

Jewish Observer of Central New York

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

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Happy Chanukah!

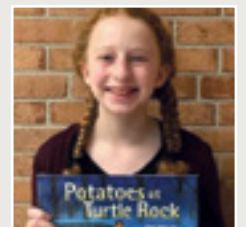
EPSTEIN SCHOOL 2013



DON'T MISS:
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2020 HONOR ROLL
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LOOK:
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As you light the candles of the chanukiya...

You think about the chain of Jewish tradition and what it means to be part of the global Jewish community...

You recognize the importance of community and of giving back...

You know what leaving a legacy means...

All of us have the ability to help sustain a vibrant Central New York Jewish community, now and in the future. Endowments are not just for the wealthy. They are the means by which ordinary people can make extraordinary, impactful gifts. An endowment fund at the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York demonstrates your belief in the continuity of Jewish life. Those who came before us sustain our community today.

Your endowment at the Foundation today
will sustain our community tomorrow.



The Jewish Community
Foundation of
Central New York, Inc.

Contact Michael Balanoff at mbalanoff@JewishFoundationCNY.org

From the Editor



Barbara Davis

Chanukah commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in the second century BCE when, according to legend, Jews rose up against their Syrian Greek oppressors in the Maccabean Revolt. Chanukah, which is Hebrew for “dedication,” is known

as the Festival of Lights, because when the Temple was rededicated, only enough oil was found to illuminate the ner tamid or eternal light, for one day. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days.

If ever we needed a Chanukah miracle, it is this year. Many of us are feeling that we only have enough emotional oil to last a day, but we need it to last for eight days, or eight weeks or eight months. After the darkness and despair of the global pandemic, after a brutal election campaign and a year of coming to terms with the major problems that affect our country – from systemic racism to climatological desecration – what we need right now is some miraculous and festive illumination. But where do we find it?

The answer may lie in those very Chanukah candles that we light each night, starting small but building up to a blaze of radiance. Each candle can represent an act of courage that you can take, a proactive dedication of your own Judaism and an act of bravery like that of the Maccabees. What if each night you did something that made a difference in your own life or the life of someone else? What if each night you and your family donated some Chanukah gelt to a different cause? What if each night you spoke out against racism, antisemitism, cruelty to children and animals or poverty? What if each night you dedicated a part of the next day to doing an act of thoughtfulness? What if each night you dedicated yourself to be a better Jew, whether through prayer, study or deeds of lovingkindness? What if you taught your children that being brave and being a light to the world is what Chanukah is all about, not presents?

You can be the Chanukah light this year, the candle lit with bravery, compassion and meaning. You can be shamash, the helper candle, lending your light to others and helping them by lending your support to their causes. Albert Einstein once said, “There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” We need Chanukah miracles this year, but we have to make them ourselves.

This issue of the Jewish Observer is filled with stories about everyday miracles, about people who are devoting themselves to others and to making our world a better place. They are proud Jews, standing strong like the Maccabees, and the light they bring to our community brightens the winter gloom. There is a story about beautiful voices, reviews of books to celebrate the holiday and to take you to other Jewish communities; there are lists of wonderful people who inspire us with their generosity and stories about accomplished Central New Yorkers of all ages and interests of whom we can all be proud.

Chag sameach! May your latkes be tasty and your sufaniyot sweet; may your s’vivon spin perfectly and may the light of the holiday bring you happiness and joy.

D’var Torah Hannukah: A Complex Contemporary Holiday

by Rabbi Daniel Jezer

The popular legendary Hanukkah cruse of oil story has captured the Jewish imagination for hundreds of years. In reality, this story does not appear in the historical books of the Maccabees.



We first hear of the story 150 years after Judah Maccabee rededicated the Temple in the year 164 BCE.

The Maccabean revolt is a story of a miracle, the same miracle that enables us to celebrate the existence of the State of Israel. It relates the miracle of survival, best known as when a few Jews were successful, despite overwhelming odds.

Hannukah is much more than ancient history. It is also the most contemporary of all Jewish holidays, for within the story lie many of the problems that beset our Jewish people and today’s world. It is a story of coping with very serious social, religious, political and economic problems, all of which are intertwined. Hannukah is both a revolt and a civil war amongst our own people.

The narrative begins 150 years before the Maccabees with the conquest of the eastern world, the middle east, by Alexander the Great of the western world’s Greece. As a result of this imperialism, serious religious, political and social conflicts arose in Judea. Segments of the Judean population, in varying degrees, wanted to adopt the Hellenistic western (Greek) culture. This was the antithesis of the eastern traditional Jewish life. Inevitably, as time went by, the divisions in the population deepened. After 100 years, the ruling Seleucids exacerbated the divisions by insisting that all of Judea forsake the traditional, “barbaric” way of life and adopt Hellenism.

The divisions between the Jewish factions were not exclusively religious and cultural. Urban populations had much more interplay with the Seleucids than did the rural population and therefore were more inclined to adopt the Hellenistic way of life. The rural population was more conservative. The urban population was wealthier than the more rural farmer population. The resentment of economic disparities exacerbated the religious and cultural split. The divisions and antipathy between segments of the Judean population so deepened that the Maccabean revolt was at the same time a civil war, pitting one Jewish group against another. The books of Maccabees relate, in great detail, the fighting between these Jewish factions as well as the war against the Seleucids.

Even after Judah Maccabee rededicated the Temple, using the eight-day festival of Sukkot as a model for temple dedication, the fighting did not stop. It lasted over a decade longer.

Superpower political influence also played a significant role then as now. Small countries today, as in ancient times, need to join an alliance with a major world power. One of Judah Maccabee’s significant decisions was to correctly read the world political map. He realized that the newly emerged world superpower, Rome, would be amenable to conclude a mutual defense treaty with his small state as this would bring benefit to both, curbing the power of their mutual enemy, the Seleucids. Rome, as an ally, was then partially instrumental for the Maccabean victories and the survival of our people.

