via Zoom.

On Saturday, July 25, Shacharit services will be held at 10:30 am via Zoom. The Torah portion is Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22 and the haftarah is Isaiah 1:1-27. At 9:15 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom. Both will be led by Rabbi Geoffrey Brown.

On Sunday, July 26, at noon, Rabbi Geoffrey Brown will lead Torah study services via Zoom.

The temple office will be closed on Wednesday July 29. Temple Israel is collecting for CHOW during regular business hours. Buzz to enter the first set of doors to access the bin between the two sets of glass doors at the entrance.

Penn-York Jewish Community

President-Treasurer-Secretary: Harvey Chernosky, 570-265-3869
B'nai B'rith: William H. Seigel Lodge
Purpose: To promote Jewish identity through religious, cultural, educational and social activities in the Southern Tier of New York and the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania, including Waverly, NY; Sayre, Athens and Towanda, PA, and surrounding communities.

Congregation 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: Lauren Korfine and Shira Reisman
Rabbi: Brian Walt
Religious School Director/Admin. Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky
Services: Fridays at 7:30 pm unless otherwise noted. Intergenerational Shabbat, music services, and other special services. Call for the weekly schedule.
Religious School: Preschool through seventh-grade classes meet on Sunday mornings.
Sixth-grade Hebrew and seventh-grade b'nai mitzvah classes meet on Wednesday afternoons.
Adult Ed: Mini courses throughout the year. Adult Hebrew offered regularly. Call the office for details.

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: 797-0015, Fax: 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.

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.

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rabbi: Miriam T. Spitzer
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: rabbi@tbeithaca.org and secretary@tbeithaca.org
Website: www.tbeithaca.org
President: Randy Ehrenberg
Sisterhood President: Julie Paige
Director of Education: Rabbi Suzanne Brody
Administrative Assistant: Jane Griffith
Services: Fri. 8 pm; Sat. 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 Midrashah (eighth grade and high school) classes will meet at times designated by their respective teachers.
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.

Beth David Synagogue

Affiliation: Orthodox Union
Rabbi: Zev Silber
Address: 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905
Phone: 722-1793, Rabbi's Office: 722-7514
Fax: 722-7121
Office hours: Mon. closed; Tues. 10 am-1 pm; Wed. closed; Thurs. 9 am-1 pm; Fri. 10 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

Temple Beth El of Oneonta

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rabbi-Cantor: George Hirschfeld
Address: 83 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY 13820
Mailing address: P.O. Box 383, Oneonta, NY 13820
Phone: 607-432-5522
Website: www.templebetheloneonta.org
E-mail: TBEOneonta@gmail.com
Regular service times: visit the temple website 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, see the website.

Kol Haverim

Affiliation: Society for Humanistic Judaism
Address: P.O. Box 4972, Ithaca, NY 14852-4972
Phone: 607-277-3345
E-mail: info@kolhaverim.net
Website: www.kolhaverim.net
Chairwoman: Abby Cohn
Kol Haverim: The Finger Lakes Community for Humanistic Judaism, is an Ithaca-based organization that brings people together to explore and celebrate Jewish identity, history, culture and ethics within a secular, humanistic framework. KH is part of an international movement for Secular Humanistic Judaism and is affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism, a national association with over 30 member communities and congregations around the country. Established in the spring of 1999, it offers celebrations of Jewish holidays, monthly Shabbat pot-lucks, adult education, a twice-monthly Cultural School for children, and a bar and bat mitzvah program. KH welcomes all individuals and families, including those from mixed religious backgrounds, who wish to strengthen the Jewish experience in their lives and provide their children with a Jewish identity and experience.

