

THE REPORTER

Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

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Volume L, Number 3

BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Federation looks ahead as 2021 begins

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton is making plans for 2021 and looking for input from the community. “We know a lot of things are still in the air as we move forward in this new year,” said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. “But we have plans in motion and are looking ahead to make this a great year.”

Film Fest

The Film Fest Committee is planning another virtual film this winter, in addition to “Born in Jerusalem and Still Alive.” (See article on this page.) It also has tentative plans to hold an in-person showing of a film in late spring. “Every member of the Film Fest Committee loved ‘Fiddler: A Miracle of Miracles’ and we wanted to wait until we could gather together to enjoy it,” said Hubal. Information about “Fiddler” will appear in future issues of *The Reporter*.

Campaign

“The 2021 Campaign continues its important work,” Hubal said. “The funds we raise through the annual Campaign sustain our vital Jewish institutions, help our neighbors in need through JFS and fund local programming that makes

Binghamton our ‘Jewish home.’” There is still time to make a pledge. People who have made pledges can now also pay online. To make a pledge, visit www.jfgb.org/2021-campaign or contact the Federation at 724-2332 or director@jfgb.org. Payments can be made at www.jfgb.org/2021-campaign or by mailing a check to Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

Calling young community members

The Federation is looking to do more programming for young professionals and families with young children. “We’d love to give young professionals and families with young children a chance to get together,” said Hubal. “We’re looking for input to create the programs you want and need. We realize young professionals and young families have specific time constraints and interests. We want them to know the Federation is here for them and their future of Jewish life in Binghamton. E-mail me your ideas at director@jfgb.org.”

Check-ins

Hubal noted that one of the things she misses most during the pandemic is talking to people who dropped by the Federation

office when they were in the Jewish Community Center. “We miss you and we want to be here for you,” Hubal said. “I’d love for you to check in and let me know how you are doing. Feel free to call the Federation office at 724-2332 or e-mail me at director@jfgb.org.”

Film Fest reminder

By Reporter staff

The Jewish International Film Fest of Greater Binghamton will hold a virtual showing of the Israeli romantic-comedy “Born in Jerusalem and Still Alive” directed by Yossi Atia and David Ofek. The film is in Hebrew (with subtitles) and English. It was named Best First Film (Yossi Atia)—Jerusalem Film Festival in 2019. A discussion on “Born in Jerusalem and Still Alive” will be moderated by Stephen A. Lisman, Ph.D., distinguished teaching professor emeritus, Department of Psychology, Binghamton University.

People will be able to register on the Federation website, www.jfgb.org, and can sign up until the film link is sent after Shabbat. The film will be streamed free for up to 100 computers. After Shabbat ends on Saturday, January 30, a link to the film will be sent

Social media

The Federation is now on Facebook and Instagram @JewishBinghamton. “Keep up to date by visiting us on either site,” said Hubal. “You can also sign up for our periodic newsletter. E-mail me at director@jfgb.org and I’ll add you to the list.”

to those who sign up in advance. The film will be available for viewing on personal devices for 24 hours. On Sunday, January 31, at 7:30 pm, Lisman will facilitate the online video discussion of the film.

“Born in Jerusalem and Still Alive” begins when Jerusalem native Ronen Matalon (Yossi Atia) overhears a tour guide offering a sanitized version of his hometown’s recent history. This inspires him to begin his own “Terror Tour,” taking tourists to famous bombing sites and giving them his take on the absurdity of everyday life during the terrorist attacks of the 1990s and 2000s. On one of his tours he meets Asia, an ex-Jerusalemite living in Barcelona, and their relationship challenges him to begin healing from the trauma that envelops his emotional life.

Chabad offers JLI course “Journey of the Soul”

Registration is still open for Journey of the Soul, a new six-session course by the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute that will seek to answer a question that occurs to many self-reflective people: “What happens when we die?” The six-week course, which will be offered on successive Mondays at two time slots, 7-8:30 pm and 8:45-10:15 pm, will begin on Monday, February 1. The course will be offered over Zoom. Sign-in information will be provided to enrolled participants.

“Death is both mysterious and inevitable,” said Rivky Slonim, the local JLI instructor. “Understanding death as a continuation of life reveals the holiness of life while putting everything in a dramatically new context. The soul is on one long journey that is greater than each particular chapter. I think this course is a journey that we will all find edifying and reassuring. It is both powerful and practical, reflective and relatable.

“‘Journey of the Soul’ considers what

happens to the soul at birth and again at death, whether there is a ‘better place’ after this one, whether our loved ones continue to connect with us, the Jewish understanding of reincarnation, and how to relate to an afterlife even if we’re not spiritual,” added Slonim.

As with all JLI programs, “Journey of the Soul” is designed to appeal to people at all levels of knowledge, including those without any prior experience or background in Jewish learning. All JLI courses are

open to the public and attendees need not be affiliated with a synagogue, temple or other house of worship.

In New York state, physicians and psychologists will be able to earn continuing education credits for this JLI course, which has partnered with Einstein College of Medicine – Montefiore Medical Center. Each class will be a self-standing event for which participants will earn 1.5 credits; participants must be present during the class. See “JLI” on page 3.

Simcha Challah: Spreading joy in pandemic times

By Arthur B. Siegel

For many months, Temple Israel has been providing all its religious, educational and social programs over the Internet, and its synagogue kitchens, once a hub of activity, have been stilled. Melissa Wolff, one of the temple’s young members, saw an opportunity to rekindle camaraderie through the warmth of shared baking. “I love baking with my family,” she says, “and how baking brings joy to other people.”

Coming from a long line of family bakers and having mass-baking experience from working on the Challah for Hunger program as a Binghamton University student, Wolff said she was confident that she could deliver a high-quality challah in volume, bring the local community together, raise funds for Temple Israel and have family fun at the same time. *Simcha* (Joy) Challah was born.

Members of the Temple Israel leadership said they were delighted to support the initiative and, after Rabbi Geoffrey Brown confirmed the kosher ingredients, Wolff went to work, perfecting her recipe through several rounds of trial bakes in the temple kitchen. Wolff’s family pitched in immediately, with her sister, Emily, and

mother, Wendy, kneading the dough, her father, Michael, procuring the materials, and all contributing advice. The Wolffs donated the first round venture capital for materials to get the fund-raiser started, and it is now self-sustaining. Melissa’s baking schedule must accommodate the familiar constraints of *kashrut* and Shabbat at the synagogue, pandemic precautions of masking and material handling, and her professional work schedule as a technical programmer/analyst at Visions Federal Credit Union.