At the rededication of the Temple in 164 BCE, the Jews offered prayers of thanksgiving. Today, we likewise on Hannukah offer a prayer of thanksgiving, “Al Hanissim,” which gives thanks to God for the miracle of survival. In those days, as well as in our very day, enemies arise against us. We divide ourselves into factions that separate us one from the other. These divisions threaten us as they did in the days of the Maccabees, and yet we survive and flourish. “Al Hanissim,” for the miracle, the miracle of survival, in those days as in our own very day, “Am Yisrael Chai.” The Children of Israel are vibrant as the lights on the menorah.

Happy Hannukah

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From the Federation Board Chair Neil Rosenbaum



“The answer is YES. Now what is the question?”

I recently attended a meeting that left me stunned. An important idea was proposed and many of the participants’ reaction to the idea started with “no.” They talked about what they wouldn’t do and why. Their points were valid, but their approach and tone were disheartening.

I am currently reading *Yes is the Answer. What is the Question?* by Cameron Mitchell. The author, who has grown a large array of restaurants in the Philadelphia area, talks about how he instilled a positive customer service attitude in his growing organization. Basically, he teaches and insists upon an attitude that begins with yes and then figures out how you get there. One example is when he ordered a grilled cheese for his child, even though it was not on the menu. The server pointed that out. “But you have bread and you have cheese,” he responded. The server went into the kitchen and came back with the same response: “No grilled cheese.” He then said, “But you serve cheeseburgers. So make me a cheeseburger, with no burger or pickles or lettuce or tomato. And grill the bun.” “I’ll have to charge you for the whole burger,” the server grimly responded.

You get the picture. This is not good customer service. If you want satisfied customers, you don’t say, “We don’t have grilled cheese.” You make the sandwich.

How much more productive my meeting would have been if, instead of digging their heels in, people had said: Okay, there are some issues here. Let’s think about the goal. How can we get to yes?

There is a saying in Spanish, *Tantas letras tiene un sí que un no*, which translates to “A **yes** [sí] has as many letters as a **no**.” In other words, it’s as easy to say yes as no, to be positive as to be negative. It’s all about reframing the response: **The answer is YES. Now what is your question?**”

Say **YES** to:

- Volunteering your time and knowledge
- Giving to support the Federation’s mission of supporting a vibrant Jewish community
- Mentoring
- Participating in religious and cultural organizations and events
- Promoting our community to others and warmly welcoming new residents

We need to build a unified community with shared values. If we desire to maintain and grow a strong community, let’s not talk about what we can’t do and instead ask what we CAN. Let’s reframe our attitude. Let’s think about what we can do to help each other, to break down silos and isolation and to create a strong and cohesive community.

We are about to celebrate Chanukah, which is synonymous with heroism. From childhood, we are taught about the bravery of Judah Maccabee, his brothers and their mother Hannah, who defied the king who wanted them to abandon their Jewish faith. Chanukah is about dedication. In the 21st century, in the midst of a pandemic that has afflicted unknowable numbers in our country, ravaged Israel and killed over one million people worldwide, we need to be heroic ourselves, and we need to dedicate ourselves to strengthening our community, not only financially but spiritually. Super Sunday this year will be all about super heroes, but the real super heroes are those who are working so hard and with so much spirit and energy to build us up, strengthen us and provide for our children’s children the same wonderful opportunities in this community that our children had.

Chag Chanukah Sameach! May the lights of Chanukah brighten your homes and your lives and may you always remember to say, “The answer is YES. Now, what is the question?”

Jewish Federation OF CENTRAL NEW YORK

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR FEDERATION’S
COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER

SUPER HERO SUPER SUNDAY!
JANUARY 10, 2021

PUT ON YOUR CAPES AND MASKS AND JOIN
Superwomen Anick Sinclair and Phyllis Zames, Superteens Milo Sinclair and Henia Zames, and Superkids Remy and Dory Sinclair and Leora and Julia Zames

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email Colleen Baker at cbaker@jewishfederationny.org

Prizes for best Super Hero costumes!
Send your Super Hero costume photo to jo@jewishfederationny.org

Who is YOUR Super Hero?
Send photo and 2 sentence entry to jo@jewishfederationny.org. We will publish the best entries!

Super Hero Scavenger Hunt, Trivia, and lots more!!!

The Federation
and the Jewish Observer
wish everyone in our community a

Happy Chanukah!

Mazal Tov to the Fall 2020 B'nai Mitzvah



Jeremy Albert became bar mitzvah on March 10. He attended the Temple Concord religious school and the Community Hebrew School. Jeremy likes baseball, basketball and world war history.



Noah Cabrey became bar mitzvah on May 4. He attended the Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas religious school and the Community Hebrew School. He loves playing basketball, football, boxing and wrestling. He is a kind-hearted young man who loves life, and loves spending time with his family and friends.

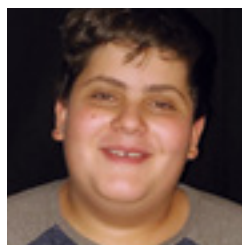


Leo Charlamb became bar mitzvah on September 20. He received his religious education at Temple Adath

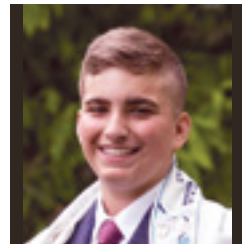
Yeshurun and attends Camp Ramah New England in Palmer, Massachusetts in the summers. Leo is a talented percussionist and cook. In his spare time, he enjoys shooting and producing videos relating to food and music for his YouTube channel.



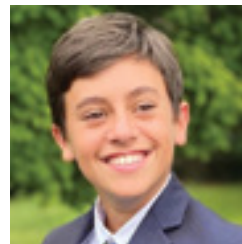
Kaitlyn Cohen became bat mitzvah on August 8. She is a graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and attended Temple Concord religious school. Kaitlyn is an accomplished gymnast and competes for GC2 Gymnastics. She also loves to read, work on her art skills and dance. She hopes to return to Camp Ramah New England next summer.



Shimi Cooper became bar mitzvah on November 2. He is a graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and is attending the Epstein School. Shimi is into computer science and information technology. He recently built his own computer and is working on building his own magic mirror.