Friday, July 17, light candles before 8:18 pm
Saturday, July 18, Shabbat ends 9:17 pm
Friday, July 24, light candles before 8:12 pm
Saturday, July 25, Shabbat ends 9:11 pm
Friday, July 31, light candles before 8:05 pm
Saturday, August 1, Shabbat ends 9:04 pm

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Rabbi: Barbara Goldman-Wartell
Address: 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905
Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm
Phone: 723-7355, Fax: 723-0785
Office e-mail: TempleConcordbinghamton@gmail.com
Website: www.templeconcord.com
Regular service times: Friday, 8 pm; Saturday, 10:35 am, when religious school is in session.
Hebrew school: Hebrew school meets at 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the school year unless otherwise noted.

All services and programs are online only. Friday night Shabbat services will start at 7 pm for the month of July.

Friday, July 17: Shabbat services with Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell at 7 pm. To attend, visit <https://binghamton.zoom.us/j/97613250758>, or call 1-929-205-6099 and enter meet ID #976 1325 0758 and password 610020, or visit www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Saturday, July 19: Torah study at 9:15 am at <https://binghamton.zoom.us/j/342411102>, or by calling 1-929-205-6099 and entering meeting ID #342411 102. “Havdalah with a Bonus” at 7 pm at <https://binghamton.zoom.us/j/526246866>, or by calling 929-205-6099 and entering meeting ID #526 246 866, or at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Tuesday, July 21: Zoom Talmud study at 7 pm with Rabbi Amy Scheinerman. Register in advance for the Tuesday meetings with this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZMtcO-sqjotH9Xbq11k-3FZuB2dBa8KX9jj>.

Thursday, July 23: Zoom Talmud study at noon with Rabbi Amy Scheinerman.

Register in advance for the Thursday meetings with this link: <https://binghamton.zoom.us/join/register/tJElf-CgrTgoHdfyNJ8VpZBSmTQOHa43bC4j>.

Friday, July 24: Shabbat services with Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell at 7 pm at <https://binghamton.zoom.us/j/97613250758>, or by calling 929-205-6099 and entering meeting ID #976 1325 0758 and password 610020, or at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Saturday, July 25: Torah study at 9:15 am at <https://binghamton.zoom.us/j/342411102>, or by calling 1-929-205-6099 and entering meeting ID #342411 102. “Havdalah with a Bonus” at 7 pm at <https://binghamton.zoom.us/j/526246866>, or by calling 929-205-6099 and entering meeting ID #526 246 866, or at www.facebook.com/templeconcord/.

Wednesday, July 29: Erev Tisha B'Av program led by Rabbi Rachel Esserman and Barbara Goldman-Wartell at 8 pm at <https://binghamton.zoom.us/j/94889708306?pwd=cERXMjJEMFhFQmQ1d2ppUzFZT1hodz09>. For more information, see related article on page 3 of this issue of *The Reporter*.

Norwich Jewish Center

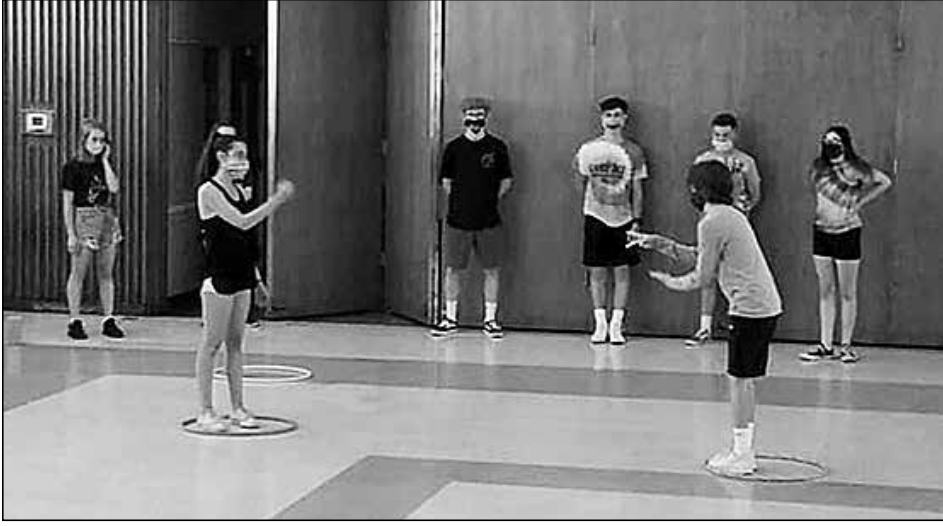
Orientation: Inclusive
Rabbi: David Regenspan
Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815
Contact: Guilia Greenberg, 336-1523
Purpose: To maintain a Jewish identity and meet the needs of the Jewish community in the area.
Adult Ed.: Saturday morning study is held at 10 am. Call for more information and to confirm.

