

“Hello Muddah, Hello Faddah”

College of Jewish Studies spring series to focus on “The American Jewish Summer Camp Experience”

The spring 2021 lecture series of the College of Jewish Studies will showcase “The American Jewish Summer Camp Experience.” There will be two lectures in the virtual series. On Thursday, April 22, Stanford University scholar Dr. Sandra Fox will speak on “The Jews of Summer: Going to Camp in Postwar America,” which is based on her forthcoming book. On Thursday, April 29, there will be a panel discussion on “How to Run a Jewish Summer Camp,” featuring former and current camp directors, Sima and Neil Auerbach, and Dr. Eliav Bock, as well as a summer camp alumna, Sarah Klionsky. Both programs will begin at 7:30 pm, and are free and open to the general public. Those wishing to attend should register at on the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton website, www.jfgb.org, or on the College of Jewish Studies Facebook page www.facebook.com/bingcjs in order to receive a link to the program.

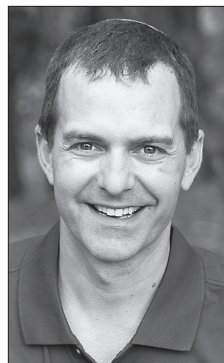
Fox will look at American Jewish culture in the decades following World War II, when American Jews climbed the socioeconomic ladder and left urban enclaves for the suburbs. Some communal leaders worried that the postwar comforts Jews found there would threaten the vitality of Jewish life. “Jewish educators, rabbis and lay leaders

from across the ideological and religious spectrum – Zionist, Yiddishist, Reform and Conservative alike – came to see the immersive, totalizing experience of sleepaway camp as a uniquely powerful solution for their communal ills,” said organizers of the event. “At the same time, campers and staff members clashed and converged, their intergenerational negotiations shaping postwar American Jewish culture both inside and outside camps’ gates.”

They added, “Dr. Fox will discuss the fantasies that drove the establishment and growth of educational Jewish camping, how educators’ high hopes for camping shaped the lived experience, and how campers responded to these efforts, impacting discourses surrounding Jewish identity, practice, language, nationalism and intermarriage for decades to come.”



Dr. Sandra Fox
(Photo by Alexa Klorman of Alexa Drew Photography)



Dr. Eliav Bock
(Photo by Ethan Weg)

Fox is a scholar of American Jewish history, Jewish youth and childhood, and contemporary Yiddish culture. A Jim Joseph Postdoctoral Fellow, she received her doctorate from New York University’s joint program in history and Hebrew Judaic studies in 2018. Fox is also the founder and execu-

tive producer of the Yiddish-language podcast Vaybertaytsh, and serves as peer-review editor at In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies.

The panel discussion on “How to Run a Jewish Summer Camp” will be moderated by Professor Jonathan Karp of Binghamton University’s Judaic Studies Department. It will explore the wide range of Jewish summer camp approaches of the last several decades. It will also offer a discussion of how camp directors have sought to market camps to Jews of all backgrounds and affiliations, and to deal with the many practical and logistical challenges running a camp entails.

See “Camp” on page 11

Stimulus checks

By Reporter staff

While the latest stimulus check is a welcome relief for those who suffered financial setbacks during the pandemic, others are looking to put those funds to good use by donating them to worthy causes. The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton is encouraging those looking for a good cause to consider a Jewish one.

“Our Jewish community has always been a strong one and a way to help

keep it strong is to consider donating part of your stimulus check to a Jewish organization,” said a representative of the Federation board. “Those organizations include the Federation, Jewish Family Service, *The Reporter*, local synagogues and other Jewish community organizations.”

To donate funds to the Federation, visit www.jfgb.org/ or mail a check to 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

JLI to offer course that bucks general trend of bleak predictions

Chabad Center will offer “This Can Happen,” a new six-session course from the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute, via Zoom. The course will run for six consecutive Mondays, beginning on April 26, with the first session at 7 pm and the second beginning 8:45 pm. Sign-in information will be offered to enrolled participants. The course fee is \$79 and \$150 per couple, which includes the text book. To register for the course visit www.chabadofbinghamton.com/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/4725643/jewish/Virtual-JLI-Classes-Registration.htm or call Chabad at 797-0015 and ask for Ruth Shea.

“This has been a difficult year on many levels,” shared Rivkah Slonim, the local JLI instructor. “While I never bought into the ‘unprecedented’ nature of the difficulty, it has been physically and emotionally taxing. This is why I am especially excited to share the news about a course that is the perfect antidote to all the bad news we are regularly bombarded with.”

“Many people nurse the idea that matters are getting progressively worse and, fostered by much hysterical media and general dialogue, an environment of fear and despair is all too rampant,” said Slonim. “Exploring

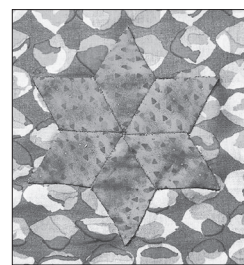
the science of world history and looking at the actual facts paint an eye-opening picture, one that can provide real, practical hope. Those who enroll in this course will have the ubiquitous question answered: is the current

situation going to get any better? In fact, participants should prepare to embark on a journey that will explore one of the most misunderstood and maligned topics in the

See “JLI” on page 4

Intersisterhood event to feature craft project

Temple Israel will host the 2021 Intersisterhood program on Zoom on Tuesday, April 27, at 7 pm. Once a year, the Sisterhoods of Temple Israel, Beth David Synagogue and Temple Concord share a program. This year, artist and educator Maxine Rosenberg will teach an English paper piecing project. Participants will be able to prepare a Kiddush cup coaster for Shabbat.



An example of the coaster that will be made. (Photo by Maxine Rosenberg)

“This paper piecing technique was very popular in the U.S. in the early part of the 20th century, Rosenberg said. “At that time, quilts were often made with small scraps of fabric. Their affordability increased their popularity and sustainability during the Great Depression. Our project will use diamond shapes to form the Star of David

and will include a contrasting colored background.”

Materials needed for the project will be assembled by the Intersisterhood program organizers, and will be available for signed-up participants ahead of the event. “Signing up for the event is essential so that there is enough time to assemble the individual packets of necessary materials,” said organizers of the event. Reservations are needed by Thursday, April 22. Out of

town participants need to respond by Friday, April 16, in order to receive their packets by mail on time. The Intersisterhood event is free for the members of each of the three synagogues. Others who attend will need to pay \$5 to cover part of the cost of the

See “Craft” on page 9

Pondering the pandemic column

The Reporter is offering a new column beginning this week: “Pondering the pandemic.” (See the first column on page 2.) People have changed their lives during the pandemic – everything from learning a new skill to perfecting an old one. *The Reporter* is asking readers to submit a short article (from 100-400 words) about something they did or learned because of the pandemic.

“This idea was suggested by our first

columnist, Sima Auerbach,” said Rachel Esserman, executive editor of the paper. “We thought it would be fun for people to share some of their pandemic successes and amusing anecdotes about things that didn’t work out as expected.”

To submit an article, e-mail the article to Treporter@aol.com with “Pondering the pandemic” in the subject line. Articles may be typed in the body of the e-mail or attached as a Word or text document.

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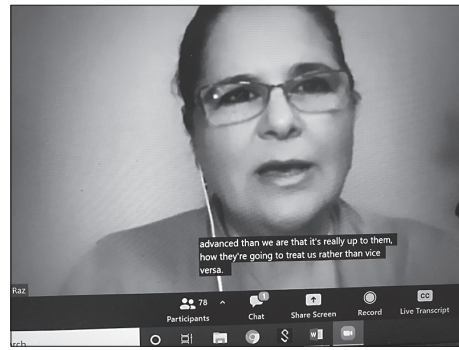
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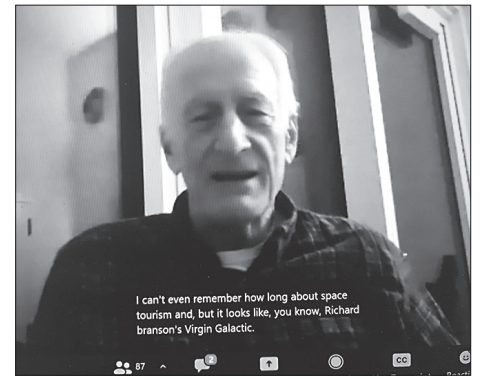
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Zoom Q&A session with astronaut Dr. Jeff Hoffman



Rachel Raz, executive producer of the documentary "Space Torah," answered questions on March 15.



NASA astronaut Dr. Jeff Hoffman was also on hand to discuss the film.

At left: Some of those who participated in a Zoom question-and-answer session about the documentary "Space Torah."

Opinion

From the Desk of the Federation Executive Director

With gratitude

SHELLEY HUBAL

I have been walking circles around the inside of my house for months now. If you were to peek in the window, you would see what looks like a crazy person, walking around and around the living room furniture. This ritual started in December. COVID made going to the gym impossible and it was, until recently, too cold and slippery to go outside for a walk. In desperation, I settled for this tedious form of exercise. Some movement is better than no movement, right?

Listening to podcasts is the only thing that has made these "walks" bearable. Last week, I listened to author and self-described optimist Simon Sinek interview Quilen Blackwell, the founder of Chicago's non-profit Eco House.

During the course of the conversation, the pair discussed their definition of faith. To paraphrase, they describe faith as being on a team and not knowing who your teammates are. I love this definition. To me, it means you are never alone and God will provide. Have you ever had a stranger show you an act of kindness on a day when you needed an affirmation of good in the world? Perhaps an opportunity that took your life in a better direction came along at the right time? These are examples of the invisible teammate.

For the Binghamton Jewish community, Federation is like an invisible teammate. It keeps our organizations funded and our Jewish neighbors supported. Without Federation, we would not have the Jewish Community Center, *The*

Reporter, Jewish Family Service, a Hebrew day school or local programming such as the Film Fest. However, Federation does not work alone. Our donors and volunteers deserve all the credit. When you give to the Federation, you are creating a better community for all. When you give your time to a Jewish organization, you are enhancing the quality of life for everyone.

I am blessed to see examples of your kindness every day. You, our donors and volunteers, make the Binghamton Jewish community whole. For this and so much more I am most grateful. I have faith in all of you and God that the Binghamton Jewish community will remain strong for years to come.

In My Own Words

Viewing immigration from the other side

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

The political debates about immigration continue and it's unlikely the issue will ever be completely resolved – if only because each generation of Americans faces a different set of circumstances. What we rarely talk about during these debates is what these immigrants feel about our country. It's certainly something I've rarely take into consideration,

Pondering the pandemic

By Sima Auerbach

When the pandemic started, I was bored and so I started looking at my house. I upholstered my dining room chairs, rearranged furniture, spot painted, went through closets, etc. etc.

I looked at all the clothes I haven't worn in years and dressed each day – I took pictures and sent them to my grandkids with info like "this was called a pant suit." We all had fun: I discovered I had 72 pairs of shoes I haven't worn in years, as well as pocketbooks, so after house, clothes and shoes, I said enough.

I started thinking of my strange childhood and started writing. I'm filling up a notebook and thinking about using my parents' stories of fleeing Russia, then Europe.... Jews fleeing is not an uncommon story. The pandemic keeping me inside physically has allowed my mind to go inward. It has been an interesting trip. I hope you, too, are exploring.

which is why Roya Hakakian's "A Beginner's Guide to America: For Immigrants and the Curious" (Alfred A. Knopf) was so thought provoking. Hakakian, who was born to an Iranian Jewish family, came to the United States in 1985 seeking political asylum. Her work is not really for immigrants, though, and, while at first it sounds like a critique, it's really a love letter to her new home.

If you want to appreciate our country, perhaps the best way may be to see it through a stranger's eyes. For example, we take free speech for granted. Oh, we may fight over cancel culture or people's rights to use certain phrases, but the sheer fact that we can have this debate shows just how lucky we are. We're not looking over our shoulders knowing that our government will make us disappear if we write or say something of which it disapproves. Take a minute to think about this. It's difficult to imagine your life any other way, isn't it? That basic right, which is ingrained in our psyche, is something that Hakakian found amazing. Maybe we should take a minute to feel the same.

She also notes that when most immigrants arrive in the U.S., freedom of speech strikes them as the most important part of their new life. Yet, what Hakakian found even more amazing was the other part of freedom: the freedom to do mundane things, for example, to dress however you like; kiss in public – with *no one* paying you any heed; or to lie on the grass in the park undisturbed. The non-interference with religious practice also surprises her, as does women

being allowed to decide how best to live their lives.

What we also need to remember is that many immigrants did not want to leave their native lands. They'd hoped to make them better places, although that rarely happens, and were forced to flee for their lives. It becomes clear as time passes that few will be able to return to what was once a beloved homeland. The world they left will not embrace them if they try. At times, they may feel betrayed by their new home, such as when U.S. policy changes and the leader of our country sees their hated dictator as an ally against another enemy. But the fact that policy can change without the violent overthrow of our government just proves they are safe in their new home.