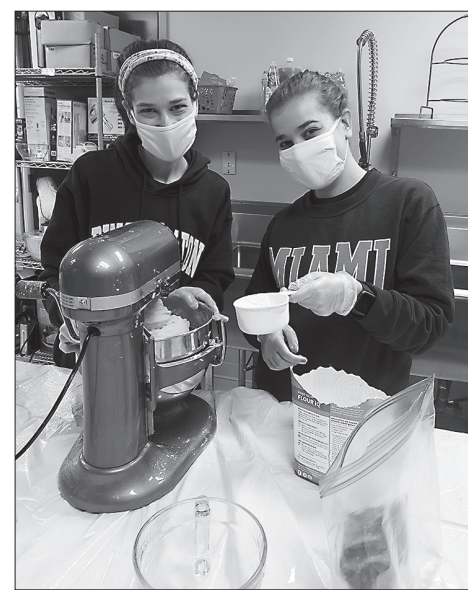
Each month, *Simcha* Challah offers a plain (\$8) and a specialty flavor of the month (\$9). Orders are placed through an online form, with an optional donation amount of \$18. *Challot* are baked to order, frozen after

baking and are picked up from the temple lobby on the third Friday of each month. A link to the *Simcha* Challah Order Form can be found on the temple website, <http://templeisraelvestal.org/>, and Facebook page, or by calling the temple office at 723-7461.

The first round in January was called a culinary and fund-raising success. “One of the best *challot* I have tasted,” raved Brown. The sentiment was echoed by all at a recent temple trustees meeting. Capacity is limited and the first round was nearly sold out. Once the pandemic eases, the project may expand the project to involve other volunteers, but for now the baking is restricted to the Wolff family bubble. “We are fortunate that Melissa stepped forward

February orders

Orders for the next batch of Temple Israel *Simcha* Challah handmade *challot* must be received by Friday, February 12. The pick-up will be on Friday, February 19, from 9 am-2:30 pm. Each *Simcha* Challah is handmade using certified kosher ingredients in the Temple Israel kitchen. The cost is \$8 for plain challah and \$9 for specialty of the month. February’s specialty is sesame. To order, visit <https://forms.gle/s8F992oMKSxjP3E3A> or call the office at 723-7461. All proceeds will benefit Temple Israel. If someone is unable to handle the pick-up, they are asked to call the temple office so other arrangements can be made.



L-r: Sisters Melissa Wolff and Emily Wolff made challah for Simcha Challah.

with the creativity, motivation and skills to bring fresh-baked joy to our community,” said members of the temple community.

Arthur B. Siegel is the president of Temple Israel.

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Jews in sports

The latest column looks at Marv Levy, a Harvard intellectual who became a Super Bowl coach.

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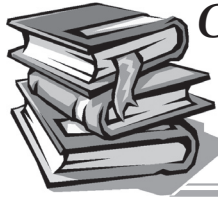
News in brief...

Israeli minister in Sudan; Israeli Cabinet OKs peace agreement with Morocco; and more.

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Off the Shelf

Life in India

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Rachel Meyer already hates the phrase she's heard far too many times since she moved to Mumbai, India, with her husband, Dhruv: "Get used to it." It's as if India demands that she change her basic nature in order to make a home there. It doesn't help that she and Dhruv married and moved after a six-month whirlwind romance. Adjusting to a different country is not easy in the best of times, but things get worse when Rachel opens her apartment door to discover her mother-in-law, Swati, unexpectedly standing before her. Swati has left her husband, who lives in another part of India, and declares she now wants to live life on her own terms. Unfortunately for Rachel, that means living with her only son and daughter-in-law. In the novel "Mother Land" by Leah Franqui (William Morrow), Rachel and Swati, who have very different ideas about life, are forced to juggle their wants and desires, something that becomes even more problematic when Dhruv leaves for a month-long trip for work.

Rachel and Swati quickly clash over the running of the household. Rachel, who is a foodie, prefers to shop for and prepare her own meals. She's distressed when Swati hires a cook and even more disturbed when Dhruv simply accepts his mother's decision. Rachel protests by refusing to eat the cook's food and continuing to wash her own dishes, even though their maid is now coming in twice a day to clean. Rachel's Jewish family had encouraged discussing

difficulties and options so that everyone is heard, something she realizes is a problem not only with Swati, but with Dhruv. Neither of them want to talk about their feelings and why they think something is important. They also are not interested in learning why Rachel feels differently. This dismissal of her concerns and desires leaves Rachel confused and upset.

Although Rachel tries to create her own life and make friends, her meeting with other western women living in India doesn't go well. The level of disdain they express for the country makes her uncomfortable and some of their remarks strike her as racist. Rachel wants to be able to complain about her problems, but doesn't feel they should be an indictment of all of India. She is no more comfortable with the Indian wives of Dhruv's colleagues. Her life feels empty until she applies for a job doing voice-over work for an English-speaking version of a Romanian soap opera. The main character's life is so unlike her own that Rachel manages to lose herself in the story. Yet, she knows this is not what she wants to do with her life and wonders whether her move to India was a positive one or her way of escaping an unsatisfactory existence in New York City.

The beauty of "Mother Land" is that the author allows Rachel and Swati to tell their own stories, something that adds depth and perspective to the work. It's clear that

many of the problems they face are cultural in nature and their misunderstandings show the very different ways they were raised. For example, Swati had to cook for her in-laws when she first married and was thrilled when she was able to turn that job over to someone else. For Rachel, "food was essential to her, and to her family, and everything in their lives revolved around it. She learned to cook as a child, with her mother, and her grandmother, who was an immigrant who had spent most of her life in Iran and cooked Persian dishes with skill and love." Yet, it was seeing the nature of Rachel and Dhruv's relationship – the way they interacted – that inspired Swati to leave her husband: she realized that not only doesn't she love him, but she doesn't feel anything for him. What the two women learn that they have in common is that they both want to be seen and heard for who they really are.

"Mother Land" is a heartwarming, absorbing work that will leave you rooting for both characters, even as they alternately irritate each other – and the reader – in big and small ways. It's perfect for book clubs that like to discuss cultural differences, although these are usually based on Rachel's being an American, rather than the Judaism she notes she doesn't practice. The novel's ending was particularly satisfying, as Rachel and Swati learn that "getting used to it" and doing what is expected is not always the best way to live a life.

