

# THE REPORTER

Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

July 29-August 11, 2022  
Volume LI, Number 15

## Tikkun v'Or to hold "Shabbat in the Park" on Aug. 19

Congregation Tikkun v'Or (Ithaca Reform Temple) will hold its annual summertime "Shabbat in the Park" on Friday, August 19, at 5:30 pm, at the Large Pavilion

in Stewart Park, Gibbs Dr., Ithaca. Playtime for children will start at 5:30 pm, followed by a short service led by Rabbi Shifrah Tobacman, and then dinner, with music pro-

vided by the synagogue's TvO musicians. Everyone is invited to attend. Contact info@tikkunvor.org with any questions.

"Greet old friends, meet new friends,

learn more about the community," said organizers of the event. "Due to COVID, we will not be sharing food, so please bring your own dinner, drinks, plates and cutlery."

## Federation sponsored a day at the Rumble Ponies



Above: Jailyn Stein, shown with the Rumble Ponies' mascot, threw out the first pitch.

At left and right: The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton sponsored a day at the Rumble Ponies on July 10. More than 30 people attended. Shown are some of the attendees.



### First Person Spotlight

## Binghamton Reunion celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary

By Anne Rothenberg

Each summer for the past 25 years, five couples, former and current Binghamton residents, have been gathering for a "Binghamton Reunion." Living in a community where many people were transplants, these couples became each others' extended family during their Binghamton sojourn. All lived on the West Side, were members of Beth David Synagogue and sent their children to Hillel Academy.

Joined by Susan and Michael Wright, current Binghamton residents and former Binghamtonians Helen and Les Loew, Anne and Jeff Rothenberg, and Meryl and Harold Sasnowitz gather each summer at the home of Roz and Harry Wiesel in the Beaver Lake community in the Catskills. Centrally located between Binghamton, Albany, West Hartford, CT, and Passaic, NJ, their Beaver Lake home comfortably accommodates the couples who spend a wonderful weekend reconnecting and reminiscing.

The weekend starts on Thursday. The couples often take trips to local attractions,



Members of the "Binghamton Reunion" celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Seated at the table: Jeff Rothenberg. Front row: Roz Wiesel, Anne Rothenberg, Meryl Sasnowitz, Helen Loew and Susan Wright. Second row: Harry Wiesel, Harold Sasnowitz, Les Loew and Michael Wright.

such as the Resorts World Casino, located on former Concord Hotel property. They also visited the Woodstock Museum, which exhibits the art and history of the 1960s that changed the world forever. Participants can also elect to relax at the

lake, public pool or in the Wiesels' hot tub. In the evening, they traditionally attend summer stock productions at the Forestburgh Playhouse.

On Friday, serious preparation begins for Shabbat meals that revolve around

themes decided on by the couples the year before. Russian, Greek, Chinese, Mexican, Thanksgiving, Brooklyn deli and picnic are examples of just a few themes. Each couple signs up to bring part of the meal and, as a result, many new recipes resulted through research, trial and error. The themes are complemented by coordinated tableware and costumes, ordered online for the occasion.

Shabbat services are held at the Beaver Lake Synagogue, and this year, the Wiesel's sponsored the kiddush, partly in honor of the group's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A quiet, but delicious, Shabbat meal is enjoyed by everyone – napping, sitting on the porch swing and reading, or chatting with each other. After Havdalah, all are invigorated, and enjoy a movie on TV.

By Sunday, everyone is ready to hit the road – to continue vacationing or head home. The Rothenbergs, who made aliyah to Jerusalem several years ago, obviously come from the farthest. But, they promised the group that they would plan their summer vacation in the U.S. around the reunion – an event not to be missed!

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# ORT programs in Greece offer sustenance to Ukrainian refugee women and children

By JNS staff

(JNS)—World ORT is extending support for Ukrainians through a new program for refugee women and children.

Its ongoing partnership with the Irida Women's Center in Thessaloniki, Greece, will expand to include holistic support for more than 50 Ukrainians. The joint program will help alleviate the trauma and displacement they have experienced since Russia declared war on the country on February 24.

The organization's operations in Ukraine serve around 3,500 full-time students in seven schools, but more than

half of ORT's Ukraine school family population has left their homes with the majority seeking shelter abroad.

Approximately 30,000 Ukrainians have reached Greece — 90 percent of them women and children — and ORT is now extending its partnership with the Irida Women's Center to support them. A \$16,000 grant will form part of the arrangement.

Irida's mission is to protect, empower and support women and children with increased vulnerabilities. The global education network has been responding to the needs of ORT students, teachers and their families in Ukraine

since the conflict began. Irida's Ukraine response includes a safe community space for women and children; legal counseling and protection services; psychosocial support; Greek-language classes twice per week; and a child's safe space for children of preschool age.

With the center's experience in working with those displaced by conflict, Irida will assist with issues including anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorders, unsafe living conditions and barriers to communication.

"Our work with the center exemplifies our aim to give See "ORT" on page 4

## Opinion

From the Desk of the Federation Executive Director

### With gratitude

SHELLEY HUBAL

"Power comes from above and legitimacy comes from below." — Frederick M. Lawrence

I recently attended the Anti-Defamation League's annual Supreme Court Review. During his opening statement, Frederick M. Lawrence shared the above concept about power and legitimacy. Lawrence is a lawyer, civil rights scholar and 10<sup>th</sup> secretary and CEO of the Phi Beta Kappa Society. He is also the former president of Brandeis University and dean of the George Washington University Law School. He was just one of the outstanding scholars that participated in this fascinating review of the historic term our nation's top court just finished. (If you are interested in watching a recording of the webinar, you can find it at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=WezdRAAOiiU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WezdRAAOiiU).)

The speakers talked about how the conservative majority on the court overturned precedents that will have lasting effects on the American legal system for decades, possibly longer. Many of these changes are not agreeable to the majority of Americans. Should the Supreme Court

pay attention to its approval ratings? It is supposed to be free of politics, but what happens if the people lose faith in its legitimacy? The Court is turning back many of our rights and there is no telling what is coming next. Will they abolish same-sex marriage? Affirmative action? Voting rights? These are all real possibilities.

Many of you know I prefer to stay out of politics. So, I am going to curb my comments on the court's decisions here. There are plenty of talking heads out there to engage those who are looking for a debate. What I want to point out is how Lawrence's statement relates to the work of Federation.

Each of our synagogues has a board, as do the Jewish Community Center and the Federation. In a small community, it is not unusual to see the same people active in leadership positions for years and Binghamton is no exception. Sure, committing to a leadership position often comes with some difficult discourse and a time commitment. However, if you want to make a difference in your community, there is no better place than serving on a board. This is where

decisions are made about policy and funding. This is where there is the "power" to have an impact.

If a leadership board has the "power," it is the community members that provide its social "legitimacy." Simply put, we exist for you. Federation is your community organization. We provide Jewish programming for you. We raise and allocate funds so you will have a vibrant Jewish community in which to live. We provide critical support to our Jewish neighbors in need because you believe in *tikkun olam*. The list goes on.

In just over a month's time, the Federation will begin its annual fund-raising Campaign. This is a critical time for our Jewish community. If you are currently a Binghamton resident, or if you have moved away, but still hold Binghamton close to your heart, we are hoping to get your support. We promise to keep doing the important work that makes this community whole and compassionate.

I am extending my gratitude to all of you for giving us legitimacy over the years. Wishing you all good health and happiness.

In My Own Words

### "God loves me"

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

"God loves you. I want to hear you say, 'God loves me.' Yes, out loud. 'God loves me.'" I've only said this to one person, someone I felt needed to hear it. Those words were said in the context of the chaplaincy work I do with individuals who have developmental disabilities. This encounter took place this spring and I've been pondering my reaction to what occurred. I should note that theological discussions are rare in my work: few people are interested in those conversations. My chaplaincy is of a more generic kind: I give individuals extra attention, read a story to which people of all religions (or no religion) can relate or help when staff needs an extra hand.

I've been asking myself what it means to say God loves me. It's an odd phrase for a classical Reconstructionist. (I know the movement now calls itself Reconstructing Judaism, but the original term still has meaning for me.) I don't believe in a God who acts in history; I don't believe what we do affects God or causes God to make changes in the world. What I do believe is that we bring God into the world by acting godly, by doing the activities the ancient rabbis noted God doing in the Torah: clothing the naked, visiting the sick, accompanying the dead for burial and other deeds of *chesed*. *Chesed* is translated into English as loving kindness, but it has far more depth than that. It is a way of treating others with care and understanding; by doing so, we bring the light of God into the world.

In my chaplaincy work, I do this godly work by recognizing that everyone — no matter their physical or intellectual ability — is created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God. That means they matter no less and no more than I do. They are human like the rest of us, with individual strengths and weaknesses the same as the rest of humanity.

There is another principle I use in my work that may surprise people. My friends know I'm not particularly interested in mysticism. My religion is very much of this earth: I leave the heavens and mystical workings to others. But I love one image from Kabbalah and use it in my chaplaincy: The idea that sparks of the Divine fell from the heavens and can be found in all of us. I look for that spark of Divinity in each person I work with and, because I look for it, I am able to perceive it. That means looking beyond the body to the soul found in each of us. It means recognizing that our abilities and/or disabilities do not make us any less in the eyes of God. Nor should it make us any less in the eyes of our fellow humans.

Why, then, don't I use the phrase "God loves me" in other contexts? I think it's partly because those words aren't regularly heard in a Jewish context. When was the last time anyone heard a rabbi or teacher look at those gathered and say, "God loves you"? Never in my experience. I know some of us experience something akin to that, but when was the last time we said that out loud?

It's difficult to write about this because I'm discussing feelings that cannot truly be defined. The same is true with questions I might ask about other aspects of my relationship to Judaism: Why have I always felt so connected to Judaism, even when I didn't define myself as religious or observant? Why does being Jewish matter? Why do I sometimes close my eyes during services and experience something internally that I don't feel anywhere else, and which I can't define?

However, I'm willing to accept those feelings without having to define them. I'm willing to just feel a connection to the individuals with whom I work. Good moments there feel godly because I recognized the humanity and divinity of those individuals who are created in the image of God and who, therefore, allow me to connect to the Divine.

Is that statement "God loves me" true? If it helps you connect to the mysteries of the universe, then yes. If not, then find another statement that does. For me, it's the human connection that matters: reading a book to someone, helping them to eat, working with them on their daily tasks and more that matters. I would be amiss if I didn't mention the staff with whom I work as another aspect of this godliness: they are incredible. You can see and feel the love and connection they have to those in their care. It is awe-inspiring in the most positive sense of the word: I am regularly wonderstruck and amazed. They, too, bring the Divine into the world.



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**THE REPORTER**  
Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton  
BINGHAMTON, NY

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

Executive Editor Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Layout Editor Diana Sochor

Advertising Kathy Brown

Bookkeeper Kathy Brown

Production Associate Julie Weber



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

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# Beth David Sisterhood seeks programming ideas

The Beth David Sisterhood is currently planning programs for the 2022-23 season. A group of about a dozen people usually attend the meetings, which are held on the second Wednesday of the month, either in the afternoon

or evening. "The meetings are very informal, although a small stage area can be available for performances," said members of the Sisterhood's Programming Committee. "We do not normally pay for programs, which usually last

anywhere from 25-40 minutes."

They continued, "Do you or someone you know have an unusual or hidden talent? How about a skill or a special interest that you would love to share with others? Are you a performer who would love to try out new material in front of a live audience, have a dress rehearsal before the big night or just perform? Did you go somewhere or do something others might find interesting? Jewish content is a plus, but definitely not a requirement."

Anyone who is interested in performing, who can suggest topics for exploration or who knows people who would be willing to speak should contact the Beth David Synagogue office by e-mailing [bethdavid@stny.rr.com](mailto:bethdavid@stny.rr.com) or leaving a message at 722-1793. "Please leave your contact information and a short description of the program. A member of the committee will try to get back to you in a reasonable amount of time," they added. "We look forward to hearing from you."

## 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.

◆ ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal will hold the virtual program "Systems, Patterns and Relationships: Judaism for Ecological and Social Healing" on Wednesdays, August 17, 24 and 31, at 7:30 pm. The program will explore the book "The Pearl and the Flame: A Journey Into Jewish Wisdom and Ecological Thinking" by Rabbi Natan Margalit. It will speak to what Margalit calls the "3 Mems" – minyan (emergence), mikdash (nestedness) and mitzvah (tipping points). To register for the program, visit <https://aleph.org/civcrm/event/register/?id=469&reset=1>.

