

# THE REPORTER

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## Film Fest to hold virtual showing of "Neighbours"

By Reporter staff

The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of the drama "Neighbours," a film by writer/director Mano Khalil. The film won the San Francisco Film Critics Jury Prize as best film at the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival 2021. A discussion of "Neighbours" will be moderated by Dr. Dina Danon, associate professor of Judaic studies and Middle East and North Africa studies at Binghamton University.

People will be able to register on the Federation website, [www.jfjb.org](http://www.jfjb.org), and a link to the film will be sent out on Sunday night, February 6. The film will be streamed free for up to 50 computers and will be available for viewing for four days prior to the event. On Thursday, February 10, at 7 pm, Danon will facilitate the online video discussion of the film.

The film takes place in a small village on the Syrian-Turkish border in the early '80s and tells the story of Sero, a 6-year-old Kurdish boy, during his first year in Arab school. A new teacher in his school preaches anti-Zionism, which confuses Sero because of his connection to his longtime neighbors, a Jewish family. Critics have noted that "with a fine sense of humor and satire, the film tells of a childhood, which, between dictatorship and dark drama, also has its light moments."

Susan Hubal, chairwoman of the Film Fest Committee, said, "'Neighbours' is a gritty film combining a raw environment and cruelty with warmth, love and pathos.



It is based on the filmmaker's own history when he was a small, precocious child and rings sad, but true." The Jewish Film Review called the film "funny and emotionally uplifting. 'Neighbours' is an important humanistic work and a stunning achievement."

See "Film" on page 3



Sehed Khalil in a scene from "Neighbours." (Photo courtesy of Menemsha Films)

## Federation Alert Grants for religious institutions

By Suzanne Holwitt

At the January 19 Federation Board meeting, the board voted to accept a recommendation from the Endowment Committee to award a one-time grant of \$10,000 each to Temple Concord, Temple Israel, Beth David Synagogue and Chabad. This money would come from the Endowment Fund. These four institutions do not apply for, nor do they receive, allocations from Federation. But the Federation wanted to thank the members of the local community and each of these institutions for their continuing support of Federation over the years.

Michael Wright, chairman of the Endowment Committee, noted, "The members of the Endowment Committee rec-

ognize the very difficult and challenging times that every member of our community and all of our local institutions have been forced to confront and deal with over the last two years as a result of COVID, and we very much appreciate the continued strong support they have shown for our Federation. This was our way of giving back in a small, but meaningful, way to those institutions, which mean so much to our community, that do not receive an annual allocation from our Federation." Wright also said he wanted to thank every member of the Federation Board of Directors for supporting and approving these grants.

Suzanne Holwitt is the president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton.

## Evening of Jewish storytelling, poetry and music to be held virtually on Jan. 29

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca will host the annual "Evening of Jewish Storytelling, Poetry and Music" on Saturday, January 29, at 7:30 pm. The event will be held virtually. Register in advance by Friday, January 28, at <https://tinyurl.com/4askcxyz> and click on the invitation to access the registration link. For more information, contact the temple at 273-5775 or visit [www.tbethaca.org](http://www.tbethaca.org).

"The evening will be a celebration of life,

community and the arts," said organizers of the event. "This is our 23<sup>rd</sup> year of offering original stories, traditional tales, jokes, folk and contemporary poetry, and dynamic live music from around the world. This event has become extremely popular over the years, drawing participants together for an intimate and cozy evening; a real reminder of times past."

Organizers added, "Although we are

not able to be physically together this year, we will create an opportunity to enjoy the warmth of our community and richness of our heritage. With a virtual presentation, people who live in other locales can easily attend. There will be a mix of original poetry, personal stories and a solo trombone presentation by Ryan Zawel. Presenters represent a cross-section of our community. The event is family-friendly."

## Film Fest to hold virtual showing of "White Right" and "Masel Tov Cocktail"

By Reporter staff

The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of a documentary by Deeyah Kahn and the short film "Masel Tov Cocktail." Stephen A. Lisman, distinguished teaching professor emeritus in psychology at Binghamton University, will moderate a discussion of the films.

People will be able to register for links to the films and the discussion on the Federation website, [www.jfjb.org](http://www.jfjb.org). The films can be streamed at no cost and will



be available for viewing beginning Sunday, February 27. The viewing links will be viable until the discussion begins on Thursday, March 3, at 7 pm, when Lisman will facilitate the online video discussion of the film.

In "White Right: Meeting the Enemy" (55 minutes), Emmy Award-winning film-maker Deeyah Khan joins the front line of the race wars in America, sitting down face-to-face with Neo-Nazis and fascists. Speaking with racists, fascists and proponents of alt-right ideologies, Khan attempts to discover new possibilities for connections and solutions. As she tries to see beyond the headlines to the human beings, her own prejudices are challenged and her tolerance tested.

"White Right" received a PeaceJam Special Jury Prize at the Monte Carlo Television Festival and an Emmy Award for International Current Affairs. It was also a BAFTA Award

Nominee for Current Affairs. Khan received a Best Director - Documentary award from the Royal Television Society.

"Masel Tov Cocktail" (30 minutes) tells the story of Dima, a German-Jewish teenager, who gets into a fight at school. When asked to apologize to the person he punched, he notes how he doesn't really feel sorry. Dima then talks directly to the audience about the hypocrisy he sees in his school and society.

"Masel Tov Cocktail" has won numerous awards at film festivals, including the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival 2021, Anchorage International Film Festival 2020, Boston Jewish Film Festival 2020, Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival 2021, Cleveland International Film Festival 2021, Filmets-Badalona Film Festival 2020, Flickerfest International Short Film Festival 2021, Florida Film Festival 2021, International Film Festival Etiuda and Anima 2020, Jaipur International Film Festival 2021, La Cabina Valencia Interna-



Alexander Wertmann in a scene from "Masel Tov Cocktail." (Photo courtesy of Go2Films)

tional Medium-Length Film Festival 2020, London Short Series Fest 2020, Moscow Jewish Film Festival 2020, San Francisco Jewish Film Festival 2020 and Unabhängiges FilmFest Osnabrück 2020.

"I am so pleased the Film Fest Committee decided to show these films," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton. "I was truly riveted by each of them. Each film focuses on hate, anger and antisemitism, but it in two very different ways. If you are interested in understanding why people hate, this is the event for you. The discussion is sure to be compelling."



Deeyah Kahn in a scene from "White Right: Meeting the Enemy." (Photo courtesy of Women Make Movies)

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**Jews in Sports**


# What price glory? Olympian Sasha Cohen

BILL SIMONS

The XXIV Winter Olympics are upon us. The People's Republic of China will host the games from February 4-20. Public health and politics render the games controversial. Diplomatic officials, albeit not athletes, from the United States and several other democratic nations will boycott the games to protest China's repression of human rights. Nonetheless, millions of fans across the globe will watch events on television and digital platforms in 15 sports, including skiing, sledding, skating, hockey and curling. And Jews will have standard bearers in the 2022 Winter Olympics.

Several American and Israeli Jews will compete in the Beijing Olympics. Israeli pairs figure skating partners Evgeni Krasnopolski and Hailey Kops are amongst the Jewish participants. On the ice, Krasnopolski and Kops are a vivacious and talented couple. The 19-year-old Kops elicits particular interest. Although she skates on the Sabbath, Kops walks to the rink, observes *kashruth* and identifies as Modern Orthodox. Due to Kops' assertion of Orthodoxy while competing on the Sabbath, Rabbi Jonathan Muskat, while wishing her well, states that the young figure skater is not a role model for Modern Orthodoxy. This raises another question: should young athletes, Jewish or Gentile, compete at a level where extraordinary expectations of performance on and off the athletic site are placed upon them?