While Hakakian's work is unlikely change anyone's mind about U.S. immigration policy, she does offer words of wisdom we should heed: "America cannot alone solve the problem of the current or forthcoming refugees; no single country or continent can. Nations must come together to affect the forces that are causing displacement at their root." Refugees are a complex problem with no one easy or simple answer. But, at least we who were born in the U.S. haven't had to give up our homes, leaves our families and face danger to escape tyrants. Yes, America is far from perfect. That's something both Hakakian and I know. But it is unlike almost any other place in the world and that's something we need to acknowledge, even as we struggle to make our homeland a more perfect place.



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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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www.thereporter.org

TC to offer virtual program on “Bioethics, Justice and COVID-19”

Temple Concord will co-sponsor the program “Bioethics, Justice and COVID-19,” featuring Professor Rosamond Rhodes, Ph.D., on April 15, at 7:30 pm. Rhodes will provide a framework for thinking about matters of justice and explain how this perspective applies to the allocation of medical resources that physicians distribute every day. She will conclude by applying her analysis of justice to

COVID-19 decisions about the allocation of ventilators and prioritization for vaccination.

To register for the event, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/an-evening-with-bioethicist-rosamond-rhodes-phd-tickets-147166425741>. The program is being offered through the synagogue’s Adult Education Committee and is being co-sponsored with

several other Reform congregations.

Rhodes is considered a leading figure in the field of bioethics. She is a professor of medical education and the director of bioethics education at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai; a professor of philosophy at The Graduate Center, CUNY; and a professor of bioethics and associate director of the Clarkson-Mount Sinai Bioethics Program. She has published hundreds of articles and chapters; and co-edited and authored several books and guides in the field of bioethics.

TI Adult Education to hold “Select Jewish Shorts” on April 25

The Temple Israel Adult Education Committee will present another in a series of “Select Jewish Shorts” on Sunday, April 25, at 10:30 am. The program will be dramatic readings of select Jewish short stories.

Ben Kasper, professor emeritus at SUNY Broome, who serves on the Executive Board of Temple Israel and is co-chairman of the Adult Education Committee, will read one of the short stories. Kasper’s selection is a story written by Solomon Simon (1895-1970), who arrived in New York in 1913 and was active in the Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute.

Steve Gilbert, professor emeritus of psychology at SUNY Oneonta, is a past president of the temple and co-chairman of the Adult Education Committee. He is reviewing Jewish short stories and considering selections from Michael Oren’s new book, “The Night Archer.”

Liz Rosenberg, who has written more than 30 books,

teaches English at Binghamton University. She is the recipient of the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching. She will read an original short story, “The Rabbi Who Wouldn’t Leave,” written by her late husband, David Bosnick.

Andy Horowitz is a graduate of Binghamton University and has an M.B.A. from Syracuse University. Horowitz is the artistic director of Galumph Dance Company. He is on the faculty of Binghamton University, lectures on entrepreneurship, and offers choreographic workshops at schools and conservatories. He played the leading role in the play “My Name is Asher Lev,” which was performed at Temple Israel in June 2018. His choice of story will be announced in a future issue.

Members of the community will be sent out the Zoom link prior to the program. Anyone who does not receive the bulletins should contact Temple Israel at titammy@stny.twcbc.com.

TC Sisterhood’s virtual donor program on May 2 to feature music

Temple Concord Sisterhood’s annual donor program will be held virtually on Sunday, May 2, at 2 pm. Jesse and Kurtis Parker will entertain with selections of violin music.



Jesse and Kurtis Parker (Photo by Jessie Gray Homer/Adjoin Photo)

“If you’re not a donor, it’s never too late to become one,” said organizers of the event. “To attend the donor program, pay Sisterhood dues of \$30 if you haven’t done so already. Then make a donation of \$25, or \$36 if you want to let a guest into the event. A guest is someone who is not eligible to join Sisterhood, such as a man, your daughter or a member of another temple’s Sisterhood.”

Reservations are due by Thursday, April 28, to Phyllis Kellenberger at pweinste@stny.rr.com or 723-2193 or 727-8305. Zoom information will be provided only to those who have reservations a few days before the program.

Jesse Parker is a musician and music teacher based in the Binghamton area. She is the owner and director of Parker Music Studio in Johnson City, where she offers private music lessons and music classes for all ages. She has performed with several professional orchestras, including the Binghamton Philharmonic, the Lima Symphony Orchestra, the Adrian Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra of Northern New York. She has also performed in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Steinway Hall, the Eastman Kodak Theater and the Avery Fischer Center for the Performing Arts. Jesse, a member of Temple Concord Sisterhood, also founded A Note of Elegance, which provides music and coordination for weddings and events of all types.

Kurtis Parker is a musician in the Binghamton area. He has performed with several professional orchestras, including the Binghamton Philharmonic, the Lima Symphony Orchestra, the Adrian Symphony Orchestra and the

Orchestra of Northern New York. Not limited to classical music, he plays electric violin with a local band, The Letter 5, and also plays roots and blues with local musician Jay Floyd. He teaches grades six-12 orchestra in the Maine-Endwell School District.

OF NOTE

Baron

Rabbi Barry R. Baron will begin a three-year term as university chaplain of Colgate University on July 1. He has been serving as associate university chaplain and campus rabbi since 2019. Baron is a retired U.S. Army colonel and former command chaplain for the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command. He also served as Temple Israel’s rabbi.

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to the family of
Joyce Haber


The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to Dorie Osisek on the death of her mother,
Rosanne Rubinstein

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to the family of
Iva Weiss

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
April 23-May 6	April 14
May 7-20	April 28
May 21-June 3.....	May 10*
June 4-17	May 26

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




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 **Jews in Sports**

Jewish baseball and “The Golem’s Mighty Swing”

BILL SIMONS

James Sturm’s graphic novel “The Golem’s Mighty Swing,” originally published in 2001, chronicles the travels and travails of the barnstorming Stars of David Baseball Club through the American Midwest of the 1920s. This mythical team of wandering Jews encounters menace in the Gothic American heartland. Compelling visual images limn Sturm’s illustrated text.

Ubiquitous utility poles punctuate the tale. As the Stars of David transverse hinterland roads, utility poles possess a Rorschach-like suggestion of human arms outstretched in a crucifixion position. During the 1920s, the resurgent

JLI Continued from page 1
Jewish canon – the future redemption.”

“This Can Happen” will present audiences with an opportunity to appreciate what Judaism really means when it talks about a messiah. “Considering that for many in the modern world, utopian visions of world peace and endless bounty sound like the stuff of fairy tales, this course summons the sources and the data to dispel such primitive notions and educate audiences that the messianic era is a deep, broad climax to the entire story of the universe,” said course organizers.

The subtitle of “This Can Happen,” “A credible case for feeling good about the future,” is indicative of an approach to the topic. “Recent events have put so many on the edge and the longer matters drag on, the louder the voice of helplessness becomes,” explained Rabbi Naftali Silberberg of JLI’s Brooklyn, NY, headquarters. “If we can make – as stated in our title – a ‘credible case’ to be optimistic about times ahead, that is remarkably edifying.”

As with all of JLI’s programs, “This Can Happen” 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.

JLI, the adult education branch of Chabad-Lubavitch, offers programs in more than 1,600 international locations in the U.S., Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Panama, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Uruguay and Venezuela. More than 400,000 students have attended JLI classes since we were founded in 1998.

Ku Klux Klan, with a strong Midwestern base, employed the cross against perceived threats to the traditions of white Protestant natives.

Other memorable Sturm drawings depict diverse Midwestern visages, encompassing the stalwart, the pathetic, the angry, the gullible, the ambitious and the exploitive. Through drawings of young hooligans, their faces innocent but their actions menacing a young Jewish ballplayer, Sturm suggests the potential for hate-fueled violence in the heartland.

Populated by bearded Jews of the American Diaspora, the homeless Stars of David travel by cramped, rickety bus across potholed roads in search of manna on the playing fields of the Midwest’s towns and small cities. For these Jewish ballplayers, conflict and contradiction are external and internal.

The Stars of David market themselves, in name, dress and grooming, as Jews for hostile and curious Gentiles. Their beards are donned to reflect contemporary stereotypes of Jews as aliens. Indeed, a shoe-polish beard is painted on Moishe Strauss, the team’s 16-year-old second baseman, whose face is yet innocent of a razor. In response to why she is in the stands at a game featuring the Stars of David, a plump middle-aged matron of the Midwest, a cross prominently hanging from her neck, proclaims, “I’m not here for baseball, but to see the Jews.” Wishing to view the horns of a Jew, credulous boys attempt to remove Moishe’s cap – by throwing rocks at this head.

Yet, despite their Jewish consciousness and commercialization of their ethnicity, the Stars of David generally exhibit little knowledge or interest in their ancestral traditions. They play on the Jewish Sabbath, and, oblivious to kosher dietary laws, “like the chop suey houses.”

Older brother to Moishe, Noah, a hard-hitting third baseman, is the team’s player-manager. Even as he leads his Jewish baseball tribe, Noah, rejects ethnic traditionalism: “My father . . . will always be a greenhorn. His imagination lives in the old country. Mine lives in America and baseball is America.” Yet, the Stars of David ply their trade in the land of the stranger by confirming Gentile expectations of the Jew.

In Sturm’s cautionary saga, Victor I. Paige, glib Gentile representative of Big Inning Promotions, persuades the Stars of David to transform esoteric Jewish lore into baseball vaudeville. Page convinces the financially-challenged Stars of David to publicize and dress their very large first baseman, Hershel Bloom, as a golem. According to legend and a popular contemporary film referenced by Paige, Jewish masters of Kabbalistic mysticism could create a superhuman creature, a golem, out of inanimate material. Although a golem initially serves its creator and protects the Jewish people, eventually the soulless golem grows more violent and is uncontrollable.

Bloom, the Stars’ faux golem, is comfortable with the promotion, and dons the creature’s costume. After all, he was neither Jewish nor Hershel Bloom; his real name is

Henry Bell. Henry/Herschel is an African-American veteran of the Negro leagues, previously presented by the Stars as a dark-skinned Jewish descendant of one of the lost tribes.

In a company town, the Stars of David and their golem, advertised as a “Jewish Medieval Monster,” are scheduled to play the Putnam All-Americans in August 1922. Reflecting the heartland fear and fascination of the Jew, *The Putnam Post Bugle* editorializes: “Jews . . . stand not for America, not for baseball, but only themselves.” The hometown newspaper warns that, unless defeated, the Stars of David “will suck the money from this town and then they will leave.” *The Putnam Post Bugle* likens the upcoming ballfield contest to defense of the nation.

On the night before the game, Buttercup Lev, the Stars’ alcoholic off-speed pitcher, hitchhikes alone to a speakeasy. Neither Lev’s obliviousness to the Friday night onset of the Shabbos nor the town’s violation of Prohibition receive direct comment: Sturm apparently credits the intelligence of his readers at this and other junctures. Informed of Lev’s presence at the bar, local vigilantes, whipped up by demagogic bigotry, savagely beat Lev, immobilizing his left arm, amongst other injuries inflicted.

The next day, Lev’s anxious teammates, ready to board the bus to the ballpark and ignorant of the pitcher’s ordeal, await his arrival. Upon learning of Lev’s injuries, a teammate suggests not playing in Putnam. Paige retorts that the failure of the Stars of David to take the field will have serious legal consequences. A defiant Noah declares that the Stars of David will play.

The ballyhoo of nativism brings out a large and hostile crowd intent on seeing the Stars of David defeated by the hometown Putnam All-Americans. Ethnic slurs, threats, brushbacks, biased umpiring, a spiking and violent fan interference assault the Stars of David. When the golem retaliates with a beanball that bounces off the head of an opposition batter, Putnam players and fans mobilize for a virulent pogrom. The threat of the golem’s mighty swing momentarily frightens the fans turned mob. The other Stars of David pray for life and grab their own bats, ready to wield them in a battle of survival. Torrential rain, however, intervenes, bringing flooding, enabling the Stars to escape – and survive. The biblical Noah and his charges found refuge on an ark; manager Noah Strauss leads the Stars to safety by bus. The baseball Noah reflects on his team’s flight from Putnam, “Survival. Perhaps that is a victory unto itself.” Much of Jewish history is encapsulated in that observation.

“The Golem’s Mighty Swing” provides a compelling reconsideration of the Jewish encounter with American culture and the national pastime during the watershed decade of the 1920s.