Dylan Friedman became bar mitzvah on June 13. He is a graduate of the Temple Adath Yeshurun religious school and the Community Hebrew School. He is attending the Epstein School. Dylan enjoys playing baseball, basketball and golf. He also likes cooking and cheering on the SU Orange.



Jamie Kuss became bar mitzvah on August 21. He attended the Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas religious school and the Community Hebrew School. Jamie is a well-rounded student who loves to play sports, especially basketball and baseball. He travels all over the northeast region with his baseball team.



Zachary Fellman became bar mitzvah on September 5. He is a graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, attended religious school at Temple Concord, serves as a *madrich* at Temple Concord, attends the Epstein School and loves spending his summers at URJ Eisner camp. Zach enjoys skiing, golfing and swimming. He plays piano and is extremely passionate about American history and politics.



Jonah Sahn became bar mitzvah on June 10. He is a 2019 graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and attends the Epstein School. Jonah enjoys chorus and acting and has performed in SHDS musicals and with Open Hand Theatre, Redhouse Arts Center and Shakespeare in the Park.



Nathan Snell became bar mitzvah on August 27. Nate attended the Temple Adath Yeshurun religious school and the Community Hebrew School and is currently enrolled at the Epstein School. He likes to play soccer, video games with his friends and the drums.



Jacob Temes became bar mitzvah on August 30. Jacob received his religious education at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas and the Community Hebrew School. He loves to read and enjoys spending time outdoors, biking, canoeing and hiking in the Adirondack mountains. Jacob is also an avid athlete, playing soccer and golf, and is an accomplished ski racer.



Andrew Wladis became bar mitzvah on July 27. He attended the religious school of Temple Adath Yeshurun and the community Hebrew School. Andrew loves to code, design websites, create his own video games and collect vintage comic books. He plays basketball and golf.



CHRISTIAN BROTHERS ACADEMY

Wishing you a
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Christian Brothers Academy is a Catholic Lasallian college preparatory school serving young men and women of diverse faiths and cultures. The administration and staff provide students with a safe, nurturing environment that fosters spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social growth by encouraging them to achieve excellence and to live as moral, responsible, contributing, and successful members of society.

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Matthews Children's Foundation Grant Benefits JCC



Pamela Ranieri, Marci Erlebacher and Steven Sisskind pose with their grant check and some happy preschoolers.

Even in the darkest of times, a little light will shine through to make things a bit better. Fortunately, during the coronavirus pandemic, the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center received a bit of that light in the form of a \$1,000 grant from the Matthews Children's Foundation. The Children's Programming department is using the funds to support its early childhood program and after school program, which are operating very differently this year due to the coronavirus. A new JCC school-age program, Club J All Day, offers support for distance learning

onsite at the JCC four days a week for Jamesville-DeWitt students.

The Matthews Children's Foundation awards grants to nonprofit organizations whose purpose is to support children. "Once again, and especially during this time of financial uncertainty, we truly appreciate the Matthews Foundation's continued support of our children's programs," said JCC President Steven Sisskind. Marci Erlebacher, JCC executive director, added, "We are delighted to receive the Matthews Foundation's continued generosity at a time when our finances can use the boost."

Teen Funders Take Ownership of Their Philanthropy

As they enter Jewish adulthood, teens have the opportunity to engage in meaningful acts of tzedakah through the Teen Funders program, which encourages teens to become involved in tzedakah by establishing a fund for Jewish charitable giving at the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York. Opening a fund gives teens a chance to play a part in improving our community and the world.

Teens who donate at least \$250 to the Jewish Community Foundation when they become *b'nai mitzvah* will have a fund established in their name. The Pomeranz, Shankman, Martin Charitable Trust will then donate another \$250 for a starting fund balance of at least \$500. The Teen Funders meet twice a year to learn about

the needs of the Jewish community—locally, in Israel and around the world, as well as about other programs of social action and social service. They pool donations from their individual funds into a "pot" and discuss and advocate for different causes, under the guidance of attorney Jeffrey Scheer. After deliberation, the Teen Funders vote on the charitable organizations to be the recipients of their *tzedakah*.

Teens who would like to participate are asked to contact Michael Balanoff at the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York (mbalanoff@jewishfoundationcny.org). Synagogue affiliation is not required and teens are eligible to join Teen Funders once they become *b'nai mitzvah*.

JCC Kids Fitness and Recreation Classes Start Week of December 7

"We're offering another great lineup of classes for kids of all abilities," said Sherri Lamanna, JCC director of gymnastics, dance and preschool physical education. "We follow all CDC and New York State health and safety guidelines while making it fun and teaching the children a lot of great skills." Although things are quite different this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center will offer classes aimed at getting boys and girls physically active. Weekday gymnastics and other sports classes will start the week of December 7 and run through mid-March 2021. The classes are open to the JCC's enrolled early childhood program preschoolers and to local school-age children in the community.

Preschool classes have only been open to JCC early childhood program preschoolers since the fall due to



the coronavirus. Registration is by classroom in order to keep groups of children separate. School-age classes are open to children from any surrounding school district. All school-age students must undergo a health check before each class, wear a mask and follow strict health and safety guidelines while attending class. Enrollment for all classes is currently open and will continue through the start of each class. JCC membership is not required for school-age classes, however members receive a discount. **For more information, contact Sherri Lamanna at 315-445-2040, ext. 126, slamanna@jccsy.org, or visit www.jccsy.org.**

CHANUKAH VIRTUAL COOKING DEMONSTRATION

with James Beard Foundation Award-winning Chef Michael Solomonov

Wednesday, December 2nd
8pm EST

The response to the first Solomonov virtual cooking demonstration was extremely positive and Federation is delighted to sponsor additional programming. The link for the Chanukah program, which will also be available for six days after the live show, is:

www.vimeo.com/showcase/chanukahcooking

The password is ZAHAV (case sensitive).

Recipes for apple shrub, potato latkes, Roman artichokes with salmon, and sfenj were sent to the community via Constant Contact in November. **If you want them emailed to you, please write to jo@jewishfederationcny.org.**



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Tan and Her Challah

by *Laura Feldman*

It was a complicated illness that brought Tan into my life close to a year ago. Tan had been described to me as one of the kindest, gentlest caregivers in the Syracuse area as well as an excellent cook and baker. Since I need 24-hour care seven days a week, I was eager to meet her and even more delighted to learn her unique story.