In the late 1960s, my sister Jo Ann held multiple New England, age-group swim records in Amateur Athletic Union competition. In her early teens, Jo Ann rose around 3:30 am to swim endless laps before school and then, after school, returned to the water for team practices. Competition, where she won innumerable trophies, dominated weekends. To fulfill her potential and gain a potential Olympic birth, Jo Ann's coach advised her to go to a residential swim school in California. Overruling Jo Ann, my mother, convinced that such narrow and intense focus at an early age would stunt Jo Ann socially and render her vulnerable to predators, thwarted those plans.

Jo Ann continued to swim, albeit in a less demanding milieu. She captained the swim team at Wheaton College and was the first woman to win a varsity letter at Trinity College. Moreover, she earned two college degrees; married and raised children, one of whom has Down Syndrome and

is a Special Olympics medalist in golf; gained a national reputation as an advocate for those with developmental disabilities; and perennially ranks amongst the top 10 on Boston Globe Magazine's annual list of the most influential women CEOs in New England. In contrast, the great Jewish-American gymnast and standard bearer Aly Raisman, winner of six Olympic medals, endured sexual abuse, along with many other young women, at the hands of team doctor Larry Nassar and continues to search for a post-athletic pathway in her personal and professional life.

The U.S. figure skater Sasha Cohen, the daughter of a Russian immigrant mother and an American father, is probably the most famous Jewish athlete to participate in the Winter Olympics. Her immense talent, dedication, melodramatic episodes, glamour and ethereal beauty rendered her a celebrity. Passionate and innocent, Sasha commanded an immense fan base while still an adolescent. For enthralled spectators, she did not merely skate to the music of "Romeo and Juliet," Sasha was Juliet. Her inspired choreography, music, costuming, delicacy and athleticism led one admirer to proclaim, "no one has ever come close to her artistry."

Jewish fans noted when a Kabbalah red string bracelet adorned Sasha's wrist. She was a Southern California Jewish Sports Hall of Fame inductee.

Sasha's athletic and aesthetic performance mesmerized. Ambitious and complex routines, elegant spirals, breathtaking spins, artistic positioning, leg pointed to the heavens and soaring leaps garnered Sasha numerous awards, including silver (2004, 2005) and bronze (2006) medals in World Championship competition, and a 2006 Olympic silver medal. Actress, model, ballerina, gymnast, romanticist, skater, Sasha appeared an ice goddess – except she was a 5'2", 95-pound mortal, forever questing for and on the cusp of an elusive perfection. For all her success, Sasha's trajectory invites the question, "What price glory?"

Like most female Olympic skaters, gymnasts and swimmers, Sasha commenced a grueling schedule of practice and competition while still in elementary school. Enormous and unfulfilled expectations took a toll. Sasha came to view anything less than gold as defeat, and pressure created swings from brilliance to inconsistency. Painful

injuries and sleeping pills marked her course. After two early falls during her performance at the Turin Olympics in 2006, Sasha, aside from a brief, abortive comeback, retired from competitive skating at the age of 21. Transitory and muted stints in ice shows, acting, modeling and celebrity journalism left Sasha, in her mid-20s, a has-been, sans vocational skills, social maturity or a clear identity.

There were no more ovations, sequins and spotlights, only a bleak anonymity. Sasha realized, "I had to be 'broken in' to living a real life: managing a bank account, finding an apartment, getting healthcare and filing my tax returns. During my skating days, I had a sort of immunity from all that." Summoning a new type of courage and resolve, Sasha applied to Columbia University, initially sampling a few courses, then enrolling full time. Relinquishing celebrity – theatrical makeup replaced by none-too-fashionable eyeglasses – she introduced herself to classmates and professors as "Alex," a diminutive of her birth name Alexandra. Developing study skills, Sasha earned a degree in political science, with a special interest in the history of income inequality.

After graduation from Columbia in 2016, Sasha encountered challenge and meaning in investment management. She enjoyed her work as an associate at Morgan Stanley Global Financial Services. Although a short-lived first marriage floundered, Sasha found love and stability with her partner Geoffrey Lieberthal, a prominent equity executive. The couple are doting parents to two toddlers, Dashiell Lev and Paloma Jane Lieberthal.

By modeling a balanced presence after premature athletic indentureship, Sasha Cohen merits kudos. Many of our young sports phenoms have paid too high a price, including Raisman and her former gymnast teammate Simone Biles, swimmer Michael Phelps and tennis star Naomi Osaka. The challenge is to encourage youth to create well-rounded lives.

*Bill Simons is a professor emeritus at SUNY Oneonta where he continues to teach courses in American 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.*

## Opinion

### In My Own Words

## Something silly

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

I'm a big fan of the Muppets. I don't remember when I first saw "Sesame Street," but I believe it must have been when I was in junior high or high school. My favorite Muppet at that time was Oscar the Grouch. I could relate to his grouchiness, a trait that remains with me even now. (I've thought about getting a T-shirt printed that says, "Chronically Cranky" just to warn people.) I also had a Cookie Monster puppet that I took with me to college. A friend who was a big Elton John fan used to borrow Cookie when he played his toy piano, which someone gave him as a gag gift.

A few years back, a friend complained on Facebook that the only container she could find to put her lunch in for the next day had Abby Cadabby on it. I immediately searched for an image because I didn't know who that was. Turns out Abby is not only a Muppet, but a fairy with wings and a wand. I happen to be a big fan of wings (I have several pairs I've used as part of Purim costumes) and, while looking at the images, fell in love with the Abby Cadabby doll. Another friend – one who is tolerant of my idiosyncrasies, although she has been known to shake her head in exasperation at some of them – bought me that doll for my birthday, which I would bring with me when we would celebrate my birthday, her birthday and her daughter's birthday with an ice cream treat. (I later promised her daughter not to bring Abby with me because

she was embarrassed by my flying Abby around while we waited for our ice cream.)

People at my synagogue are familiar with Abby because I've brought her to the Purim activities. I usually wear one of my pairs of wings because Abby feels uncomfortable if she is the only winged individual there. She also attended the last year's Zoom Purim activities and people have noted that I don't need a pet because I have Abby for company.

But it's not Oscar, Cookie or Abby who is making headlines lately. The news has featured the controversy between Elmo and Zoe concerning her pet rock, Rocco. I'm not that familiar with Zoe, but I am a big fan of Elmo's appearance in the book "The Monster at the End of This Book: Starring Lovable, Furry Old Grover" by Jon Stone. (I like the book so much I did a report on it in a Hebrew class when I was in rabbinical school.) It seems that a clip from a 2004 episode from "Sesame Street" has gone viral. According to one report, the clip has been replayed more than seven million times (as of January 10) and has people taking sides in the Twitter universe.

The conflict is relatively simple: Elmo wants to eat the last oatmeal cookie available. Zoe says he can't eat it because Rocco wants the cookie. Elmo makes fun of Rocco, stating quite clearly that a rock with no mouth can't eat a cookie. They never discuss if Zoe really wants the cookie, but it's clear from other videos that have been

posted that Zoe treats her rock as a living creature who is different from other rocks. (When someone offers her a replacement rock after Rocco goes missing, she refuses because it's not the real Rocco.) Although some people are on Zoe's side (including the actor/wrestler known as the Rock, who notes that he does eat cookies), many people take Elmo's side.