Jews in Sports

Marv Levy: Harvard intellectual as Jewish Super Bowl coach

BILL SIMONS

Buffalo, NY, has had its ups and downs. Its population and manufacturing have declined precipitously, and Buffalo snowstorms are a staple of American humor. The Buffalo Bills, an original AFL franchise subsequently incorporated into the NFL, have intermittently given the city a needed boost in morale. Quarterback turned Congressman Jackie Kemp and running-back-gone-bad O.J. Simpson had notable seasons. And this year, the Bills paced their division with a 13-3 won-lost record. It was a Jewish coach and Harvard intellectual, Marv Levy, however, who gave Buffalo its most sustained football glory when the city didn't

have much else to cheer about.

Levy is the greatest coach in Bills history – as well as the longest serving. From 1986-97, he led Buffalo to 112 regular season victories against 70 losses, good for a .615 winning percentage. During Levy's 11½ seasons coaching Buffalo, the Bills won six Eastern Division and four American Football Conference championships. Although the NFL title eluded Buffalo, Levy's Bills are the only team to appear in four consecutive Super Bowls (1990-93). Garnering NFL Coach of the Year (1988) and AFC Coach of the Year awards (1988, 1993 and 1995),

Levy was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame and the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame.

A proponent of team balance, proportionality and consensus, Levy asserted, "The offense sells tickets, the defense wins games and the kicking wins championships." He developed a strong Bills core around quarterback Jim Kelly, receiver Andre Reed, running back Thurman Thomas, linebacker Cornelius Bennett and defensive end Bruce Smith. Emphasizing preparation, confidence, efficiency and resilience, Levy delegated significant responsibilities to

See "Levy" on page 8

Opinion

In My Own Words

America's social contract

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Social contract: "an implicit agreement among the members of a society to cooperate for social benefits, for example by sacrificing some individual freedom for state protection." – Oxford Languages

The fundamental basis for American democracy is a social contract. That includes accepting the results of elections, even if the person or party we wanted to gain office does not win. It also means being willing to accept the decisions of our courts and legislators, even if they rule or pass a law we dislike. The social contract does allow us to lobby our representatives to change those laws. It allows us to bring court cases challenging those laws and decisions. We are also permitted to protest those decisions and laws in print, on social media and by peaceful protests or gatherings. What we are *not* allowed to do is attempt to overthrow those decisions by force or violence.

In order for our social contract to stand, we must all accept the same reality, something that is not currently happening in our country. The claims of fake news fly through the air about anything people dislike or with which they disagree. Confusion about the difference between opinion and fact makes debate impossible because there needs to be some basic agreement about them before we can have a real

discussion. For our social contract to work, we must *not* equate a theory or meme or conspiracy with fact *without* checking to see whether it is correct – no matter *who* posts it. If we are unwilling to do that work, or prefer to accept ideas simply because they re-enforce our preconceived notions, then our democracy may soon be no more.

The actions of the rioters on January 6 in Washington, DC, scared me. Although there is no solid evidence of fraud, a large group of Americans are refusing to accept the results of the election as valid. Please note there is a difference between wanting to show support for the candidate who lost and trying to declare the winner's victory null and void. Some of those who stormed the Capitol were willing to kill to change our government and they had the weapons with them to do so. Let's be clear here: they were advocating the violent overthrow of our government. Even worse, they were cheered on by people who should have known better: those asking the vice president of the United States to go against the rule of law by not accepting the election results and the lawyer who suggested that the election should be decided by a trial by combat.

Democracy is a fragile thing and we can no longer take this precious gift for granted. The beauty of our system is

that the exchange of power has never – at least in the past – been accompanied by bloodshed or violence. That was true even when a president was forced to resign. I remember that moment and was so proud of our country because even those of his own party recognized what needed to be done for the good of the nation. Unfortunately, in our day, too many on both sides refuse to consider whether their actions benefit all citizens.

I am writing this column the week before the inauguration. Photos of armed guards protecting the Capitol building and reports of potential violent protests across the nation appear on every news website I visit. This world is a new and frightening place. I can only hope and pray that the January 6 violence is an aberration, but I'm not sure I really believe that. More than four years ago, I wrote that there was a lot of anger in our country and that no matter who won, something needed to be done about that. The events of the last four years have only inflamed that anger and our divisions.

Our leaders *must* do something to move us forward. Our social contract is tattered and partly broken. We need to repair it before it shatters completely – before there is civil war in our land, and bombs and violence fill our streets.



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OPINIONS

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

LETTERS

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

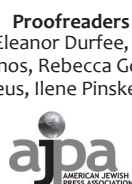
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DEADLINE

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TC Sisterhood rummage sales seeking volunteers

The Temple Concord Sisterhood is seeking volunteers to help with future rummage sales. "This is a big fund-raiser for Sisterhood, plus it helps community residents," said Sisterhood organizers. The Sisterhood hopes to begin having monthly rummage sales again starting on Sunday, February 7.

Each month weather and health conditions will be reviewed. If the sale must be cancelled, volunteers will be notified personally by Janet Hayman, chairwoman of rummage sale staffing. If the sale can be held, all safety precautions will be used. These include masks, limiting

the number of people in the sales room, social distancing, sanitation stations and paperwork to be filled out by all prior to entry to the sale area for tracking purposes.

Sisterhood members and anyone from the congregation or any other volunteers should sign up with Hayman by contacting her at 1265 Queen Esther Dr., Sayre, PA 18840 or jhayman527@hotmail.com.

Rummage raises funds for Sisterhood programming, community service donations and financial support for Temple Concord and its religious school.

The schedule for 2021 is Sundays, February 7, March 7, April 11, May 2, June 6 and June 13. Six volunteers are needed for each sale. This includes two checkout people and one security staff person from 10 am-noon and the same from noon-2 pm.

Hayman said, "Your support by volunteering is so appreciated."

TI Sisterhood to hold virtual chair yoga on Feb. 18

Temple Israel Sisterhood will offer a virtual chair yoga class on Thursday, February 18, at 3 pm. Angela Clark, a certified yoga and Pilates instructor, will lead a 35-minute program that is designed for all levels of activity and strength. "You will have so much fun, you will forget it's exercise!" said Arlene Osber. The cost of the class is \$5. To register, call the temple

office at 723-7461; the Zoom link will be e-mailed to participants.