◆ The Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy will hold a variety of online programs this fall: "The City of Dreams: Part One of a Three Part Series About Jewish Odessa on Zoom" on Tuesday, September 13, from 7-8:30 pm ([www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/city-or-dreams-odessa-zoom-talk](http://www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/city-or-dreams-odessa-zoom-talk)); "Jewish Intellectuals of Odessa" on Wednesday, September 21, from 7-8:30 pm ([www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/jewish-intellectuals-of-odessa](http://www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/jewish-intellectuals-of-odessa)); "Odessa During WWII" on Thursday, October 20, from 7-8:30 pm ([www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/jewish-odessa-part-3-ww2](http://www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/jewish-odessa-part-3-ww2)); "This is NOT the Borscht Belt: Resorts of the Early Jewish Catskills: Part 1 of 2" with urban historian Justin Ferate on Wednesday, October 26, from 7-8:45 pm ([www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/this-is-not-the-catskills-part-1-borscht-belt-reprise](http://www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/this-is-not-the-catskills-part-1-borscht-belt-reprise)); and "This IS the Borscht Belt! Resorts of the Jewish Catskills Part 2 of 2" on Monday, November 7, from 7-8:45 pm ([www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/this-is-the-catskills-part-2-borscht-belt-reprise](http://www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/this-is-the-catskills-part-2-borscht-belt-reprise)).

◆ The Yiddish Book Center will hold a virtual program about "Dineh: An Autobiographical Novel" by Ida Maze, translated by Yermiyahu Ahron Taub, on Thursday, August 4, at 7 pm. Taub will discuss the book and answer questions. For more information or to register, visit [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_9PYGzmgXS-GCcjhSEeLiVbA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9PYGzmgXS-GCcjhSEeLiVbA).

◆ The Center for Jewish History will hold the virtual program "Family History Today: Finding Overlooked Clues in German Records," featuring Alex Calzareth, on Monday, August 15, at 5 pm. Calzareth, director of the JewishGen German Research Division, will share his strategies for correlating evidence and making sense of ambiguous records. For more information or to register, visit <https://programs.cjh.org/event/family-history-today-2022-08-15>.

◆ ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal will hold the virtual program "The Needs of the Griever" on Sundays, August 14, 21 and 28, at 7:30 pm. The cost to attend is \$54. The program will look at the needs of grieverers and a discuss of the grieving process. To register, visit <https://aleph.org/civcrm/event/info/?reset=1&id=470>.

◆ Qesher will hold a variety of online Jewish tours and program. All programs will begin at 1:30 pm and all talks will take about 90 minutes: "A Tale of Three Kingdoms: The

Jews of Andalusia, Morocco and Gibraltar" on Thursday, August 4 ([www.qesher.com/a-tale-of-three-kingdoms/](http://www.qesher.com/a-tale-of-three-kingdoms/)); "Jewish New York: A Virtual Tour of Harlem" on Thursday, August 11 ([www.qesher.com/jewish-harlem/](http://www.qesher.com/jewish-harlem/)); "Jewish Africa: A Photographic Journey" on Sunday, August 14 ([www.qesher.com/jewish-africa/](http://www.qesher.com/jewish-africa/)); "Vilnius: The Jerusalem of Lithuania and the city of my family" on Thursday, August 18 ([www.qesher.com/vilnius-the-jerusalem-of-lithuania/](http://www.qesher.com/vilnius-the-jerusalem-of-lithuania/)); "The Jews of Bahrain: A Resilient Community in the Persian Gulf" on Sunday, August 21 ([www.qesher.com/the-jews-of-bahrain/](http://www.qesher.com/the-jews-of-bahrain/)); "The 3K Virtual Tour of Jewish Lithuania: Kaunas, Kedainiai and Kalvarija" ([www.qesher.com/virtual-tour-of-jewish-lithuania/](http://www.qesher.com/virtual-tour-of-jewish-lithuania/)); and "Finland: Home of kosher reindeer and Kabbalat Shabbat at midnight" on Sunday, August 28 ([www.qesher.com/finland/](http://www.qesher.com/finland/)).

◆ Hadar, in partnership with SVIVAH, HerTorah, the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan and the JTS Hendel Center for Ethics and Justice, will hold the virtual program "Real Torah / Real Life: Abortion, Beyond Law" on Tuesday-Wednesday, August 2-3. To receive information about when registration opens, visit <https://info.hadar.org/abortion-beyond-law>.

◆ The Museum of Jewish Heritage will hold the virtual and in-person "Saving Freud" book launch on Tuesday, August 23, from 7-8 pm. Andrew Nagorski, author of "Saving Freud," will discuss his work that tells of how in 1938 Sigmund Freud was persuaded to leave Vienna and emigrate to London. Sylvia Nasar, Knight Professor Emerita at Columbia Journalism School, will moderate the program. For more information or to register, visit <https://898a.blackbaudhosting.com/898a/tickets?tab=2&txobjid=06f7943aff6c-4e79-ac2b-96728c1a95a8>.

◆ The Museum of Jewish Heritage will hold the virtual and in-person book talk "Researchers Remember" on Tuesday, September 6, from 1-2:30 pm. Judy Tydor Baumel-Schwartz and Shmuel Refael, editors of "Researchers Remember: Research as an Arena of Memory for Descendants of Holocaust

See "Resources" on page 4

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to the family of **Barbara A. Wolfson**


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August 12-25.....	August 3
August 26-September 8.....	August 17
September 9-22.....	August 31
September 23-October 6.....	September 14

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**BARBARA A. (FREEDMAN) WOLFSON**

Barbara A. (Freedman) Wolfson, age 92, died at her home in Binghamton, New York, on July 11. She will be remembered for her adventuresome spirit, boundless energy and enthusiasm, joy in learning, delight in life, determination, grace, and bright laugh; and her dedication to and love of her immediate and extended family and her dear friends and neighbors.

Barbara grew up in Great Neck, New York, graduated from Skidmore College, and then earned her Master of Science in Social Work degree at the Columbia University School of Social Work, where she met and married Edward A. Wolfson, then a young medical resident at New York Hospital. Ed predeceased her in 1990. Cherished parents David and Ruth, and beloved older brothers Stanley and Albert and sisters-in-law Martha and Mary, also predeceased her.

Barbara worked as a social worker in local school systems while raising her family of three in Glen Rock, New Jersey, and then, after she and Ed moved to Binghamton in 1977, in Deposit, New York. In Binghamton, Barbara was very involved with local organizations, serving as a board member of over a dozen educational, political advocacy, and cultural organizations, and she ran in the Democratic primary for an open Congressional seat. She was an active member of Temple Israel in Binghamton, and of the local Shakespeare Club and hiking club. She was also a certified mediator, continuing to hold mediation sessions almost until her passing. She took almost daily walks and often played tennis and rode her bicycle, and she regularly drove many hours to see her family and friends or stay at her ski cabin in Vermont. Until a few years ago, she still played golf (always walking with her clubs) and downhill skied and kayaked. She loved keeping up with her four adoring grandchildren, always taking an active interest in their activities and steadfastly supporting them as they grew into adults.

Barbara is survived and lovingly remembered by her children Michael (and Sharon), Andrew (and Susan), and Nancy (and Jeremy); and her grandchildren Benjamin, Aaron, Rachel (and Jack), and Noah. Memorial donations may be made to Planned Parenthood or Women's American ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training).

**EPAC Kids Theater Workshop 2022**



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[www.EndicottArts.com](http://www.EndicottArts.com)



# Jewish Baseball Players

## Baseball's other Greenberg: the Jewish "Moonlight" Graham

BILL SIMONS

The official registry of the game lists two players named Greenberg who played Major League Baseball. One of them was, of course, Hall of Fame slugger Hank Greenberg. The other major league Greenberg was Adam, the Jewish "Moonlight" Graham.

Archie "Moonlight" Graham was an actual person. He spent a few weeks sitting on the bench of the New York Giants, appearing in his one and only MLB game on June 29, 1905. Graham registered no put outs, assists or errors, and, to his great disappointment, never got a major league at-bat and soon returned to the minors.

Graham's speed, as well as his second job "moonlighting" as a doctor, may have provided the genesis for the sobriquet "Moonlight." Intrigued by the nickname Moonlight and the elusive quest for an MLB at-bat, creative writer W.P. Kinsella burnished Graham's story in the 1982 novel "Shoeless Joe," which was subsequently adapted for the screen as "Field of Dreams" (1989).

The movie "Field of Dreams" transformed the fictionalized Moonlight Graham into an iconic figure in American popular culture. In "Field of Dreams," Graham, who is near the end of his life, is made young again and transported to an Iowa cornfield converted into a baseball diamond where ghostly major leaguers play ball. Graham finally gets his long-denied plate appearance, connecting for a fly ball to right field. The ball is caught for an out, but it knocks in a run and counts as a sacrifice. Graham's posthumous attainment of a long-denied goal stirred something deep in the American culture related to quest and redemption.

A hundred years later, almost to the day of the real Moonlight Graham's two innings of play, Adam Greenberg, a Chicago Cubs rookie fresh from the minors, strode to the plate as a pinch hitter in the top of the ninth inning for his MLB debut at Florida's Dolphins Stadium, home of the Marlins, on Saturday July 9, 2005. Like Moonlight Graham, Greenberg was compact, dark-haired, grew up in a substantial family, possessed notable speed, graduated from the University of North Carolina, batted left, played the outfield and shared the initials AG.

With his parents in attendance, Greenberg felt great excitement as he waited for the first pitch from Florida Marlins pitcher Valerio de los Santos. That pitch, traveling 92 miles an hour, smashed into the rookie's skull. It felt, Greenberg later recalled, as though "my head exploded." Greenberg left the game, which the Cubs won 8-2. Although the physiological and psychological impact of the injury took time to fully manifest itself, concussion, double vision, headaches, vertigo, dizziness, nausea and erosion of batting skills followed. Adam's father, Mark, watched his son's difficulty tying shoes and worried not about Adam's

baseball future, but about the quality of his life.

It appeared that de los Santos' pitch had ended Greenberg's MLB career, with a plate appearance short of an official at-bat. No other player in baseball history had his major league career end with a single pitch on a debut plate appearance. From 2006-08, Greenberg labored in the minors with disappointing results, as well as all or parts of five seasons (2008-11; 2013) with the Bridgeport Bluefish of the independent Atlantic League. He continued to do well in the field and on the base paths, but struggled offensively.

There is a Jewish component to the story. Greenberg points out, "When you hear my last name, you know I'm Jewish." The son of Jewish parents, he was bar mitzvahed at Reform Temple Beth Tikvah (Madison, CT), attended Jewish summer camps, developed a taste for gefilte fish and other ethnic foods, and never played baseball on Yom Kippur. "Proud to be a Jew," he joined Team Israel Team for the 2012 World Baseball Classic.

By 2012, however, the time had come to accept that he would never get his official MLB at-bat. Then film-maker Matt Liston produced an impactful advocacy video, "One At-Bat," spurring a petition drive that garnered approximately 27,000 signatures, called for MLB to grant Greenberg the at-bat denied by the 2005 beaming. Improbably, the Miami Marlins, the team whose pitcher had beamed Greenberg in 2005, signed him to a one-day contract for Tuesday, October 2, 2012. Jeffrey Loria, the controversial owner of the Marlins and a landsman, had taken a special interest in Greenberg.

October 2 came to the Miami ballpark, and the Marlins' manager, Ozzie Guillen, had Greenberg pinch hit to lead off the bottom of the sixth inning against the New York Mets. Greenberg came to the plate to face Mets knuckleball pitcher R.A. Dickey. At age 37, Dickey had improbably emerged as baseball's premier pitcher after years of grappling with depression. Dickey struck Greenberg out on three straight pitches, high and fast knuckleballs. Greenberg took the first pitch and swung, without making contact, at the next two. However, Dickey treated Greenberg with respect as did players on both teams, and the fans, many holding encouraging signs, gave Greenberg tremendous ovations both before and after his at-bat. Then, Guillen pulled Greenberg from the lineup, leaving him to sit on the dugout bench for the remainder of the game. Dickey reflected, "I think the story far transcends the result of the at-bat." Greenberg savored his at-bat, declaring it a moment that "will last for an eternity... It was magical... You could just feel the genuine support. It was awesome."

Greenberg pursued other endeavors in the years that followed his MLB at-bat - an attempt to continue playing

professional baseball, entrepreneurial promotion of a substance to lessen joint discomfort, motivational presentations to Jewish groups and a campaign that nearly resulted in election to the Connecticut state legislature. His Marlins at-bat, however, holds place of pride.

In "Field of Dreams," Moonlight Graham spoke for Greenberg and millions of other strivers of the quest for an at-bat: "I would have liked to have had that chance. Just once. To stare down a big-league pitcher. To stare him down, and just as he goes into his windup, wink. Make him think you know something he doesn't. That's what I wish for."

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.

### Community Calendar

The Community Calendar can be found on the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton's website, www.jfgeb.org, by clicking on "calendar." Updates or additions of events for the calendar 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.

### ORT . . . . . Continued from page 2

people the skills they need for a self-sufficient future. As this protracted, complex conflict continues, it will be vital for us all to do everything we can to give Ukrainians the practical support they require," said Dan Green, World ORT director general and CEO.