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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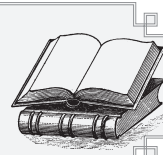
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Make a quick and easy gift	Simply write a check now or use a credit card	An income tax deduction and immediate charitable impact
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Defer a gift until after your death	Put a bequest in your will (gifts 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



Celebrating Jewish Literature



Searching the past for answers

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Scholars and historians study documents and photographs, visit meaningful sites and interview people connected to the events. Family members search for answers to questions they were too young to have asked when their parents or grandparents were still alive. No matter how much research is done, it will never be possible to discover what happened to everyone caught in the whirlwind of the Holocaust. Memories fade, documents get lost or found, and knowledge disappears as survivors, perpetrators and bystanders age and die. That doesn't stop people from trying to understand what occurred as can be seen in two new books: "The Ravine: A Family, A Photograph, A Holocaust Massacre Revealed" by Wendy Lower (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) and "Plunder: A Memoir of Family Property and Nazi Treasure" by Menachem Kaiser (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt).

Lower, the John K. Roth professor of history at Claremont McKenna College, takes a formal approach to her research. After she is shown a photograph taken during World War II that came to light after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Lower feels compelled to learn not only about the people pictured, but the open-air massacres that occurred in Ukraine during the war. The photo offers a rare action shot of the Holocaust, showing a woman falling into a ravine just after being shot and dragging down with her the child holding her hand. Behind her stand four men: two German commanders and two Ukrainian auxiliary members. One of the Ukrainian rifles is so close to the woman's head it's possible to see the halos of smoke from the gunshot. On the ground near the ravine is a pair of empty boots. Closer examination reveals another child, partly hidden by the woman's body.

Some information was relatively easy for Lower to uncover. For example, it didn't take her long to learn the name of the photographer. What surprised her was that he was not an official German one, but rather a Slovakian amateur named Lubomir Skrovina, who was later willing to testify about the massacre, even though that put his life at risk. Lower was also able to identify the men in the picture, although it took decades to convict these offenders of their crime. She gives the background of what was occurring behind the scenes, including others who were victimized – for example, civilians who were forced to dig mass graves for the Germans or be killed themselves. More difficult

was discovering the names of those who were murdered. Lower believes she may have discovered members of the family, but could not prove definitely whom the woman and children were. What was amazing is that Lower also learned of the one person who managed to escape death: Ludmilla Blekhman, who had lost consciousness during the massacre, but had not been shot. When she awoke, those who were dying helped push her from the pit after which she crawled through the woods until she found someone willing to help her.

While it seems incredible that Lower managed to gain as much information as she did since so much time had passed, that's not the only interesting thing about the book: the author also explores the Holocaust with a focus on the destruction of the Jewish family. Most studies feature information about individuals or speak about mass murder policies. Lower, however, sees the family unit as being important to the Nazis, noting that "Nazi policy was two-pronged: family welfare and family destruction." Family welfare focused on ethnic Germans of Aryan stock. Not only were they encouraged to reproduce, but the Nazis hoped to colonize the world with these ethnic Germans. Family destruction focused on anyone the Nazis deemed inferior, including Jews, Romas and Slavs, and anyone with mental or physical disabilities. This policy included restrictions on marriage, in addition to forced sterilizations and abortions. This was also one reason that whole families were moved to concentration camps at the same time. All members of the family unit were to be destroyed.

"The Ravine" is written in easy to read prose and the sheer range of topics was interesting and thought provoking. What Lower wants to do is give voice to all those whose voices were silenced, during *and* after the war. She also acknowledges the difficulties that can be caused by displaying photographs such as the one that started her on her search. For her, it is important *not* just to place them on display; she deems it essential to put them in context so that people understand what happened to the victims and why. Her book successfully accomplishes that.

While Lower's work is non-personal, Kaiser's focuses on his own family, at first on the grandfather who died before he was born. He notes feeling detached from him, even though he visits his grandfather's grave every year with his father and is named after him. Even the stories his father tells of his own father feel generic, as if they could

be about anyone. The family actually knew very little about his grandfather's life before he moved to Canada: He was the only member of his immediate family to survive, but his heirs know nothing of his life before or during the war, including what the author's great-grandfather did for a living or the name of the concentration camps to which family members were sent. Before his research, Kaiser didn't even know the names of his grandfather's siblings. As he notes, "We knew *they* had died, but we had no idea who *they* were."

It is only when Kaiser is in Poland for academic reasons that he begins to look into the family history. His father sends him documents showing that his grandfather had tried to reclaim family property in Krakow. Kaiser finds himself unexpectedly moved by them since this is the first time he's actually read anything his grandfather wrote. Although his grandfather's legal attempts were a failure, Kaiser decides to try again to reclaim the property – searching the records for ownership, hiring a lawyer, attending court proceedings needed to declare his grandfather's siblings deceased, etc. The process is frustrating and irritating, not just because of the restrictions the courts place on those trying to reclaim property, but the ethics of what should be done to the people who have been living in the property for decades.

This would have been a straight forward story about the difficulties of reclamation were it not for a strange fact that Kaiser uncovers: one of his grandfather's first cousins, Abraham, also managed to survive the war. But Abraham is not an ordinary survivor: he is a celebrity in Poland because he served as a Nazi slave laborer and wrote about his experiences building underground bunkers. It's not his survival that matters in Poland: instead, his words are mined by treasure hunters searching for Nazi gold and artifacts. To Kaiser's surprise, he is embraced by these people and not only interviews them, but visits some of the bunkers with them. Although he is irritated that they believe Abraham is his grandfather (and his attempts to correct that never work), he is also amazed at the number of people involved in treasure hunting and the joy they feel from their explorations, even when they are unsuccessful.

What also makes this memoir different is that Kaiser lacks the spiritual connection that many looking into their family history feel. In fact, he refers to himself as cranky because of the legal process, the people he meets and the number of errors he discovers when trying to verify family stories that turn out to be myths. What is the most difficult thing for him to deal with, though, is the way the treasure hunters view World War II. They revise what happened, ignore the suffering of those oppressed by the Nazis and de-emphasize the Jews who were brutally and systematically murdered. He notes that "the moral narrative of the war is thus subverted, inverted, perverted. The Nazi misdeeds are minimized, whitewashed; they become the protagonists, even the heroes. The real bad guys are the forces pulling the strings, the conspirators, the ones hoodwinking the world... And where you have behind-the-scenes powers you have, inevitably, the Jews." That's something Kaiser finds extremely dangerous.

"Plunder" is an unusual memoir in that its explorations take two different directions that only rarely intersect. Readers looking for closure – for answers and final determinations – will find themselves disappointed in how, like real life, that rarely occurs. However, it's what makes the work intriguing, particularly the way it also offers food for thought about how differently people view the past.

DEFINING RELIGION

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Many Jewish professionals believe that contemporary American Jews are uninterested in Judaism, as seen by their lack of engagement with traditional American Jewish organizations such as the synagogue and Jewish Federations. Rachel B. Gross, on the other hand, thinks these professionals are using an incorrect measurement to evaluate Jewish engagement. Rather, Gross, assistant professor in Jewish studies at San Francisco State University, posits that Jewish engagement now takes a different form. In her "Beyond the Synagogue: Jewish Nostalgia as Religious Practice" (New York University Press), she expands the definition of Jewish practice to feature a wider range of activities, including those that she labels Jewish nostalgia.

Gross sees religion as "best understood as meaningful relationships and practices, narratives, and emotions that create and support these relationships." That means religion does not have to include specific beliefs about God or the practice of rituals. What others see as Jewish culture, Gross sees as religion. She notes that this more inclusive definition of Judaism is more traditional, that it is only in the modern era that Jews divided activities between those defined as secular and those labeled religious. That means that engaging in Jewish culture activities was once also considered engaging in Judaism as a religion.

"Beyond the Synagogue" looks at four specific activities that Gross believes should be considered Jewish religious practices – practices she calls nostalgic. She defines nostalgia "as a way of finding one's place in the world and of laying claim to the past. The institutions of American Jewish nostalgia encourage their patrons to claim ancestral heritages in ways that are meaningful beyond simplistic divisions among religion, spirituality, and culture." These activities are researching Jewish genealogy; visiting historic synagogue sites; using children's books and dolls as tools to teach about the Jewish past; and taking part in the Jewish culinary revival.

◆ Researching Jewish genealogy: Gross believes Jewish genealogy serves as a way for people to honor and remember their ancestors, something she sees as a very Jewish activity. The fact that many people join genealogy groups that support their members and increase connections between them also makes the practice a religious one. For Gross, the

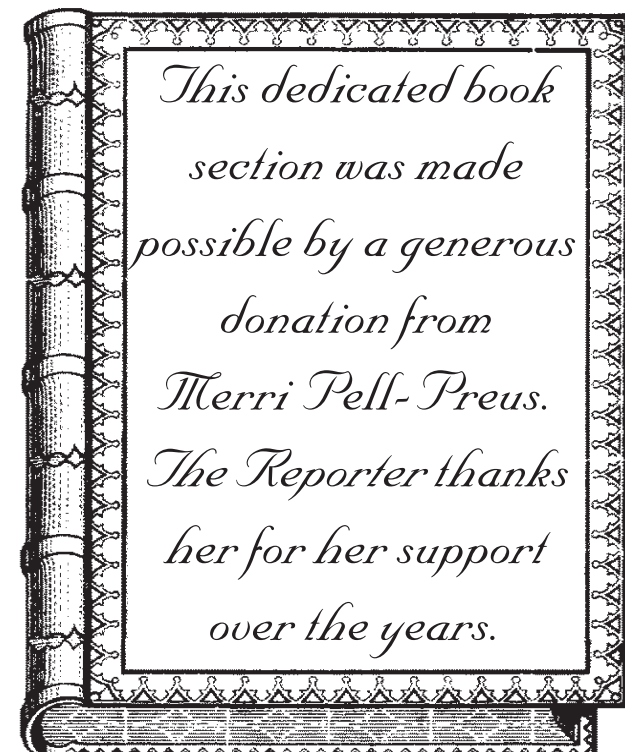
activity is "both broadly expansive and narrowly personal, as genealogists find their own ancestral legacies through which to lay claim to the past... The emotion connecting them to familial and communal histories is a means to claim ownership over the past and make it one's own."

◆ Visiting historic synagogue sites: Restoring old synagogues for use as heritage sites is another part of Gross' religion of nostalgia. She acknowledges there exists a conflict between a synagogue that is used as a museum and one used for ritual activities. The fact that many of these buildings are treated as symbolic religious artifacts – meaning they are restored with their ritual areas intact – creates a religious experience that allows visitors to imagine themselves standing in the footprints of their ancestors. Gross notes the buildings have that effect because "emotional engagement with the materials of nostalgia provides the basis for sacred relationships that cross spatial and temporal boundaries."

◆ Using children's books and dolls as teaching tools about the Jewish past: Parents help their children engage in nostalgia when they teach them about late 19th-early 20th century Jewish immigrants' lives. Gross writes about Jewish dolls that are part of the American Girl collection and the many children's books published about Jews living on the Lower East Side of New York. An increasing number of these are published in special editions by the PJ Library, which sends free books and music to Jewish children. These children, and their parents, are treating the elders in these books as if they were their grandparents, even though their experiences may have been several generations before their parents were born.

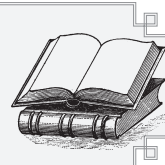
◆ Taking part in the Jewish culinary revival: Gross sees food as an example of shared religion, whether or not the food is kosher. She believes that "preparing and eating certain types of food places American Jews in a nostalgic network of sacred relationships with family members, friends, and coreligionists living and dead, historical and mythical." Her focus is on the revival of Ashkenazic food since other Jewish ethnic cuisines – Sephardic and Mizrahi – have not received the same treatment. It is the engagement with food and the Jewish past that makes this nostalgic in a religious manner.

See "Defining" on page 6





Celebrating Jewish Literature



The war and its reverberations

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

The never-ending number of novels about World War II and/or the Holocaust amazes me. It's so easy to get behind because numerous new ones are published each month. In fact, I decided not to ask for review copies of six recent works because I already had five novels for this review. While those books might have been wonderful, unless I want to review a World War II/Holocaust-themed novel every week, I have to make tough decisions about which books to ask for. That doesn't mean I won't be reviewing more novels on this topic. In fact, I already have another book with a similar theme on my pile, and am looking forward to other works that are scheduled to be published this year. However, as much as I hate to admit it, there are limits to the number of books even I can read and review.

"The Most Precious of Cargoes"

Sometimes the simplest narratives are the most powerful. That's certainly true of "The Most Precious of Cargoes: A Tale" by Jean-Claude Grumberg (HarperVia). In fewer than 120 pages, Grumberg captures an incredibly wide range of emotions.

The story reads like the fable: the illiterate, barren wife of a very poor woodcutter tries to survive an unnamed war, even as she longs for a child of her own. While searching the woods for what meager food she can find, the high point of her day is watching for the train that passes daily. Sometimes those on the train throw her notes she saves, but cannot read. One day, the train contains a Jewish father whose newborn twins are starving because his wife is no longer able to produce milk. Making a heartrending decision, he tosses one twin from the train in the hopes that at least that one might survive. That infant is found by the woodcutter's wife. The emotions that child creates in the lives of the woodcutter's family lead to a simple and heartbreakingly beautiful tale.