The debate is funny, but it also has a serious side. While in general it doesn't matter if Zoe has a pet rock and believes it's alive and eats, that can become a problem when her belief affects others. The conflict between Elmo and Zoe has been used to teach how we should respect each other and not make fun of people, even when we disagree. Yet, are there limits to this? Are some customs and laws wrong, even if other societies follow them? Mutual respect is far easier when we live in different countries, but can become a problem when we share one. Or when we don't believe a rock/person should take something from us – in this case, a cookie, but in other cases, our livelihoods, our right to vote, to practice our religion, etc. – that doesn't belong to them.

But I'm going to stop the analysis now because this light-hearted debate may be what people need during these divided times. Just be careful, though, with whom you discuss this: you and a friend may end up arguing about who is right – Elmo or Zoe.



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#### OPINIONS

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

#### LETTERS

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

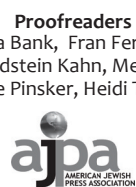
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#### DEADLINE

Regular weekly deadline is noon, Wednesday, for the following week's newspaper.

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www.thereporter.org

# TC to host speaker for Repro Shabbat on Jan. 28

Temple Concord will host Aviva Friedman, community educator at Family Planning of South Central New York, as its guest speaker for Repro Shabbat on Friday, January 28, at 7:30 pm. Friedman is a Temple Concord member and on the Binghamton City Council. To attend in person, all must show proof of COVID-19 vaccinations, wear a mask and physically distance. The service will also be available via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/37UQSpK>, meeting ID 829 9450 3102 and passcode 708450, or on the Temple Concord Facebook page.



Aviva Friedman (Photo by Katie Kanazawich Photo)

bat to dedicate to reproductive freedom," said organizers. "It was during the week of the Mishpatim Torah portion that the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision, which legalized abortion in the United States, was announced 49 years ago. We also read in Mishpatim, the verses that form the basis of the Jewish approach to reproductive freedom: the story of a miscarriage caused by an accident that teaches us much about how Judaism does, and doesn't, regard the status of a fetus. This is a time for us to learn about our tradition and to seek steps toward action."

Organizers added, "The critical importance of advocating for reproductive freedom, ensuring that we all have access to the quality, comprehensive care that we need to thrive with dignity, is part of our Jewish communal celebration sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women."

## OF NOTE

### Kahn

Rebecca Kahn, who is assistant director of enrollment marketing at Binghamton University, was presented with the STAR Award by her colleagues and BU President Harvey Stenger on January 14. According to the BU website, "the STAR Award recognizes, affirms and supports examples of outstanding quality service by any faculty or staff member within the Binghamton University community."

# Esserman to give annual TC Sisterhood book talk on Jan. 30


Rabbi Rachel Esserman will discuss three books at the annual Temple Concord Sisterhood book talk on Sunday, January 30, at 11 am, at Temple Concord, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, and on Zoom. The event is open to the public. Those interested in attending are asked to make a reservation whether coming in person or joining via Zoom by contacting Phyllis Kellenberger at [pweinste@stny.rr.com](mailto:pweinste@stny.rr.com) or 727-8305 by Wednesday, January 26. There is no charge for the program. Those attending must show proof of vaccination and wear a mask. The Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3897224889?pwd=c1haTFczd0pTTlRbJFZkdTFEeIRhdz09>, meeting ID 389 722 4889 and passcode 230720; or by phone at 646-558-8656, meeting ID 389 722 4889 and passcode 230720. This information will also be e-mailed the week of the program.



Rabbi Rachel Esserman

During her talk, Esserman will review "The Slaughterman's Daughter" by Yaniv Iczkovits, "Nirvana is Here" by Aaron Hamburger and "Come and Hear: What I Saw in My Seven-and-a-Half-Year Journey through the Talmud" by Adam Kirsch.

"I am again looking forward to one of my favorite events of the year," Esserman said. "I've made sure to include a nonfiction work this year again by request. Each work is very different and I look forward to reading them. I've had 'The Slaughterman's Daughter' on my shelf for most of the year and was debating reading it, but decided I would save it for this review. I was a big fan of Aaron Hamburger's works and was delighted to learn he finally had a new novel out. As for 'Come and Hear,' I thought it sounded like a great way to introduce people to the Talmud." See "Talk" on page 7



## DEADLINES

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

| ISSUE                      | DEADLINE    |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| February 11-24.....        | February 2  |
| February 25-March 10 ..... | February 16 |
| March 11-24.....           | March 2     |
| March 25-April 7 .....     | March 16    |

All deadlines for the year can be found at [www.thereporter.org/contact-us/faqs](http://www.thereporter.org/contact-us/faqs) under "Q: What Are the Deadlines for the Paper?"

# JLI to offer "Meditation from Sinai"

Registration for "Meditation from Sinai," the new Rohr Jewish Learning Institute winter course, is now open. The six-session course explores the nature of Jewish meditation and the benefits it can bring to one's daily life. The class will be held for five consecutive Mondays, starting January 31; it will be offered at 7 pm and again at 8:45 pm.

The course is scheduled to be offered over Zoom; a decision will be made closer to the class date if the 7 pm class might be in person and on Zoom. Sign-in information will be provided upon enrollment. Interested students should contact Chabad at 797-0015 or [rshea@Chabadofbinghamton.com](mailto:rshea@Chabadofbinghamton.com), or visit [www.myJLI.com](http://www.myJLI.com) for registration and for other course-related information. The course fee, which includes the text book, is \$79 per person and \$140 per couple.

"Course participants can expect to explore what Jewish meditation is, the pivotal role it plays in Jewish tradition,

and the fundamental ideas it is based on," said organizers of the class. "The course will teach crucial life tools that can help people respond effectively to negative thoughts and emotions, recognize the value of each new moment, and find purpose and spirituality even in life's most mundane tasks."

"Not many people think of meditation as a Jewish thing," said Rivkah Slonim, course instructor, "when in reality, Judaism has a rich and authentic tradition of meditation practices that, when implemented, can truly transform one's life for the better."

"Meditation from Sinai" is a revolutionary, empowering offering that unveils Jewish meditation and mindful awareness as the bedrock for a meaningful life," asserted Slonim. "This course synthesizes extensive research from both the spiritual community and psychological research, forging a practical path to fully realizing life's potentials."

# Morning Book Club offers virtual talk with Naomi Ragen on Feb. 2

Instead of its regular book discussion, the Morning Book Club will take part on the virtual program "A Conversation with Naomi Ragen" on Wednesday, February 2, at 11 am, on Zoom in the Temple Concord library or at home. Ragen is the author of "An Observant Wife," the sequel to "An Unorthodox Match." The program is sponsored by the Port Jewish Center as part of its Jewish Book Authors Series.

"After discussing what were to be our January and February books at our 'doubleheader' in January, we decided to do something different for our February meeting," said club organizers.

The Zoom event can be watched at Temple Concord or at home. Reservations are necessary if attending in person at the synagogue as there is a limit to 12 people in the library. Those watching from home need to register in advance to see the conversation by visiting <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAvd-2rDIsgN-WjG10i5Lryc6QL386z68oR>.

For answers to questions or for more information, contact Merri Pell-Preus at [merrypell.preus@gmail.com](mailto:merrypell.preus@gmail.com) or 222-2875.

Those interested in seeing the review of Ragen's book by Rabbi Rachel Esserman can look in the January 14-27 issue of *The Reporter*, or read the review online at [www.thereporter.org/past-articles/feature-book-review/feature-book-review-stream/book-review-stream/off-the-shelf](http://www.thereporter.org/past-articles/feature-book-review/feature-book-review-stream/book-review-stream/off-the-shelf).