ORT established a partnership with the Irida Women's Center in 2021 to support Syrian and Afghan refugee women and children, as well as Africans and other nationalities fleeing to northern Greece.

Chloe E. Kousoula, Irida's CEO and founder, said "we are grateful to receive this generous grant, which will allow us to provide critical services to Ukrainian women and children forced to flee their homes."



Ukrainian refugees joined women from around the world for a session on human rights at the Irida Women's Center in Thessaloniki, Greece. (Photo courtesy of ORT)



Ukrainian refugee women are taking Greek-language courses. (Photo courtesy of ORT)

### Resources . . . . . Continued from page 3

Survivors," will discuss how when "descendants of Holocaust survivors who became researchers and scholars, whether they devoted their professional lives to the Holocaust or to other topics, the Holocaust often accompanies their professional lives like a shadow." Jacqueline Heller, Dan Carter, Dorota Glowacka, Sam Juni, Abraham J. Peck, Liat Steir-Livny, Zehavit Gross and Eva Fogelman will also discuss how their parents' or grandparents' Holocaust experiences affected their personal and professional trajectories. For more information or to register, visit <https://898a.blackbaudhosting.com/898a/tickets?tab=2&txobjid=fd3f54cb-4174-4522-849b-07c0ad61cdb2>. ♦ Maven will hold "The Pope at War: Saving the Catholic Church at the Expense of the Jews" on Thursday, August 11, from 3-3:45 pm. David Kertzer will discuss his book, for which he looked at "thousands of never-before-seen documents not only from the Vatican, but from archives in Italy, Germany, France, Britain, and the United States...

paint[ing] a new, dramatic portrait of what the pope did and did not do as war enveloped the continent and as the Nazis began their systematic mass murder of Europe's Jews." For more information or to register, visit <https://maven.aju.edu/events-classes/program/the-pope-at-war-saving-the-catholic-church-at-the-expense-of-the-jews>.

♦ The Keshet Leadership Project partners with leaders of national and local Jewish organizations such as synagogues, day schools, JCCs, youth groups and summer camps to teach community leaders the tools, skills and confidence to put LGBTQ equality into practice. For more information on the project, visit [www.keshetonline.org/keshet-leadership-project/](http://www.keshetonline.org/keshet-leadership-project/).

For additional resources, see previous issues of The Reporter on its website, [www.thereportergroup.org/streams/miscellaneous-features/miscellaneous-features/tag/80309?](http://www.thereportergroup.org/streams/miscellaneous-features/miscellaneous-features/tag/80309?)

### Quick Reference Guide to Planned Giving

Use this planned giving quick reference guide to help determine the best strategy for achieving your philanthropic and financial goals.

For further information or assistance, please contact Shelley Hubal at 724-2332 or [director@jfgeb.org](mailto:director@jfgeb.org)

If Your Goal is to:	Then You Can:	Your Benefits May Include:
Make a quick and easy gift	Simply write a check now or use a credit card	An income tax deduction and immediate charitable impact
Avoid tax on capital gains	Contribute long-term appreciated stock or other securities	A charitable deduction plus no capital gains tax
Defer a gift until after your death	Put a bequest in your will (gifts of cash or a share or the residue of your estate)	Exemption from federal estate tax on donations
Receive guaranteed fixed income that is partially tax-free	Create a charitable gift annuity	Current and future savings on income taxes plus fixed stable payments
Avoid the two-fold taxation on IRA or other employee benefit plans	Name a charity as the beneficiary of the remainder of the retirement assets after your lifetime	Tax relief to your family on inherited assets
Make a large gift with little cost to you	Contribute a life insurance policy you no longer need or purchase a new one and designate a charity as the owner	Current and possible future income tax deductions
Reduce taxable income from IRA Required Minimum Distributions	Make a qualified charitable donation directly from your IRA (after age 70½)	Reducing taxable income



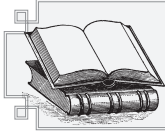
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**Create a Jewish Legacy**  
Strengthen the Jewish community you care about for generations to come. Consider a gift to the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton in your estate.

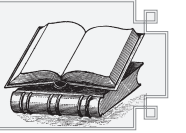
For further information or assistance, please contact Shelley Hubal at 724-2332 or [director@jfgeb.org](mailto:director@jfgeb.org)

 **Jewish Federation**  
OF GREATER BINGHAMTON

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# Celebrating Jewish Literature



## What remains after grief

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Even though Steve Leder conducted more funerals than he could count in his 30 years in the rabbinate, it wasn't until he experienced personal loss – the death of his father – that he developed a new philosophy: one that says death offers people the opportunity to experience more meaning in their lives and to love more deeply. Leder, the senior rabbi of Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles, has written two books to share this idea: “The Beauty of What Remains: How Our Greatest Fear Becomes Our Greatest Gift” and “For You When I Am Gone: Twelve Essential Questions to Tell a Life Story” (both published by Avery/Penguin Random House).

In “The Beauty of What Remains,” Leder focuses on what he believes is the typical reaction of those who are close to death: “Many people are ready for death the way we are ready to sleep after a long and exhausting day... We are not anxious about sleeping. We are not afraid of it. Disease, age, and life itself prepare us for death. There is a time for everything, and when it is our time to die, death is as natural a thing as life itself. Consider this very good news for those of us who fear dying. Dying people are not afraid of dying... Anxiety is for the living.” He notes that he is not talking about those who die young or who die suddenly in an accident. But he believes that people who are ill, especially those suffering from a long-term illness, are usually prepared for death. Whatever worries remain are not for themselves, but for their family.

Many of Leder's discussions focus on the best ways to tend to those who are dying. He advises visitors to ask questions about the good times they remember. That allows the dying to look back on their lives with joy. Led-

er does not see these visits as a good time to challenge relatives about painful moments or expect apologies for remembered hurts. According to Leder, while this might seem therapeutic for the living, it is painful to those who are dying. He suggests instead that visitors offer comfort, saying how good a parent/spouse/etc. they have been and because of that the visitor will be OK when they are gone.

People should also not expect final illnesses to change family dynamics. Leder writes, “Death does not change the essential nature of a person or a family, it just makes everything and everyone more so. Yes, there are rare exceptions, but generally speaking, families who are dysfunctional in life are dysfunctional in death. Loving, close families in life are loving, close families in death.” He uses his family, particularly his relationship with his father as an example, particularly the years his father lost to Alzheimer's, to model appropriate behavior. The author notes that his good and bad habits are a result of his reactions to his father's life and example. What he doesn't explore is how his deep grief might be partly due to the fact that, although he loved his father, his own life took a different direction than he might have wanted because of his father's influence.

One of the greatest challenges Leder faces as a rabbi is when he's asked to counsel people who are facing seemingly impossible decisions: “Most people coming to see me about a problem have no *good* options, only bad and worse. Sometimes it is bad to get divorced but worse to stay married. Sometimes it is bad to endure medical treatment but worse not to; other times the opposite is true.” On one occasion, he had to choose between what Judaism says should be done and the needs of the people who are

looking to him for support. He notes that in giving that advice, “I violated my faith and confirmed my humanity.”

“The Beauty of What Remains” also talks about creating a living will, a topic that is the focus of “For You When I Am Gone.” In the latter book, Leder asked a group of friends – of different ages and religions, with children or childless – to answer a series of questions about their lives. He uses those questions as his chapter titles and includes the answers he received, which could serve as the basis of an ethical will that allows parents to offer wisdom to the next generation. The author sees this as a way people can continue to speak to those they love after they are gone. It also offers a tangible document that can be referred to and read even years after a death. In addition to the friends who answered his questions, Leder includes writings from other sources that focus on important life issues and offer advice worth pondering.

The 12 questions include “When Was a Time You Led with Your Heart?”; “What Makes you Happy?”; “What Was Your Biggest Failure?”; “What Got you Through Your Greatest Challenge?”; “What is a Good Person?”; “What is Love?”; “Have You Ever Cut Someone Out of Your Life?”; “How Do You Want to Be Remembered?”; “What Is Good Advice?”; “What Will Your Epitaph Say?” and “What Will Your Final Blessing Be?” The answers included are interesting and offer excellent advice, even for those not interested in writing an ethical will.

Some of the most interesting sections are when Leder writes about his own life or offers wisdom he's learned through his rabbinate. One of my favorite examples can be found in the chapter about failure: “A lot of people think the See “Grief” on page 8

## RECONSTRUCTING A LIFE

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

How wonderful to read a memoir by someone who loves his mother. That love comes through clearly in Wayne Hoffman's “The End of Her: Racing Against Alzheimer's to Solve a Murder” (Heliotrope Books). Except for a short time when he was coming to terms with his sexuality (Hoffman is gay), he and his mother, Susan, had a wonderful relationship. That's why when Susan begins to suffer from dementia, he tries to solve a family murder in order to give them a common interest. The murder? His mother's grandmother, Sarah, had been shot and killed in Winnipeg, Canada, in 1913 and no one was ever arrested. But Hoffman's excellent work is more than a memoir and a murder mystery: it also offers insight into Canadian Jewish history.

Hoffman, who grew up in Maryland as the youngest of three siblings, claims to have been his mother's favorite, something his brother and sister do not dispute. His parents adjusted to his announcement of his sexuality fairly quickly and were completely accepting of his partner. As an adult, Hoffman spoke to his mother almost every morning, something that made her dementia even harder to accept. He was losing his daily confidant, the person with similar interests and with whom he could discuss his life.

It was after they learned of his mother's cognitive difficulties that Hoffman decided to research who had killed his mother's grandmother. He had heard the story of the murder often – his mother was such a great storyteller, no one minded her repeating a tale. In fact, Hoffman envied

her talent: “I inherited many things from my mother: her sweet tooth, a (probably not unrelated) lifelong struggle with my weight, the webbed toes that she'd gotten from her father. But most importantly, from a young age, I wanted to be a storyteller just like her. I loved the way she could hold people's interest, create memorable characters, and above all, make people laugh. My father called her ‘the funniest broad I ever met.’” But he realized the story she told made no sense and finally said so to his mother. According to family lore, his great-grandmother, Sarah, was breast feeding her latest baby on the porch outside her house in the winter and was killed by a drive-by shooter in broad daylight. When his mother asked Hoffman what he thinks happened if that story is not true, Hoffman realizes he never thought to explore what really occurred.

That put Hoffman, who has worked as a journalist, on the trail of the real story. It was not hard to find newspaper articles about the murder: the story was covered not only in the Jewish press, but the secular one. Hoffman was correct in believing that the events were different from the story his mother told. Sarah was shot while asleep in her bed with her youngest child lying beside her and her next oldest in a crib in the same room. However, the newspaper accounts were sometimes contradictory: many of the people that reporters and the police interviewed were Yiddish speakers whose English was not always accurate. Hoffman manages to learn a great deal before stopping his research when he is unable to pinpoint the murderer. However, he

makes another attempt years later and reveals the person he believes committed the crime. Unfortunately, it's too late to share his thoughts with this mother.

For those interested in Canadian Jewish history, Hoffman writes about the waves of Jewish immigrants who came to the country. He notes that, in the decades after the 1880s, “the Jewish population of Canada would climb from thirteen hundred to more than seventy-five thousand; the majority of those newcomers were from towns and cities in Russia – Marxist-leaning, Yiddish-speaking workers who fled growing anti-Semitic attacks following political unrest and the abortive revolution of 1905. Ten thousand of these Russian Jews would eventually settle in Manitoba, nearly all of them in Winnipeg. Newcomers initially lived in immigrant sheds, crowded wooden barracks housing hundreds of people along the Red River in the part of town known as ‘The Forts,’ or in shanties in ‘the flats’ nearby. Nearly all the Russian Jews eventually settled in Winnipeg's North End, giving it the nickname ‘New Jerusalem’ or, to those less fond of the newcomers, ‘Jew Town.’” He also writes of how his great-grandparents met and what happened to the family after his great-grandmother was murdered. One advantage of his research was connecting with family members with whom his family had long lost touch. Fortunately, he also includes numerous family trees that help make these connections clear.

“The End of Her” is one of those rare books where the different sections are not only equally interesting, but which come together as an extended portrait of a family. Its emphasis on the relationship between Hoffman and his mother shows how painful it was for him to watch her decline and how much he appreciated the woman she once was. Whether the author actually uncovered the true murderer will matter less to readers than that loving portrait.