Tan was born and brought up in Thailand. One day, in 1984, she spotted a cookbook showing a Jewish woman holding a

challah on the cover. “Wow,” she thought. “I want to learn to bake that bread!” For the first one, Tan didn’t have poppy seeds so she used what she had in her cupboard, which happened to be sesame seeds.

At first Tan baked only for her friends and family who loved the taste and smell of the bread baking in the oven. Soon, and ever since, challah became her signature holiday bread. Each time her children



came to visit, she baked the challah, which made them very happy.

Tan and her family moved to the United States, where they lived on the west coast in San Diego and Monterey. Wherever she lived, Tan baked challah. Even when the family was stationed in Japan, when they visited other families Tan brought

her signature challah as a greeting.

One particular *mamasan* was very kind to Tan. She realized Tan was lonely and did not speak Japanese or English. *Mamasan* invited Tan to her home and introduced her to Japanese food and taught her Japanese customs including the tea ceremony. When *Mamasan* and Tan visited as guests, Tan brought her signature challah as a greeting.

Eventually Tan returned to the United States with her five children and settled in Central New York where the suburban communities of Jamesville, DeWitt, Fayetteville and Manlius soon discovered her. This was accomplished through the network known facetiously as “the Jewish underground” through which vital information such as best doctors, hair stylists, landscapers and school districts is shared. Soon Tan’s reputation spread as a caregiver for tired and retired souls, some suffering from dementia or recovering from surgery, who were not able to shop or cook for themselves.

Imagine your own relatives who have difficulty taking care of themselves. And into their lives comes Tan, born and brought up in Thailand, whose challah is among the best in the world!

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Faster Treatment = Better Outcomes

People have been avoiding emergency rooms fearing they will be exposed to the COVID-19 virus.

Getting to the hospital quickly is critical for patients suffering heart attacks or strokes, when heart and brain cells can die by the minute. Other serious conditions — such as severe headache or stomach ache — can also cause long-lasting damage if treatment is delayed.

Our regionally recognized emergency services, cardiac care and Comprehensive Stroke Center teams are here 24/7 to provide you and your family with rapid intervention and treatment for all medical emergencies.

Your Safety = Top Priority

To keep you safe, we have put in place stringent safety and infection control measures in our Pomeroy Emergency Services Department and across our entire hospital and outpatient sites to prevent the spread of infection, including:

- ▶ Screening patients, visitors and staff at entry points
- ▶ Requiring all patients, visitors and staff to wear a mask
- ▶ Isolating suspected COVID-19 patients in private rooms
- ▶ Rigorous deep cleaning/disinfecting of all surface areas

Don't wait to go to the Emergency Department – Call 911

#TakeMeToCrouse

Moving to The Oaks

“I’m not a winter person,” confessed Diana Brownlie, with a smile that showed in her eyes, even as her lips were hidden behind a mask. That is one of the reasons she was so happy to move into The Oaks. “Where I lived, it was horrid in winter. There were no sidewalks,” she explained, a contrast with her present home, where everything winter-related is handled by others and the atmosphere is warm and friendly.

“It feels very secure here,” Diana added, “and they are organized for all kinds of activities.” She pulled a sheet of paper from her purse and began to read off the list of things to do, ranging from art to zen yoga. “There’s a movie every night,” she added. “The activities director is just a bundle of energy!”

Diana was born in Germany, grew up in London and moved to New York, living for a time in the small town of Hancock before moving to Skaneateles, where she raised her family. She taught German at Syracuse University and, as a sideline, baked beautiful (and expensive) wedding cakes “until Martha Stewart ruined the market by telling people they could make their own,” she fumed, still smoldering after all these years. Diana still likes to cook and makes her own meals during the week, although her daughter has arranged for her to take meals in the dining room on weekends.

Diana is a city person at heart, but knows that neither London nor New York City is where she was meant to live now. Downsizing from a house to senior living seemed like a better move for her and she finds that the people at The Oaks are very diverse, interesting and congenial. “There’s a great cast of characters here,” she notes. “It’s quite amazing – there’s artists and doctors and so many more.” She loves her apartment which she says is well-planned and laid out, with “a gorgeous big bathroom.”

Diana’s daughter, Jeanie Anderson, lives nearby. When she realized that her mother was housebound during the long winters, she began to explore other options. Diana had broken her leg the year before. Jeanie wanted her to go for rehab to Menorah Park, because it was “the place to go,” she recalls. “So The



Oaks was the first place I went to see when we were considering a move.” The decision was made the moment they arrived, and she’s been extremely happy

ever since. “My mom has lit up,” she says, explaining that Diana found the other residents welcoming and interesting and has made many new friends quickly.

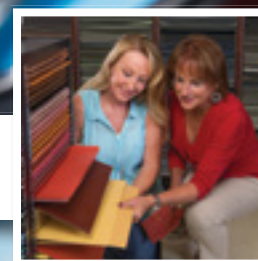
Diana’s move to The Oaks and the selling of her house were facilitated by a team from Howard Hanna Realtors, which has a close working relationship with Menorah Park. “Often when people are considering rightsizing, they will tour a facility like The Oaks and then be so overwhelmed they don’t know where to start,” says Molly Lane, Menorah Park’s director of marketing and communications. “The Howard Hanna team can help facilitate the journey to independent living,” said Shauna Teelin, the realtor who worked with Diana, adding, “We have the local connections to help transition folks to the next chapter and lifestyle.” The other members of the Howard Hanna team are Cheryl Schotz and Beth MacCrimble.

Jeanie helped Diana downsize her possessions and stage her home, and Shauna put it on the market. Jeanie enjoyed doing this work so much that she is planning to make it a career. In the end, everyone was happy, especially Diana, who says she is so glad she made the move and that “It was the right decision.”