Temple Brith Shalom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated
Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045
Phone: 607-756-7181
President: Bruce Fein, 607-423-3346
Service leaders: Lay leadership
Shabbat services: Either Friday evening at 7:30 pm or Saturday at 10 am from Rosh Hashanah to Shavuot. Holiday services are also held. Check the 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 Shalom is a small equalitarian congregation serving the greater Cortland community. Congregants span the gamut of observance and services are largely dependent on the service leader. The Friday night siddur is “Likrat Shabbat,” while the Saturday morning siddur is “Gates of Prayer.” The community extends a warm welcome to the Jewish student population of SUNY Cortland, as well as the residents of local adult residences.

Jewish Community Center

Fun in the sun at Camp JCC



Camp JCC's counselors participated in training exercises the week of June 29.



Campers lined up for an activity during the first week of Camp JCC 2020.



Campers worked on a project during an art class at Camp JCC.



A group of campers took a break for lunch at Camp JCC.

Meeting.....

Continued from page 1

screen sharing, but learning to use these in the moment has its challenges," she added. "I am always grateful that people are willing to spend their time attending an event or meeting. I want to be mindful that they are having a good experience. So, when there is a bad connection on a Zoom call or there are struggles to run the technology smoothly, I am frustrated. Given all this, I am satisfied that we have the Zoom technology. I think having a meeting or event via Zoom will be, in some fashion, part of your new culture when the pandemic is over."

Rabbi Zev Silber, spiritual leader of Beth David Synagogue, wrote that he was completely unfamiliar with the technology before institutions had to close. "Before the pandemic hit I had never heard of Zoom!" he said. "When someone mentioned that perhaps I can do things on Zoom, I didn't know what she was talking about. Then my kids told me that they were teaching on Zoom and that the grandchildren were having classes via Zoom, so I checked it out."

Using the new technology was not as difficult as he expected. "Not being very computer savvy, I spent a short amount of time looking [online] at the information on line and thought that I'd give it a try, and I surprised myself that I was able to use it," he noted. "I know that I do not how to take

advantage of all that it offers, but I mastered the basics quite easily and found it friendly. Not familiar with other platforms, I would not venture to talk about Zoom's strengths and weaknesses nor compare it to others."

He is grateful the Zoom allows him to communicate with his congregants. "What I feel comfortable in saying is that each time I give a class on Zoom or participate in a meeting, I thank God for the wisdom He gave us that has allowed us to create the technology to have a way to communicate with others, even while we must remain physically isolated and distant," he added. "I can't imagine how difficult life would be if we didn't have this ability and had to remain totally isolated from friends, family and others."

While Silber realizes how important virtual communication is during this time, he believes it cannot replace coming together in person. "Isolation is necessary to save lives, and we are fortunate to have ways to make it bearable and preserve much of our mental health during this difficult time, and be able to save even more lives!" he said. "Baruch Hashem! Yet, there is no comparison between communication via Zoom and actual face to face, and the personal touch that real life provides. The services, the classes, the meetings, while productive

and effective, are all missing much that is necessary for human interaction and I look forward to those resuming in a safe way."