## Summer, marriage and melodrama

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

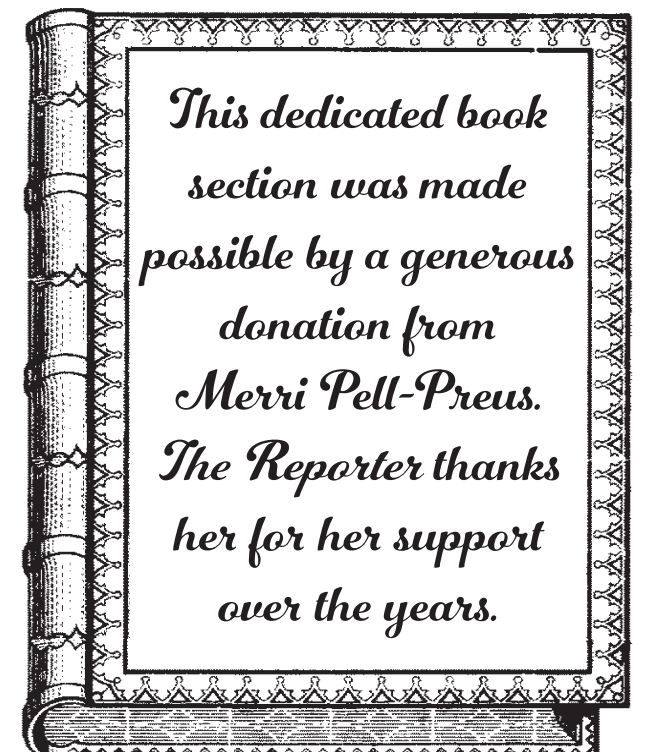
Google defines melodrama as “a sensational dramatic piece with exaggerated characters and exciting events intended to appeal to the emotions.” I consider melodrama to also include too many unbelievable coincidences and events. But that doesn't mean melodrama is a bad thing. For example, while I might have kept saying, “Oh, come on, really, yet another twist?” when reading Jennifer Weiner's novel “The Summer Place” (Atria Books), that doesn't mean I didn't keep eagerly turning its pages to discover what would happen. That makes it a great book for the beach or, in my case, a three-day weekend (although I did finish it in two days.) Yes, I know that Weiner does include some serious material: that was affective, but it was the convoluted plot elements that captured my attention.

It's hard to know where to begin since I don't want to ruin the surprises. What sets the plot in motion is 22-year-old Ruby Danhauser's announcement that she and her pandemic boyfriend, Gabe, are going to marry at her grandmother Ronnie's beach house on Cape Cod that summer. Her stepmother, Sarah, is upset because a) she feels Ruby is too young, b) has not known Gabe that long and c) she told Ronnie, who is Sarah's mother, about the wedding first. This is not Sarah's only worry: Eli, her husband and the father of her two sons, has been acting strangely since the pandemic started. Sarah feels shut out and alone. Readers learn why Eli feels this way: years ago.... sorry, but I'm not going to reveal any of the surprises.

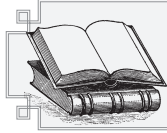
However, Eli is not the only one with a secret. Ronnie has something she needs to tell her children. A once successful novelist, she put her writing career aside for reasons that are part of yet another plot twist. Her son, Sam (and Sarah's twin) also has to make some difficult life decisions. He plans to reveal those when he comes east with his stepson for the wedding. Readers learn about Ruby's mother, who left Eli when she was a baby, and how Sarah and Eli came to marry. Ruby's interaction with her stepmother and her half-siblings also plays a role in the book. However, it is Ruby herself who sets the final over-the-top plot twists into action.

The summer house itself is a minor character in the book and its thoughts open the different sections of the novel. She (as the house is called) worries about what will happen to the family if Ronnie sells her, especially because she can't speak to them, but only watch their actions: “The house never gave up. She kept working at it, trying to find ways to let her people know she heard them, that she saw them, that she wanted to help. They might take her for granted; they might leave her empty all through the winter, letting mice chew through her insulation to make nests inside her walls, but she cared for them, and always would.”

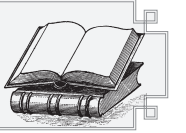
Whether readers like “The Summer Place” will depend on their tolerance for plot twists and almost unbelievable coincidences. While not normally the type of book I enjoy, reading it was a great way to forget my own problems. I also couldn't wait to talk about the plot and share the melodramatic action.



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# Celebrating Jewish Literature



## A rom-com about romance...

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman  
After being dumped

It's bad enough that Lauren Leo is 41 and the last of her friends to marry. Well, to almost marry because in the opening chapter of Marilyn Simon Rothstein's "Crazy to Leave You" (Lake Union Publishing) Lauren is dumped by her fiancé minutes before she is supposed to walk down the aisle. Some readers will think she dodged a bullet after learning how he did that and his not-exactly healthy relationship with his mother. But Lauren's family is no picnic, either: her mother constantly harps (and harps and harps and harps....) at her about her weight and criticizes almost her every move. Lauren envies her younger sister, Stephanie, who is definitely their mother's favorite child. Stephanie has the perfect job, a perfect husband and perfect children.

Lauren's life is made more complicated when her older sister, Margo, shows up at her door and camps out in her apartment. Not only had Margo refused to come to Lauren's wedding, she's had no contact with their parents for ages. Although she claims to be there to support Lauren, Margo's real purpose is to resurrect her acting career: the fact that she gained a great deal of weight damaged her chances for employment in California. Lauren throws herself into job at a public relations firm as an antidote to heartache and hopes her efforts will result by being made partner. An additional complication occurs when she's injured in a car accident and needs a driver, Ruby Cohen, who at first annoys her with his attempts at conversation. However, she does grow fonder of him overtime, although the nature of their relationship remains unclear to her. Then revelations from several of her friends make her doubt whether any romance can last a lifetime.

"Crazy to Leave You" includes several subplots that make it more complex reading than many rom-coms. They add depth to a work that features a fairly realistic look at the world, while also offering a fun romance. Parts of the plot offer topics for discussion at book clubs, including women's body images and the glass ceiling that still exists in many workplaces.

**That is just like a TV movie (maybe)**

There is a cable TV channel that warps women's views of romance and the world. At least one could make that case after reading "As Seen on TV" by Meredith Schorr (Forever/Hachette Book Group). Adina Gellar is enamored with the channel's movies that show a big city woman who goes to a small town to help prevent it from being exploited by a big city builder. Not only does the heroine come to love the town, but she finds true romance with a

small-town hero. Unfortunately for Adina, life is far more complex than a made-for-TV movie would suggest.

Adina is a freelance journalist who is hoping for her big break: a permanent job at an online magazine. The publisher loves her new idea, showing how a real estate magnate is ruining the small town of Pleasant Hollow. If her article is good enough, she'll have that job. Unfortunately, Adina has to use to her own money for expenses; even though her mother helps, finances are tight. Even worse, Pleasant Hollow is far from the charming towns featured on that cable channel. Most people seem happy with the construction that's happening, at least those who are even willing to talk to her, rather than finding her questions intrusive and annoying. Adina does meet an interesting man, only it turns out he's working for her supposed villain, the real estate magnet. Is Adina wrong? Maybe small towns aren't as wonderful as she believes, and maybe romance and happiness are different from what those TV movies have led her to expect.

"As Seen on TV" features some realistic subplots, which add more depth to the novel. Money troubles and a portrayal of a woman who is clear about her desires (career and sexual) create additional interest. But there is still plenty of fun and humor in this anti-TV-romance-movie work.

**That was destined to happen**

Ever want to shake some sense into a novel's main character? That occurred when reading "Meant to be Mine" by Hannah Orenstein (Atria Paperback). I wanted to grab Edie Meyer and say, "You dumped a wonderful man who loved you, who understood you and whom you loved because your grandmother Gloria told you that you would meet the love of your life on a particular date and that date will happen in a few months. I don't care how many times she's been right about the date that someone in your family has meet their true love: why turn away someone wonderful for an uncertain future?"

But maybe her grandmother is right: on the date predicted, Edie travels to Maine to watch her sister's boyfriend propose to her. Edie also meets the gorgeous Theo on the plane and, with a few clever twists, they end up dating. Theo seems to be everything that Edie is looking for, but sometimes things seem off. Not that Theo isn't a great person, but they don't always fit or seem to want the same things. Is it possible that her destined match is the wrong one?

What's not a problem is Edie's relationship with her grandmother. Gloria is a great character and it was wonderful to see Edie attend a regular mah-jongg date with Gloria, her mother and her sister. The scenes when these

relatives interact are among the best sections of "Meant to be Mine." Plus, the initial premise – learning the date that one will meet the love of one's life – was clever. An additional pleasure was my correctly guessing the ending.

## THE COST OF WAR

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman  
The Spanish Civil War

Spain has a mixed Jewish history. Tales of tolerance and understanding while the country was under Muslim rule clash with the forced conversions and expulsions of the Jewish population during the reign of Christian monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I. Yet, during the Spanish Civil War, Jews from other parts of Europe and the U.S. traveled to Spain to fight against Franco and fascism. "Home So Far Away" by Judith Berlowitz (She Writes Press) tells how that fight affected the life of one Jewish woman.

Klara first experienced Spain in 1925 while visiting her uncle, who hid his Jewish heritage from his children and neighbors. However, even though asked to not to mention she was Jewish, Klara felt more at home in Spain than she did in her native Germany and, after five years, found a position teaching at a Madrid medical school. There she tries to help the female students who are treated as second class citizens. She also works to further the communist cause, believing it is the only way to form a just society, and participates in marches and other actions close to her heart.

Klara is a pacifist, but her stance wavers once the Spanish Civil War begins. Although, at first, she only expects to help nurse the wounded, she soon finds herself willing to put her life on the line. But not everyone agrees on politics or for what they should be fighting. What is more important: winning the war or furthering the socialist/communist cause?

"Home So Far Away" is written as a diary, meaning that, unlike readers, Klara has no idea that she's fighting for a lost cause. Her entries focus more on politics than on her personal life since politics and justice are her passion. The novel ends abruptly, which may leave readers partly unsatisfied and wondering what happens to Klara after its final entry.

**Warsaw, Israel, Spain and France**

A panoramic novel whose main character travels from Warsaw to France, then to Israel and Spain, before returning to France: that summarizes the travels Rivka Berg makes in the years before, during and after World War II in "The Corset Maker" by Annette Libeskind Berkovits (Amsterdam Publishers). Rivka is independent minded: she starts a business with her best friend Bronka in Warsaw, even though few women ran their own stores during the late 1920s. Rivka then decides to travel to Palestine to find her sister, Golda, whom the family has not heard from in years.

An underground group helps her leave Poland, although she plans to return after learning what happened to Golda. Since Palestine is still under British control, Rivka has to travel under an assumed name, Raquela, first to France, and then be smuggled into Palestine. Things go awry during her time in Palestine and she has no desire to remain the country and become a pioneer. Since she has no money to return to Warsaw, she finds herself traveling to Spain with someone looking to fight in the Spanish Civil War against the fascists. There Rivka/Raquela makes a life for herself, until the war ends and it becomes dangerous for anyone Jewish to remain in Spain. She returns to France; however, life there is also not easy once the Nazis conquer the country.

"The Corset Maker" offers readers romance, adventure and excitement: Rivka has relationships with several men, which allows her to discover that love can appear in different forms. There are also many coincidences, as characters return to her life or meet people she knows, something that could have been unconvincing, but which isn't because it adds to the drama. That's because the plot and characters are well done, making the novel interesting and absorbing reading.

**Finding refuge in Stockholm**

When is a spy novel not exactly a spy novel? When, as with "Dr. B." by Daniel Birnbaum (Harper), it tries to do something far more complex. "Dr. B.," which is based on true events, opens with its title character, German-Jewish journalist Immanuel Birnbaum (also known as Dr. B), imprisoned in Stockholm for spying for Nazi Germany, something that makes little sense since he fled from Warsaw to escape the Nazis' invasion of Poland.

Landing in Stockholm, Immanuel writes for a Swiss newspaper under the name Dr. B. and finds work with the German publisher S. Fisher Verlag, whose business has also moved to Stockholm. Immanuel meets many different people while working, including a potential English spy and saboteur, and a Russian woman who has great influence at the Soviet embassy. However, what concerns him and other refugees is whether the country's financial connections to Germany will determine their treatment. Many of the refugees are hoping to leave the country, to move to England, Shanghai or the U.S. The city also **See "War" on page 8**

## Gender and the Talmud

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Nonbinary gendered individuals found in the Talmud: Max. K. Strassfeld (who uses the pronouns they/their) was fascinated by the discussions they discovered about them in the rabbinic text. Strassfeld wanted to know more, to not just understand what the rabbis thought, but how that knowledge could contribute to contemporary understanding of trans and intersex (someone with mixed male and female biological traits) individuals. In "Trans Talmud: Androgynes and Eunuchs in Rabbinic Literature" (University of California Press), the author notes that their interest is not the same as the rabbis; in fact, they deliberately use a "bad/trans" (their words) reading of the text that may influence contemporary readers' ideas about gender.

While the Talmud uses several terms to denote eight different terms to describe gender, Strassfeld subsumes several of them into two main types: androgynes and eunuchs. In the book's glossary, eunuchs are defined as "one understood to be male who lacks testicles, a penis, or both, whether congenitally or due to removal." Androgynes are called "a person whose body includes both genitalia traditionally regarded as female and genitalia traditionally regarded as male." The rabbis' interest in these different genders was often connected to an individual's legal responsibilities. For example, are these individuals like females, meaning they are only responsible to for the *mitzvot* women must perform? If not and they are considered male, then they must perform all the *mitzvot* for which men are responsible. Strassfeld is particularly interested in the times when the rabbis consider these individuals as neither male nor female, but rather a third gender.