At the end of the novel, Frank Wayne, the book's translator, notes his fear that his English version would not be able to reproduce the poetry of the original French. While I have not read the French version, the American edition of "The Most Precious of Cargoes" promises to become a classic.

"Our Darkest Night"

"Our Darkest Night" by Jennifer Robson (William Morrow) focuses on a lesser known part of the Holocaust: what happened to the Jews in Italy. Although Venice has been affected by fascist anti-Jewish rules, Antonia Mazin doesn't feel that her life is in any real danger. However, that changes in 1942 when the German presence becomes

more prominent. In an attempt to save his daughter, Antonia's father asks for help from a former patient, a priest who lives in a small village in the countryside. Although she doesn't want to leave her parents, Antonia bends to her father's wishes – traveling with Nico Gerardi, a stranger recommended by the priest, to his family farm. However, in order to keep her safe, Nico says she must not only pretend to be Catholic, but his wife.

Life on the farm is not easy for Antonia, who was studying with her father to become a doctor. But Nico's family is warm and loving – except for one sister who takes an immediate dislike to her. But even the village is not safe from the Nazis, especially one who takes an active interest in Nico's life. The interaction between the two, and the fact that Nico is helping others escape the Nazis, places not only Antonia, but his whole family in danger.

"Our Darkest Night" is absorbing and the pages turned quickly. The last 100 pages were filled with such suspense it was impossible to put the book down. The characters were interesting, as was the development of the relationships between them. The ending felt wonderful, although it may strike readers as unrealistic. However, other parts of the work are based on events that occurred in a real town in Italy: The priest and parishioners of Mezzo Ciel have been honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles for their actions during the war.

"This Magnificent Dappled Sea"

Actions that manage to remain hidden for decades can suddenly come to light in unexpected ways. That's the idea behind "This Magnificent Dappled Sea" by David Biro (Lake Union Publishing). At first, the novel's two plots seem to have nothing in common: in 1990s Italy, 9-year-old Catholic Luca Taviano is unable to shake a cold. Unfortunately, that simple illness is not the real problem: he has leukemia. A bone marrow match is difficult to find: his father, who was adopted by the grandparents with whom he lives, died in a car accident. His late mother's family, who want nothing to do with him, are also not matches.

The second story, which takes place in Brooklyn, tells of Joseph Neiman, a pulpit rabbi who is suffering a crisis of faith. He finds himself falling into a dark hole of depression, not helped by the fact he seems to be unable to help his teenage son, who has been accused of theft. When a congregant's daughter is diagnosed with leukemia, Neiman arranges for a bone marrow fair to take place. Imagine the surprise on both sides of the Atlantic when a Jewish match appears for a Catholic Italian child. What it means is that secrets from World War II may have to be revealed

in order to save Luca's life.

"This Magnificent Dappled Sea" is less a World War II story than one showing how the results of a simple action can reverberate for decades. The novel's many characters are well drawn, particularly Luca's grandfather and his self-punishing way of dealing with secrets. The ending is satisfying in that it feels realistic, especially when showing how Luca manages to forge a compromise between his conflicting heritages.

"The Plum Trees"

Some novels try to accomplish too many things. That's true for "The Plum Trees" by Victoria Shorr (W. W. Norton and Company). The contemporary story – that of Consie who learns that her Great-Uncle Hermann may have survived the Holocaust – gets lost and as a result its conclusion feels unsatisfactory. Where the novel does succeed is in its portrayal of Magda, Hermann's daughter, and her description of life before and during World War II, including her time in a concentration camp and a death march at the end of the war.

The novel also succeeds in showing why Hermann's family delayed leaving their home. Life changed slowly enough to make them believe they would be fine – until it was too late. Hermann's struggle to understand what the Nazis really felt about Jews – which serves as a betrayal of his humanist beliefs in the goodness of mankind – is particularly effective, as are Consie's later struggles to understand what occurred in Europe. She reads about the nature of evil and ponders what philosophers and political scientists, including Hannah Arendt, thought and wrote about that time.

Unfortunately, while all this is makes for interesting reading, the book doesn't work as a novel. The original impetus for the story – whether or not Hermann survives the war – gets lost in the many other layers of the story. However, if readers are looking for insight into how a Jewish family felt about their lives in Europe before the war – the love of their home, the land they lived on and the culture to which they were so attached – "The Plum Trees" does a wonderful job portraying that, along with a graphic portrait of the horror of the Holocaust.

"Send for Me"

There are writers who demand a great deal from their readers. Take, for example, "Send for Me" by Lauren Fox (Alfred A. Knopf). Her novel feels disjointed, slipping back and forth between characters and different time periods without labels to orient readers. That makes it far too easy to confuse the characters of four generations of women whose interactions are both demanding and loving.

Parts of the novel take place in Germany: Klara and her daughter, Annelise, clash over everyday chores and choices. Their relationship becomes less fraught when Annelise marries and has a daughter of her own. However, life in Germany has become dangerous and the families look to move to the United States. Unfortunately, only Annelise, her husband and daughter, Ruth, can get visas. With promises to find a way to bring her parents to the United States, Annelise and her family emigrate. Interspersed with this story is that of Clare, Ruth's daughter, who seems unable to settle into adult life. When she falls in love with someone British, Ruth worries how that will affect her relationship to her mother.

Readers are left to decide why Ruth and Clare react as they do, particularly in relationship to their mothers. Fox notes that her novel is based on family letters. While the plot and characters are fictional, excerpts from the letters – which are quoted between chapters – are affecting as they portray the feeling of a woman who longs to see her daughter. While "Send for Me" may not be a complete success as a novel, it does capture the essence of love and loss, in addition to showing how those emotions can influence several generations of a family.

Religion, money and hate

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Are houses of worship built to celebrate the glory of God or the glory of humans? That question would not have been asked of synagogues in medieval Europe because of the many restrictions limiting the size and height of those buildings. Other laws restricted where Jews could live and which occupations they could hold. It might therefore seem strange to read a review of a novel called "Cathedral" (Europa Editions) in a Jewish newspaper, but Ben Hopkins' brilliant and panoramic look at 12th-13th century Hagenburg (in an area of the Rhineland that was part of the Holy Roman Empire) not only speaks to Christian readers, but to Jewish ones.

The 600-page novel contains a wide cast of characters and their lives overlap in unexpected ways. Always in the background is the cathedral that is being built – one so awe-inspiring that it will rival the glory of those being constructed in Paris. Reaction to the building varies: it brings tears to the eyes of shepherd Rettich Schaffer because, even though only partially finished, it is the most beautiful thing he has ever seen. Eugenius von Zabern, a priest who is also the bishop's treasurer, has no doubt the building will be impressive if ever completed, but mostly thinks about the expense since he is in charge of raising funds to continue its construction. Yudel Ben Yitzhak Rosheimer, the nephew of the city's best known Jewish moneylender, sees the cathedral as an abomination, a monstrosity that is like a "demon squatting on the idolatrous earth." These are only a few of the 15 characters who live in the shadow of the cathedral.

A great deal of the plot centers on the competition between the merchant class and the church as to who will control the city's resources. The artisans and merchants gather into guilds to consolidate their power – although Jewish artisans were not allowed to join and were then no longer able to ply their trades. The church does not want to cede to any power to what it sees as an upstart class, even when its power is threatened by the demands of the city's increasingly larger population, as those from the countryside flock to the city for work. Both clergy and merchants try to tie the aristocracy to their cause. That landed class looks to its own desires, sometimes siding with the clergy and other times with the guilds. The changing fortunes of

each side shows the move from clerical power to secular power – a struggle for not only the money, but the souls and beliefs of all who live in the city.

Of interest to Jewish readers will be the ways the Jewish population of the city survives in this hostile atmosphere. At best, the Jews were tolerated within the city's border. Judaism was seen as a lesser religion, as shown by the statues that will decorate the cathedral. The statue portraying Judaism shows a dejected woman: "Her eyes are blindfolded, her mouth is drawn down in sadness. Her right hand carries a broken spear, from her left hand, a stone tablet is falling. She is the Old Covenant, she is the Synagogue. Blinded, broken, in darkness, unaccepting of the Truth and the Light." The statue symbolizing Christianity, on the other hand, shows a woman whose "eyes are open, her richly curled hair carries a Crown. Her seeing eyes stare into a bright future."

Jewish and Christian lives did overlap, especially when a Christian was low on funds. Since there are no banks and Christians were forbidden by the church to lend money with interest, many Jews served as moneylenders. That was one of the few occupations open to them, especially after the formation of the guilds, which made it impossible for Jewish artisans to sell to anyone other than fellow Jews. Yet, dealings with the Church often went through middlemen, Christians working for Jews who pretended to handle the transactions so they would be sanctioned by the Church. This time period was also the beginning of Christian attacks against the Talmud, which led to its burning in some areas of Europe, along with the additional persecution of the Jewish community.

Although "Cathedral" contains a large number of characters and a variety of interweaving plots, it was surprisingly easy to read. All of the characters are complex and fascinating people whose interactions will intrigue readers. What was surprising is how readers will come to care about them, even those they disliked at first. Other characters, who at first seemed pure of heart, will disappoint as they become corrupted by power and money. The ending ties the different strands of the novel together in a satisfying and meaningful way, showing the power of simple faith, no matter in which religious tradition it is celebrated.

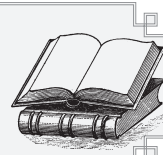
DEFINING Continued from page 5

According to Gross, the activities create greater connections as those who research Jewish genealogy visit historic synagogues and buy Jewish books to read to their children and grandchildren. Many of them may also visit a Jewish restaurant – not a kosher one, but one that claims to serve Jewish food reminiscent of what their ancestors ate.

"Beyond the Synagogue" expands the definition of religion to include a variety of activities. Based on her definition, the activities Gross describes can be considered religious practice. However, even if they accept her definition, scholars and readers will debate whether these activities are truly Jewish. Another question to consider is whether the children of those who practice nostalgic Judaism will continue to identify as Jewish. But those who support Gross' theory might suggest that each generation discovers or creates its own Jewish practices. The debate is an interesting one and anyone who thinks seriously about contemporary Judaism may want to read "Beyond the Synagogue."



Celebrating Jewish Literature



Graphic works for all ages

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

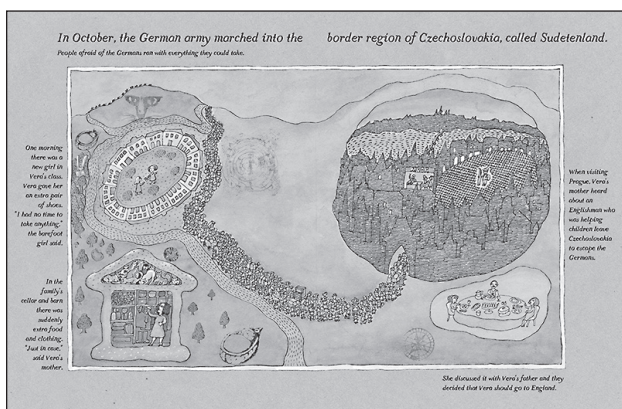
When a writer offers long descriptions of people and places, my mind rarely forms a visual image from the text. Instead those words create an emotional mood – one that may not be completely faithful to the author’s intent. That’s one reason I enjoy books with drawings or photographs: the pictures offer me a different way to understand the story, letting me experience how the author/artist visualizes the characters and situations. This review features works for all ages that combine text and images to enhance the readers’ enjoyment.

For readers grades one-four

A simple combination of words and pictures can create a very moving experience. That will be true for adults who read “Nicky and Vera: A Quiet Hero of the Holocaust and the Children He Rescued” by Peter Sis (Norton Young Readers). The reason? Adults know what happened to most of the children whom Nicholas Winton was unable to save. This picture book tells the story of Winton, who seems an unlikely savior: a young man interested in fencing and skiing. The only reason he traveled to Prague in 1938 was because a friend suggested that destination in place of the planned skiing vacation. Winton realized how dangerous the Nazis were and arranged for 699 children under the age of 17 to travel to safety in England before World War II began.

Vera Gissling’s story is intertwined with Winton’s. In 1938, the 10-year-old Vera was living with her family in a small town near Prague. When the German army marched into their country, Vera’s mother managed to find a spot for her daughter on one of the trains to England. When Vera returned after the war, none of her family remained and she moved permanently to England. Years passed and Winton’s wife discovered the secret of what he had accomplished, something he never mentioned. The end result is that Winton is honored by those who survived due to his efforts. Sis quotes Winton as saying, “I was not a hero... I did not face danger, as real heroes do. I only saw what needed to be done.”

“Nicky and Vera” is an excellent way to introduce children to World War II and the people who quietly tried to help. Parents would do well, though, to discuss the material with their children since those unfamiliar with the war may have many questions. Adults will appreciate the author’s notes offered at the end of the book, which give more details about Winton. The drawings create the appropriate mood and readers will find themselves pondering the additional layers of meaning they bring to the tale.