## Film..... Continued from page 1

Danon's research at Binghamton University "focuses on the eastern Sephardi Diaspora during modern times and draws heavily on previously unexplored Ladino language archival material. [She] is particularly interested in social history and how its tools help revise prevailing scholarship not only on the Sephardi world, but on Jewish modernity as a whole." Her book, "The Jews of Ottoman Izmir: A Modern History," was published in 2020.

# Jewish online resources

By Reporter staff

A variety of Jewish groups are offering educational and recreational online resources. Below is a sampling of those. *The Reporter* will publish additional listings as they become available.

◆ The Jewish Languages website will hold two virtual lectures this winter: "Lishán Didán and Hulaulá: Jewish Neo-Aramaic in the Kurdish region of Iran" on Sunday, February 20, at 1 pm; and "Judeo-Persian in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: See "Resources" on page 8



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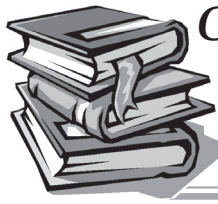
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Off the Shelf

# Folktales and legends

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Humans are storytellers and the stories we tell give insight into our particular culture. We use stories to teach lessons to the younger generations or offer quiet criticism of the status quo, in addition to their being an entertaining way to pass the time. Whether we're talking about Aesop's fables with their explicit morals or Homer's poetry about Greek heroes whose deeds inspire emulation, storytellers and lecturers seek to engage, educate and amuse us. Examples of these types of works can be found in "The Angel and the Cholent: Food Representation from the Israel Folktale Archives" by Idit Pintel-Ginsberg (Wayne State University Press) and "Filled With Fire and Light: Portraits and Legends from the Bible, Talmud, and Hasidic World" by Elie Wiesel (Schocken Books).

In "The Angel and the Cholent," Pintel-Ginsburg analyzes 30 folktales from the Israel Folktale Archives collection that focus on food. She notes that food is "a cardinal presence in human life" and its presentation in these tales "reflects the customs, beliefs, and cultural perceptions" of the storyteller. Each tale is transcribed as it appears in the archive (although translated into English) and is followed by Pintel-Ginsburg's analysis. The book is divided into five parts – for example, "Worldly Pleasure: Food and Taste," "He Bought a Chicken for Her to Cook: Food and Gender" and "Fish in Honor of the Shabbat: Food and Sacred Time" – although many stories could belong in several sections.

The majority of the tales are only a few pages long and range from humorous to serious. There is a wonderful story about a man who eats at restaurants when his wife is out of town and one day has a strange request. In another, a rich man takes a poor man to court to make him pay for enjoying the smell of his food. An interesting comparison is made between Christians and Jews in their religiously segregated hells that shows the Christians in a far better light than the Jews. Another tells of a rich man who wants to try a poor man's fare, that is, until he really learns what that means. A serious story concerns a blood libel against the Jews of a town in Russia, which, fortunately, ends on

a positive note. No one seems exempt from criticism: the rich, the poor, men, women and religious leaders.

Some of the commentary Pintel-Ginsburg offers about the stories came as a surprise: the majority of the tales are actually a critique of the storytellers' family or community. At first, it seemed as if the interpretations were going far behind the tales' meaning, but her analysis does work. For example, Pintel-Ginsburg sees the story about the man who was forced to eat in restaurants while his wife traveled as critical of her leaving her husband and therefore not performing her wifely duties. Many of the stories contain thinly veiled complaints about Jewish society, particularly those that criticize the rich for not helping their poorer brethren, although boorish behavior on the part of the poor is also criticized. The differences between the generations – that of traditional parents and their more secular children – are also found in several stories.

Pintel-Ginsburg notes the many variations of these tales, in both Jewish and other cultures. While the tropes may be the same in several cultures, Jewish storytellers do put a unique spin on some of them. While the commentary is interesting, it's also possible to enjoy the stories on their own. However, as the author writes in her epilogue, "this book enables one to discern the common themes that have preoccupied Jewish culture for centuries. Prominent is the existential need to maintain identity, whether personal or gender, as well as collective identity as a minority group struggling to survive." According to Pintel-Ginsburg, these tales also clearly show the Jews' "deep fear of annihilation," both cultural and physical annihilation, which makes sense since many of these stories come from a Europe where Jews suffered "forced religious conversion, expulsion, and persecution, horrifically culminating in the Holocaust."

While the writing in "The Angel and the Cholent" is dry as befitting a scholarly work, the legends in "Filled With Fire and Light" are recounted in far more dramatic tones. The essays were originally lectures and offer insights into biblical figures (the prophet Elisha, King Josiah and the portrayal of God in the first five books of the Bible);

several stories of talmudic rabbis, along with a rabbinic look at Satan; and tales of Chasidic rabbis.

Wiesel notes that the Torah does not always answer the questions that contemporary readers ask of it, but suggests the real reason one should study these texts is "to create through learning a community from which it is possible to draw, as from an inexhaustible fountain, a joy that is exhilarating and pure. One studies these texts not out of a desire to please or conquer but to better understand things that both elude and envelop our being in an endless quest for transcendence." That means Wiesel doesn't question the miracles that take place in the tales he discusses, including those of the more modern Chasidic rabbis, which will strike some readers as more legend than reality.

However, the lectures are powerfully written. For example, Wiesel writes vividly about the unlikely friendship of two talmudic rabbis, Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish. The story of an almost saintly rabbi and a Jewish bandit who becomes a scholar shows how close the two men became and how one comment can destroy lives. Wiesel's essay about God in the Torah allows him to come to questioning what occurred during the Holocaust, but, even though he had been in a concentration camp, Wiesel can't condemn God. That means that piece ends on a positive, although extremely sad note. The essay "Satan in Ancient Memories" is an excellent look at Jewish ideas about Satan and shows how his place in Judaism differs from that in Christianity. Wiesel also portrays those who cruelly attack Jews as the true followers of Satan.

The difference in tone between "The Angel and the Cholent" and "Filled With Fire and Light" shows the varying approaches of non-fiction Jewish works. "The Angel and the Cholent" qualifies as the more scholarly because the author takes a dispassionate look at the stories. "Filled With Fire and Light" is a more religious work; while some parts offer objective takes on the text, that cannot be said for the majority of the book. These are not complaints about either work since each is attempting to do something completely different, and each succeeds in its own way.

## Financial Planning

### Financial planning for 2022 taxes

(NewsUSA) – The new year has just started, but it is never too early to review your financial plan to meet your 2022 financial goals. Now is the perfect time to take steps to reduce your 2022 tax obligations, according to Dan Mathews, a Certified Financial Planner™ professional.

Five strategies from LetsMakeAPlan.org that may reduce your 2022 taxes include:

1. Maximize your health savings account. Health savings accounts (HSAs) are a way to put money aside and reduce your taxable income. For 2022, you can contribute \$3,650 for individual coverage and up to \$7,300 for family coverage. You don't have to use the money in these accounts by the end of the year; in fact, the money can be invested to maximize growth until your retirement.

2. Optimize your 401(k). Most 401(k) retirement plans are tax-deferred, which means you don't pay taxes on the money you put in, or gains on that money, until you withdraw the


money. Good news for individuals with employer-sponsored 401(k) plans: The contribution limits have increased to \$20,500 for 2022, with a catch-up contribution of \$6,500 for those age 50 and older. Also, consider rebalancing your portfolio this year so it aligns with your acceptable level of risk.

3. Plan your payments. People who withhold federal tax from their income generally make one tax payment with their annual federal income tax return on or before the mid-April tax deadline, if they didn't withhold enough tax for the tax year. But some people, such as the self-employed or retirees, may need to pay estimated taxes quarterly. One way to avoid paying penalties when you file your federal tax return is to ensure your tax payments in 2022 exceed 90 percent of your 2022 estimated tax liability. For those making estimated payments for 2022, the key payment-due dates are April 18, 2022; June 15, 2022; September 15, 2022; and January 16, 2023.