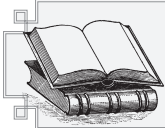
While it's difficult to find a central thesis to discuss, the individual sections of "Trans Talmud" offer interesting and intriguing ideas, usually by taking something that was of minor interest to the rabbis and making it the focus for rethinking the meaning of gender. For example, Strassfeld notes the rabbinic idea of deciding a person's status by whether they are fertile (in this case as to whether they can father children, but also for women) and asks readers to think about what that means for those too young or too old to be fertile. How do you define someone who has not yet gone through puberty who may or not may fit these categories, particularly when they may already have physical signs to show they belong to one of the nonbinary gender categories?

Another interesting idea is the comparison of Jewish and Christian ideas about eunuchs. For example, while rabbinic Judaism considered only two categories of eunuchs (born eunuchs and those who become eunuchs after birth), the New Testament considered another type; "those who become eunuchs for the sake of heaven." This difference may be because the rabbis could not contemplate the idea that men would deliberately choose to become eunuchs since marriage and procreation play such a large role in Judaism. In addition, it's considered a *mitzvah* for men to be fertile and multiply. Rabbinic texts even debate the number of children necessary to fulfil this requirement with the standard answer being a minimum of two children (although whether that is two male children, or one male and one female is debated).

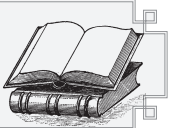
Strassfeld also looks at contemporary U.S. laws and how they can be understood as transphobic. For example, they discuss "bathroom laws," laws that forbid transgendered individuals from using the bathroom that is not that of their birth sex. They also quote from a Mississippi marriage law that says marriage can only be the union of one man and one woman, which not only forbids intersex and trans marriages, but gay and lesbian ones. The law also declares that a person's sex is the one determined at their birth. However, Strassfeld notes the law ignores those born with mixed sexual characteristics, something the ancient rabbis did acknowledge.

Strassfeld's book contains information that could be of interest to two separate audiences, although what they hope to gain from it may not overlap. For example, those interested in rabbinic literature may be looking for the legal ramifications of the rabbinic discussions. For those working in gender studies, it will be the aspects of trans and intersex history that stand out. Strassfeld does recognize each audience is familiar with different terminology and tries to note the terms with which they may not familiar.

"Trans Talmud" offers as many questions as it answers, but that seems to be the point of the work: it forces readers to explore how we understand gender. What would be of interest is a discussion between the work's two potential audiences so they can learn from each other. Until that happens, Strassfeld's book will be of most interest to those seeking to challenge their ideas about the meaning of rabbinic literature and how it can be used to inform contemporary times.



# Celebrating Jewish Literature



## Nonfiction, Fiction and Fantasy for tweens (and adults)

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

I don't know if it's because there were so few books for Jewish tweens published when I was young, but I love reading books for this age group. Not only are numerous books being published, but the works are really impressive in depth and breadth. Since I've enjoyed them so much, I think other adults might feel the same. Maybe parents or grandparents and tweens can form their own book clubs and discuss these works and others. What if synagogues offered book clubs for tweens? With the right leader, they might be a huge success.

### "Alias Anna"

Once in a while it's to my advantage not to have paid close attention to the PR about a book. Otherwise, I might not have read the wonderful "Alias Anna: A True Story of Outwitting the Nazis" by Susan Hood with Greg Dawson (Harper). First, I didn't realize it was nonfiction. (I thought it was a novel based on a true story.) Second, I was unaware it was written in poetry, something that might have led me to pass on asking for a review copy. But I'm glad I did because "Alias Anna" is not only beautifully written, but it also packs a powerful punch.

In easy-to-read prose poetry, this biography tells the moving story of Zhanna Arshanskaya, a young and brilliant musician, who lived in Ukraine with her parents and her equally talented sister, Frina. The poetry is written in the third person, but the authors also include short comments on events using Zhanna's own words. This commentary adds even more depth to the story. The authors use a variety of styles, with my favorite chapter being the poem "What Goes Around Comes Around." Once read in the traditional way (top to bottom), the reader is encouraged to read the poem the opposite way, beginning at the bottom. It's brilliantly done and offers insight into Stalin's life.

Life is not perfect for Zhanna's family in a Ukraine governed by the U.S.S.R., but things quickly take a turn for the worse when the Nazis conquer the country. Her family and the other Jews in their town are gathered and taken on what is clearly a death march. Zhanna's father bribes a guard to allow her to escape, telling his daughter the most important thing is to survive. She does so by changing her name and hiding in plain sight, playing music for the Nazi oppressors who have no idea she is Jewish.

Even knowing from the beginning that Zhanna lived through the war didn't lessen the suspense, which kept me quickly turning pages. What's fascinating is that Zhanna never elaborated on what occurred until her granddaughter sent her a letter (which is featured in the prologue) asking about her story for a school project. Readers will be grateful she did.

### "A Visit to Moscow"

Does the graphic novel "A Visit to Moscow" (West Margin Press) portray a true story? The writing credits say it is an adaptation by Anna Olswanger from a story told by Rabbi Rafael Grossman (West Margin Press). In an afterward by Grossman's son, he notes that this is a story his father told when he spoke about his visit to the Soviet Union in 1965. The purpose for the trip was to learn whether reports that the Jewish community was being persecuted were true.

Grossman travels as part of a group of rabbis. Their itinerary is severely restricted and they are told not to leave the hotel without their tour guide. However, Grossman pretends to have a headache and skips one of the tours. Instead, he heads to an address given to him by a Russian woman living the U.S. who is worried about her brother. The man who opens the door is very suspicious because he had no way of knowing if Grossman is a rabbi or a member of the KGB seeking to trap him. When he is finally let into the apartment, Grossman discovers a secret, one that makes a lasting impression on him.

To tell more of the story would spoil the surprise, but it is extremely well done. The excellent illustrations by Yevgenia Nayberg use color to create a mood that informs the story, generating far greater emotion than one might expect from the sparse number of details included. The book ends with factual information about the plight of Soviet Jews that helps place the story into perspective. Since Grossman has passed away, Olswanger is unsure how much of the tale is fact and how much is fiction. However, she hopes to eventually find the Soviet family featured and learn the truth. That story would also be a fascinating one to read.

### "Wayward Creatures"

Two very different families are featured in "Wayward Creatures" by Dayna Lorentz (Clarion Books). That is not an unusual sentence for me to write in a review, but in this case the difference is greater than normal: the families featured are from two different species – coyote and human. Each chapter features a first-person narrator – either Rill, a young coyote, or the half-Jewish 12-year-old Gabe – both of whom are having a difficult time. In Rill's case, it's because her parents expect her to watch over her younger siblings, even though they are refusing to learn to hunt and expect Rill to feed them. Gabe's problems began when his



A scene from "A Visit to Moscow" (used with permission of the publisher)

father lost his job and are compounded by the fact his two closest friends have been ignoring him now that they are in junior high. His parents and sister don't seem to notice he has any problems, probably because no one is paying much attention to him. When Gabe sets off some fireworks to impress his former friends, he starts a forest fire, one that injures Riff and leaves her helpless.

The chapters alternate between Riff and Gabe, and both are extremely well done. The sections where Gabe discovers the damage he's done and how to control his temper felt convincing. The sections about restorative justice – a program in which Gabe is enrolled so he won't go to jail – were interesting and thought provoking. (The author offers more information about the program at the end of the book.) Riff's narrative is fun because she is such an appealing character, something I would never have said about a coyote before reading this novel.

This is an excellent work for tweens from troubled families to help them better understand their emotions. The book is not preachy; the author makes Gabe and Riff's learning feel real and natural. As an adult, I found the book delightful and enjoyed spending time with both characters, although there was something special in getting to know the sweet and charming Riff.

### "The Button Box"

What's the best way to learn about history? Time travel, of course! That's what happens to Jewish Ava and her Muslim cousin Nadeem in "The Button Box" by Bridget Hodder and Fawzia Gilani-Williams (Kar-Ben). The two cousins, who spend afternoons with their Granny Buena, have had a bad day: a bully has mistreated them because of their religions. To take their mind off what happened, Granny tells them a story of one of their ancestors, Ester ibn Evram, who lived in Sabtah, Morocco. She also shows them a button from her fancy button box – a button that once belonged to Prince Abdur Rahman the first, a Muslim leader who, with the Jews in his community, made Spain the center of arts and science in the eighth century.

But before finishing her story, Granny feels the need for a nap, leaving the button box with the cousins. When they decide to sew Rahman's button onto Ava's sweatshirt, something very strange happens: darkness descends and they suddenly find themselves in Sabtah. The two quickly become involved with an intrigue that could either save Ester and the prince, or change the course of history.

"The Button Box" blends adventure and history, and is perfect for young readers who enjoy novels with time travel. Ava and Nadeem are appealing characters, and the fact that neither is perfect adds to their charm. The book concludes with an author's note about Sephardic Jews, Muslims and which characters are based on fact and which are fictional.

### "The Lost Ryu"

How could I resist a book that features a Yiddish speaking dragon? Even though Cheshire, as the dragon is called, doesn't play a major role in Emi Watanabe Cohen's "The Lost Ryu" (Levine Querido), I love the fact that each character has their own small dragon (called ryu) who talks to them. The main character, 10-year-old Kohei Fujiwara, has never seen the big dragons that existed during World War II, which ended 20 years before the novel begins. Kohei's family life is not easy: he and his mother live with his grandfather, a cranky old man who drinks and throws things.

Kohei's mother expects him to befriend their new neighbor, Isolde, a half-Jewish and half-Japanese girl his age who has just moved to Japan from the United States with her parents. Kohei has no desire to be her friend. Instead, he's concerned about his grandfather: Kohei blames his grandfather's behavior on the fact he no longer has his own dragon. Kohei then decides to travel to where new dragons are hatched so he can bring his grandfather one, even though it is a long trip and his mother would forbid him from doing so if she knew. Although Kohei hasn't wanted to be friends with Isolde, she has befriended him



Two pages from "A Visit to Moscow" (Used with permission of the publisher)

and decided he will not travel alone. The adventures they have and the truth he discovers about his late father during the trip changes his life.

Although Kohei is a complex and interesting character, Jewish readers will be interested in Isolde's background. Her Jewish father was sent to America by his family in order to escape the Nazis. Her Japanese mother's parents had been placed in a detention camp in the U.S. She wonders if she belongs anywhere: in the U.S., she's considered Japanese; in Japan, she is considered American. When Kohei makes fun of Cheshire for speaking Yiddish, a language he believes no one speaks, she quickly notes that a language dies only when the people who spoke it die, referencing the Holocaust without actually saying the word.

But "The Lost Ryu" ultimately belongs to Kohei, who learns a difficult truth about war and human nature. However, any lesson taught by dragons will appeal to readers who wish that dragons were real. They may also envy Kohei and Isolde for having a dragon of their own.

## Apps and games

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

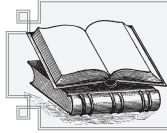
Is it possible to create an app that will help you find happiness? Can playing online games provide an escape from life's difficulties and griefs? How much of our personalities and actions are based on our physicality, and how much on our intellect alone? Two recent novels explore the intersection between online life and off-line reality: "Happy for You" by Claire Stanford (Viking) and "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow" by Gabrielle Zevin (Alfred A. Knopf). While what I've written might make the two works sound intellectual and cold, it is the very human feelings they elicit that make them so intriguing and ultimately moving.

Evelyn Kominsky Kumamoto, the narrator of "Happy for You," is at a crossroads. After four years of working on her philosophy dissertation, she's unsure whether she wants to continue. Her research is on the mind-body problem, but new technology – for example, social media, virtual reality and artificial intelligence – has complicated the issue. She believes our bodies are not very important, noting that her "dissertation argued that our online selves were an extension of our consciousness, that they were so deeply enmeshed with our cognitive processes, that they had become part of our minds." However, Evelyn is not sure she believes her own theory, one of the reasons she finds herself applying for a job at "the third-most popular internet company."

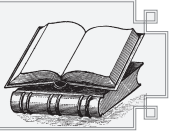
The third-most popular internet company (which is never named) hires her to research the components of happiness so the company can develop an app that will be used to make people happier. Evelyn is unsure that's possible because emotions are complex. For example, she notes that "studies had shown that a group of people would say that they were all experiencing the same emotion – anger, for example – but MRIs of their brains would show entirely different regions lighting up." Plus, Evelyn wonders if everyone defines happiness the same way. Would a text asking how you are feeling at any given moment and then making suggestions for what to do next really make a difference in your life, or might you just think you were happier because an app told you you were according to its algorithm?