"This revitalizing workout can be enjoyed from the comfort of your own chair at home," said organizers of the class. "Angela's infectious manner makes her classes a joy. There will also be some surprises to enhance your experience. We hope you will join us!"

BD Sisterhood schedules Purim party

Beth David Sisterhood will hold a Zoom Purim party on Wednesday, February 24, at 7 pm. "Beth David Sisterhood members decided that it wouldn't be Purim without some sort of a party," said organizers of the event. "So, once again we will try our hand at a virtual Zoom party just as we did for Chanukah. Regrettably, due to COVID, we do not anticipate Beth David Synagogue sponsoring its usual Purim *seudah*, which would be held late in the afternoon of Purim. So, we decided that this year we would celebrate 24 hours early, which should help get you in the spirit of things."

The final details of the event are still being planned, but organizers said that "if you participated in our Zoom Chanukah party, you will be similarly entertained." They also noted that "the fast of Esther doesn't begin until Thursday morning, so you can enjoy yourself Wednesday night with a clear conscience. So, please, make your *shalach manot* bags early so you have nothing else to do Wednesday evening."

More information will appear in the next issue of *The Reporter* and in e-mails sent out to the synagogue's e-mail list.

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to the family of **David Gitlitz**

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to **Linda Krushansky** on the death of her son, **Richard Krushansky**

DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
February 12-25.....	February 3
February 26-March 11	February 17
March 12-25.....	March 3
March 26-April 8 (Passover)	March 17

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

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Israeli minister pays first official visit to Sudan since normalization

In an historic first, an Israeli Cabinet minister led an official delegation to Sudan on Jan. 25. Israeli Intelligence Minister Eli Cohen met with Sudanese leaders, including Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the acting head of state, to discuss a variety of diplomatic and security issues as well as the potential for economic cooperation, reported Reuters. "I am confident that this visit has laid the foundations for many important collaborations, which will help both Israel and Sudan, and security stability in the region, deepen our ties with Africa and lead to further agreements with countries in the region," said Cohen, according to *Israel Hayom*. Sudan officially joined the Abraham Accords on Jan. 6, following the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, which also agreed to normalize relations with the Jewish

state. Morocco followed in December with a normalization agreement. Sudan agreed to normalize relations with Israel in October on the condition of being removed from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism. A stipulation on the U.S. side of the agreement included the guarantee that Sudan would agree to pay \$335 million in compensation to American victims of terrorism.

Senate confirms Janet Yellen as U.S. Treasury secretary

The U.S. Senate confirmed former Federal Reserve Chairwoman Janet Yellen on Jan. 25 as the 78th U.S. Treasury secretary and the first female to lead the 231-year-old U.S. Treasury Department. The final tally was 84-15. The 74-year-old, who is Jewish, will succeed Steve Mnuchin, who's also Jewish. (As Fed chair, she succeeded Ben Bernanke, who is Jewish.) She was to be officially sworn in the night of Jan. 25 and again ceremonially on Jan. 26, reported Bloomberg. Yellen was the first woman to lead the Federal Reserve, which is America's central banking system. She served as chairwoman between 2014-18. Before leading the Federal Reserve, Yellen served as the body's vice chair from 2010-14, following an earlier term on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors and as president of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. She served as chair of the Council of Economic Advisers under U.S. President Bill Clinton, has held a litany of high-profile leadership roles with national and international economic organizations, and has forged a career as a professor of economics, including as a faculty member at the University of California, Berkeley, for the last four decades.

JLI..... Continued from page 1

(they cannot listen to a recording at another time) and must be registered for the continuing education credits before the start of the course. Those interested in earning the credits must indicate that when signing up for the course.

The cost for the course per person is \$59, which includes the textbook. People interested in participating must register by calling Chabad at 797-0015 or writing to rshea@chabadofbinghamton.com. Registrants should include complete mailing address for receipt of book and indicate their preferred class time slot.



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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@jfgb.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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Bar & Bat Mitzvah Planning Guide

Mazel tov to these 2021 b'nai mitzvah

All information was provided by representatives of local synagogues.

B'nai mitzvah	Parents	Date	Synagogue
Drew Thomas	Abby Thomas and Bryan Thomas	January 16, 2021	Congregation Tikun v'Or
Rennie Smolenski	Alita Howard and Karl Smolenski	February 27, 2021	Congregation Tikun v'Or
Elijah Kelley	Jennifer Savran Kelly and Chris Kelly	April 24, 2021	Congregation Tikun v'Or
Jay Rattarree	Michelle McEllroy	May 22, 2021	Temple Concord
Jacob Friedman	Felix and Viktoriya Friedman	May 29, 2021	Temple Israel
Colette (Coco) Hamilton	Melanie Hamilton and Charles Hamilton	May 29, 2021	Congregation Tikun v'Or
Kayla Gerson	Maggie Gerson and Henry Gerson	June 19, 2021	Congregation Tikun v'Or
Ruby Gozen-Keck	Julie Gozan and Tom Keck	June 26, 2021	Congregation Tikun v'Or
Yordana Wilensky	Naomi Wilensky and Joe Wilensky	July 10, 2021	Congregation Tikun v'Or
Menzie Berkowitz	Kenny Berkowitz and Bridget Meeds	August 7, 2021	Congregation Tikun v'Or
Julia Kleinberg	Miranda Phillips and Bobby Kleinberg	August 14, 2021	Congregation Tikun v'Or
Shayna Foreman	Abbi and Brett Foreman	August 21, 2021	Temple Concord
Joshua Kweller	Yaron and Alice Kweller	October 2, 2021	Temple Israel
Eve Krasno	Jonathan and Amy Krasno	TBA	Temple Concord



On the Jewish food scene The days of whitefish and lox

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

A great deal has changed since I was a teenager, but one thing has not: the food at a b'nai mitzvah kiddush luncheon must include whitefish (either plain or in a salad), lox and bagels. It doesn't matter how many fancy-shmancy new kinds of food are included: without that specific bread and those fish, it ain't a real b'nai mitzvah meal.