4. Gift your stock to charity. You can gift highly appreciated stock as a charitable donation in 2022. A gift of appreciated stock is an itemized tax deduction – and the charitable organization will not have to pay tax on the capital gain. "You can then repurchase the stock with the cash you would have otherwise donated as an effective way to raise the cost basis in your portfolio," Mathews explains.

5. Think long term. Many people neglect estate planning, but making a resolution to create or update a will is a smart strategy for 2022, Mathews emphasizes. Estate planning helps ensure that your wealth is distributed according to your wishes. This may include charitable giving and considerations for family members. In the short term, you may gift up to \$16,000 per person in 2022 to as many people as you want without being subject to either gift tax or IRS filings, he adds.

Working with a CFP® professional can help you make the most of tax strategies relevant to your situation.



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# Bar & Bat Mitzvah Planning Guide

## Mazel tov to these 2022 b'nai mitzvah

| B'nai mitzvah    | Parents                              | Date              | Synagogue      |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Maren Golden     | Sherry and Ian Golden                | March 5, 2022     | Tikkun v'Or    |
| Oscar Sachs      | Christine Evans and Aaron Sachs      | March 26, 2022    | Tikkun v'Or    |
| Ezra Gindi       | Jacob Gindi and Amber George         | April 23, 2022    | Temple Israel  |
| Tsadia Bercuvitz | Stacey Langwick and Jeff Bercuvitz   | May 7, 2022       | Tikkun v'Or    |
| Sonia Enns       | Melissa and Peter Enns               | June 4, 2022      | Tikkun v'Or    |
| Aaron Sambursky  | Daniel and Malvinia Sambursky        | June 18, 2022     | Temple Israel  |
| Isaac Sambursky  | Daniel and Malvinia Sambursky        | June 18, 2022     | Temple Israel  |
| Dalia Bosworth   | Lara Estroff and David Bosworth      | July 9, 2022      | Tikkun v'Or    |
| Bram Elia        | Melanie Lefkowitz and Anthony Elia   | July 16, 2022     | Tikkun v'Or    |
| Julia Kleinberg  | Miranda Phillips and Bobby Kleinberg | September 3, 2022 | Tikkun v'Or    |
| Ezra Schatz      | Joe Schatz and Jackie Lesson-Schatz  | November 5, 2022  | Temple Concord |

### Mazel Tov to the 2021 B'nai Mitzvah



**Jay Ratterree**  
May 29, 2021  
Michelle and Brian McIlroy  
Temple Concord



**Yordana Fay Wilensky**  
July 10, 2021  
Naomi and Joe Wilensky  
Congregation Tikkun v'Or



**Eve Sophia Krasno**  
August 14, 2021  
Jonathan and Amy Krasno  
Temple Concord



**Shayna Foreman**  
August 21, 2021  
Abbi and Brett Foreman  
Temple Concord



**Joshua Kweller**  
October 2, 2021  
Alice and Yaron Kweller  
Temple Israel



### Off the Shelf

## Mitzvah projects and new schools

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

I always celebrate when I see Jewish-themed novels being published for the younger generation, particularly tweens. "Eddie Whatever" by Lois Ruby (Carolrhoda Books) seemed perfect for our annual *b'nai* mitzvah issue because the plot centers on a bar mitzvah student and his mitzvah project. The publishers also sent a copy of "AfterMath" by Emily Barth Isler (Carolrhoda Books), which features a Jewish main character facing a difficult time in her life.

In "Eddie Whatever," 13-year-old Eddie Lewin is not thrilled to have to do a community service project for his bar mitzvah, wondering how he'll find the time what with juggling schoolwork, bar mitzvah prep and baseball practice. He's even less happy to be roped into becoming a volunteer at the Silver Brook Pavilion nursing home. The residents refuse to learn his last name, calling him Eddie

Whatever, and argue about trivial matters, some of which he doesn't understand. Eddie does make a connection with a few of the residents, but problems arise when their possessions start going missing. Eddie knows he didn't take anything, but someone is trying to make him look guilty. Plus, he's worried about the tension he feels at home, and even though they deny it, he wonders if his parents are going to get divorced.

Eddie's story, which is told in the first person, is engaging from the start. It helps that he basically a good kid, but not such a goodie-goodie that he won't appeal to readers. Eddie notes how many things he's not good at (including baseball), but his willingness to forge ahead makes him someone worth emulating. The plot contains several interesting twists and turns, and some serious

material concerning the history of a few residents. However, "Eddie Whatever" was definitely fun to read and would make a worthwhile book for tweens to share with their parents.

The word fun, however, does not describe "AfterMath." The adjectives that come to mind are powerful and moving. Twelve-year-old Lucy, who also narrates her story in the first person, is attending a new school because she and her parents moved after her younger brother, Theo, died from a congenital heart defect. While her parents' lives remain relatively stable (they are commuting to the same jobs), Lucy feels lost in their new home. It doesn't help that the students in her grade survived a school shooting years before and lost many classmates, including one who used to live in Lucy's new home.

See "Projects" on page 8

## Planning Timetable

### At birth:

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

### 1-3 years ahead:

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

### 10-12 months ahead:

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

### 6 months ahead:

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

### 4-5 months ahead:

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

### 3 months ahead:

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

### 2 months ahead:

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

### 6 weeks ahead:

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

### 4 weeks ahead:

- Prepare bar/bat mitzvah speech
- Finalize hotel reservations and transportation
- Meet with caterer(s)
- Make up welcome gifts for out-of-town guests (if desired)
- Arrange *aliyot*
- Send honorary gift to synagogue
- Meet with rabbi
- Make up seating charts for reception

### 2 weeks ahead:

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

### A few days ahead:

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

### Special Day:

- Prepare to enjoy your *simcha!*



### Judaic Shop

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## Weekly Parasha

Mishpatim, Exodus 21:1-24:18

# Biblical slavery

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR, THE REPORTER GROUP

The debate about the lasting effects of slavery in America continues to this day, even though the Thirteenth Amendment, which ended slavery in U.S.-controlled territory, was ratified on December 6, 1865. Currently, people are questioning the treatment of those slaves, suggesting that slavery in the American South is not as bad as it appears in recent books. That's clearly not true: by any standards, it was horrific, with those living under servitude suffering

from near starvation, in addition to the rape of women, the separation of families, the punishments such as whipping and the cutting of the Achilles tendon of those who tried to escape, and more. Yet, the practice of slavery was defended in the South because slavery is discussed and regulated in the Bible. However, as noted in *parashat* Mishpatim, this slavery was far different from that found in the American South and the Carribean.

Slavery is taken for granted in the Torah, but there are severe limitations placed on slave owners. First is that even when a person becomes a slave, there is a time limit to that servitude: "If you buy a Hebrew slave, he will serve for six years and, in the seventh, he will go free." (Exodus 21:2) A slave could choose to remain a slave, although the procedure he had to go through discourages that: he not only

See "Slavery" on page 7

## 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 and in-person (masks are required).

On Saturday, January 29, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required). The Torah portion is Exodus 21:1-24:18 and the haftarah is Jeremiah 34:8-22 and 33:25-26. At 6 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom.

On Tuesday February 1, at 7 pm, there will be an Executive Board meeting on Zoom.

On Wednesday, February 2, there will be Torah study from 4-5 pm on Zoom only.