These are some of the same questions Evelyn is asking in her own life. As one of the few mixed-race people – in her case, half-Asian, half-Jewish – in many situations, including her new job, she doesn't know if she thinks about happiness the same way other Americans do. Her Jewish mother died not long after her bat mitzvah, so her connection to Judaism has lessened as she's grown older. She worries about marrying her long-term boyfriend, Jamie, not because of anything he's done, but rather because she questions what she wants out of life. Her equilibrium is further upset when she realizes her

See "Games" on page 8



# Celebrating Jewish Literature



## Translated from the Yiddish and Hebrew

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Stories from 1930s' (pre-World War II) Europe and 21<sup>st</sup> century Israel: what do they have in common? Human nature, of course: the search for love and meaning, and the struggle against the sorrows of daily life. In their wonderful tales, Chana Blankshteyn's "Fear and Other Stories" (Wayne State University Press) and "Café Shira" by David Ehrlich (Syracuse University Press) show how humanity's basic needs have not changed over the past century.

### War . . . . . Continued from page 6

seems to teem with spies for both England and Germany, countries that believe Stockholm will play a vital role in the war they believe is coming.

If the plot lines sound confusing, that's because they are at first, both for the characters and the reader. In addition to the main character, there are many secondary characters whose main purpose seems to be talking about subjects (politics, Jewish music, conversion to Christianity and women's issues) that serve mostly to irritate the other characters. Readers unfamiliar with what took place in Stockholm before World War II will find the author's "Afterward" interesting in that it resolves some of the confusion, but not all. "Dr. B." works best for readers who enjoy puzzles; for this reader, the book was more interesting in retrospect than on first reading.

#### World War II in Italy

The only novel in this review to feature a non-Jewish main character is Anita Sabriel's "A Girl During the War" (Atria Paperback). Why review it? Because it contains Righteous Gentiles, including Marina Tozzi's father, who is murdered by the Nazis for hiding a Jewish artist. Marina only escaped death because she was food shopping when the soldiers arrived at their home. But Rome is no longer safe for her and the only person she thinks can help is her father's American friend Bernard Berenson, who lives in a villa near Florence, with his partner, Belle de Costa Greene. All three are art lovers – Marina's father owned an art gallery – and she is recruited to help Bernard catalogue his art books.

But it's impossible to escape the war even in Florence. Not only do the Nazi soldiers control the area, but the Italian resistance is active. Marina is recruited by Carlos, a young, handsome neighbor, to evaluate art pieces being sold to fund the resistance. She also befriends another neighbor, Desi, who is in despair because she is pregnant by a German soldier and is unsure of what her mother's reaction to the news will be. In addition, Marina is puzzled by some of Bernard and Belle's actions. Why are jewelry and art objects disappearing from the villa? Are her hosts more involved in the war than she knows? Her questions only increase when the war comes to a close and she has to acknowledge that her judgment of friends and neighbors may not have always been accurate.

"A Girl During the War" was absorbing and interesting reading. I looked up some details to learn if they were accurate, but was unable to verify all the facts. That didn't prevent me from enjoying the work, including its realistic ending, which also managed to be very satisfying.

#### Memories and shadows after the war

For many people, the war didn't end when the fighting stopped, even for those who were never in concentration camps. That's true for Raska Morgenstein, now known as Rachel Pearlman, in David R. Gillham's "Shadows of Berlin" (Sourcebooks Landmark). During the war, Rachel and her artist mother spent years as U-Boats, Jews who lived in Berlin during the war, hiding from the Nazis and moving from place to place with no regular access to food, employment or housing. Her mother did not survive and Rachel moved to the U.S. with her Uncle Fritz, her only living relative. Now, in 1955, Rachel lives in Brooklyn with Aaron, her American-born husband, who doesn't understand how what happened during the war still affects the way she feels about their life.

However, what happened in the war is not forgotten as shown by an incident that landed her in Bellevue's psychiatric ward. Once home from her short stay there, she visits a psychiatrist to whom she refuses to reveal the true reason for her pain. He encourages her to start painting again, but Rachel is afraid of what she'll reveal on the canvas. Her delicate balance is again upset when Uncle Fritz tells her he discovered one of her mother's paintings in a pawn shop. Rachel tries to buy the painting, but doesn't have the funds with her. When she returns a second time, the painting has disappeared. But just seeing that portrait of the woman Rachel calls the "Red Angel" brings forth memories, ones that may destroy her life.

"Shadows of Berlin" is moving, heartbreaking and surprising. Rachel is a wonderful, complex character whose plight made me care about her deeply. The author also does an excellent job in portraying Aaron, a man who loves Rachel, but who lacks the insight and experience to help her. Even readers who think they might be tired of books about World War II may find themselves intrigued by this impressive novel.

Blankshteyn's book originally appeared in Yiddish two weeks before the author's death in 1939. Few copies of the original exist, so Anita Norich has performed a real service in translating these stories for publication. My favorites are the love stories: they feel real, showing how life can be a series of compromises, yet still bring joy. For example, in "The Decree," Shtoltzman is a determined communist who has passed a decree that religious marriages are no longer legal. Leah, the woman he loves, is the granddaughter of a rabbi and refuses to be wed unless it's under a *chuppah*. The resolution of their dilemma is delightful.

"The First Hand" shows love developing over time as its characters struggle to make a living. Andrée, who never knew her father, is left an orphan after her mother dies. Her only living relative, an aunt, can't care for her since she needs to work in order to survive. Andrée is taken to an orphanage, and, once she turns 15, is sent to work at a clothing business. She slowly improves her lot by hard work and determination. True love is not easy to find, though, and it's a pleasure to watch it develop and grow, despite the obstacles placed in its way. However, in the story "The Incident," love is thwarted when politics turn deadly, but that isn't the ending: life continues in ways that can still bring comfort and, sometimes, joy.

Blankshteyn also writes about the difficulties the Jewish

### Grief . . . . . Continued from page 5

hardest thing to say is "I'm sorry," but I think that it is even harder to say, "I was wrong." It's hard to say those words to others and often even harder to ourselves." He believes this is because people are punished for making mistakes so we try to pretend we have not done anything wrong, rather than facing what truly occurred and dealing with it honestly.

Leder also explains that the question of whether someone is a good person is far more complex than most people think. For example, he notes, "The complicated truth is that the question of good and evil is not about our essence but our essence at any given moment. Ask anyone fighting to stay sober one day, one hour, one minute at a time. Any anyone in a committed relationship with a wandering eye deciding whether or not to remain his or her best and truest self... When it comes to good and evil, we are each at the center of a battle that sometimes rages and sometimes smolders within us until we die."

In both works, Leder offers his own living will – written for his two children – as an example. Although the author mentions Jewish customs, this is not a work for those seeking information about how to hold a Jewish funeral or the Jewish laws of mourning. It's aimed at a general audience, one looking for psychological and practical advice on how to deal with the messy emotions of grief and use them to appreciate the beauty life offers.

### Games . . . . . Continued from page 7

Japanese father – whom as far as she knows has not dated since her mother's death – now has a serious girlfriend: he has not only changed how he lives, but is attending church with his Japanese girlfriend.

Then something changes and "Happy for You" takes a more serious tone. The surprise makes sense in the context and forces Evelyn to think more clearly about what's truly important in life. However, this seriousness is still leavened by Evelyn's deadpan humor; although she may not actually consider herself funny, readers will. The only puzzling part of the novel was its ending: a specific event occurs that's not part of the general narrative, but which felt like it symbolized an important lesson. Unfortunately, it's meaning was not completely clear. However, that is a small flaw in a well-done work.

While "Happy for You" features one main character and takes place over a short period of time, "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow" offers two – the half-Korean and half-Jewish Sam Masur and Jewish Sadie Green – and present events that occur over several decades. The two former friends/enemies (flashbacks explain their relationship) knew each other in California when they were younger and reconnect when they are attending different colleges in Boston. Sam sees Sadie on a subway platform and calls out to her. She almost doesn't answer, but, after talking to him, hands him a copy of a video game she's made for a class. Sam, who is majoring in mathematics, but isn't interested in the subject, decides that the two of them should work together to create a video game. Their work is the beginning of a legendary collaboration. With Sam's roommate Marx, who handles the business aspect of their work, they become a gamer phenomenon.

Fortunately, readers don't have to like video games to be entranced by this novel because it is the human relationships, particularly the intriguing friendship that develops between Sadie and Sam, that is the most important part of the work. Watching how their relationship changes from when they were in their early teens to contemporary times serves as a wonderful character study. This works because they are

population faced in the period before World War II. "Director Vulman" is a terrific story about how Jews were often chosen as scapegoats when the government was looking for someone to blame. What's ironic is that the Jews in this case feel more German than Jewish. The title character wonders, "What connection did they all have to Jews, to those very different Jews there on the other side of the border. He felt like a German, loved Germany with all his soul, was proud of the country he thought as his, the land of high culture and infinite possibilities." Unfortunately, not everyone felt the same way.

All nine stories in "Fear and Other Stories" were well done and featured interesting plots and characters. My hope is that Blankshteyn's work will now reach a wider audience.

"Café Shira" by David Ehrlich (Syracuse University Press) calls itself a novel, but feels like a connected collection of short stories. That's not a complaint: the café is the scene for much of the action, which focuses on those who visit or work there. Although Avigdor owns the café, he spends as little time there as possible. When the café first opened, he had grand plans for it; now he just wants to be left alone. The café is mostly run by Rutha, a waitress who recently moved to Jerusalem and is exploring what it means to be an adult.

The café is frequented by regulars who get upset if anyone else sits at their table. There is Ruhama Shittin, who writes poetry, but doesn't make a living from it; Kuti, who prefers to sit outside, even when it's cold and complains about the prices, even though he has no financial worries; Raymond, who can become violent when disturbed; and Noar Sela, who is in love with Rutha and writes stories that imagine them as a couple. The cast of characters is far wider than this since it includes people who only periodically stop by the café. Readers not only hear selections of their conversations, but learn what they are thinking. Adding to the mix is Christian Joubaux, a tourist from France who is studying for the priesthood. He hopes to have a religious experience, but undergoes a different type of conversion.

Ehrlich captures what the café means to the people who frequent it: Rutha thinks that "it's amazing what a coffeehouse can be for so many people, what a crossroad, what a meeting place for worlds and ideas. And despite her ability to read people and sometimes even their thoughts, there are more stories and plots to Café Shira than she can handle." The tales show how the café means much more to people than a place to buy and drink a cup of coffee; it is in some way their home away from home.

"Café Shira" was published in English after Ehrlich's death. (The introduction notes that he died during the pandemic, but not of COVID. He refused to seek treatment for a heart attack due to his fear of being infected with COVID at the hospital.) This excellent work makes me wish he were alive to write more great books; I can only hope that his other works will also be translated into English.

both interesting in their own right, particularly Sam whose life has been filled with challenges and physical pain. How do they differ? One example is shown when Zevin writes, "It is worth noting that greatness for Sam and Sadie mean different things. To oversimplify: For Sam, greatness means *popular*. For Sadie, *art*." For two people working on the same video game, that means trouble.

The novel also explores the attraction of video games, which allows both characters to escape real life. In Sam's case, "Sam did not believe his body could feel anything but pain, and so he did not desire pleasure the same way that other people seemed to. Sam was happiest when he felt nothing. He was happiest when his body was feeling nothing. He was happiest when he did not have to think about his body – when he could forget that he had a body at all." This happens when he plays video games. Sadie, on the other hand, enjoys more of life: "She liked playing games, seeing a foreign movie, a good meal. She liked going to bed early and waking up early. She liked working. She liked that she was good at her work, and she felt proud of the fact that she was well paid for it. She felt pleasure in orderly things – a perfectly efficient section of code, a closet where every item was in its place." This type of life suits her because it means she could be uncompromising in her creations, making games that appealed to her and a few others, rather than the masses.

However, when a change in one of the video worlds they created has real world repercussions, it radically alters both of their lives. That's when "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow" becomes an incredibly moving, fascinating and great work of literature, making it rank with the best novels of the year.

"Happy for You" and "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow" portray young people who have yet to learn that it's impossible to control all life's twists and turns – that the real world can make apps, games and the internet seem irrelevant. That isn't to dismiss those things: the characters never do. However, they do learn to differentiate between the two. They also discover the importance of human connections and the way they create true meaning in life.

# SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGHS

## TAU researchers develop experimental drug for autism and other syndromes

By Diana Bletter

(Israel21c via JNS) – Tel Aviv University researchers have unraveled a mechanism shared by mutations in genes that cause autism. They have also developed an experimental drug that could lead to effective treatments not only for autism, but also for other syndromes that impair brain function, including schizophrenia and Alzheimer's.

Professor Illana Gozes from the Department of Human Molecular Genetics and Biochemistry at the Sackler Faculty

of Medicine and the Sagol School of Neuroscience, who led the study, reported the findings in the scientific journal Molecular Psychiatry.