Rachel Coker, immediate past president of Temple Concord and the chairwoman of The Reporter Editorial Committee, has used virtual meeting places for professional and personal events, for example, synagogue board meetings and the bat mitzvah of her daughter, Charlotte. She sees the advantages and disadvantages in using virtual meetings rooms. "As a volunteer and leader in the local Jewish community, Zoom has been essential for things like board meetings," she wrote. "It's not ideal, particularly for people with hearing impairments, but it's better than the phone, I think."

She noted that Temple Concord has been using Zoom for its Friday night services since New York State restricted gatherings. "We've had some technical hiccups along the way, but I think we've developed a combination of slides, prayers and, recently, a cantorial soloist—that provides an acceptable worship experience," she wrote. "It is missing the warmth of greeting friends, hearing about their week, sharing a snack at the *oneg* and so forth. Of course, I do long for those things, still."

She was very pleased, though, with her daughter's virtual bat mitzvah. "Zoom enabled friends and relatives all over the world (literally!) to join us for my daughter's bat mitzvah in May," she noted. "That's definitely my most significant Zoom experience! The day was wonderful, even though it was nothing like we had planned back in the pre-pandemic days. We're lucky to have Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell leading us at this challenging point. She was very flexible and worked with us so that at least our immediate family could be in the sanctuary for the service."

One advantage was having people who couldn't travel to Binghamton be able to view and participate in the event. "We were pleased to have people participate in the service remotely who couldn't travel to Binghamton

safely," she added. "Other guests wouldn't have been able to come from faraway places, including London and Nairobi, so the technology actually brought us together at a time that we wouldn't have expected it to be possible. My daughter felt good about the day and I was so glad it retained its significance and spiritual meaning for her and for so many people who participated."

Coker noted that "the plus sides of Zoom include the feeling that you're 'seeing' the other participants and that you're at least sort of in a room together. It's not a terrible way to deliver or to watch a presentation, for example. The negatives include worrying about technology (are we on mute? are they on mute? did we advance the slides at the right time?) vs. focusing on content (the prayer or the message)."

While she noted the advantages of using Zoom during the pandemic, she also mentioned that she still misses meeting with people in person. "In general, I'm grateful for the technology that has helped to stitch our community together at a time of extreme crisis," she wrote. "I work full time and I do sometimes suffer from a bit of 'Zoom fatigue.' After a day of meetings held via videoconferencing, it can be difficult to summon the energy and enthusiasm for another meeting in the evening. I now try to limit the number of nights with Zoom commitments in any given week."

Reopening.....

Continued from page 1

each time permission is granted for a particular type of activity to restart we must create a mitigation health and safety plan which guarantees that everyone will be wearing the proper personal protective equipment, that we are performing health checks before anyone enters the building, that we have enough room to ensure proper social distancing, that our staff will be diligently following all of the cleaning and disinfecting guidelines put in place by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and we will fully cooperate with the Health Department in the occurrence of a contamination.

"It is definitely financially challenging, to say the least, but even more so is how overwhelming the whole process is," she added. "However, we want you to know that our number one priority is to reopen our facilities as soon as possible and we are doing everything humanly possible in order to make this happen. We'd like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for sticking with us through all of this and we are looking forward to seeing you very soon."

For more information, contact the JCC at 724-2417.

Visit us on the web at www.thereporter.org

Community Calendar

The Community Calendar can be found on the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton's website, www.jfgb.org, by clicking on "calendar." Updates or additions of events can be made by contacting the Federation through its website (click on "calendar" and then "click here to request a change to the calendar") or by calling 724-2332.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Court rejects Amnesty petition to revoke export license of Israeli spyware firm

The Tel Aviv District Court ruled on July 13 against an Amnesty International petition to cancel the export license of the Israel-based technology company NSO Group, whose spyware, Pegasus, enables the remote surveillance of smartphones. Amnesty International filed the petition in January, claiming that “NSO Group, the Israeli company marketing its technology in the fight against COVID-19, contributed to a sustained campaign by the government of Morocco to spy on Moroccan journalist Omar Radi,” a human-rights activist critical of the powers-that-be in Rabat. The court explained its ruling in favor of NSO on the grounds that the granting of export licenses in Israel “is done after the most rigorous process,” and that even after an export license is granted to a company, it is subjected to oversight and inspection.