On Friday, February 4, at 5:30 pm, there will be a Scout Shabbat/Ma'ariv services in person and on Zoom.

On Saturday, February 5, at 9:30 am, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required). The Torah portion is Exodus 25:1-27:19 and the haftarah is I Kings 5:26-6:13. At 6:15 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom.

On Wednesday, February 9, at 10 am, there will be a Ritual Committee meeting. Torah study will be held from 4-5 pm on Zoom 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.

### 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.

### Temple Brith Sholom

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

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

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

### Synagogues limit face-to-face gatherings

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

### Beth David Synagogue

Affiliation: Orthodox Union  
 Rabbi: Zev Silber  
 Address: 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905  
 Phone: 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

### 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.

### Temple Beth El of Oneonta

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism  
 Rabbi: Amelia F. Wolf  
 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.  
 Friday night services will be held on February 4; March 4; April 1; May 6 and Saturday morning, May 7; and June 3.

### Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism  
 Rabbi: Rachel Safman  
 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-safman@tbeithaca.org and secretary@tbeithaca.org  
 Website: www.tbeithaca.org  
 Presidents: David Weiner and Linda Aigen  
 Sisterhood President: Gail Zussman  
 Director of Education: Rabbi Suzanne Brody  
 Services: Fri. 8 pm; Sat. 10 am, unless otherwise announced.  
 Weekday morning minyan 7:30 am (9 am on Sun. and legal holidays).  
 Religious School/Education: September-May: Classes meet on Sunday, 9 am-12:30 pm and Wednesday, 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.

Friday, January 28, light candles before ..... 4:55 pm  
 Saturday, January 29, Shabbat ends ..... 5:57 pm  
 Friday, February 4, light candles before ..... 5:04 pm  
 Saturday, February 5, Shabbat ends ..... 6:06 pm  
 Friday, February 11, light candles before ..... 5:13 pm  
 Saturday, February 12, Shabbat ends ..... 6:15 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: Fri., 7:30 pm; Sat., 10:35 am, when religious school is in session.  
 Hebrew school: Hebrew school meets at 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm on Tues. and Thurs. during the school year unless otherwise noted.

Some services and programs are online only.  
 Friday, January 28: at 7:30 pm, Repro Shabbat service led by Rabbi Goldman-Wartell with Aviva Friedman, guest speaker. To attend in person, all must show proof of COVID-19 vaccinations, wear a mask and physically distance. Join via Zoom at https://bit.ly/37UQSpK, meeting ID 829 9450 3102 and passcode 708450, or on the Temple Concord Facebook page. For more information, see the article on page 3.

Saturday, January 29: Shabbat school at 9 am; Torah study at 9:15 am on Zoom at https://bit.ly/3CVxM14, meeting ID 8829808 7579 and passcode 676707; Shabbat family service at 10:30 am; and "Havdalah with a Bonus" at 7 pm on Zoom at https://bit.ly/3zd0atv, meeting ID 897 4179 1260 and passcode 408279.

Sunday, January 30: at 11 am, Temple Concord Sisterhood's Annual Book Talk by Rabbi Rachel Esserman. For more information, see the article on page 3.

Wednesday, February 2: at 11 am, Temple Concord Morning Book Club: A Conversation with Naomi Ragen. (For more information, see the article on page 3.)

Wednesday, February 2: at 6:30 pm, Sisterhood schmooze and at 7 pm, Sisterhood Board meeting.

Thursday, February 3: at 7 pm, "A History of Women Rabbis" in the Temple Concord library and on Zoom. Pre-register with the Temple Concord office by calling 723-7355 or e-mail templeconcordaa@gmail.com and specify in-person or via Zoom. Join via Zoom at https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83161633898?pwd=d-0VZcmLLTTFKNGhIK315cUZAyVYyZzd09, meeting ID 831 6163 3898 and passcode 243055.

Friday, February 4: at 7:30 pm, Shabbat service with Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell. To attend in person, all must show proof of COVID-19 vaccinations, wear a mask and physically distance. Via Zoom at https://bit.ly/37UQSpK, meeting ID 829 9450 3102 and passcode 708450, or on the Temple Concord Facebook page.  
 See "Concord" on page 7

### 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.

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

# Jewish Community Center

## JCC Pilates and Silver Sneakers holding food drive to TC CHOW pantry

During the month of February, the Jewish Community Center's Pilates and Silver Sneakers classes will hold a food

drive for the Temple Concord CHOW pantry. All non-perishable food items can be placed in the box located in the lobby of

the JCC. Suggested food items are oatmeal, cold cereal, instant potatoes, rice, canned fruit, canned vegetables, bottles of juice, crackers and cookies.

There are still openings for the winter session. All ability levels are welcome from beginners to advanced. "Come and try a class, the first class is free of charge," said organizers.

Pilates classes at the JCC are held Monday, Thursday and Friday from 9:30-10:30 am.

For more information on the classes, call the JCC at 724-2417.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

#### Yad Vashem partners with genealogy database to boost access to Holocaust records

New York City's Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust and its genealogy affiliate JewishGen has announced a new partnership with Yad Vashem that will enable the public to gain more access to genealogical records. "By making available these precious records via JewishGen, the broader Jewish community can more easily research names of family and friends who were murdered during the Holocaust," said Museum of Jewish Heritage President/CEO Jack Kliger. "The agreement facilitates access to the resources of our museum and Yad Vashem, two of the most prestigious Holocaust memorial institutions in the world." The partnership will allow researchers to access Yad Vashem's Pages of Testimony when doing a genealogical search on the JewishGen website, which is the largest online resource for Jewish genealogy and includes nearly 3.8 million Holocaust records.



A recent Pilates class at the Jewish Community Center. (Photo by Phyllis Kellenberger)

#### Talk.....Continued from page 3

"The Slaughterman's Daughter," winner of the 2021 Wingate Literary Prize, has been described as "a family drama into far-reaching comedy of errors that will pit the Czar's army against the Russian secret police and threaten the very foundations of the Russian Empire. It is a rollicking and unforgettable work of fiction."

"Nirvana is Here" is the winner of a Bronze Medal, Foreword Reviews 2019 Indie Award for Best LGBTQ+ Fiction. The book was called "a wonder of a book" by novelist Lauren Grodstein ("Our Short History"): "As a Jewish Gen-Xer, the novel reminded me exactly of who I once was – and all that I still want to be.... a brilliant accomplishment."

"Come and Hear: What I Saw in My Seven-and-a-Half-Year Journey Through the Talmud" has been described as "a kind of travel writing – a report on what [the author] saw during his seven-and-a-half-year journey through the Talmud. For readers who want to travel the same path, there is no better guide."

Esserman is the executive editor and book reviewer for The Reporter Group. Her editorials and reviews have won awards from the American Jewish Press

Association and the Syracuse Press Club. This year she won four awards for her book reviews: first place and honorable mention in the American Jewish Press Club's Simon Rockower Awards Book Review category, and first and second place in the Syracuse Press Club's Critique category. She also serves as the Jewish chaplain for Broome Developmental Disabilities Service Office. Her work has been published in "The Women's Torah Commentary" and "The Women's Haftarah Commentary" both by Jewish Lights Publishing. She also has had a book of poetry, "I Stand By The River," published by Keshet Press of Temple Concord. A Reconstructionist rabbi who says her first love is teaching, she sees her position at *The Reporter* as an opportunity to educate the public about Judaism.

Esserman also is a freelance rabbi who does lifecycle events, hospital visits, chaplaincy; and has been rabbi-on-call when needed by local Reform and Conservative synagogues. Her education includes a B.A. in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania, and rabbinic ordination and an M.A. in Hebrew letters from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Wyncote, PA.