Happy Hanukkah
from
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Village
Hardware

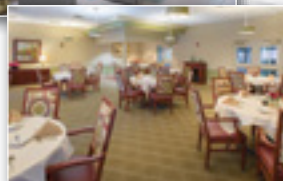
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Beautiful Voices in Our Community

2020 will be remembered as the year we could not sing in our synagogues. Even masked and socially-distanced, singers project and, as such, were silenced. But as we turned to social media to help us find some of the joy of live performance, we became acquainted with some beautiful voices in our community that we might never have known otherwise. YouTube and Facebook provided us a way to hear four talented singers and the *JO* is pleased to share their stories with our readers.



"I realized I could sing well the day my elementary school music teacher came to my house to inform my parents that I was not like the other children in my class," recalls **Ashira Zehavi**. "I was able to read and learn music on my own at the age of nine as well as sing in harmonies that I improvised. Before that visit, I had no idea that what I did with music was special in any way." Ashira studied classical voice and earned a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University and a Masters of Music from the San Francisco Conservatory. She felt that the best way to become a great prayer leader was to learn how to pray well. "I

sought out a community that I loved and learned the service they led," she says. She then began the Davenen Leadership Training Program. "This training was a great adventure in learning the parts of the service and being encouraged to lead them in new and creative ways. It was also deeply spiritual." She began cantorial studies at the Academy for Jewish Religion, where she realized how much she wanted a traditional Jewish education in prayer and in life. "This led me to transfer to the Jewish Theological Seminary. My first year of study in Jerusalem was life-changing. I immersed myself in traditional, egalitarian Jewish prayer and studied the prayer services of Reform, Renewal, Conservative, Orthodox, Ashkenazic and Sephardic traditions. I also got to experience secular and liturgical middle eastern music performed by fantastic, passionate artists. It was heavenly." While living in Israel, Ashira participated in multiple recording projects as singer, music director and vocal coach. She also began composing music, both secular and liturgical, in Hebrew and English, including a service of music for Kabbalat Shabbat with harp and piano accompaniment which she composed and led with her husband throughout their last year in Jerusalem.

"Leading people in prayer through song is a calling for me," Ashira says. "It is something I fell into as a child and has shaped my life and my musical expression ever since. I love bringing people into a space where they can relax their 'logic minds' for a while and connect with something larger than themselves that is good, holy and enveloping. This experience combined with the beautiful language, liturgy and customs of our Jewish heritage, is a gift I like to share with others. It sustains us in times of questioning and crisis and helps us celebrate the high points in life as well. It is an honor for me to be a part of that experience with others."



Norm Poltenson, whose lovely voice can be heard leading services at Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse, began singing with his junior and senior high school choruses. He also sang with a triple quartet as an undergraduate. "I was a baritone, but the group needed a second tenor," he recalls, "so I adjusted." He learned to daven by attending shul regularly and picking up the melodies. For the high holidays, he listened to old 33 rpm records and tapes to memorize chazonim that he liked. "Leading the service as the shaliach tzibur is a special feeling," Norm says, "because I have the weight of the congregation on my shoulders. I feel a heavy responsibility to offer the congregation's prayers."



"I'm not sure when I realized I could sing well," says **Rachel Jacobson**, "but I can remember always loving to sing, a passion that was nurtured by my mom and grandfather who both have beautiful voices and were always making up

songs." Like the others in this profile, Rachel learned how to lead Shabbat and holiday davening by going to shul every Shabbat and holiday with her family. She learned how to lead weekday davening as a camper at Camp Ramah in Canada and learned how to lead parts of High Holiday davening from a friend when she was living in Jerusalem. "Now every time I want to learn to lead a new part of high holiday davening, I have a network of friends I call on to share recordings and check my understanding of various parts of the service," she says. "I also use online resources like Mechon Hadar, Virtual Cantor and Open Siddur." Rachel enjoys leading services "because I am a very externally motivated person, so it's when I know that I'm responsible for the davening of others that I'm able to do my own best davening. I am an emissary for the congregation's tefilot to deliver them to God. That is what leading prayer is all about."



Singing came naturally to **Lisa Levens** also. "My mother said I sang before I could talk," she remembers. "When I was one year old, we travelled to California. When the plane touched down, I sang out full-voiced A-a-men! for all the passengers to hear. That was the beginning of my singing career." Lisa's mother bought her a guitar, and together they sat for hours singing and harmonizing

Hebrew folk songs. Lisa studied privately in the preparatory program at the New England Conservatory of Music. She sang with the Zamir Chorale in Boston for many years, as its youngest member, and was the lead singer in a wedding band.

But Lisa had never led a service until 2006. Fellow Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas congregant Alan Goldberg heard her sing and asked why she wasn't davening. "I told him I didn't know how," she recalls, "and he said, 'So learn.'" Lisa studied the Friday night service and led it for the first time at her daughter's bat mitzvah. Rabbi Ain asked her to lead a monthly Shirat Shabbat. Lisa joined the CBS-CS Adult B'nai Mitzvah class and taught herself to read Torah and Haftarah. Last year, Rabbi Pepperstone asked her to learn how to daven the High Holiday Shacharit Service, so she armed herself with CDs and a workbook and did. "I love davening Friday nights," she explains, "because I feel that I am lifting up the congregation. I am channeling spiritual energy and creating a sacred space, and I know that if I'm feeling it and letting go, then they will too." To enhance her Friday night services, Lisa has composed her own melodies to many of the prayers. These can be found on her YouTube channel.

Print cannot convey the beauty and spirituality of the voices of the singers profiled here.

To hear Norm Poltenson, you will have to go to STOCS, but Ashira, Rachel and Lisa all have an online presence:

Havdallah with Ashira and Rabbi Zehavi:

www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=233647757726250&ref=watch_permalink

Havdallah with Rachel Jacobson:

<https://www.facebook.com/templeadath/videos/740061223201753>

Lisa Levens on YouTube

www.youtube.com/channel/UCX5gxJYOzQiKnlKAHX2PbKQ

On each of the eight days of Chanukah we celebrate how your support of Federation impacts people's lives for good.



On the first night of Chanukah, let's celebrate Federation's support of Jewish education at the Day School, the Community Hebrew School and the Epstein School, assuring a knowledgeable and committed Jewish future.

On the second night of Chanukah, let's remember how Federation helps support and care for our seniors, through programs at Menorah Park, the Jewish Home and the Jewish Community Center.