Israel’s nurses threaten general strike over manpower shortage

The Israel Nurses Association threatened a general strike on July 12 over what it claims are worsening work conditions caused by the coronavirus crisis. “We are collapsing,” INA head Ilana Cohen wrote in a letter to Finance Minister Israel Katz. “If we do not immediately receive extra manpower, we will strike,” Ynet reported. Cohen also complained that hospitals purchased ventilators “but did not train nurses to operate them.” The reopening of hospitals’ coronavirus wards as a result of a second-wave outbreak, emergency rooms filled with COVID-19-infected patients and the quarantine of many nurses all have exacerbated the manpower shortage that nurses say they already faced before the start of the pandemic. According to the Health Ministry, 757 nurses were in quarantine as of July 12, as compared with 124 exactly one month ago, which is an increase of more than 500 percent. As of the afternoon of July 13, Israel registered 19,300 active cases of coronavirus, with 47 patients on ventilators and a death toll of 362.

Israeli Air Force unveils joint special-forces wing for “enhanced capability”

The Israeli Air Force on July 13 unveiled a new squadron of joint special forces, united under a single umbrella. The units that will be part of the “Wing 7” squadron are the Airborne Combat Unit, Search and Rescue Unit 669 (“Shaldag”) and the Frontal Landing Unit. The new wing will include an Intelligence unit and a school for Special Forces. “We are in times of regional change, with a global pandemic and a battlefield becoming more complex every day,” said IAF Commander Maj. Gen. Amikam Norkin during the opening ceremony at the Palmachim Air Force Base, where Wing 7 will be housed. “Our commanders understand that these changes force us to adapt to the challenges that the future holds. There is an enhanced capability that makes our special forces more effective in combat, more influential in building our aerial superiority and a more significant part of every process within the IAF.” The Israeli Air Force faces a number of challenges, among them the threats posed by Hamas in Gaza, Iranian presence in Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Israel’s energy minister: Impose 10-day nationwide lockdown

Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz has called for a 10-day nationwide lockdown to combat the sharp rise in coronavirus infections. In an interview on July 13 with Ynet, Steinitz said he believes that the country should enforce a closure, while still allowing Israelis to work. He said that the government was too quick to reopen the economy in May, following the first nationwide lockdown in April, and did not invest enough in enforcing public-health directives. Regarding Israel’s omission from the list of countries with a low COVID-19 infection rate, which means that Israeli visitors and tourists are banned from entering Europe, Steinitz said that it is “essential to the economy” that Israel remain connected to the rest of the world. Steinitz said that being disconnected from Europe and the rest of the world for “more than two or three months” will damage “the basic mechanisms of the economy. ... Aerial disconnection from the world is financially dangerous,” he said. “Sometimes it is better to make it difficult for ourselves for two weeks, in order to make it easier for the rest of the year.” Thousands of Israelis demonstrated in Tel Aviv on July 11, protesting what they call Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s failure to address economic woes brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. With economic stress deepening in recent weeks, many Israelis believe that the government has not done enough to compensate hundreds of thousands of workers

Journeys Continued from page 6

provided us throughout this strange period in time. While it was no doubt a challenge on so many levels, for the most part we have our health and happiness to be thankful for. And, as we reflect on the choices we have made, we need to take stock, take lessons

for the future and determination to do even better in our future “journeys and encampments.” That is, after all, how we get to the promised land.

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Biblical Continued from page 5

“greatness and humility are one.” The author believes “[Moses’] humility is his strength. But his strength never overrides his frailty. For Moses, because he is a man, may die any moment, leaving his mission unfilled.”