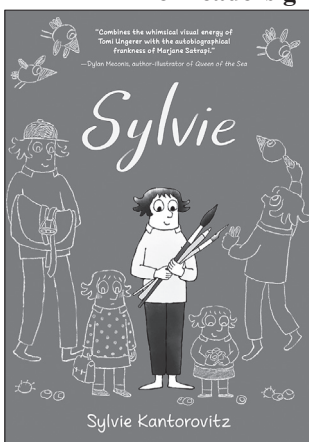
A page from “Nicky and Vera” by Peter Sis

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Warning: If you prefer to view Israel through rose-colored glasses, then you should skip this review of Rebecca Sacks’ novel “City of a Thousand Gates” (Harper). If you’re hoping that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be easily resolved, you should think twice before opening its pages since it will leave you in despair. The events that occur just before the novel opens are horrific: the brutal stabbing of a 14-year-old Israeli girl by a Palestinian and the retaliation beating by a group of Israeli teenagers that leaves a 14-year-old Palestinian boy in a coma. The reactions to these events – the very different reactions – ripple through the characters’ lives. What is unusual, though, is how a book focusing on the political reality of the situation is also so intensely personal – offering intimate details about the characters’ mundane day-to-day lives.

“City of a Thousand Gates” follows numerous characters whose lives are impacted by the murder and the beating. For example, Hamid enters Israel illegally so he can earn money for college. The Israeli who hires him to install air conditioners is less concerned with politics than cheap labor. Hamid earns far more than he could working in the territories, but also faces danger whether he’s sneaking

For readers grades four-seven



The cover of *Sylvie* Kantorovitz’s graphic memoir

principal. Sylvie was born in Morocco and is Jewish. The questions she gets asked (did they kill Christ, do they eat Christian babies) would sound ridiculous if her fellow students weren’t serious about their accusations. However, most of the memoir focuses on Sylvie’s daily life: the problems between her mother and brother, Alibert; the addition of two younger siblings whom Sylvie helps take care of; the fights between her parents; and the increasing difficulty of schoolwork as Sylvie must decide on her course of study. Her real love is drawing, which unfortunately must take second place to schoolwork and chores.

Kantorovitz’s drawings of Sylvie and her surroundings are delightful. Sylvie’s personality shines through the deceptively simple figures. While the memoir is aimed at young readers, older ones will also enjoy spending time with this sweet, wonderful young woman.

For readers grades seven-nine

Not everyone who lived in Germany during the 1930s and ‘40s supported the Nazi cause. Some risked their lives to protest Hitler and his cronies. That was true of the university students who formed the White Rose, which published and distributed leaflets against Hitler’s policies. Their story is told as a graphic novel in Andrea Grosso Ciponte’s “Freiheit! The White Rose Graphic Novel” (Plough Publishing Company).

The graphic novel feels cinematic in the way it moves between scenes, highlighting what both the White Rose was doing and the actions of Nazi leaders. These sections – many of which also juxtapose the philosophical ideas of the members of the White Rose and the propaganda espoused by the Nazis – create a mood that feels appropriate to the action. That’s also true of the dark, almost deary drawings that portray a story without a happy ending.

“Freiheit!” (which means liberty or political freedom) highlights the actions of a group that should be better known. The work concludes with an English translation of the leaflets the members of the White Rose distributed for those who better want to understand their philosophy. Parts of “Freiheit!” can be disturbing so parents may want to also read Ciponte’s work in order to discuss it with their teenagers.

For those interested in the biblical text

Dikla Laor’s beautiful photographs will be the first thing to catch readers’ eyes after they open “Women in the Bible in the Golan Heights.” The vivid and colorful photos have a painting-like feel and offer visual interpretations of a biblical text. Also included are several verses about

Sylvie Kantorovitz’s “Sylvie” (Waker Books) is a charming, clever graphic memoir about a young girl looking to find her place in the world. The author manages to capture the way Sylvie comes to understand her own needs, while also realizing the ways her parents – particularly her mother – are trying to mold and influence her.

Sylvie doesn’t feel completely comfortable with her French classmates. It’s not just that they live at the school where her father is a



A page from Andrea Grosso Ciponte’s “Freiheit!”

the women featured and short rabbinic commentary to highlight an aspect of the women’s stories. But it is the photos themselves that will speak to readers.

For example, the longing on Lot’s wife’s face is palpable as she glances back for one last look at the daughters she’s left behind in Sodom. The aged Sarah radiates great contentment when sitting in a field where a young Isaac is playing. The photo of Leah and Rachel asks readers to ponder which woman is the beloved one, while noting how their hands reach for each other, even as they cannot look each other in the eye. The mixed feelings Rahab experiences when her city is about to be conquered by Joshua are apparent in the way she holds herself. The moving portrayal of Jephthah’s daughter shows the many emotions she must have experienced while waiting to be sacrificed.

What makes the photos so impressive is not just the models, but the way the women are framed; they show just how beautiful are the hills and valleys of the Golan Heights. See “Graphic” on page 8



“Jochebed” from “Women in the Bible in the Golan Heights” by Dikla Laor

Daily life and political despair

across the border or entering through Israeli checkpoints. Ori, a 19-year-old who lives in a settlement, guards one of those checkpoints. His settlement was the home of the murdered girl, and his mother, Miriam, fears for his safety and worries that he has abandoned their Orthodox faith.

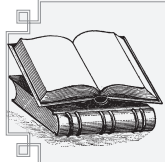
The Israeli Ido and his American-born wife Emily focus on their newborn baby and their careers, while trying to ignore their very different feelings about the Israeli army and the settlements. Samar Farha, one of Hamid’s professors, know that while academic circles respect her because of her Ph.D., some members of her family treat her as inferior because she’s unmarried and has no children. Vera, a German freelance journalist hoping to make a name for herself, sympathizes with the Palestinian cause, while longing for Amir, a professional Israeli soccer player who rarely acknowledges her text messages. This leaves her torn between her professional desires and her almost overwhelming sexual feelings. And these are only a few of the more than 25 people listed in the opening cast of characters.

The despair and fear felt by each side is palpable. Miriam wonders about the purpose behind the settlement where she lives if Ori no longer practices his faith: “What is the point of all the locked doors and the locked windows, the walls

and the barbed wire, the grief, the rocks, the knives, and all the ways there are to die in these territories? These are the sacrifices, this is the labor – it is the work of a whole life to keep the commandments, to love and tend this land, the only inheritance that matters.” The Palestinians see Israelis settling in land that does not belong to them – filling swimming pools with clean water, while Palestinian homes are lucky to have running water. The callous treatment they receive at checkpoints and the ability of the Israeli army to enter their villages and search their homes makes most of them hate those who enforce these rules. Underlying this is fear they will be erased from the land their ancestors cultivated, that the Israelis won’t stop until they disappear.

“City of a Thousand Gates” is not a pleasant book to read. The explicit sexual scenes jarred until it became clear that the author was showing how fear and pain can live side-by-side with routine activities and everyday desires. The feelings of hate and destruction on both sides may leave readers squirming in their seats. Even relatively simple things – like the Arabic curse words used by Israeli soldiers whose translation turned out to be pornographic – were usually far more complex than one might imagine. “City of a Thousand Gates” is an impressive, if unlikeable, work.

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Celebrating Jewish Literature



A synagogue and a frozen yogurt shop

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

What possible connections could there be between a synagogue and a frozen yogurt shop? They both serve as buildings that offer meaningful lessons, or at least they do in two recent novels: “The Rabbi Who Prayed with Fire: A Rabbi Vivian Mystery” by Rachel Sharona Lewis (Ladiesladies Press) and “Milk Fed” by Melissa Broder (Scribner). I’m not certain how the two main characters of these works would interact: Rabbi Vivian might be less than impressed with Broder’s heroine Rachel’s obsession with calories, while Rachel might scoff at Vivian’s social organizing. Fortunately for readers, we can enjoy both heroines without worrying whether they would clash.

Rabbi Vivian is a wonderful character: she’s a young, new rabbi who wants her congregation to join interfaith efforts and make their city a better place. It’s the perfect time for politics: a special mayoral election is taking place shortly and affordable housing is one of the main issues. The extra land the synagogue owns would be perfect for that type of housing, although not all members of the congregation agree. Joseph Glass, the senior rabbi, wants to do the right thing, but after years of being battered by so many different opinions, it’s difficult for him to decide

the best way to use the land. Good intentions then go awry and Vivian finds herself at odds with a woman to whom she is attracted. Will politics ruin not only her professional life, but her social one?

“The Rabbi Who Prayed with Fire” made for quick and easy reading. I guessed “whodunnit” and why, but that didn’t spoil the fun. In fact, I was pleased that I spotted the clues as early as I did. Anyone who has been on a synagogue board will note how Lewis captures the give and take of those meetings, which can seem long and tedious. Young rabbis will appreciate the problems Vivian faces while trying to balance her personal and professional lives. My favorite lines in the book were Vivian’s thoughts about going to a dance club after she was ordained: she visualizes “three bearded old men staring her down with disdainful eyes... It was soon after her ordination that the panel of rabbis first appeared to her in her favorite dance spot in Brooklyn, sitting on bar stools, drinking wine from the kiddish cups and shaking their heads in disapproval.” That is a wonderful image. Fellow readers will join me in hoping this is the first in a series.

While Vivian feels like a far more mature character than Rachel, the heroine of “Milk Fed,” it’s unlikely she

knows the exact number of calories she consumes in a given day. That’s the central fact of Rachel’s life, though. Rachel’s days revolve around food, although her focus is on limiting what she eats. A chubby child, her mother continually tried to control everything and anything that went into her mouth. Rachel calls her mother “the high priestess of food, the religion of our household: *abstain, abstain, abstain.*” Rachel felt the most Jewish as a child when she visited her grandparents, who, she says, were “deeply obsessed with Jewish food,” noting they “would drive me to New York and take me on a tour of all the old culinary haunts of our tribe.” Now that Rachel is slim and living in Los Angeles, she counts calories, is rigid about what and when she eats and tucks nicotine gum into jaw 24 hours a day to help limit her appetite.

Rachel does allow herself to indulge in a small amount of frozen yogurt each day. She has trained the counter person to stop the flow of yogurt when it reaches the lip of the cup. But one day, when Rachel walks into the shop, she finds a different person behind the counter: the Orthodox Miriam. Miriam seems the opposite of Rachel: fat, religious and embracing of food and the joy of family. When Miriam fills her cup to overflowing, Rachel has difficulty getting rid of the excess yogurt. When Miriam gives her a yogurt with all the toppings she normally refuses, Rachel is smitten not only with the food, but with Miriam. The descriptions of food that follow are the most erotic I’ve ever read and the descriptions of what Rachel wants to do with Miriam aren’t far behind. But there’s a problem. Miriam invites Rachel to celebrate Shabbat at her parents’ home, where Miriam lives, and the family embraces Rachel. Yet, if the two women start an affair, will Miriam’s family, to whom Miriam is greatly attached, ever accept it?

While this description might make “Milk Fed” sound very serious, Broder leavens the drama with a great deal of humor. Although in different hands Rachel might have come across as unlikeable, she’s not: readers will sympathize with her and the problems she faces.

Being a Jewish teenager

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

For some teenagers, being Jewish plays a major role in their lives. For others, it’s a minor part of their identity, at least until they come face-to-face with antisemitism. Seeing their lives reflected in the novels they read, however, is something both they and their parents can appreciate.

“The Violin Players”

I wish I could say that the reprint of “The Violin Players” by Eileen Bluestone Sherman (The Jewish Publication Society) was out of date, but unfortunately its message is as relevant today as when the novel was first published in the 1990s. It may seem strange to read about a teenager who is not glued to her cell phone, but that’s true of Melissa Jensen who moves from New York City to the Midwest when her father accepts a position at a college there. She could have stayed with her grandparents, but this secular Jew did not want to bend to the rules of their Orthodox practice.

Although Melissa expects to hate her new school, she finds herself befriended by the cool kids and discovers that the school orchestra is far more professional than she expect-

ed. Even better, she has a chance for the lead in the school play. She also finds herself attracted to Daniel Goodman, another violinist in the orchestra who is an extraordinary musician. Life seems perfect until antisemitism raises its ugly head. No one suspects that Melissa is Jewish so, when a bigoted, popular classmate makes ugly comments about Jews, no one is willing to tell him to stop – including Melissa. When things start to escalate and Daniel’s best friend is targeted, Melissa must decide whether to embrace her heritage and risk censure, or fight prejudice.

“The Violin Players” is well done and Melissa is an engaging character. The novel contains enough suspense for the pages to turn quickly. Although it teaches a lesson, it’s never preachy and Melissa’s discoveries feel natural and real. The novel will generate discussion in a classroom setting or in a teen book club. It can also be used as a starting point for parents to talk with their teenagers about contemporary antisemitism.