OK, so I'm exaggerating. I can think of at least one bat mitzvah I attended in the past few years that didn't include those, but they are pretty much a staple of Jewish brunches, whether after services or for other events. And, while this last year has allowed for fewer of those gatherings, that doesn't mean people had to do without them. They just, unfortunately, had to pay for their own. (Why unfortunately? Have you seen the cost of smoked whitefish lately? It's expensive!)

Another staple that is not quite as common as it used to be is herring. At a fancy kiddush, that meant at least two types, usually one in cream sauce and the other in wine sauce. Although, if all these fish weren't available, people just opened a few jars of gefilte fish to take their place. Cut them in pieces, plopped them on a plate, put some toothpicks in them and they're ready to serve. If you have some horse-radish to go with them (which you put in a bowl to use like a dip), then you have everything you need.

Sense a theme here? The question you might ask is, "Why so much fish?" But that's not exactly the right question. You should be asking, "Why so much cold fish?" The answer is easy: no cooking on Shabbat means cold food. All the fish mentioned above can be served cold. In fact, they taste better cold. And while I know whitefish, lox and herring can be cooked, I've never tasted them any other way but smoked or pickled and served cold.

And why the bagel? I'm tempted to say, "Why not?" When you think of the quintessential Jewish food that is not connected to a holiday, the bagel usually comes to mind. Well, at least to Americans. When I was in Beer Sheva during rabbinical school, I had an Israeli roommate who thought a bagel was so weird she refused to try it. It still doesn't make sense, but even after explaining to her that it was just bread in a different shape, she wouldn't even take a taste.

There is one major difference in the b'nai mitzvah meals from my past that might amaze people. I remember every kiddush luncheon included a table covered with wine glasses filled with concord grape wine. Yes, I mean wine, not grape juice. And everyone - I mean everyone because we teens and preteens also took a glass - could have some. There was no bartender and no one watching the table.

I don't know if that happened in other synagogues, but it was definitely part of kiddush luncheons at the former Temple Beth El of Endicott. I never remember being tempted to drink more than one glass. Alcohol was not a forbidden fruit and adults used to give us sips from their drinks when we were out to dinner. (Whisky sour - yum!) That was helpful when

laws got stricter when I was in college. Alcohol was not a big deal and I didn't mind not being able to drink. (Soda, on the other hand, did not appear on our dinner table so that was far more a tempting.)

Of course, with the pandemic this past year, there have been almost no meals for guests after b'nai mitzvah. While that saved on the family budget, it is sad that the commu-

nity couldn't gather in person to celebrate the new Jewish adult. But, maybe, once it is safe to come together, each synagogue can hold an *oneg* or *kiddush* for those who celebrated any *simcha* during this difficult time, even if we don't serve traditional Jewish food. After all, it's having our joys recognized by our extended communal family, rather than the food, that really counts.

Bar/bat mitzvah service prep timeline

By Temple Concord's Religious School Committee

Editor's note: Some of these things may only apply at Temple Concord, but many are generally applicable. The Religious School Committee's original guidelines have been edited here.

2 years before:

- Parents set date of bar/bat mitzvah service with rabbi
- Decide priorities: bar/bat vs. sports, music, etc.
- Work on Hebrew prayerbook

1 year before:

- Parents and bar/bat mitzvah meet with rabbi
- Obtain Torah and *haftarah* sections
- Start tutorials in/out of Hebrew school/evaluate
- Sign contract for facility use at temple
- Go to/observe other bar/bat mitzvahs
- Seek out parent-parent mentor

9 months before:

- Lock in on *tzedakah* project/gift
- Work on Torah portion in Hebrew
- Decide on chanting as option
- Work on *haftarah* blessings
- Attend Friday night (Saturday morning) services
- Tallit* and *kippah*: Place orders

6-5 months before:

- Know minimum verses from Torah

- Start reading Torah without vowels
- Review Hebrew prayerbook selections with rabbi
- Begin *haftarah* in Hebrew

4 months before:

- Begin practicing Hebrew parts in sanctuary
- Arrange for music at services

3 months before:

- Read English translation of Torah and *haftarah* (3 times)
- Attend Friday night (Saturday morning) services

2 months before:

- Discuss speech with rabbi
- Begin practicing English parts in sanctuary (with parents)
- Review Friday night (Saturday morning) parts with rabbi
- Add cues to service book/Hebrew names?

1 month before:

- Write speech with rabbi
- Work on parents' speech

2-3 weeks before:

- Full rehearsals in sanctuary

1 week before:

- "Welcome" pamphlet (office)
- Family rehearsal

Your Shabbat:

- Mazel tov, you made it!

Planning Timetable

At birth:

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

1-3 years ahead:

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

10-12 months ahead:

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

6 months ahead:

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

4-5 months ahead:

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

3 months ahead:

- Plan Sunday brunch (if applicable)

- Order printed yarmulkas, if desired

2 months ahead:

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

6 weeks ahead:

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

4 weeks ahead:

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

2 weeks ahead:

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

A few days ahead:

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

Special Day:

- Prepare to enjoy your *simcha*!

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Bar & Bat Mitzvah Planning Guide

Mazel Tov to the 2020 B'nai Mitzvah



Meira Strulowitz
February 9, 2020
Josh and Bethany Strulowitz
Grandparents: Rita and Larry Bleir
Passaic, NJ



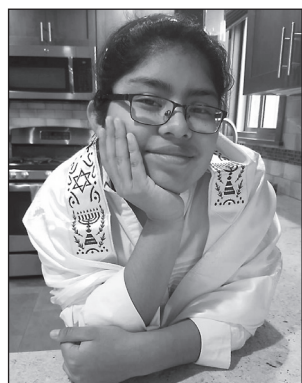
Devin Bleier
March 7, 2020
Seth and Maria Bleier
Grandparents: Rita and Larry Bleir
Raleigh, NC



Zev Rosales
April 18, 2020
Cherese Wiesner-Rosales and Andre Rosales
Temple Israel



Charlotte Coker
May 23, 2020
Rachel and Eric Coker
Grandparent: Jan Dickler
Temple Concord (Photo by Sam Rigo)



Laura Weinstein
June 25, 2020
Kim and Jason Weinstein
Temple Israel



Jay David Blechman
June 28, 2020
Chuck and Lisa Blechman
Grandparent: Roz Antoun
Park Avenue Synagogue, NYC



Anna Grills
August 8, 2020
Sara and Brian Grills
Grandparents: Lew and Jean Hecht
Temple Concord (Photo by Emily Lar)



Evan Grills
August 8, 2020
Sara and Brian Grills
Grandparents: Lew and Jean Hecht
Temple Concord (Photo by Emily Lar)



Michael T. Martinez
October 17, 2020
Temple Israel



Owen Herz
November 21, 2020
Jeff and Nancy Herz
Grandparent: Carol Herz
Temple Beth El, Stamford, CT

B'nai mitzvah books

By Reporter staff

Here are a few books that can help create the perfect bar or bat mitzvah.