The author is not the only one to see Moses in this light. The idea of Moses as a woman can be found in Rashi’s commentary when he tries to explain a biblical verse that uses a feminine pronoun to refer to Moses. The details are of less interest than the way Attias sees Moses as having a maternal role in his dealings with the Israelites. This is also a Moses who complains about the burden of caring for these people – a Moses who does not want to be responsible for God’s people – one who reminds God that the Israelites are “thy people.”

Moses is perhaps at his most human when God not only refuses to allow him to enter the Promised Land, but to write of his own death. Attias has a rather clever way of showing how God tricked Moses into performing the deed – striking a rock, rather than speaking to it – that made it possible for

God to refuse him entrance. (The details are too complex to repeat in a short review, but they are interesting and unusual.) However, the most fascinating point Attias makes is showing how Moses might have guessed that he would never enter the land: After the refusal of the Israelites to first enter the land of Canaan, God declares that the generation of slaves must wander in the wilderness and die before the next generation can take possession of the land. Only Caleb, Joshua and the descendants of the slaves will be able to enter. Nowhere is mention made of Moses, something Moses does not seem to question. In fact, it is as if Moses assumes that he will, of course, be included – something that makes his exclusion even more bitter.

“A Woman Called Moses” is less a systematic discussion of Moses in the Bible than it is an exploration of the many different possibilities found in the story. Attias notes that the important thing is the questioning, not the answer. He also suggests that Moses’ humility could be a lesson for all humankind – for ourselves and our leaders.

who lost their jobs as a result of restrictions and shutdowns. Unemployment has surged more than 20 percent since the start of the coronavirus crisis.

Former Lebanese minister: Hezbollah needs to be dismantled

(MEMRI via JNS) – Lebanese politician Dr. Ahmed Fatfat, former minister of youth and sports, said in a July 4 interview on MTV (Lebanon) that all the militias in his country – first and foremost Hezbollah – should be dismantled in accordance with the Taif Agreement and the Lebanese constitution. He said that in his view, Hezbollah has carried out acts of terrorism and is Lebanon’s main problem. He added that it is preventing any reforms in the country from taking place. Furthermore, he said, Hezbollah is not a legitimate political party; that it is occupying Lebanon and its political decision-making process; that it believes in Iran’s Rule of Jurisprudence, rather than the Lebanese Constitution; and that its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, is effectively the person ruling Lebanon. Born to one of the biggest families in Danniye, Fatfat holds a degree in medicine.

Report: Senior Hamas commander flees Gaza on IDF boat

A senior Hamas commander escaped from the Gaza Strip aboard an Israel Defense Forces boat on July 11. The commander, from Hamas’s military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, is said to have commanded the terrorist organization’s naval commando unit, and is suspected in the Gaza Strip of collaborating with Israel, reported Israel’s Channel 12 on July 11. The report, based on Palestinian media sources, said the senior commander had escaped with a laptop containing “dangerous classified materials,” along with money and listening devices. The sources also said that this was the second senior Hamas commander recently suspected of collaborating with Israel. The previous suspect, identified only as “Mohammed,” was in charge of the Palestinian factions’ networks in the Sajaiya neighborhood of Gaza and trained Hamas terrorists. According to the sources, the latest suspect began cooperating with Israel as early as 2009 and his alleged ties with Israel were revealed of late, when he asked his brother to collect money for him and leave it near a trash can. That brother was captured by the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. The sources said that Hamas was “hysterical” in the light of the discovery and launched a series of arrest raids of suspects. The Channel 12 report comes on the heels of a news story published a week earlier in the Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese newspaper, *Al-Ahbar*, according to which Hamas revealed a “dangerous plot by Israeli intelligence services” to carry out attacks against Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip, and that Hamas arrested a number of ISIS operatives planning to carry out suicide-bombings in Gaza, using explosive belts and booby-trapped motorcycles.