“It’s My Party and I Don’t Want to Go”

Unlike Melissa, Ellie Katz, the narrator of “It’s My Party and I Don’t Want to Go” (Scholastic Press) loves being Jewish. It’s speaking or standing before large groups of people that scares her. After she has a panic attack during her older sister’s bat mitzvah party, Ellie decides she can’t have the same type of event. However, when the time comes to plan her own bat mitzvah, Ellie doesn’t want to disappoint her parents who are planning a big party. She decides the only way she can prevent the large ceremony and party from happening is sabotage. With the aid of her only friend, Zoe, she makes plans to derail the event that include e-mail hacking, food fights and strange requests to the DJ. However, Ellie discovers that each action has unintended results and those results include hurting the people she loves the best.

“It’s My Party and I Don’t Want to Go” is laugh out loud funny at times and Ellie is a delightful character. The issue of panic attacks is taken seriously over the course of the book, which also makes some good points about the natural self-absorption of teenagers. While it might sound strange, the obituaries Ellie mentally writes for herself when facing her fears are the best parts of the novel. This excellent work can help teens who have performance fears or are very shy: it never talks down to them or pretends their feelings aren’t real.

“The Castle School (for Troubled Girls)”

Being Jewish only plays a minor role in Alyssa Sheinmel’s “The Castle School (for Troubled Girls)” (Sourcebooks). It’s the forbidden tattoo Moira Dreyfuss gets that’s the final straw for the parents of this troubled teen. Combined with her skipping school and sneaking out of the house at night, Moira’s parents decide she should attend a special school, one that can help her come to terms with the death of her best friend, and only, friend Nathan. Moira feels she’s being punished by being sent away, something she believes she deserves, but for reasons her parents don’t suspect.

Moira takes an instant dislike to the school and the creepy Dr. Prince who runs it. She believes something sinister is happening behind the scenes, but also finds herself bonding with her fellow students, many of whom she’s surprised to learn want to be there. Although Moira is the novel’s narrator, each student has her own chapter, which describes what brought them to the school – something that adds depth to the narrative.

The plot’s twists and turns are entertaining and surprising – for both Moira and the reader. The novel is also extremely moving: I found myself crying on and off during the last 100 pages, a sure sign that Moira and her friends felt real and alive.

Book talks

◆ The Center for Jewish History will offer the virtual program “Bugsy Siegel: The Dark Side of the American Dream,” featuring author Michael Shnayerson, on Monday, April 26, at 4 pm. For more information or to register, visit <https://programs.cjh.org/event/bugsy-siegel-2021-04-26>.

◆ Jewish Women’s Archive will hold April Quarantine(ish) Book Talks on Thursdays: April 15, Jessica Cohen, translator of “And the Bride Closed the Door,” on the art and politics of literary translation; April 22, event in honor of National Poetry Month, with poets Joy Ladin, Shara McCallum and Lesléa Newman; and April 29, Brandy Colbert, author of “Little & Lion,” on a Black Jewish teen’s exploration of identity. All sessions will be held at 8 pm. To sign up for the series, visit <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/8uG8YGs/QBC>.

◆ Centro Primo Levi New York will hold the virtual talk “Surviving the Ghetto” on Monday, April 19, at 11:30 am. Serena Di Nepi will discuss her book “Surviving the Ghetto,” which traces the history of the birth of the ghetto in 16th-century Rome. For more information or to register, visit https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_TTtOSR-bT46dVc--t4gQ2w.

◆ The Jewish Week will hold the virtual talk “The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler’s Ghettos” on Tuesday, April 20, at 1 pm. Judy Batalion will speak about her book “The Light of Days” about a cadre of Jewish women in Poland who helped transform the Jewish youth groups into resistance cells to fight the Nazis. For more information or to register, visit <https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/event/the-light-of-days-the-untold-story-of-women-resistance-fighters-in-hitlers-ghettos/>.

◆ My Jewish Learning has started the Great Jewish Book Club, which will feature Jewish novels from the past century. The first meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 13, at noon. The book for April will be “Bread Givers” by Anzia Yezierska, which explores the pushcart and tenements of the 1920s Lower East Side through the eyes of a young Jewish-American immigrant. For more information or to register, visit www.myjewishlearning.com/the-hub/explore-100-years-of-great-jewish-literature-with-my-jewish-learning/.

◆ The Skirball Culture Center will hold an evening with biographer Blake Bailey where he will talk about his newest work, “Philip Roth: The Biography.” The event will talk place on Tuesday, April 13, at 8 pm. For more information or to register, visit www.skirball.org/programs/words-and-ideas/blake-bailey-conversation-peter-sagal.

Graphic Continued from page 7

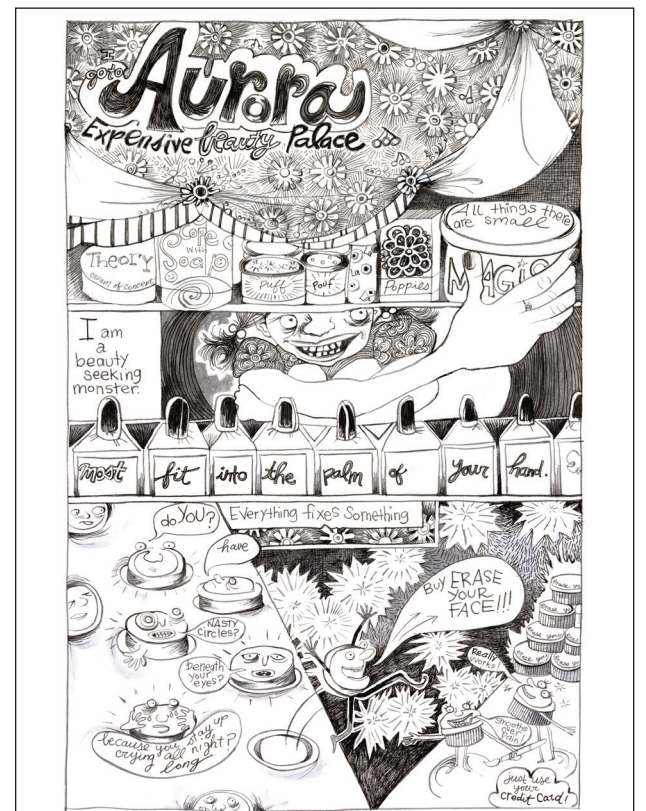
The 44 photos offer a different way to view and interpret the biblical text, and make clear the photographer’s love of the disputed area in which she lives.

For mature readers

Some memoirs are told in a straight forward, linear form. Others, like Shira Spector’s “Red Rock Baby Candy” (Fantagraphics), are a psychedelic journey into the author/artist’s psyche. The non-linear story jumps around in time and place, yet still manages to portray Spector’s feelings about her life, the death of her father and her attempts to become pregnant.

No two pages in this work feel alike: some tell a traditional story with easy to read dialogue and commentary. On others, the drawings and text circle each other – asking the reader to search for the written word. The memoir also contains very explicit sexual content that might make some readers uncomfortable. However, Spector is to be applauded for how bravely and openly she discusses her hopes and fears.

“Red Rock Baby Candy” is not for everyone because Spector demands attention and the willingness to search for the meaning of her drawings. This graphic roller coaster ride will, however, reward those readers with its emphatic embrace of life.



A page from “Red Rock Baby Candy” by Shira Spector

TC to host the community a musical program about Israel for 3-6-year-olds and their families

By Reporter staff

Temple Concord will host a musical program about Israel for 3-6-year-olds and their families featuring award-winning musician and early childhood music educator Ellen Allard on Sunday, April 11, at 11:30 am. The Zoom program will be open to the community and is sponsored by a community grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton. Other smaller Jewish communities and congregations will also be joining the program. The Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86160170996?pwd=QWEwb3A1anJEVmd3c1ZiUW1GbTIXdz09>, meeting ID 861 6017 0996, passcode 291984. For more information, contact Temple Concord at TempleConcordbinghamton@gmail.com or 723-7355.

"It was wonderful to see our children engaged with Ellen and her puppet ZigZag joining in the songs and hand motions

in the first program she did for us. I'm looking forward to the second one," said Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell, spiritual leader of Temple Concord. "I'm grateful we could make it possible for our Jewish community to be able to come together to join in her music and learn about Passover. I look forward to her next program, which will focus on Israel."

According to the Reform Judaism website, "Ellen Allard is synonymous with the very best in children's music. She is a multi-award winning children's recording artist, composer, performer and early childhood music educator, drawing on a rich tradition of musical experiences in presenting her lively and captivating concerts, keynote presentations and workshops for family audiences and educational conferences across the country."

Allard has won several Children's Web awards for her work, including the

albums "Sing it! Say it! Stamp it! Sway it! vol. 1," "Sing it! Say it! Stamp it! Sway it! vol. 3," "Sing Shalom: Songs for the Jewish Holidays" and "Good Kid." Her music has been recorded by other artists and her compositions have been used in schools, synagogues and summer camps. It is also taught to cantorial students attending Hebrew Union College's Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music in New York City and the Hebrew College in Newton, MA. In addition, it is also



Ellen Allard (Photo courtesy of Ellen Allard)

taught to students, rabbis, cantors, educators and performers throughout the country.

"I'm so pleased that the first of our community grants is going to programs for young children in our community," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "I think Ellen's second program will be a great way to introduce them to Israel."

For more information about Allard, visit her website at <https://ellenallard.com> or view her YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Ellen+Allard.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Bahrain appoints its first-ever ambassador to Israel

Bahrain has announced its appointment of the country's first-ever ambassador to Israel, following the establishment of formal relations in September as part of the Abraham Accords. Khalid Al Jalahma will head the Gulf country's diplomatic mission to Israel, the state news agency BNA reported on March 30. Al Jalahma serves as director of operations at Bahrain's Foreign Ministry and was previously deputy chief of mission at Bahrain's embassy to the United States from 2009 to 2013. Israel said the appointment was approved after a call between Bahraini Foreign Minister Abd al-Latif al-Ziani and his Israeli counterpart Gabi Ashkenazi on March 28. "The decision of the Bahraini government to appoint an ambassador to Israel is another important step in the implementation of the peace agreement and of the strengthening of ties between the two countries," Ashkenazi told al-Ziani, according to the Israeli foreign ministry. "In the coming weeks, a team from Bahrain will arrive in Israel to make the necessary arrangements," the statement added.

Germany provides \$13.5 million to help Holocaust survivors get vaccinated

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (or Claims Conference) announced on March 24 the establishment of a new \$13.5 million program, funded by the German government, to help Holocaust survivors get access to coronavirus vaccinations. The new Holocaust Survivor Vaccine Assistance Program is a one-time initiative to offer COVID-19 protection for survivors worldwide. Its \$13.5 million in funding will be dispersed by the Claims Conference through its existing network of more than 300 partner organizations around the world. The funds will be used to cover costs such as the organization of vaccination appointments, transportation to and from appointments, and the coordination of necessary follow-up care and counseling for Holocaust survivors before, during and after inoculation. There are currently more than 340,000 Holocaust survivors living around the world.

Israeli matzah tower breaks Guinness World Record

(Israel Hayom via JNS) - Residents of the Azrieli Palace assisted-living facility in Modi'in broke a world record the week of March 24 by building a matzah and chocolate spread tower 5.4 meters (17.7 feet) high. Two hundred residents took turns to build the tower, using matzah and the HaShachar Ha'ole chocolate spread, a classic Israeli Passover treat. The tower consisted of 950 matzahs and weighed 10 kilos (22 pounds). After the record was confirmed by Guinness World Records, Gili, the local chef, turned the tower into chocolate balls.

Craft Continued from page 1

materials, as well as mailing costs if the materials need to be mailed to them.

Reservations can be made by contacting Tammy Kunsman, Temple Israel's secretary, at 723-7461 or titammy@stny.twcbc.com. Once registered, participants will need to pick up their packets at Temple Israel, 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal, on Friday, April 23, or Monday, April 26, between 9am and 2:30 pm. By including their e-mail address when making their reservation, participants will be sent the Zoom meeting ID for logging in to the event.

Each packet will include an explanation of English paper piecing; pre-cut shapes that will already be ironed onto fabric so that participants can more easily complete the project; batting material; a "Big Eye" embroidery needle designed for batting; squares of fabric for the background and back of the coaster; and a roll of thread which should glide through the fabric. Participants will need to have on hand scissors that cut cotton fabric; a glue stick; a 6- or 12-inch ruler; a pencil; an iron; and an ironing surface.

Associated with the quilting tradition, English paper piecing has been called a historically significant handicraft, with the earliest known English paper piecing quilts dating back to the 18th century in England.

EPP first came to the U.S. in 1807. This traditional quilting style makes use of paper templates that are the exact shape and size needed to create an interconnected pattern without any gaps or overlaps. In EPP, the fabric is wrapped around the paper, then basted and glued, thus holding the fabric to its shape. Finally the fabric-covered shapes are whip-stitched together.