"The JPS B'nai Mitzvah Torah Commentary"

Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin has taken his expertise in creating meaningful b'nai mitzvah ceremonies in a new direction by showing teenagers how the Bible - both Torah and haftarah portions - can speak directly to their lives.

"The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planner"

Emily Haft Bloom focuses on the spiritual and practical aspects of the day, in addition to hints on how to organize for the event. The work contains tabbed sections for easier usage and a pocket for business cards and swatches. There is also information on everything from stationery to entertainment.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Ideas to celebrate bar/bat mitzvahs during continued COVID restrictions

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to keep Jewish services and life-cycle events smaller in size, many Jewish families are grappling with letting go of long-held expectations about the bar or bat mitzvah celebration they imagined for their child. To that end, Moving Traditions has published a new guide to facilitate the transition. From Zoom mitzvahs to car mitzvahs to other alternative formats, the organization's staff has collected best-practice ideas from parents, clergy and Jewish educators about ways to celebrate the coming-of-age milestone in 2021. Ideas range from having breakout discussion groups on Torah-related topics for family members of different ages to scheduling a food or dessert truck to ride around to friends and guests locally. Acknowledging the challenges, authors Pamela Barkley and Rabbi Daniel Brenner write that they hope the publication "offers useful innovations and alternative approaches, and sparks your own creative ideas." For more information or a copy of the guide, visit <https://www.movingtraditions.org/zoom-mitzvah-101-a-moving-traditions-guide>.



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Jewish resources to occupy your family during social distancing – part 30

By Reporter staff

A variety of Jewish groups are offering online resources – educational and recreational – for those who are not allowed out of the house. Below is a sampling of those. *The Reporter* will publish additional listings as they become available.

◆ Ritualwell will hold the virtual program “Refuah Shleimah: A Healing Ritual Marking a Year of Pandemic” on Thursday, March 11, from noon-1:15 pm. The event will mark the one-year anniversary of the pandemic with a ritual to hold losses and create hope for healing through prayer, poetry, and music. Attendees are invited to actively participate by bringing names of those they want to memorialize, names of those who are sick, and names of essential workers, doctors and scientists they want to lift up. For more information or to register, visit www.ritualwell.org/immersion/refuah-shleimah-healing-ritual-marking-year-pandemic.

◆ Jewish Book Week, located in London, England, is holding many of its events online this year. For information about specific events or to purchase a ticket, visit <https://jewishbookweek.com/upcoming-events/>.

◆ The Tenement Museum will hold the virtual tour “LOVE at the Tenement” on Friday, February 12, at 6 pm, or Sunday, February 14, at 7 pm. The tour will offer shared stories of romantic and platonic relationships of 97 Orchard Street, from forbidden to familial love. Learn about dating, courting and marriage traditions observed in different times and cultural groups. The cost is \$15 per device or free with museum membership. For more information or to register, visit www.tenement.org/tour/love-at-the-tenement/.

◆ The Shalom Hartman Institute will hold the “Truth, Difference, and Loyalty: An Interfaith Symposium,” Sunday-Thursday, February 14-18. The symposium schedule will include daily *beit midrash* sessions, electives, interfaith learning, a new Con/Text video series and evening panel conversations, all exploring spirituality, faith and values, led by Hartman scholars, faculty and guest experts. For more information or to register, visit https://hartman.tfaforms.net/4717737?mc_cid=98a1383193&mc_eid=96085fa8a5.

◆ On its YouTube Live channel, the Tenement Museum will host a virtual talk with Jane Ziegelman, author of “97 Orchard Street: An Edible History of Five Immigrant Families in One New York Tenement” on Tuesday, February 2, from 7-8 pm. The talk will explore the culinary life of the residents of 97 Orchard Street, one of the historic tenement buildings of the Tenement Museum. The program will continue to be available on after the live screening. For more information and a link to the program, visit www.tenement.org/events/book-talk-an-edible-history/.

◆ The Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy will hold “The Great Kosher Meat War of 1902 – A New Book Talk on Zoom with award winning author Scott D. Seligman” on Wednesday, February 10, from 7-8:15 pm. Seligman will take about his book, which tells the story of how immigrant housewives took up positions on the streets of Manhattan’s Lower East Side and caused a riot that shook New York City. The event is limited to 100 computers. For more information or to register, visit www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/great-kosher-meat-war-book-talk.

◆ The Center for Jewish History will hold several virtual events in February, including “Writing Between Tongues: An Exploration of Hebrew and Arabic Calligraphy – Part 2” on Sunday, February 7, at noon; “Family History Today:

Finding Your Eastern European Jewish Family on JRI-Poland.org” on Thursday, February 11, at 3 pm; “Yiddish: Biography of a Language – Live on Zoom” on Wednesday, February 17, at 1 pm; “Color on My Mind: The History of the First Black Mental Health Clinic in America” on Wednesday, February 24, at 3 pm; “People of the Book Club: The Lost Shtetl with Author Max Gross” on Wednesday, February 24, at 4 pm; and more. For more information, other events or to register, visit <https://programs.cjh.org/>.

◆ The Jewish Theological Seminary will hold several mini-courses and lectures in February: “The Meanings of the Tabernacle” with Dr. Alan Cooper, on Tuesdays, February 16 and 23, and March 2, from 1-2 pm (www.jtsa.edu/the-meanings-of-the-tabernacle?utm_term=The%20Meanings%20of%20the%20Tabernacle); “The Holy City of Jerusalem” with Dr. Benjamin Gampel on Tuesdays, February 16 and 23, and Wednesday, March 3, from 10:30-11:30 am (www.jtsa.edu/the-holy-city-of-jerusalem?utm_term=Jerusalem%20and%20Three%20Religions); and “Other Gods: What the Bible Thinks about Other Nations’ Deities (Or: Is the Bible Really Monotheistic?)” with Dr. Benjamin Sommer on Monday, February 1, from 2-3:30 pm (www.jtsa.edu/other-gods-what-the-bible-thinks-about-other-nations-deities).