On the third night of Chanukah, let's rejoice in the connections Federation gives our community through the *Jewish Observer*, Community Happenings, its website and, coming in 2021, an enhanced social media presence.

Tikkun olam, repairing the world, is a core Jewish value and a tenet of Federation. **On the fourth night of Chanukah**, let's be mindful of how Federation helps people in need around the globe.

On the fifth night of Chanukah, let's think about how Federation ensures that everyone has the ability to live Jewish life to its fullest by

supporting *Beit Tikvah*, a home for young women with disabilities, Jewish Family Service, the *mikvah*, the *Va'ad Ha'ir* and Kosher Meals on Wheels.

On the sixth night of Chanukah, let's see how Federation ensures that future generations learn to know and love Israel by travelling there, with Birthright and with local scholarships, to see for themselves what is so special about our Jewish homeland.

On the seventh night of Chanukah, let's be thankful for the young adults who are committed to social justice, giving back and paying it forward, through the Epstein School, the Teen Funders program and Hillel at Syracuse University.

As we light all the candles **for the eighth day of Chanukah**, let's recognize and thank all the professionals, lay leaders and volunteers in our synagogues, schools and agencies and organizations whose dedication and commitment exemplify all that is good and meaningful about Jewish life.

We especially thank the donors whose names appear on the Honor Roll on the following pages. You are the lights that keep our present and our future bright!

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MAZEL TOV



Mazel Tov

William Matthew Sisskind and Rebecca Jeanne Griffing were married on November 1st under a white birch chuppah, officiated by Rabbi Hausman, in an intimate family setting in the backyard of Becca's childhood home in Stoughton, Massachusetts. Will and Becca "tied the knot" on the date they had planned for their wedding and are looking forward to "tightening the knot" at their originally planned celebration at The Sapphire Estate of Sharon, Massachusetts in late April. Will is the son of Robin and Steven Sisskind. Becca is the daughter of Amy, and the late Robert Griffing, and the granddaughter of Sandra Koltz who was joyfully in attendance. Will and Becca live in Brooklyn where he is an instructional designer and she is pursuing her master's degree in education.

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B'TAY AVON!

Jewish Cook of the Month

Mitchell Malbouf is the executive chef at SkyTop Coffee. He is a recent graduate of Johnson and Wales University. Mitch has worked at some of the best restaurants in Providence, Rhode Island including Cafe Nuovo, 10 Prime and Milk Money. He's excited to be back home "and to bring amazing food with me."

Where did you learn to cook?

I learned to cook when I was young. I always grew up around the kitchen with my dad. My first memory is standing on a chair helping my dad grind tomatoes from our garden, and we (well, he) made the freshest sauce.

Why do you like to cook?

I like to cook because I like to change people's moods. Having the ability to help someone forget about their day, even if only for a bite, is so rewarding. Knowing that what I do could change someone's day is the whole reason I do it.

What is your favorite dish to prepare?

That's like asking someone their favorite song. I could give you a different answer each time, but my favorite style



of cuisine is Asian, because something about the technique and the flavors come together effortlessly.

What is your favorite cooking secret/trick/hack/shortcut?

Don't be scared of a sharp knife. If you don't have a honing rod or a wet stone, use the back of a ceramic plate to sharpen your edge.

Could you please share a favorite kosher recipe that isn't terribly complicated?

Grandma Ruth's Gefilte Fish

4 pounds of white fish (halibut, trout, snapper)
1 onion
garlic
3 eggs

Remove skin from fish, place in food processor, add water until desired texture, place in bowl.

Season with salt and pepper, add eggs and chopped garlic and onion. Mix and form into balls.

Boil until they float.

» Community Businesses

The *Jewish Observer* is proud to feature businesses owned by members of our community. This column is generously sponsored by RAV Properties.

Sitting Pretty:

SMITH CONTEMPORARY FURNITURE

When Jewish immigrants came to the New World, they began as peddlers and then moved into shopkeeping, opening a grocery, dry goods or general store, a shoe repair shop or a furniture store. Without a trade or a profession, the thing to do was to open a store.

That was the humble background for great success. The Jewish community of Central New York has a long and proud history in the furniture business, with stores such as Long-time residents will remember such stores as Rosenbloom's, Fleischman's, Markson's, Lipsy Brothers, Goldberg's and Raymour's. Today, there is Raymour & Flanagan, the ninth largest furniture seller in the United States.

Tucked away on East Water Street was another shop, established in 1932: Seymour D. Smith Decorating Center. It was primarily a paint and wallpaper store. Malcolm Smith, Seymour's son, came to work in his father's store after trying his hand at corporate life and not finding it to

his liking. He didn't plan to stay, but while he was there, he began to expand the store's offerings, upgrading the wallpaper lines, adding carpeting, flooring, drapery, tile and carpet. Everything except furniture.

Then an opportunity presented itself. The owner of Bronson Interiors at 3184 Erie Boulevard was thinking of selling, and Malcolm entered into lengthy negotiations to purchase the building and the business. The rest is furniture history. Smith Interiors, Ltd. was formed in 1997 as a combination of the former Bronson Interiors and Seymour D. Smith, Inc. Because the store was a direct importer of contemporary Scandinavian, Italian, German and French furniture and accessories, its name was changed to Smith Contemporary Furniture to better reflect what they offered: international, contemporary quality furniture.

Today Smith Contemporary Furniture is a unique specialty purveyor of exquisite



furniture not only in Central New York but throughout the world. From their showroom and through their website, they deliver to customers anywhere in the United States. "Every piece of furniture at Smith Contemporary is a unique design," emphasizes president Malcolm Smith, adding that they carry "furniture and mattresses at all different price levels" and "everything in the store is discounted."

Malcolm and his wife Sandy travel the globe seeking out pieces that are not only well-made but aesthetically pleasing. The store emphasizes good design and quality craftsmanship. Their showroom is a joy to visit because every piece of furniture at Smith Contemporary is stylish and distinctive. Stopping by is like visiting a museum of beautiful—and exquisitely crafted—modern furniture.