The scientists focused mainly on the mutations in the ADNP gene, which Gozes said “disrupt the function of the ADNP protein and lead to structural defects in the skeleton of neurons in the brain.”

In the lab, the researchers were also able to identify mutations in SHANK3, a gene associated with autism and schizophrenia. According to estimates, these two

mutations are responsible for thousands of cases of autism around the world.

The scientists' further work led them to develop an experimental drug, Davunetide, that they said significantly improved the behavior of model animals with autism. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has recognized Davunetide as a rare pediatric drug for future treatment of the developmental syndrome ADNP, whose hallmark features are intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorder.

*This article was first published by Israel21c.*

## Kit lets ill astronauts self-diagnose while in outer space

By Diana Bletter

(Israel21c via JNS) – An experiment conducted aboard the International Space Station proved that a diagnostic kit developed in Israel can precisely identify viruses and bacteria infecting crew members during space missions.

Israeli astronaut Eytan Stibbe conducted the experiment as part of the Ramon Foundation and Israel Space Agency's Rakia mission to the International Space Station in April. The study was led by Dudu Burstein from the Shmunis School of Biomedicine and Cancer Research at Tel Aviv University and Gur Pines from the Volcani Center Agricultural Research Organization.

The CRISPR-Cas (or clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats) system protects bacteria from viruses. Bacteria use CRISPR-Cas as a sort of molecular “search engine” to locate viral sequences and disable them.

According to Burstein, the results of the experiment proved the possibility of performing precise CRISPR-based diagnosis even in an environment with virtually no gravity. This method requires minimal equipment and is easy to operate, allowing rapid diagnosis of diseases and pathogens even on longer explorations of the Moon and Mars.

Burstein explained that conditions in space are “ex-

remely problematic, and treatment methods are limited. So it is essential to identify pathogens in a rapid, reliable and straightforward method. Tests like PCR, which we are now all familiar with, require trained personnel and relatively complex equipment.”

The kit was prepared by doctoral student Dan Alon and researcher Karin Mittelman for Stibbe to test in space. The kit, Burstein said, allows “the whole process to be conducted in one tiny test tube, so it can suit the astronauts' needs.” Such kits, he concluded, “may help future astronauts on their extraterrestrial missions.”

*This article was first published by Israel21c.*

## Led by Tel Aviv University researchers, spaceship “Gaia” identifies two new planets

By JNS staff

(JNS) – A new discovery led by researchers from Tel Aviv University: The spaceship “Gaia” from the European Space Agency (ESA) recently identified two new planets in remote solar systems. Since this is the first time that “Gaia” has successfully located new planets, the planets were given the names “Gaia-1b” and “Gaia-2b.”

The research was led by Professor Shay Zucker, head of

the Porter School of the Environment and Earth Sciences, and doctoral student Aviad Panahi from the Raymond and Beverly Sackler School of Physics & Astronomy. Conducted in cooperation with the European Space Agency and the research groups of the “Gaia” space telescope, the study was published in the scientific journal Astronomy & Astrophysics.

There are eight planets in the solar system – giant

balls that orbit the sun. Less known are the hundreds of thousands of other planets in the galaxy, the Milky Way, which contains untold numbers of solar systems. Planets in remote solar systems were first discovered in 1995 and have been an ongoing subject of astronomers' research ever since in the hopes of using them to learn more about the solar system.

See “Planets” on page 11



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## Weekly Parasha

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

# Revenge killings

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR, THE REPORTER GROUP

“The avenger of blood, he himself will put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he will put him to death.” (Numbers 35:19) One doesn’t like to think of the Hebrew Bible legitimizing revenge killings, but the law allows, under certain circumstances, a person (known as the avenger of blood) to kill someone who murders a member of his family. While modern readers of the Bible may be disturbed by this, the biblical religion recognizes revenge killings as a fact of life in the Middle East. Since it would probably have been impossible to eliminate them, the Bible seeks to control and restrict when they can take place.

How does the text impose this social control? The first step is to take the decision about whether or not the murderer should be put to death out of the hands of the victim’s family. The laws recognize that not all murders

are alike. There are deliberate killings, for example, when a person lies in wait for his victim or strikes him with an object; others are accidents, as when a killer pushes the victim without meaning to hurt him, or throws a stone in the air without realizing it might hit someone. The law requires all killers to flee to a city of refuge, three of which are to be placed in the land of Canaan and three on the other side of the Jordan. The killer is then judged by the community, not the family of the victim. If the killing is held to be deliberate, the murderer is handed over to the family. If the death was accidental, the killer goes on to live in the chosen city of refuge and the family is not allowed to harm him.

However, there are limits to the protection offered to the killer. The killer can only return to his home after the

death of the current high priest. If he is foolish enough to leave the city of refuge, the victim’s family may kill him and not be punished for doing so.

Although I have used the word murderer as the name for the deliberate killer and the word killer for one who accidentally commits murder, the Hebrew text does *not* make this distinction. It uses the same word, which comes from the root *resh tzadie chet*, for both. This root is also used in the statement “You shall not murder,” found in the Ten Commandments. This is not because there is no other word in Hebrew for killing. It would be possible to refer to the deliberate killer using a word with the root *resh tzadie chet* and the accidental killer with a different one, *hey resh gimel*, which means to kill. In fact, the first person who

See “Revenge” on page 11

## 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, July 30, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required). The Torah portion is Numbers 30:2-36:14 and the haftarah is Jeremiah 2:4-28; 3:4. At 9:15 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom.

On Wednesday, August 3, Torah study from 4-5 pm on Zoom.

On Saturday, August 6, at 9:30 am, Shacharit services will be held via Zoom and in-person (masks are required). 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.

On Wednesday, August 10, the Ritual Committee will meet at 10 am; and there will be Torah study from 4-5 pm on Zoom.

The bat mitzvah of Jasmin Rosales will be held on Saturday, August 20, at 9:30 am.

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### 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  
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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.

### Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive  
Rabbi: David Regenspan  
Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815  
Phone: 334-2691  
E-mail: fertigj@roadrunner.com  
Contact: Guilia Greenberg, 373-5087  
Purpose: To maintain a Jewish identity and meet the needs of the Jewish community in the area.  
Adult Ed.: Shabbat study sessions are held on designated Saturday mornings at 10 am. Call ahead, text or e-mail to confirm dates.

### 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, July 29, light candles before ..... 8:08 pm  
Saturday, July 30, light candles after..... 9:07 pm  
Friday, August 5, light candles before..... 7:59 pm  
Saturday, August 6, light candles after ..... 8:59 pm  
Friday, August 12, light candles before..... 7:50 pm  
Saturday, August 13, light candles after ..... 8:49 pm

### 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 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, July 29: at 7:30 pm, Shabbat service led by congregant. To attend in person, proof of COVID-19 vaccination is no longer required. Masks are optional, but recommended. Join via Zoom at https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330; or on the Temple Concord Facebook page.

Saturday, July 30: Torah study at the new summer hours 9:45-11 am with Rabbi Rachel Esserman and Allen Alt in the temple library or on Zoom at https://bit.ly/3CVxM14, meeting ID 882 9808 7579 and passcode 676707.

Wednesday, August 3: 10:30 am, the Morning Book Club will discuss “Last Summer at the Golden Hotel,” a novel by Elissa Friedman, in the library or on Zoom at https://bit.ly/3CXVd9b, meeting ID 881 6469 4206 and passcode 653272.

Friday, August 5: First Friday from 5-7:30 pm in the Kilmer Mansion with artists from the Fine Arts Society of the Southern Tier (FASST). Trolley tours are free.

Friday, August 5: at 7:30 pm, Shabbat services with Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell. Proof of COVID-19 vaccination is no longer required. Masks are optional but recommended. Join via Zoom at https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330; or on the Temple Concord Facebook page.

Saturday, August 6: Torah study from 9:45-11 am. Join via Zoom at https://bit.ly/3CVxM14, meeting ID 882 9808 7579 and passcode 676707; and erev Tisha B’Av observance at Temple Israel, time TBA.

### 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.

# Going to the dogs (and why that's a good thing!)

By Howard Blas

(JNS) – Dog owners in need of a walk, concerned about health and wellness, or looking to support important societal causes... meet Dogiz.



The company offers services such as dog-walking, grooming, boarding and daycare. (Photo courtesy of JNS)

Founder and COO Danny Djanogly, 32, and CEO Alon Zlatkin, 37, created the Dogiz company and dog-walking app while students in a business-school class on startups at Israel's IDC Herzilya (now Reichman University). While their original plan was to make it easier for dog owners in Tel Aviv to find walkers while at work – and to create jobs for people with disabilities – the recent COVID-19 pandemic posed new challenges as people were staying home with their dogs more and needing less help. It also provided an opportunity for the founders to rethink the business.

As a result, Dogiz has just launched an updated app, website and business plan for these changing times.

Djanogly was pleased with how things were going with Dogiz prior to the pandemic. In 2015, the two immigrants – one from northwest London and one from Kazakhstan – were accepted into the HIVE, an accelerator for olim (new immigrants to Israel) and won a Google competition that landed them their first \$100,000 investment. They received support from Samurai Incubate Inc., an early-stage Japanese venture-capital firm that has invested in more than 33 Israeli startups. They were imagining a company

that offered services such as dog-walking, doggie daycare, boarding and grooming.

When Djanogly and Zlatkin met Aviad Friedman – an Israeli author, businessman, adviser to Israeli ministries, as well as former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and (at the time) chairman of the Israeli Association of Community Centers (IACC) – he suggested that they consider training and employing people with disabilities. He had some expertise in the area; he is the father of a 24-year-old son with autism.

Friedman pointed out that people with autism and other disabilities like and depend on routines and predictability, as do many dogs. He also shared data on the high rate of unemployment among people with disabilities and suggested they train and hire people with disabilities.

"We stumbled upon disabilities by accident," says Djanogly, who notes that "we created Holchim B'Yachad ['Walking Together'] and were growing unbelievably – we had 15 candidates with disabilities, a course and special trainer, and were working with the Shekel and Beit Ekstein [disabilities programs] in Israel.

"We were flying until March 15, 2020," reports Djanogly. "Then COVID hit. We were sure it would boil over soon. It didn't – and so we had to face the harsh truth and reality. It was a curse and a blessing, and gave us some downtime to look at our



Danny Djanogly (left) and Alon Zlatkin (Photo by Sam Jakobson)

business. We went to our board and told them that we could either close or change."

The founders had an observation. "We realized that 15 percent to 20 percent of dog owners use pet-care services like boarding, grooming and walking. But 100 percent buy food and use veterinarians. Dog owners are also a community where there is implicit trust," say Djanogly and Zlatkin, who also spoke with many veterinarians.

They decided to create a platform to better manage their own dogs' lives. The app and website, complete with a new logo, incorporate gaming techniques to educate and engage dog owners, along with a health and fitness tracker. See "Dogs" on page 12

## Planets. . . . . Continued from page 9

"The planets were discovered due to the fact that they partially hide their suns every time they complete an orbit and thus cause a cyclical drop in the intensity of the light reaching us from that distant sun," said Panahi.

To confirm they were, in fact, planets, he explained that "we performed tracking measurements with the American telescope called the Large Binocular Telescope, located in Arizona. This telescope is equipped with two giant mirrors, each with a diameter of 8.4 meters, making it one of the largest telescopes in the world today. It makes it possible to track small fluctuations in a star's movement, which are caused by the presence of an orbiting planet."

"Gaia" is an ESA spaceship whose main purpose is the three-dimensional mapping of the structure of the galaxy, the Milky Way, with unprecedented accuracy.

To fulfill this mission, it scans the heavens while rotating around an axis, tracking the locations of approximately two billion suns in the galaxy with a precision of up to a millionth of a degree. This level of precision is comparable to standing on Earth and identifying a 10-shekel coin on the moon.

While tracking the suns' locations, "Gaia" also measures their brightness, which is an incomparably important feature in observational astronomy since it can teach a lot about the physical characteristics of heavenly bodies. Changes documented in the brightness of the two remote suns were what led to the discovery.

Zucker has extensive experience in discovering planets, ever since his days as a student of senior astronomer Professor Tsevi Mazeh.

"The measurements we made with the telescope in the United States confirmed that these were in fact two giant planets, similar in size to the planet Jupiter in our solar system, and located so close to their suns that they complete an orbit in less than four days, meaning that each Earth year is comparable to 90 years of that planet," he

said. "The discovery of the two new planets was made in the wake of precise searches, using methods of artificial intelligence. We also published 40 more candidates detected by 'Gaia.' The astronomical community will now have to try to corroborate their planetary nature, like we did for the first two candidates."

He noted that the data continues to accumulate and that "it is very likely that 'Gaia' will discover many more planets with this method in the future."