◆ The Yiddish Book Center will hold several virtual events in February, including “Sutzkever Essential Prose” book launch, with translator Zackary Sholem Berger and scholar Justin Cammy on Sunday, January 31, at 2 pm; “On Packing My Library: How I Built My Latin American Judaica Collection – and Shipped It Away, with Ilan Stavans” on Tuesday, February 4, at 7 pm; “Talking Across Time: A Conversation between Three Great Jewish Women Poets” with Zohar Weiman-Kelman on Tuesday, February 16, at 1 pm; and “Jews, Art, and Inequality: Lee Conell’s ‘The Party Upstairs’” with Josh Lambert on Tuesday, March 23, at 7 pm. For more information or to register, visit www.yiddishbookcenter.org/events-and-store/virtual-public-programs-calendar.

◆ The Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy will reprise two programs: “Hello Gorgeous: An Hour or so with Fanny Brice – The consummate performer!” on Thursday, March 11, from 7-8:15 pm (www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/fanny-brice-talk-on-zoom-march-11); and “Nooks and Crannies of New York City” on Wednesday, March 17, from 7-8:30 pm (www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/nooks-and-crannies-of-nyc-talk-on-zoom-wbtwd). It will also hold a

new program, “Borscht Belt: Resorts of the early Jewish Catskills – Part 1 of a 2 part talk,” on Wednesday, April 21, from 7-8:30 pm (www.nycjewishtours.org/event-log/this-is-not-the-catskills-part-1-borscht-belt). There is a charge and all programs are limited to 100 participants.

◆ The Women’s Initiative of the Orthodox Union is offering Torah Imecha Nach Yomi. The 10-15 minute lessons are aimed at learners of all levels. To subscribe, visit www.ou.org/women/torat-imecha/nach/.

◆ Ritualwell will hold two events in February in preparation for Purim: “The Book of V: A Reading and Conversation with Anna Solomon and Sivan Rotholz” on Wednesday, February 17, from 1-2:00pm; and “Embodying Purim Joy: Hasidic and Shtetl Dance with Rabbi Daniel Brenner” on Wednesday, February 24, from 8-9:15 pm. For more information or to register, visit www.tickettailor.com/events/reconstructingjudaism/.

◆ Jewish Federations of North America will kick off Jewish Disability Advocacy Month with a conversation featuring violinist Itzhak Perlman, members of Congress and Federations empowering people with disabilities. “Our Time, Our Fight” will be held on Wednesday, February 3, from 7-8 pm. For more information or to register, visit <https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/event/our-time-our-fight/>. See “Resources” on page 8

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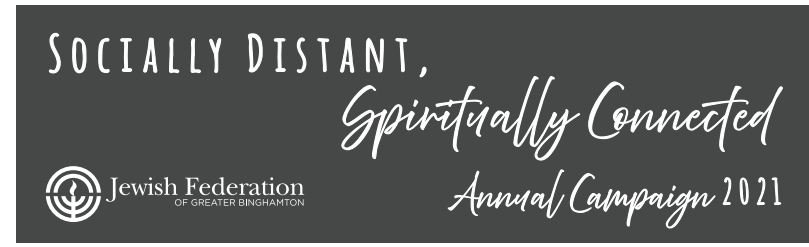
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Jewish Family Service will once again be collecting funds to fulfill the Purim mitzvah of *matanot l'evyonim* (gifts for the poor). These donations will be distributed to more than 16 local Jewish families who are experiencing extreme financial difficulties. In order to assure a timely distribution of these gifts, please be sure your contribution reaches our offices by February 19, 2021.

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Women. Continued from page 6

pursuit, found themselves cast beneath the returning waters. "Of all Pharaoh's army that had followed the Israelites into the sea, not a single one remained." (Exodus 14:28)

Upon witnessing this wonder, "The Israelites saw the great power that God had unleashed against Egypt and the people were in awe of God, they believed in God and his servant Moses." (Exodus 14:31) Spontaneously, the Jewish men, 600,000 strong, burst into a rapturous ode to God. They sang a song of awe and exaltation, of praise and tribute, of gratitude and appreciation. And they expressed their belief

in God's omnipotence and eternity. This first song is followed closely by another, Miriam's Song. Miriam the prophetess, sister of Moses and Aaron, led the Jewish women in their own ballad, this one with musical accompaniment.

Each week the reading of the Torah portion is followed by a reading from the prophetic works this is known as the *haftorah*. The *haftorah* is always connected thematically to the Torah portion. This week, the *haftorah* focuses on the song of Deborah the prophetess. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the Chabad movement, sees in

this choice of *haftorah* great significance. Our *parasha* features songs by both men and women. The prophetic writings, too, include songs by both men and women. What symbolism, then, is expressed in choosing the song of a woman over one by a man, i.e. David? Such a choice cannot be arbitrary.

The explanation, Rabbi Schneur Zalman taught, lies in the difference between the songs. Both the men and women had witnessed the same miracles and perceived in equal measure the revelation of God. Yet there was a vast difference in their apprehension and appreciation, and consequently in their respective songs. When the men sang, they sang with happiness, even passion. When the women sang, it was with rapture and elation. Indeed, they needed to harness the added dimension of music to fully express their joy.

Their happiness was greater, for they had suffered so much more under the tyrannical Egyptian reign. But their happiness was also greater, for their trust in God was of a fuller measure and now their belief was not only justified, but shared by the entire world around them.

Jewish women suffered the indescribable hardships of slavery alongside their male counterparts. The greatest travail, however, involved birthing and raising children, and here the women's pain and courage took on

spectacular dimension. In the face of excruciatingly difficult circumstances and the bitter decrees of Pharaoh, Jewish women persisted in encouraging their husbands to build the "army of God." With enormous trust in God, they forged ahead in bearing and nurturing their children despite the perilous conditions. This faith withstood their fear and uncertainty, and the sheer agony they endured.

Their song at the sea reflected this depth and breadth; it reflected their particular relationship with the Divine – one quite unmatched by their fathers, husbands, brothers and sons. For this reason, the sages saw fit to highlight this *parasha* with the song of a woman.

The legacy of Miriam lives on. Jewish women of every age have, against seemingly insurmountable odds, kept the torch of Yiddishkeit burning brightly. With their own brand of passion and implacable belief in the Almighty, they led the nation of Israel in doing what had to be done. They taught their people not to fear anything or anyone, but God himself.