Temple Concord at the Intersection of a Move and a Pandemic

A congregation is not a building. For generations, the Jewish people have survived without a temple, worshipping wherever ten Jews could be found for a minyan. In Syracuse, congregations began atop stores, in church basements and in school cafeterias. Syracuse's oldest congregation, Temple Concord, the ninth-oldest Reform Jewish congregation in the United States, is currently in the process of finalizing the sale of its building on Madison Street in Syracuse and getting ready to relocate to temporary quarters and, ultimately, to a new home, but the congregation is vibrant and active. Moreover, Concord pivoted with amazing alacrity to a pandemic world.

As a member of the Union for Reform Judaism, Temple Concord offers a spiritual home for all, whether born or raised Jewish, a Jew by choice, an interfaith family or a same sex couple. Most recently, Rabbi Fellman reached out via Facebook to LGBTQ+ New Yorkers concerned about the continuance of marriage equality rights, offering to perform a socially-distanced ceremony in warm or cold weather, rain, snow or sunshine, "in a park, on my porch or on a hiking trail."

The pandemic caused almost all Concord's activities to shift to a virtual presence. Services moved to Zoom and Facebook live. Kabbalat Shabbat, Shabbat

and Havdalah services are held online, with Rabbi Fellman and Cantor Eglash leading a large contingent of congregants in song and prayer. For the High Holidays, Torah scrolls were delivered to *b'nai mitzvah* to continue the Temple's tradition of having teens read Torah on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

At the request of the Food Bank of Central New York, Concord now operates its food pantry in partnership with its neighbors, Grace Episcopal Church and University United Methodist Church. Its cultural programming has continued on Zoom, with online Torah and Talmud study, as well as author talks and Brotherhood and Sisterhood events. All of Concord's programs are open to the community.

The TC religious school switched to online learning. After a socially-distanced opening day at Ryder Park, the school continues at full throttle, with classes, *chugim* and electives. "Our founders may have imagined an energetic, diverse, socially conscious and spiritual congregation carrying on into the twenty-first century," says Temple president Sally Cutler, "but could they have imagined that we could carry on this way in the midst of a pandemic? Still, through the decades and centuries, Temple Concord has been, and endures as a house of learning, community and prayer."

Jewish Repertory Theater

It should come as no surprise that the artistic community, being creative by definition, should have developed novel ways of adapting to the harsh realities of the Age of COVID-19. While it is definitely strange to "attend" a performance of *Symphoria* and see the musicians encased in plexiglass or to "see" a play at Syracuse Stage from one's living room, at least these Central New York artistic institutions can be patronized now without worrying about driving in the snow or finding parking.

Another unique virus-engendered opportunity is the ability to enjoy productions of Jewish plays from the Buffalo Jewish Repertory Theater without driving three hours and planning an overnight stay. The Jewish Federation of Central New York is delighted to partner with JRT to bring this new opportunity to our community.

Tickets may be purchased at www.jewishrepertorytheatre.com. Upcoming productions are:

HOLIDAY SHORTS by Hank Kimmel, December 10 – 30, 2020. A set of offbeat, comic 10-minute plays featuring themes of the holiday season.

EXQUISITE POTENTIAL by Stephen Kaplan, January 7-27, 2021. All parents think their children are brilliant. Alan Zuckerman just happens to think his three-year-old son, David, is the Messiah.

AN UNEXPECTED LIFE by Alice Eve Cohen, Feb. 4 – 24, 2021. Hope, humor and an entertaining cast of characters are woven into a captivating memoir of a high risk, unanticipated pregnancy.

BEAU JEST by James Sherman, March 11-31, 2021. What's a nice Jewish girl to do when her parents expect her to marry a nice Jewish doctor even though she's already in love with another man?

CBS-CS Enjoys Virtual Visits from Around the Globe

by Joanne Villegas

Due to the pandemic, Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas has taken all service and event offerings to the world wide web including the high holidays. Through Zoom, CBS-CS has been able to open its doors to current and past members, even those who would need to drive for days to get to the sanctuary.

"Arleen and I had been members of CBS-CS for 35+ years before we moved to Portland, Oregon in June of 2009 to be closer to our daughter's family in Los Angeles and our son's family in Portland," says Bob Zucker. "CBS-CS has been and still is a meaningful place for us. We both were very active through the years, and I eventually became president. We had many friends and much of our social life focused around CBS-CS. We were delighted to join on the Zoom get-together and see some of our old friends." Linda Alexander, now also living in Portland, agrees. "I really enjoyed the virtual experience. I have missed the CBS-CS services since I moved away three years ago, so for me it was great to hear familiar tunes and see familiar faces on the Zoom."

Even the way *b'nai mitzvah* are celebrated has changed. Although the sanctuary is no longer teeming with people, through Zoom *b'nai mitzvah* families are surrounded by family and friends from around the world. Even the sourest of lemons have turned sweet after a surprise Zoom visit from former members who joined the festivities all the way from Israel.

From Oregon to Florida to Israel, Zoom has allowed CBS-CS members from around the globe to worship alongside friends and family. As its vision statement says, CBS-CS will continue to meet people where they are, Ba'asher hu sham, value collaboration, Shutfut, and always see Jewish life as a blend of tradition and innovation, Masoret/Hidush.

Learning Opportunities at Temple Adath Yeshurun

by Sonali McIntyre

Temple Adath Yeshurun is pleased to offer several learning opportunities to the members of its community. Rabbi Zehavi is offering several different opportunities for learning and growth. On Tuesday evenings, he teaches *Swimming in the Sea of Talmud* at 7:30 on Zoom. It is an exploration of the dynamic and textured expression of Rabbinic creativity. Thursday mornings, following morning services at approximately 8:10, there is an open discussion about prayer, based on the interests of participants. Thursday afternoon lends itself to *From the Depths: A Personal Journey through Psalms* at 5:00 on Zoom, in which participants engage in study of the Hebrew Bible's collection of devotional poetry – the book of Psalms. Following Thursday evening services at 6:30, Rabbi Zehavi offers a Torah reading class, where participants can gain and hone the skills to chant sacred text with the musical elaboration that has been passed down for millennia.