A former kindergarten-12th grade visual arts teacher in the public schools, Rosenberg has taught continuing education art classes at SUNY Broome and was an outreach educator for the Institute for Asia and Asian Diasporas, and the Confucius Institute of Chinese Opera at Binghamton University. Rosenberg volunteers her talents at Temple Israel from graphics to centerpiece design. "My current passion is quilting," Rosenberg says, "and I have Temple Israel member and friend Sandy Paston to thank for teaching me the art of English paper piecing. The Kiddush cup coaster for Shabbat project combines a traditional technique with a modern design. As participants will see, there's something so lovely about the feel of hand stitching - it brings a sense of peace. Our hope is that this project will remind us of the bond we all share every time we place our Kiddush cup on our beautiful handmade coaster."



Car buying tips

(NAPSI) - The U.S. auto industry estimates about 17 million cars are bought in the United States every year. If you're hoping - or just dreaming - of buying one of them anytime soon, there are a few suggestions from Kia, www.kia.com, that can make car shopping a better experience for you.

1. Be aware of book value. Look up the current market value of any car you're thinking of getting in a pricing guide such as Edmunds.com or KBB.com.

2. Get a pre-approved car loan and tell the salesperson you're a cash buyer. That will keep the up-selling down and help you stay within your budget.

3. Take a test drive. Make sure it's a vehicle you'll be comfortable in.

4. Before visiting the lot, visit the Internet. Check out the company's website. There may be specials, coupons or discounts it will pay you to know about. Also, look up the car manufacturer's website to learn a lot about their cars, trucks and more.

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Shemini: paving the way!

RABBI BARUCH BINYAMIN HAKOHEN MELMAN, TEMPLE ISRAEL OF THE POCONOS, STROUDSBURG, PA

Nadav and Avihu, Aaron's sons, brought a "strange fire" as an offering. Their souls were then consumed in the process. Can we argue in their favor? Does their case have any merit or justification? Can we give them any benefit of the doubt, or must we roundly condemn them for "not following the rules"?

Many traditional commentaries have sought to explain the grievous sins of Nadav and Avihu in their bringing a "strange fire offering" to justify God's taking of their souls. Layers of *midrashic* emphasis serve to vilify their intentions. Now, while no one should advocate breaking

with protocol, maybe it was deeper than all that.

On a surface level, they had indeed seemed to have broken with the rules, but how exactly, it doesn't really say. The text only hints that they possibly were intoxicated, as the **See "Shemini" on page 11**

Congregational Notes

Temple Concord

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

All services and programs are online only. Friday night Shabbat services will start at 7:30 pm in February. There are also new Zoom links for Torah study and "Havdalah with a Bonus."

Friday, April 9: 7:30 pm, Shabbat services with Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell and Jason Flatt on Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81957095574?pwd=SGRTU2lrZFMzMzZmZk1dncyTlFuUT09>, meeting ID 819 5709 5574 and passcode 097653.

Saturday, April 10: 9 am, Shabbat school; 9:15 am, Torah study at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88298087579?pwd=eTVkMDRVVlpwTmZvMkdYTm1OK0w1Zz09>, meeting ID 882 9808 7579, passcode 676707; and 7 pm, "Havdalah with a Bonus" at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89741791260?pwd=MzZlZmZk1dncyTlFuUT09>, meeting ID 897 4179 1260 passcode: 408279.

Sunday, April 11: 10 am-2 pm, Temple Concord's rummage sale. The sale will be held in the basement. Shoppers are asked to use the Oak Street entrance.

Sunday, April 11: 11:30 am, Ellen Allard music program for young children and their families about Israel. (For more information, see the article on page 9.)

Sunday, April 11: 3:30 pm, Women's Interfaith Book Club will discuss "Secrets of Divine Love" by A. Helwa. The club is sponsored by the Children of Abraham group and has been meeting monthly since September 2017 on the second Sunday of each month. For more information, contact Eve Berman at eberman@stny.rr.com or 761-6269.

Thursday, April 15: 7:30 pm, "Bioethics, Justice and Covid-19." Professor Rosamond Rhodes, Ph.D., will provide a framework for thinking about matters of justice and will explain how this perspective applies to the allocation of medical resources that physicians distribute every day. To participate, join the event at www.eventbrite.com/e/an-evening-with-bioethicist-rosamond-rhodes-phd-tickets-147166425741.

Friday, April 16: Shabbat services celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut with Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell on Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81957095574?pwd=SGRTU2lrZFMzMzZmZk1dncyTlFuUT09>, meeting ID 819 5709 5574 and passcode 097653.

Saturday, April 10: 9 am, Shabbat school; 9:15 am, Torah study at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88298087579?pwd=eTVkMDRVVlpwTmZvMkdYTm1OK0w1Zz09>, meeting ID 882 9808 7579, passcode 676707; and 7 pm, "Havdalah with a Bonus" at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89741791260?pwd=MzZlZmZk1dncyTlFuUT09>, meeting ID 897 4179 1260 and passcode 408279.

Tuesday, April 20: from noon-5 pm, blood drive at Temple Concord. To schedule an appointment to make a blood donation, contact the Red Cross at <https://www.redcrossblood.org/donate-blood/dlp/coronavirus--covid-19--and-blood-donation.html>. For additional information, call the temple office at 723-7355 Tuesdays-Fridays, from 10 am-2 pm.

Congregation Tikkun v'Or

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
 Address: PO Box 3981, Ithaca, NY 14852; 2550 Triphammer Rd. (corner of Triphammer and Burdick Hill), Lansing, NY
 Phone: 607-256-1471
 Website: www.tikkunvor.org
 E-mail: info@tikkunvor.org
 Presidents: Lauren Korfine and Shira Reisman
 Rabbi: Brian Walt
 Religious School Director/Admin. Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky
 Services: Fridays at 7:30 pm unless otherwise noted. Intergenerational Shabbat, music services, and other special services. Call for the weekly schedule.
 Religious School: Preschool through seventh-grade classes meet on Sunday mornings. Sixth-grade Hebrew and seventh-grade b'nai mitzvah classes meet on Wednesday afternoons. Adult Ed: Mini courses throughout the year. Adult Hebrew offered regularly. Call the office for details.

Synagogues limit face-to-face gatherings

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

Beth David Synagogue

Affiliation: Orthodox Union
 Rabbi: Zev Silber
 Address: 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905
 Phone: 722-1793, Rabbi's Office: 722-7514, Fax: 722-7121
 Office hours: Mon. closed; Tues. 10 am-1 pm; Wed. closed; Thurs. 9 am-1 pm; Fri. 10 am-1 pm
 Beth David e-mail address: bethdavid@stny.rr.com
 Rabbi's e-mail: rabbisilber@stny.rr.com
 Website: www.bethdavid.org
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/bethdavidbinghamton

Rohr Chabad Center

Affiliation: Chabad-Lubavitch
 Rabbi Aaron and Rivkah Slonim, Directors
 E-mail: aslonim@binghamton.edu
rslonim@chabadofbinghamton.com
 Address: 420 Murray Hill Rd., Vestal, NY 13850
 Phone: 797-0015, Fax: 797-0095
 Website: www.Chabadofbinghamton.com
 Rabbi Zalman and Rochel Chein, Education
 E-mail: zchein@Jewishbu.com, rchein@Jewishbu.com
 Rabbi Levi and Hadasa Slonim, Downtown and Development
 Chabad Downtown Center: 60 Henry St., Binghamton
 E-mail: lslonim@Jewishbu.com, hslonim@Jewishbu.com
 Rabbi Yisroel and Goldie Ohana, Programming
 E-mail: yohana@Jewishbu.com, gohana@Jewishbu.com
 Regular service times: Daily 7:30 am, Friday evening 6 pm, Shabbat morning 9:30 am, Maariv and Havdalah one hour after candle-lighting time, Sundays 9:30 am.
 To join the mailing list, for up-to-date information on adult education offerings or to arrange for a private tutorial, for details concerning the Judaica shop and resource center, or for assistance through the Piaker Free Loan Society or Raff Maasim Tovim Foundation, call Chabad's office at 797-0015.

Chabad will be holding pre-Shabbat virtual programs. For more information, visit www.JewishBU.com/S2020Partnership.

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 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
 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.

Temple Beth El of Oneonta

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
 Rabbi-Cantor: George Hirschfeld
 Address: 83 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY 13820
 Mailing address: P.O. Box 383, Oneonta, NY 13820
 Phone: 607-432-5522
 Website: www.templebetheloneonta.org
 E-mail: TBEOneonta@gmail.com
 Regular service times: visit the temple website for days of services and times
 Religious School/Education: Religious School, for grades kindergarten through bar/bat mitzvah, meets Sunday mornings. For the schedule of services, classes and events, see the website.

Friday, April 9, light candles before 7:20 pm
 Saturday, April 10, Shabbat ends 8:22 pm
 Friday, April 16, light candles before 7:28 pm
 Saturday, April 17, Shabbat ends 8:30 pm
 Friday, April 23, light candles before 7:36 pm
 Saturday, April 24, Shabbat ends 8:37 pm

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: Tuesday, 5:30 pm; Friday, 5:30 pm; Saturday, 9:30 am

On Fridays and Tuesdays at 5:30 pm, services will be led by Rabbi Geoffrey Brown via Zoom.

On Saturday, April 10, Shacharit services will be held at 10:30 am via Zoom. The Torah portion is Leviticus 9:1-11:47 and the haftarah is II Samuel 6:1-7:17. At 8:30 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom. Both will be led by Rabbi Geoffrey Brown.

On Sunday, April 11, there will be Torah study at 10:30 am on Zoom led by Rabbi Geoffrey Brown.

On Saturday, April 17, Shacharit services will be held at 10:30 am via Zoom. The Torah portion is Leviticus 12:1-15:33 and the haftarah is II Kings 7:3-20. At 8:30 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom. Both will be led by Rabbi Geoffrey Brown.

On Sunday, April 18, there will be Torah study at 10:30 am on Zoom led by Rabbi Geoffrey Brown.

A Temple Israel adult education program will take place on Sunday, April 25, at 10 am, on Zoom. (For more information, see the article on page 3.)

An Intersisterhood event will take place on Zoom on Tuesday, April 27, at 7 pm. Reservations are required no later than Friday, April 16, for out of towners who need their supplies mailed to them, and Thursday, April 22, for locals who can pick up their supplies at the temple. (For more information, see the article on page 1.)

Norwich Jewish Center

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

Temple 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: rabbib@tbeithaca.org and secretary@tbeithaca.org
 Website: www.tbeithaca.org
 Presidents: David Weiner and Linda Aigen
 Sisterhood President: Julie Paige
 Director of Education: Rabbi Suzanne Brody
 Administrative Assistant: Jane Griffith
 Services: Fri. 8 pm; Sat. 10 am, unless otherwise announced.
 Weekday morning minyan 7:30 am (9 am on Sun. and legal holidays).
 Religious School/Education: September-May: Classes meet on Sunday, 9 am-12:30 pm and Wednesday afternoons, 3:45-5:45 pm. The Midrashah (eighth grade and high school) classes will meet at times designated by their respective teachers.
 Adult Ed.: Numerous weekly courses, several semester-long courses and a variety of mini-courses and lectures are offered throughout the year. Call the temple office for more details.

For upcoming services and events on Zoom, visit www.tinyurl.com/HappeningAtTBE.

Kol Haverim

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

Camp.....Continued from page 1

The Auerbachs are longtime members of the Binghamton Jewish community and have operated a variety of summer camps. In addition to their camp management activities, Sima served for many years as executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton and as fund-raising director for Hadassah and Albert Einstein College of Medicine. She was a Wall Street options trader for Rothschild Inc.

Bock is the executive director of Ramah in the Rockies. Ordained as rabbi by the Jewish Theological Seminary, he holds a bachelor of arts degree in Bible and a master of arts degree in Jewish education, as well as a bachelor of arts degree in urban studies from Columbia University. Bock has been awarded the Pomegranate Prize by the Covenant Foundation and is a Schusterman Senior Fellow. He is joined each summer at camp by his wife, Binghamton University Professor Dina Danon, and their three children.

Klionsky grew up in Binghamton and holds degrees from Brandeis University, the David Yellin Institute in Jerusalem and Lesley College. She was a leader in the regional and national boards of the Zionist Youth Movement Young Judaea and attended the national camp Tel Yehudah for four summers as a camper and three summers as a staff member. A former principal of Ohavi Zedek in Burlington, VT, she currently serves as the assistant director for counseling at St. Michael's College.