Our sages stated: In the merit of righteous women were the Jews redeemed from Egypt and in their merit will the Jews be redeemed in the future. May we sing praises to God upon our final redemption speedily in our days.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Biden's top security advisor tells Israeli counterpart he aims to build on accords

The new U.S. national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, talked on the phone with his Israeli counterpart, Meir Ben-Shabbat, on Jan. 23, according to the National Security Council. Sullivan "reaffirmed President [Joe] Biden's unwavering commitment to Israel's security and expressed appreciation for Ben Shabbat's contributions to our bilateral partnership," according to NSC spokesperson Emily Horne. The two discussed opportunities "to enhance the partnership over the coming months, including by building on the success of Israel's normalization arrangements [Abraham Accords] with UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco," according to Horne. Sullivan also "confirmed the United States will closely consult with Israel on all matters of regional security" and "extended an invitation to begin a strategic dialogue in the near term to continue substantive discussions," according to Horne.

Israeli Cabinet OKs peace agreement with Morocco

The Israeli Cabinet on Jan. 24 unanimously approved the country's normalization agreement Morocco, the fourth U.S.-brokered peace deal with a Muslim country in the past four months. The deal with Morocco, which is being submitted to the Knesset for ratification, follows similar agreements with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan. "I would like to commend King Mohammed VI of Morocco on the cooperation between us," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at the start of the Cabinet meeting. "Together, we are advancing direct flights between the countries, which will happen soon, as well as economic, commercial and technological cooperation, and, of course, the opening of missions in the two countries."

U.S. State Dept. ends ties with Islamic charity

The U.S. State Department has cut ties with an Islamic charity over allegations of antisemitism. Until recently, Islamic Relief Worldwide, a humanitarian and development organization, had received hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars and was an official partner of the U.S. government, according to *The Washington Free Beacon*, which first reported on Jan. 18 the cutting of ties.

Resources. Continued from page 7

◆ The Israeli-American Council will hold online classes for its IAC Eitanim leadership and entrepreneurship for teenagers. The 15 online sessions, which are 90 minutes long, seek to promote a mindset of entrepreneurship, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving

and other soft skills. There is a \$105 cost for the program. For more information or to register, visit www.israeliamerican.org/eitanim. For additional resources, see previous issues of *The Reporter* on its website, www.thereporter.org.

Levy. Continued from page 2

his assistant coaches and players, fostering smart play and accountability. Famously, Levy employed a fast-moving, no-huddle "K-Gun" offense, allowing Kelly to call offensive plays, thus disrupting opponents' defensive strategy.

For Levy, it was a long road to the glory years in Buffalo. A native of the South Side of Chicago, he was born in 1925, the son of working-class, Jewish immigrants, Sam and Ida. Ida instilled in her son a lifelong love of literature, and Sam, a World War I Marine hero, told Marv, "Son, don't use being Jewish as an excuse not to do well in sports." Not surprisingly, Levy's boyhood sports hero was Sid Luckman, the Chicago Bears Jewish quarterback. Motivated by his father's encouragement and Luckman's example, Levy, a football running back, played multiple high school sports. Following World War II Army Air Force service, he earned varsity letters in football, basketball and track at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, IA.

By the time Levy arrived in Buffalo, he had coached football, at all levels, for nearly 35 years, starting with St. Louis Country Day School (1951-53). Next, he returned to Coe as an assistant before moving on to the University of New Mexico, initially as assistant, then taking command as head coach. Subsequently, Levy served as head coach at the University of California, Berkeley, and William and Mary. During his long collegiate apprenticeship, Levy was named Conference Coach of the Year four times (1958, 1959, 1964 and 1965).

Moving up to the NFL, the peripatetic Levy was an assistant with the Philadelphia Eagles (1969), Los Angeles Rams (1970) and Washington Redskins (1971-72). At age 48, Levy assumed his first pro football head coaching job, with the Montreal Alouettes of the Canadian Football League. In five seasons with the Alouettes (1973-77), he captured two Grey Cup championships, the Canadian equivalent of the Super Bowl.

Next stop, Levy was named head coach of the Kansas City Chiefs, whom he led from 1978-82, with mixed results. In 1984, Levy had the misfortune of coaching the imploding Chicago Blitz of the ill-fated United States Football League. Then, in 1986, Levy, at an age (61) when most coaching careers have already come to an end, took the reins of the Buffalo Bills – and the rest is history. In addition to becoming the pre-eminent coach in Bills history,

Levy – with all due respect to Sid Gillman, Allie Sherman and Al Davis – emerged as football's top Jewish coach.

Levy's greatest asset is his intelligence. With a Phi Beta Kappa key, an M.A. in English history from Harvard University and an omnivorous appetite for reading important books, he is an intellectual, an anomaly among formidable, but narrowly focused, NFL coaches. Levy employed his analytical skills to dissect opponents' strengths and weaknesses, evaluate talent and communicate expectations. From his studies of Winston Churchill's World War II leadership, Levy found tactics to motivate players and formulate team strategy. Levy's core values, powerfully articulated, animated his teams: "Ability without character will lose. The Buffalo Bills are going to be a team of high character." And so, they were.

Transcending the gridiron, Levy evolved into a cultural icon. A prolific writer, his publications include a memoir, a history of the Bills, a novel, a children's book and a volume of poetry. A popular commercial depicted Levy intimidating the Bills with the admonition that no one is leaving the room until they figure out how to win the next Super Bowl: tension subsides only when a player fortifies himself for the long siege by taking a bite out of a Snickers – and a mellowed Marv asks if he has an extra candy bar. A "Saturday Night Live" skit wittily juxtaposed the normalcy of Coach Levy with the bizarre questions emanating from sportscaster O.J. Simpson. And the quotable Levy has left his mark across the decades with notable "Marvisms," such as, "Adversity is an opportunity for heroism."

At age 95, the remarkable Marv Levy is still going strong – and enjoying the resurgence of his Bills. Retiring from coaching at 71, he has used his time well as author, motivational speaker, jogger, Bills general manager in his 80s and sportscaster. When he was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, the mayor of Buffalo proclaimed the occasion "Marv Levy Day." An eloquent role model for a life well lived, his most famous Marvism has meaning for us all: "Where else would you rather be than right here, right now?"

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



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