#### Concord.....Continued from page 6

Saturday, February 5: Shabbat school at 9 am; Torah study at 9:15 am on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3CVxM14>, meeting ID 882 9808 7579 and passcode 676707; Shabbat family service at 10:30 am; and "Havdalah with a Bonus" at 7 pm on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3zd0atv>, meeting ID 897 4179 1260 and passcode 408279.

Sunday, February 6: from 10 am-2

pm, Sisterhood's Rummage Sale: Buy one coat or jacket, get one free. Shoppers should use the Oak Street door and wear their mask.

Tuesday, February 8: at 6:30 pm, Executive Board meeting and at 7:30 pm, General Board meeting. The general meeting is open to members; contact the temple for the meeting link.

#### Slavery.....Continued from page 6

has to declare his willingness to remain in servitude, he must allow his master to bore his ear with an awl. (An awl being a fine pointed tool that would be sharp enough to pierce an earlobe.)

People might claim that freedom after six years is only for a Hebrew slave, but later verses in this *parasha* note other limits on the treatment of any slave. For example, if a man killed his slave (male and female are mentioned), then the master is punished. (Exodus 21:20) Wounding a slave is also not allowed: Exodus 21:26 says, "If a man strikes the eye of his male or female servant, and destroys it, he shall let him go free for the sake of his eye." The next verse says the same is true if a servant's tooth is destroyed: they must also be freed.

These laws are included in a chapter filled with regulations that cross the line between civil and religious behavior, although in biblical times, the two were the same. One of the ways to worship God was

to be honorable in all your behavior – in your business dealings, in your relationship with your neighbors and in the way you treated the members of your household. In fact, you were to treat everyone well, as noted by the number of times in the Torah we are also told not to oppress the stranger because we were once strangers in Egypt.

Knowing that our ancestors had been enslaved gives us even more reason to take part in the current American debate about slavery. Every year at Passover, we acknowledge that we were slaves and are now free. In fact, we are *commanded* never to forget what happened to our ancestors. If we feel the need to recall that event – one that took place centuries ago and which scholars debate even occurred – how much more so should those whose ancestors were enslaved in our country less than 200 years ago feel the need to have their suffering – and the continued effects of that suffering – acknowledged.

#### Moving any time soon?



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

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- 2) Pledges and payments (checks should be made payable to "Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton") can be mailed to The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Road, Vestal, NY 13850
- 3) Fill out the form in this ad and mail it to the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Road, Vestal, NY 13850.

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Visit us on the web at [www.thereportergroup.org](http://www.thereportergroup.org)

# Resources . . . . . Continued from page 3

New Research” on Sunday, March 13, at 1 pm. For more information or to register, visit [www.jewishlanguages.org/events](http://www.jewishlanguages.org/events).

- ◆ The Yiddish Book Center will hold the virtual author talk “The Murders of Moisés Ville: The Rise and Fall of the Jerusalem of South America,” with Javier Sinay on Thursday, February 24, at 7 pm. The author will discuss the history of Moisés Ville, the “Jerusalem of South America,” and his personal connection to a little-known period of Jewish history in Argentina. For more information or to register, visit [https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register?WN\\_PgnLmJDNR-yQKIY84VJXjQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register?WN_PgnLmJDNR-yQKIY84VJXjQ). There are a limited number of seats available, but a taped version of the program will be available later at [www.yiddishbookcenter.org/language-literature-culture/recordings-yiddish-book-centers-virtual-public-programs](http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/language-literature-culture/recordings-yiddish-book-centers-virtual-public-programs).
- ◆ Chutzpod! is a weekly podcast with Rabbi Shira Stutman and Joshua Malina. The show will include guests and explore a wide variety of questions. To listen to the podcast, visit [www.chutzpod.com/](http://www.chutzpod.com/).
- ◆ The Jewish Theological Seminary will hold several online courses this winter, including “Jews and the Left: A History” on Mondays: February 7, 14, 21 and 28; March 7, 14 and 21; and April 4, from 7:30-8:45 pm ([www.jtsa.edu/event/online-course-jews-and-the-left-a-history/](http://www.jtsa.edu/event/online-course-jews-and-the-left-a-history/)); and “Passover Journeys – From the Torah to Your Seder” on Tuesdays, February 22 and March 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29, from 7-8:30 pm ([www.jtsa.edu/event/passover-journeys-from-the-torah-to-your-seder](http://www.jtsa.edu/event/passover-journeys-from-the-torah-to-your-seder)).
- ◆ The Port Jewish Center will hold two virtual book talks in February: “A conversation with Naomi Ragen” on Wednesday, February 2, at 11 am (<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register?tZAvd-2rrDIs-GNWjG10i5Lryc6QL386z68oR>); and “A Conversation with Jonathan Boyarin” on Wednesday, February 16, at 8 pm (<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZYkcOCgrz0qE93eeSEqGH70S-I3n-TN02WrL>).
- ◆ The Forward will hold two events in February: “From the 1860s to 2022: Bringing the history of the Lower East Side to the digital age” on Thursday, February 3, at 3 pm (<https://forward.com/culture/480339/february-3-from-the-1860s-to-2022-bringing-the-history-of-the-lower-east/>) and

“Local Live(s): the Forward” on Thursday, February 10, at 9 pm, with a focus on storytellers from the Los Angeles Jewish community (<https://forward.com/culture/480297/february-10-local-lives-the-forward/>).

- ◆ The Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy will hold “A Virtual Exploration of the Historic Henry Street Settlement” on Wednesday, February 2, from 7-8:30 pm. The tour will include a virtual look inside Lillian Wald’s historic former home at 265 Henry Street, the Settlement’s present-day headquarters. For more information or to register, visit [www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/virtual-henry-street-settlement](http://www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/virtual-henry-street-settlement).
- ◆ Tivkah will hold a weekly virtual program called “The Jerusalem Roundtable: A Weekly Conversation on Israeli Politics and Society,” on Tuesdays at 9:30 am. People who sign up can participate live and/or get access to the event videos to watch on-demand. For more information or to register, visit <https://tikvahfund.org/jerusalem-roundtable/>.
- ◆ HIAS Book and Film Club will discuss “The Ungrateful Refugee” (2019) by Dina Nayeri on Friday, February 11, from noon-1 pm. It will be an interactive discussion so people are encouraged to read or listen to the book before the meeting. For more information or to register, visit [www.hias.org/events/hias-book-and-film-club-february-2022](http://www.hias.org/events/hias-book-and-film-club-february-2022).
- ◆ The Center for Jewish History will hold the virtual book talk “Admiral Hyman Rickover: Engineer of Power,” featuring author Marc Wortman and Rabbi Bruce E. Kahn, on Thursday, February 17, at 6:30 pm. The book tells the story of Hyman George Rickover, who was born Chaim Godalia Rykower in a Polish shtetl and was an almost mythical figure in the United States Navy. For more information or to register, visit <https://programs.cjh.org/event/admiral-hyman-2022-02-17>.
- ◆ HUC Connect: The Webinar will hold four virtual lecture series. The lectures on “Arts and Culture” are “Breathing the Air of Freedom” on Tuesday, February 1, at 2 pm; “Finding Myself in Motel” on Tuesday, March 22, at 2 pm; and “Sacred Land: Israel Before and After Time” on Tuesday, May 3, at 2 pm. The lectures on “Civil Society” are “Israel, American Jewry, and 45” on Tuesday, March 15, at 3 pm; “More than a Monolith” on Tuesday, April 5, at 2 pm; and “Reparations and Jewish Thought”

on Tuesday, May 10, at 2 pm. The lecture on “(Re)defining allyship” are “LGBTQ+ Rights” on Tuesday, April 26 (time to be announced); and “Women in the Rabbinate” on Tuesday, May 31, at 2 pm. The lectures on “Religion” are “Obligation, Social Justice, and Faith-driven Reform” on Tuesday, February 22, at 2 pm; “Natural Mystics” on Tuesday, March 8, at 2 pm; and “Grief, Death, and Mortality: Honoring Tradition and Exploring New Perspectives” on Tuesday, April 12, at 2 pm. For more information or to register for a series, visit <https://huc.edu/huc-connect/huc-connect-webinar-theme-view>.