Erdogan: Hagia Sophia “resurrection” harbinger for Al-Aqsa “liberation”

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed on July 10 that the “resurrection” of the ancient Hagia Sophia church in Istanbul as a mosque bodes well for the “liberation” of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. He made the declaration during an event in Istanbul marking the official conversion of Hagia Sophia into a Muslim house of worship. Hagia Sophia, a major tourist attraction listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site, was built as a church in 537 C.E. during the reign of Byzantine Emperor Justinian and became the seat of the Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople until the Ottoman invasion in 1453, when it was converted into a mosque. Then, following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, Turkey’s secular leader, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, converted the church-turned-mosque into a museum. Erdogan’s Islamist government has been planning to reverse the status of Hagia Sophia since 2013. According to the pro-government Turkish daily, *Yeni Safak*, Erdogan said during the ceremony that the “resurrection of Hagia Sophia was the harbinger of the liberation of Masjid al-Aqsa [Al-Aqsa Mosque] and footsteps of Muslims’ will to leave hard days behind.” Erdogan announced at the event that the mosque will be open for Friday prayers on July 24. His decision to reconvert Hagia Sophia into a mosque has been condemned by UNESCO, the United States, the European Union and the World Council of Churches. Erdogan frequently invokes the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem to rally support in the Muslim world.

U.S. House subcommittee passes \$250 million in funding for Palestinians

A U.S. House subcommittee included \$250 million in funding for Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and Palestinian business development in a \$66 billion spending bill passed earlier the week of July 10, despite the Trump administration defunding both areas. The House Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs passed the bill on July 6. It includes \$50 million annually over five years for dialogue programs and investment in the Palestinian private sector: \$110 million for the former and \$140 million for the latter. Additionally, bill seeks “to restore humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestinians to continue the viability of a two-state solution by providing resources to organizations working in the West Bank and Gaza,” said House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) in a statement introducing the bill. It also includes \$225 million for Palestinian relief and development, despite the Trump administration slashing funding in that category to virtually zero. Israel-related lobbying groups AIPAC and J Street have applauded the move. Restoring the aforementioned funding has bipartisan support. The bill now heads to the full Appropriations Committee, and then the House and Senate must reconcile the bill with the parallel Senate version.

Four-time Tour de France winner to head Israel’s national cycling team

Team Israel Start-Up Nation has announced that Chris Froome, a four-time Tour de France winner and one of the biggest names in the sport, has signed a long-term contract to lead the Jewish state’s cycling team. Team co-owner Sylvan Adams said this is a historic moment “for ISN, Israel, Israeli sports, our many fans all around the world and, of course, for me personally – a moment of enormous pride,” said team co-owner Sylvan Adams. “Chris is the best rider of his generation, and will lead our Tour de France and Grand Tour squad,” he continued. “We hope to make history together as he pursues further Tour de France and Grand Tour victories – achievements that would make a serious case for Chris to be considered the greatest cyclist of all time.” As for Froome, he said he looks forward “to challenging and being challenged” by the talent of the Israeli team. “ISN’s impact on the sport is rapidly expanding,” he said, “and I’m energized to be along for the ride. I feel we can achieve great things together.” Founded in 2015, Team Israel Start-Up Nation has rapidly grown into one of the world’s leading cycling teams in a short time. With the addition of Froome, the team aims to become a Grand Tour contender, which includes the three major professional cycling races: Giro d’Italia, the Tour de France and the Vuelta a España.

New York’s Jewish Week to move to digital publication

The *New York Jewish Week* is putting its print edition on hiatus, announced the 145-year-old publication on July 7. The last print edition is scheduled for July 31. Print news has struggled for years as technology takes over, and the Jewish news industry in particular has seen lower revenues and decreased pages. An announcement on its site noted that the coronavirus pandemic has damaged its revenue, and as such, the publication will transform into a digital news outlet starting in August.