Because tickets cannot be sold at the door, the organizers ask that attendees make a voluntary contribution to support the College of Jewish Studies. Checks should be made out to the "College of Jewish Studies" and sent to the JCC, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

The College of Jewish Studies was founded in 1986 as a coalition between the Judaic Studies Department at Binghamton University and several local Jewish sponsoring institutions, including the Jewish

Community Center, the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, Beth David Synagogue, Temple Concord and Temple Israel. Its mission is to provide opportunities for quality adult Jewish education in Broome

County. The CJS Committee strives to bring scholars from local and regional campuses for enlightening lectures; an effort is made to combine broad appeal with intellectual and stimulating content and challenge.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Israeli president tasks Netanyahu with forming next gov't

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin gave Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the mandate on April 6 to form the country's next government. In his address, broadcast from the President's Residence in Jerusalem, Rivlin noted that in the seven years since his election by the 19th Knesset, there have been five Knesset elections, four of them in just two years. "I did not imagine and I did not expect that, time after time, five times, I would be faced with the difficult task of deciding whom to entrust with forming a government," he said. During his consultations with the representatives of all Knesset factions on April 5, he said 52 Knesset members had requested that Netanyahu be tasked with forming a government, while 45 recommended Yesh Atid Party head Yair Lapid. Seven MKs had requested that Yamina Party leader Naftali Bennett be asked to form a government, while 16 had made no recommendation. "The results of the consultations, which were open to all, led me to believe that no candidate has a realistic chance of forming a government that will have the confidence of the Knesset," he said. "I have come to a decision based on the numbers of recommendations, which indicates that MK Benjamin Netanyahu has a slightly higher chance of forming a government. Accordingly, I have decided to entrust him with the task of doing so," he said.

Shemini.....Continued from page 10

next verse cautions us to avoid intoxicating beverages while in the Divine service. But maybe it was truly deeper than all that...

Maybe it was no punishment at all. Perhaps it was a heavenly embrace. And perhaps their purpose in life had been completed:

Leviticus 10:3: "Va-yomer Moshe el Aharon hu asher diber Hashem l'emor b'krovay ekadesh v'al p'nai chawl ha'am ekaved va-yidom Aharon." "Moses said to Aaron: of this did Hashem speak, saying, 'I will be sanctified through those who are nearest Me, thus I will be honored before the entire people;' and Aaron was silent."

Rashi hints at the meritorious status accorded Nadav and Avihu by Moses' above statement: Moses now told Aaron, "I knew that the Tabernacle would be sanctified through someone in whom God's glory reposes, but I thought it would be one of us. Now I know that they were greater than either of us."

And in the Talmud Bavli Zevachim 115b, it states that it was already hinted that God Himself alluded to their future deaths, as if to recognize that some necessary occurrence would need to take place: "Dichtiv, venoadti shama livnei Yisrael ve nikdash b'chvodi (Exodus 29:43) al tikri b'chvodi, ela b'mechubodai." For it is written, "And I shall set my meeting there with the children of Israel and it (the Tabernacle) shall be sanctified through my honor (b'chvodi)." Do not read b'chvodi ("through my honor"), rather read it as "b'mechubodai" ("through my honored ones"). Thus shall be done to whom the King of Kings wishes to honor.

Rashi gives us some cover now to explore how their actions were not sinful, but actually quite meritorious. But what was so meritorious in their actions? Let us examine the end of the verse: "va-yidom Aharon." "And Aaron was silent."

Instead of reading it as "silent," one could also see a connection to the word "dahm," which in Hebrew means "blood." They are the same exact letters, but vowelized

differently. Now where is the word *dahm* as blood first mentioned in the Torah?

Let us go to the Cain and Abel fratricide narrative (Genesis 4:1-10). In verse 10 it reads, "Kol d'mei achicha tzoakim elai min ha'adamah," "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!"

This is the very first mention of blood and it is mentioned in the context of fratricidal rivalry – the very first recorded act since the expulsion from Eden! And in what context did this act of fratricide take place? The very first *korban*, the very first offerings to Hashem.

As the very first *korban* offerings were blemished by dint of jealousy and fratricidal rage, the Tabernacle dedication ceremonies, with their attendant sacrificial offerings, could not proceed apace without a *tikkun*, or a fixing of the earlier Edenic blemish. The only fixing for brotherly jealousy is brotherly harmony. The only fixing for the root of the fratricide could be a *new* offering, one which was neither animal-based (Abel's) nor soil-based (Cain's). A fire offering was a *neutral* offering, neither one nor the other. It was thus symbolic of brotherly love and reconciliation.

Nadav and Avihu were thus the *gilgulim* (reincarnated souls) of Cain and Abel. Reincarnated in the *dor hamidbar*, the generation of the wilderness, their purpose in life was to make it possible for the offerings in the Tabernacle to be acceptable. They paved the way for all of us, embracing the Torah's value of brotherly love and harmony. In their shared bringing of the strange fire they achieved a unity of love and purpose. Thus they repaired the sin-taint of the fratricidal rage that accompanied and ruined humanity's very first offering to God.

God embraced their souls for showing us the way. Their work here was done. May we all come to love one another and to serve Hashem with fire. Not with a strange fire, but with the fire of our souls.

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Hillel Academy to offer community after-school enrichment program

Hillel Academy, under the supervision of Rabbi Moshe Shmaryahu, plans to offer after-school enrichment classes in three disciplines this spring. The classes, which are for children of the entire Jewish community, will be aimed at children from 6-15 years of age. The times have not yet been set, but the program is expected to begin in early May and conclude in mid-June. The sessions are expected to run about one hour, likely starting at 4 pm, and are expected to take place during the week. Classes offered would include art, music and technology.

The music and art classes would be offered at \$20 per child per session, for six sessions or a total of \$120. The technology course would involve training and working with a 3-D printer. The cost is also expected to be \$20 per student per session. However, the cost of materials may require a higher cost. A minimum of five-six students would be necessary to run each course. Specific material will be oriented according to the ages of the children.

"Hillel Academy has remained open during the

pandemic and has a good safety record during this period," said organizers of the program. "Appropriate distancing will be maintained for those concerned. For parents wishing to have their children interact with others after a year of severe restrictions, this would be a good opportunity."

For more information or to register students, contact Hillel Academy at 304-4544 or frontoffice@hillelacademy-ofbc.org by Tuesday, April 20. For additional information, contact Shmaryahu at 240-1087 for further details.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

March of the Living awards Dr. Anthony Fauci "Moral Courage in Medicine Award"

To mark Holocaust Remembrance Day, which this year begins on the evening of April 7, International March of the Living, together with the Maimonides Institute for Ethics and the Holocaust, the Miller Center at Rutgers University, the USC Shoah Foundation and Teva Pharmaceuticals will be holding an online symposium on "Medicine and Morality: Lessons from the Holocaust and COVID-19." The program, scheduled to air at 7 pm EST, will include testimony from survivors who were both persecuted by Nazi doctors and saved by medical professionals during the Holocaust. It will also feature medical professionals and researchers who will discuss medical resistance during the Holocaust, the legacy of Nazi medicine, and what the Holocaust can teach about the ethics of care. During the symposium, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and chief medical adviser to the president, will receive the "Moral Courage in Medicine" award for his work in combating COVID-19, his long history of leading the battle against infectious diseases, and his dedication to the health and well-being of humankind. The event will include a performance of "Schindler's List" by Grammy Award winner and United Nations Goodwill Ambassador of Music Miri Ben-Ari, herself the descendant of Holocaust survivors. Anyone interested in watching the symposium can register at <https://www.motl.org/medicine/>.

UPenn won't to reschedule commencement on Shavuot

The University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia said it will not move the date of its commencement ceremony, which is set to take place during the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, despite a petition signed by more than 1,600 students and alumni to reschedule the event to accommodate those who celebrate the Jewish holiday. According to the university's student-run publication, *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, nearly 40 seniors who identify as Orthodox Jewish received an e-mail about the decision on March 24. Vice president and university secretary Medha Narvekar, and vice president of social equity and community, and university chaplain Chaz Howard said the school cannot move the date of commencement due to logistical challenges. The FAQ section on the university's commencement website said the school will provide "alternate arrangements" to Orthodox students who choose to attend the ceremony in person. A full recording of the event will also be posted online for families to watch at a later date. According to Hillel International, as much as 17 percent of the university's undergraduate population is Jewish. A Chabad House at Penn also serves students in a city that ranks among the 10 highest metropolitan-area Jewish populations in the U.S.

British court sentences Holocaust denier to prison time

A woman in Britain said to be a "virulent antisemite" has been found guilty of spreading offensive messages and material over the Internet and was sentenced to 18 weeks in prison by a magistrate court there. Reports say that Alison Chabloz, 57, who is known for promoting Holocaust denial, is expected to serve nine weeks in prison for violating the country's communications act after she promoted antisemitic rhetoric and ideas on the GAB social-media service in two interviews she did with far-right online sites. GAB has been under fire for being utilized by far-right extremists. According to the *Daily Mail*, in issuing his ruling, District Judge Michael Snow told Chabloz: "I'm not sentencing you on the basis that you are antisemitic, I'm not sentencing you on the basis that you are a Holocaust denier. I'm sentencing you on the basis that on two separate occasions whilst subject to a suspended sentence, you participated in a radio program where you made grossly offensive comments. The grossly offensive contributions by the defendant to both programs are insulting to members of a vulnerable community," continued Snow. "The need to protect that community from such gross offense is a pressing social need."

Educational video charts history of antisemitism for use on college campuses

The Academic Engagement Network announced a new video, "Antisemitism in Our Midst," which charts the history of antisemitism, from its ancient origins to its contemporary manifestations. The video was created as part of the Antisemitism Education Initiative at the University of California, Berkeley, which brings together campus stakeholders to inform about, discuss and develop the resources to respond to antisemitism. AEN is supporting the Antisemitism Education Initiative with a multi-year grant. AEN Executive Director Miriam F. Elman notes the video's potential to reach new audiences. "With heightened anxiety about antisemitism around the country and the disturbing trend of rising antisemitic incidents on college campuses, this educational resource couldn't be better timed," she says. "We are certain that university leaders, and especially diversity officials and staff, will find the film incredibly helpful in their efforts to promote the values of tolerance, inclusion and respect for Jewish and all students on their campuses." Professor of history and Jewish studies Ethan Katz, one of the initiators of the Antisemitism Education Initiative, says the film "is the product of more than a year of work to think through the most effective and fair-minded approaches to presenting antisemitism on college campuses, testing and retesting our ideas with administrators, colleagues, and finally, diverse groups of students. 'Antisemitism in Our Midst' offers clarity about historical and contemporary meanings of antisemitism, and a balanced approach to highly charged matters like Jews and race in America today, and the line between legitimate criticism of Israel and antisemitism." The video can be viewed on Youtube, <https://youtu.be/e9SQrIdlaVE>.

Canadian Jewish students call on universities to adopt antisemitism definition

More than 140 Jewish students have signed an open letter calling on Canadian post-secondary institutions to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism. It would "help administrators better identify and meaningfully combat" antisemitism on campus, reads the letter, listing incidents at the University of Toronto, McGill University and Queen's University. "As students involved in the Jewish community on campus, we can corroborate that antisemitism has found an all-too comfortable home at Canadian universities. Using the IHRA definition would help administrators establish when more insidious forms of antisemitism are taking place," according to the letter. The global definition was adopted as part of the Canadian government's anti-racism strategy in 2019. It has since been endorsed by Ontario's provincial government, the University of Manitoba and University of Western student unions, the Global Imams Council and other bodies.

U.S. State Dept. report returns to using "occupied" territories

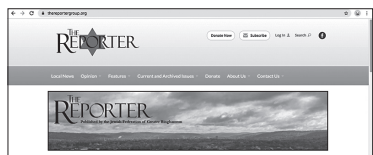
The Biden administration returned to using the term "occupied" when referring to the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and eastern Jerusalem in its annual human-rights report issued by the U.S. State Department. Under the Trump administration, the State Department dropped the term "occupied" when referring to these territories and removed the Golan Heights from the 2018 and 2019 reports after the United States recognized Israeli sovereignty there. That section of the report covers Israel "within the 1949 Armistice Agreement line, as well as Golan Heights and East Jerusalem territories that Israel occupied during the June 1967 war and where it later extended its domestic law, jurisdiction and administration." The language, however, "is not meant to convey a position on any final-status issues to be negotiated between the parties to the conflict, including the specific boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem, or the borders between Israel and any future Palestinian state." The report did acknowledge Washington's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017, as well as Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights in 2019. The title also remained the same: "Israel, West Bank and Gaza." Prior to the Trump administration, the report had used "Israel and the Occupied Territories." Speaking on the decision to keep the title, acting State Department official on human rights Lisa Peterson said its authors continued to believe that it was better to assign specific geographic names. "That's in line with our practices generally. We also believe it is clearer and more useful for readers seeking information on human rights in those specific areas," she told reporters. Former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also said America would no longer consider Israeli settlements in the West Bank as illegal, breaking with prior policy and with many in the international community. Israel gained control of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and eastern Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War.



This issue's "Jewish Resources to occupy your family during social distancing" can be found on *The Reporter's* website.

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