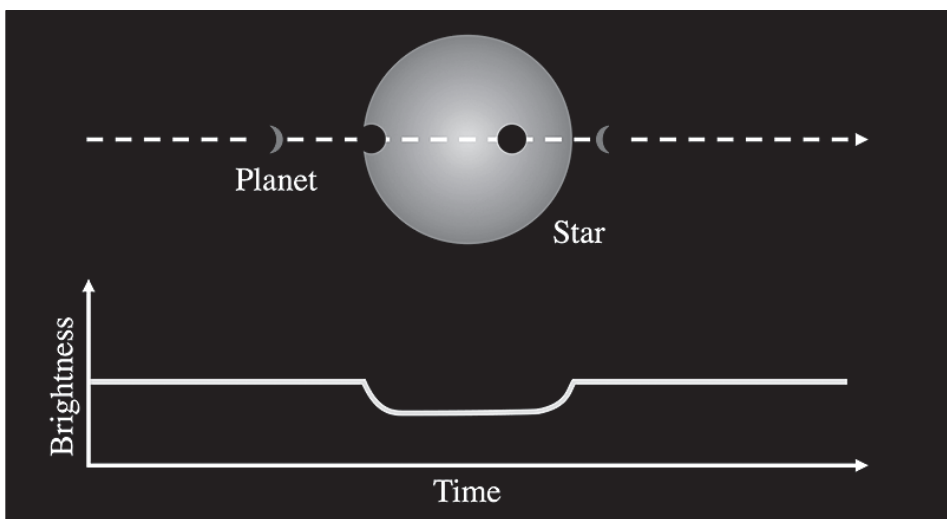
This discovery marks another milestone in the scientific contribution of the "Gaia" spaceship's mission, which has already been credited with a true revolution in the world of astronomy.

Its ability to discover planets via the partial occultation method, which generally requires continuous monitoring over a long period of time, has been doubted up to now. The research team charged with this mission developed an algorithm specially adapted to Gaia's characteristics and searched for years for these signals in the cumulative databases from the spaceship.

What about the possibility of life on the surface of those remote planets?

As Panahi summed up, "the new planets are very close to their suns, and therefore the temperature on them is extremely high – about 1,000 degrees Celsius – so there is zero chance of life developing there. In the astronomy community, such a planet is called 'Hot Jupiter' or 'Jupiter' because of its size, and 'hot' because of its proximity to its sun. Even though there is no real chance of life on the planets we found, I'm convinced that there are countless others that do have life on them, and it's reasonable to assume that in the next few years, we will discover signs of organic molecules in the atmospheres of remote planets.

"Most likely," he added, "we will not get to visit those distant worlds any time soon, but we're just starting the journey, and it's very exciting to be part of the search."



The transit method (Illustration by Aviad Panthi)

## Revenge. . . . . Continued from page 10

kills in the Bible, Cain, does not murder (resh tzadie chet) his brother Abel, but kills (hey resh gimel) him.

Why is Cain not called a murderer? Perhaps the biblical text recognizes that Cain could not have understood the consequences of his attack, since up to that time, there was no death in the world. Our current portion demands a higher standard,

that we be conscious of all the possible results of our actions. These biblical laws recognize that our thoughtlessness could result in an endless cycle of revenge killings, which would greatly damage society. By legislating when these killings could take place, a family's need for vengeance becomes subordinate to the greater good of the community.

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**NEWS IN BRIEF**

From JNS.org

**Israel approves “historic” plan to develop southern section of Jordan River**

The Israeli government on July 24 approved a “historic” plan to develop and restore for tourism purposes parts of the southern Jordan River, the Environmental Protection Ministry said in a statement. “This is the broadest plan for rehabilitating the river and developing [it] that has been authorized in recent decades,” said the statement. The goal is to increase water levels and ensure a constant flow throughout the year, turning the area into a diverse biological ecosystem and a tourist destination, according to the ministry. As part of Israel’s effort to deal with climate change, the proposal envisions the creation of a continuum of open areas that protects the surrounding environment and encourages sustainable farming. This will include eliminating two sources of pollution that have led to bans on bathing in a section of the river that extends for 11 kilometers (7 miles) from the Kinneret to Naharim, as well as installing a water desalination plant. “This is a historic government decision,” said Environmental Protection Minister Tamar Zandberg. “It is the first time that an Israeli government took a decision to rehabilitate the central and most important river in Israel, which also forms a rich ecological system, a tourist attraction, and a community and social focal point, as well as a center for regional and international cooperation.”

**Hundreds of Palestinian attorneys protest in Ramallah against P.A. “rule by decree”**

Hundreds of Palestinian attorneys staged a rare public demonstration on July 25 in Ramallah against what they described as the Palestinian Authority’s “rule by decree,” denouncing P.A. leader Mahmoud Abbas for governing without a parliament, AFP reported. Since 2007, the Palestinian Legislative Council, which was established during the Oslo Peace Accords with Israel, has remained inactive, meaning that Abbas has presided over the Palestinian Authority without a functioning parliament for virtually the whole of his presidency, the report noted. In response, a new leadership of the Palestinian Bar Association has recently attempted to exert pressure on the P.A. to change the situation. During the July 25 rally, Suheil Ashour, president of the Bar Association, said his organization would take a firm stance against legislation issued by P.A. presidential order that restricted Palestinian “rights and freedoms.” “Our demand is either to stop their implementation now or to cancel” them, said Ashour. The protesters, dressed in black, were stopped by P.A. riot police from advancing in the direction of P.A. Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh’s office. “The legislative authority is absent in Palestine, and the judicial authority is completely marginalized,” said protester Farhan Abu Aisha, according to the report. He accused Abbas of making decisions “under the cover of darkness.”

**Israel to host French Super Cup soccer match**

The French Super Cup between Paris Saint-Germain FC (or PSG) and FC Nantes was scheduled to be held on July 31 at the Bloomfield Stadium in Tel Aviv. Argentinian soccer star Lionel Messi was to arrive with PSG. He last visited Israel in 2019 with the Argentinian national team in a friendly match against Uruguay. Brazilian PSG star Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior, better known as Neymar, also planned to be in Israel for the match. Meanwhile, Tottenham Hotspur was to face Roma in Israel on the evening of July 30 at the Sammy Ofer Stadium in Haifa. The game was part of the I-Tech Cup, which featured local technologies.

**Saudi magazine showcases success of Israeli Arabs in IDF**

A feature article in the Saudi monthly magazine Al-Majallah covered the topic of Israeli Arabs who serve in the Israel Defense Forces. According to the essay by Kurdish-Swedish journalist and researcher Suzan Quitaz, who specializes in Israeli politics and the Gulf States region, more Muslim and Christian Arabs are enlisting in the IDF due to its successful recruitment strategies and mindset. The article begins by noting the misconception prevalent in the media about the IDF’s composition, and that it is, in fact, not only Jewish but also

incorporates members from across Israeli society, including Arab soldiers – Muslims and Christians, Druze and Bedouin – as noted in a report by the Middle East Media Research Institute (or MEMRI). In particular, according to MEMRI, the article highlights efforts by the IDF unit in charge of recruiting minorities, which has subdivisions specializing in specific minority groups, and emphasizes how the military’s success in recruiting greater numbers of Israeli Arabs is mainly attributable to its effective recruitment mechanism. “Ella’s story is an extraordinary one – she was born in 1989 in the Israeli Arab town of Qalansawe, a few miles from the city of Netanya,” explains the article. “She joined the IDF in 2013 and completed her training as an exemplary soldier and participated in many operations. In 2015, she received the President’s Outstanding Medal,” continued the report. “In September 2021, Ella was promoted to the rank of major in the Israel Defense Forces and became the first Arab Muslim woman to attain this rank.” Both the Saudi news article and the MEMRI report exemplify how the Israeli military is a way to gain professional success and skills that prove key for these participants going forward.

**Group carrying swastika flags in Tampa, FL, disperses antisemitic fliers**

Antisemitic fliers claiming that Jews control the media were found outside homes in Minnesota, Georgia, New York and Florida in recent days, and are being attributed to the same group that marched with swastika flags in Tampa, FL, on July 23. “Six Jewish media corporations own 96 percent of the media,” read the fliers, which were contained in plastic bags weighed down with corn kernels and included photos of several Jewish media insiders with a Magen David, or Star of David, on their forehead. It included the web address for the antisemitic Goyim Defense League. One Minnesota resident who found a flier on her driveway on the morning of July 25 shared a photo on social media with the message: “Found this outside my house this morning. WTF?” Similar fliers, including ones that blame the coronavirus pandemic on Jews, have been distributed in cities across the country in recent months, tied to the Goyim Defense League. That group was behind a protest outside of the Tampa Convention Center, where the conservative youth event, Turning Point USA Student Action Summit, was meeting. Responding to reports that those involved in the protest were “actors,” the Anti-Defamation League tweeted on July 25: “Our Center on Extremism is aware of claims that the neo-Nazi protesters outside this weekend’s TPUSA [Turning Point USA] conference were ‘paid actors.’ These claims are false. In fact,” the ADL continued, “these protesters were known white supremacists who were there to promote their racist, hateful beliefs.” Executive Director Liora Rez of StopAntisemitism.org pointed out that one of the men in the group was 74-year-old David Howard Wydner, a member of the neo-Nazi National Socialist Movement. Back in January, members of both NSM and the Goyim Defense League gathered in Orlando, FL, and carried placards that said “Vax the Jews” and called Jews “the devil” and saying “Jews rape children and drink their blood.”

**IAI to provide special mission aircraft to NATO country**

Israel Aerospace Industries announced in recent days that it signed a contract valued at more than \$200 million to provide special mission aircraft to a country in Europe. The aircraft, destined for a European NATO member, will be developed by IAI subsidiary Elta Systems, which also manufactures a range of radars, intelligence-gathering technology and other systems. According to a statement by IAI, the company’s special mission aircraft “are active in Israel and in many countries around the world and provide an important strategic edge.” The company’s breakthrough in the field of special mission aircraft is made possible due to miniaturized sensor technologies, as well as developing algorithms and software applications based on artificial intelligence, leading to “highly advanced intelligence systems are integrated on business jets,” said the company. “Prior to this, most special mission aircraft utilized large cargo or commercial aircraft.” IAI vice president and Elta CEO Yoav Tourgeman said “the special mission aircraft developed by IAI-ELTA provide our customers with a significant advantage and constitute a strategic asset. We are thrilled to win this contract to provide a NATO member country with our advanced technologies.” He added that “our ongoing commitment to providing cutting-edge technologies to our customers – with advanced detection and classification capabilities – will enable success even in the most complicated missions.”

**International flights from Eilat to start in August**

International flights from Eilat’s Ramon Airport will begin in August, the Israel Airports Authority and the Eilat Municipality announced on July 19. Arkia Airlines will operate two weekly flights from the airport to Georgia and Cyprus, according to Ynet. “This summer Eilat’s airport will start to serve its purpose as an international airport. After a short break due to COVID, flights abroad will be renewed,” said an Eilat Municipality official, according to the report. Eilat Mayor Eli Lankri said, “I believe more airlines will follow after Arkia, like El Al and Israir. International flights from Eilat are big news, for Eilat and Israel.”

**Dogs. . . . .Continued from page 11**

“Our mission is to help owners gain a deeper understanding of their dog’s health and reward them for being more active with their dogs,” notes Djanogly. “As dog owners, we know how hard it can be to manage your pup’s life, so we created Dogiz to do all the hard work for you.”

Dog owners are encouraged and incentivized to increase the fitness levels of their pets by keeping them more active. In the process, they earn Dogiz coins that can be used for discounts on products and services in the Dogiz shop.

For every action owners do on the app – completing a quiz, tracking walks and providing weight, memory or mood updates associated with their pets – they get coins. They can also see on the leaderboard how fitness levels compare with other dogs in the neighborhood.

As Djanogly and Zlatkin continued consulting with veterinarians, they also learned of an interesting trend that the doctors were seeing. The veterinarians reported that they were regularly receiving photos of dog poop from concerned dog owners who wanted to check if something was wrong with their pet’s digestive systems. And so, the Dogiz team created Dr. Poop, where a team of veterinarians reviewed images and created a

program to quickly analyze the byproducts and let owners know how concerned they need to be about their dog.

“Dog poop is a clear window into a dog’s gastrointestinal health,” reports Djanogly. Owners can also earn coins by using Dr. Poop.

The two founders also take the opportunity to help less fortunate dogs. In the United Kingdom, for example, owners can participate in the “PAWpurse Miles for Meals” program. For each mile walked with their dog, a meal is donated to a dog in a shelter. In Israel, people can donate coins earned to a local dog shelter, which receives funding to support their important work.

Djanogly further notes that with the relaunch of Dogiz, “we are no longer geo-restricted.”

The company will continue to provide dog-walking services in Tel Aviv and London, and train and hire people with disabilities. But they have now expanded – creating an inclusive community of dog lovers and arranging partnerships with service providers and pet-food companies.

The duo says that they are pleased with their new direction: “It gives dog owners rewards and motivation to be active with their pet via products they need and use. Why not do it by keeping their dogs healthy?”

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Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton  
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