- ◆ The Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy will hold two virtual tours: “Virtual Tour of Jewish Paris” on Monday, February 7, from 7-9 pm (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-tour-of-jewish-paris-a-new-presentation-on-zoom-tickets-234967804027>); and “The History of Jewish Harlem” with Justin Ferate on Thursday, February 24, from 7-8:45 pm ([www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/virtual-jewish-harlem](http://www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/virtual-jewish-harlem)).
- ◆ Fairfield University Centers and Institutes will hold several virtual events: “In Concert from Germany: Klezmer-Yiddish rocker, Daniel Kahn” on Tuesday, February 8, from 5-6:30 pm (<https://events.fairfield.edu/events/in-concert-from-germany-klezmer-yiddish-rocker-daniel-kahn-230403582317>); the Joan and Henry Katz Lecture in Judaic Studies “Too Long, Too Foreign... Too Jewish? The Rise, Politics, and Fall of Jewish Name Changing in 20th Century New York” on Thursday, February 17, from 7:30-9 1111111111pm (<https://events.fairfield.edu/events/adoiph-and-ruth-schnurmacher-lecture-in-judaic-studies-carol-meyers-phd-230408737737>).
- ◆ Organic Torah will hold two virtual classes: “Reading the Rabbis: The Puzzle of Pesach” on Thursdays, February 10, 17 and 24; and March 3 and 10, from 7-8:30 pm, for \$135 (<https://organictorah.org/reading-the-rabbis-the-puzzle-of-pesach/>); and “Song of Songs in the Rabbinic and Mystic Imagination” on Thursdays, March 24 and 31, April 7 and 28, and May 5, from 7-8:30 pm, for \$135 (<https://organictorah.org/song-of-songs-in-the-rabbinic-and-mystic-imagination/>). The cost to sign up for both classes at the same time is \$270 (<https://organictorah.org/reading-the-rabbis-pesach-and-song-of-songs-both-classes-combined/>).

- ◆ The Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History will hold several virtual music events: “Suiting the Sound – The Jewish Rodeo Tailors of Country Music” on Tuesday, February 15, at 8 pm (<https://www.nmajh.org/events/suiting-the-sound-22/>); “Mark Rubin: ‘Jew of Oklahoma’” on Tuesday, February 22, at 8 pm ([www.nmajh.org/events/mark-rubin-concert/](http://www.nmajh.org/events/mark-rubin-concert/)); “Torah of Country Music” on Tuesday, March 1, at 8 pm ([www.nmajh.org/events/judaism-and-country-music/](http://www.nmajh.org/events/judaism-and-country-music/)); and “Nefesh Mountain” on Tuesday, March 8, at 8 pm ([www.nmajh.org/events/nefesh-mountain/](http://www.nmajh.org/events/nefesh-mountain/)).
- ◆ The Jewish Book Council will hold two events: “Writing Europe Before the Holocaust: A Conversation with Rachel Kadish and Menachem Kaiser” on Thursday, February 10, from 7-8 pm ([www.jewishbookcouncil.org/events/writing-europe-before-the-holocaust-a-conversation-with-rachel-kadish-and-menachem-kaiser](http://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/events/writing-europe-before-the-holocaust-a-conversation-with-rachel-kadish-and-menachem-kaiser)); and “Virtual Unpacking the Book: Gal Beckerman and Talia Lavin – Where Do Radicals Come From?” on Thursday, February 24, from 7-8 pm ([www.jewishbookcouncil.org/events/virtual-unpacking-the-book-gal-beckerman-and-talia-lavin](http://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/events/virtual-unpacking-the-book-gal-beckerman-and-talia-lavin));
- ◆ The Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU will hold the virtual talk “Barbra on Film: A Discussion about Barbra Streisand” on Thursday, February 3, from 7-8 pm. Dan Hudak will talk about Barbra Streisand’s films. Hudak is the former chairman of the Florida Film Critics Circle and a member of the Southeastern Film Critics Association. For more information or to register, visit <https://secure.qgiv.com/for/jmoffiu/event/842372/>
- ◆ Siegal Lifelong Learning will hold the virtual “Jewish Fur Traders and Their Native Wives” on Wednesday, February 9, from noon-1:30 pm. The lecture will examine stories of Jewish fur traders in North America and their Native wives from the Colonial Period through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For more information or to register, visit <https://case.edu/lifelonglearning/lectures/jewish-fur-traders-and-their-native-wives-remote>.
- ◆ The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute will hold several virtual events: “‘Nobody Told Me’: The Loss of Family Through the Eyes of Wanda Albinska, a Child Holocaust Survivor from Warsaw” on Monday, February 7, from noon-1:30 pm; “Studio Israel with Dege Feder” on Thursday, February 10, from noon-1 pm; and “Galleries, Guilds, and Graves: British Orthodox Jewish Women” on Monday, February 28, from 12:30-1:30 pm. For more information or to register for events, visit [www.brandeis.edu/hbi/events/index.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/hbi/events/index.html).

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



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# Projects . . . . . Continued from page 5

What surprises Lucy that her classmates speak openly about the shooting, but that makes Lucy feel her grief about Theo’s passing is less important. It’s not easy making friends at school since most of her classmates ignore her as if she doesn’t exist. Lucy also feels alienated from her parents: her father lives in his own reality and her mother keeps redecorating the house, as though new furniture will make everything alright. Lucy longs for them to talk about Theo and to acknowledge the changes in their lives.

“AfterMath” is a wonderful and emotional novel. The story captured me from its beginning and I loved the lessons Lucy learns about herself and her parents, particularly that parents don’t always deal well with their own sorrows. Yet, the work is not preachy or condescending. Although aimed at tweens, adults readers can also appreciate this novel – whether or not they have children with whom to share it.

Reading these two books also made me think about myself when I was the characters’ age. I’ve written before how there were few serious novels – and even fewer Jewish-themed ones – when I was that age. However, even if authors had been writing for tweens, they could not have written these books. When I was a tween/teen, *b’nai* mitzvah students did not have

to do mitzvah projects as do the students in “Eddie Whatever.” I’m not sure when those became common, but they were not done in my community in the late 1960s, nor were the students I tutored in the 1980s required to have one. The projects do add something to the process of becoming an adult – making students learn about helping others, something that hopefully they will continue to do for the rest of their lives.

As for the trials Lucy faces in “AfterMath,” while there were siblings who became ill and died, no one worried about school shootings when I was young. They may not have been unknown at the time, but I don’t remember hearing of any, nor being afraid to attend school. We never had active shooter drills, although I have some vague memory of nuclear attack alerts (did we hide in the hallway with our heads’ down?), but have no idea if that is real or imagined. In junior high, we were debating the Vietnam War and petitioning to let female students wear pants to school, something that feels so long ago.

But that’s the beauty of these two books: they gave me a window into a different world. I also believe they can help tweens better understand their own feelings by exploring the dilemmas Eddie and Lucy face, and help adults appreciate the challenges tweens face today.