Cantor Jaffe has several uplifting, monthly programs including *Singing with the Cantor*, *Family Torah Experience*, and *Shabbat at Home Together*. *Singing with the Cantor* offers the opportunity to sing, listen and share music with one another. Each month she will focus on a different theme. The next session is Wednesday, December 9 at 7:30 pm on Zoom. *Family Torah Experience* is a time for parents and school-age children to join Cantor Jaffe for discussions and activities related to the Torah portions of that month. The next *Family Torah Experience* will be Saturday, December 5 at 4:00 pm on Zoom. *Shabbat at Home Together* is a monthly opportunity to join the Jaffe family for Shabbat blessings, a few songs and a virtual Shabbat dinner. The next *Shabbat at Home Together* will be Friday, December 18 at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

For Zoom information, email rabbizehavi@adath.org, ejaffe@adath.org, or info@adath.org, or visit www.adath.org.

» Book Reviews

New Kids' Books for Chanukah Reviewed by SHDS 6th Graders

Hanukkah Cookies with Sprinkles
reviewed by Jacob Fellman

Hanukkah Cookies with Sprinkles, by David A. Adler, is about a girl named Sara who gives food to someone who has less than her. She drops cookies off next to a little shop and a man picks them up and eats them. Sara ends up having her class prepare a bag of food for this man. If you want to know the ending, then you have to read the book. I liked this book because it has a good deed in it. I would recommend this book to little kids who like fun, tasty looking cookies, and kindness.



Honeyky Hanukah
reviewed by Julia Zames

I really enjoyed *Honeyky Hanukah* by Woody Guthrie and the pictures by Dave Horowitz. This book is poetry about the traditions of Chanukah: eating latkes, lighting Chanukah candles, and opening up presents! I listened to the song CD that comes with the book and reading with the music going was very nice. I would recommend this book to anyone from ages three and older who enjoys poetry! It was a really fun book to read!



The Parakeet Named Dreidel
reviewed by Benzi Ashkenazi

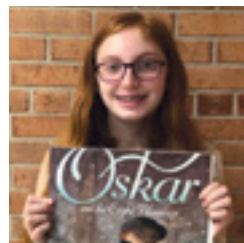
The Parakeet Named Dreidel was written by Isaac Bashevis Singer. A family is inside their house during Chanukah when all of a sudden,

a random parakeet flies in from the open window. The family lets the parakeet stay. The parakeet flies over to the table where the son and dad are playing dreidel. This random parakeet starts pushing the dreidel, and spins it, thus the nickname "Dreidel." They see this, and think it's maybe a circus animal. I know that this was created for younger audiences, so I would recommend this book to people around the ages of five to ten. I liked this book because it's short, and it has a very bittersweet ending.



Potatoes at Turtle Rock
reviewed by Rose Scheer

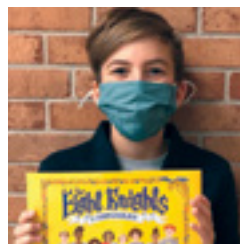
In *Potatoes at Turtle Rock*, by Susan Schnur and Anna Schnur-Fishman, a girl named Annie takes her family on a trip. It's snowing, so they celebrate Chanukah in the woods. Annie brings her family all around the woods. She planned four different stops. Read the book to find out what happens next! I liked this book because it was about a fun adventure. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes stories about family and being together. I really enjoyed this book!



Oskar and the Eight Blessings
reviewed by Makayla Seidman

Oskar and the Eight Blessings by Richard Simon and Tanya Simon is about a boy named Oskar. He gets sent by his parents to America by himself. His parents give him an address and a photo. When Oskar

gets to America, it is the seventh day of Chanukah and Christmas Eve. Read this book to find out what happens to Oskar. I like this book because it is during my favorite holiday, Chanukah. I recommend this book to fourth graders or anyone who wants to read more about the Holocaust.



The Eight Knights of Hanukkah
reviewed by Judah Eglash

In *The Eight Knights of Hanukkah*, by Leslie Kimmelman, eight knights have to save the town from a scary dragon. While they're doing this, they also have to help prepare for the Chanukah dinner. This book was really funny. I loved everything about it! The illustrations were so funny. I highly recommend it!



The Trees of the Dancing Goats
reviewed by Issy Weinberg

The Trees of the Dancing Goats, by Patricia Polacco, is about a family who is Jewish. It is wintertime and they are celebrating Chanukah. But unfortunately, there is a disease going around called scarlet fever, and all their neighbors have it. So their family does something special for the people who are sick, and it makes them very happy. I would recommend this book because it mixes two different religions into a very good book. I liked this book because it included goats in a very creative way. I recommend this book to anyone who likes realistic fiction and Jewish stories.

The Biblical Hero

by Elliott Rabin

Reviewed by Steven Kepnes



This is a fine book on an extremely interesting topic in the Bible, the virtues and vulnerabilities of heroes. The book has chapters on Moses, Samson, Esther, Abraham, Jacob, David, and interestingly, God! Rabin engages with both the Bible and Rabbinic midrash as well as figures from Western literature to unearth new characteristics and views of Biblical heroes. Rabin mentions one factor of Biblical literature that makes Biblical heroes excellent subjects for interpretation and that is the lack of descriptive detail about them. What does Moses look like, what clothes does he wear? How does Sara feel when Abraham takes Isaac to Mt. Moriah to sacrifice him? Detail is sparse and internal feelings often unclear. However, what seems to be a lack in narrative detail is a gain for the imagination of the reader and the interpreter. The characters gain richness and complexity as they are incessantly interpreted through the ages.

Rabin discusses how and why it is that we are fascinated by heroes. And he suggests that they give us models and exemplars for how we want to live. They tell us that we, too, can be heroes. Most notably with Biblical heroes, they are believable for us precisely because they are not perfect. Like us, they make mistakes and stray from the path. Moses is short-tempered, Samson is arrogant, Jacob deceives his brother for his birthright. But these figures earn their status precisely because of their strength of character, their perseverance and grit. Sometimes it is not clear why it is that they are chosen as heroes, even to themselves. Sometimes, when they make moral mistakes they call out for our judgment. Here, there is something that God might see in them that we do not see. But this too makes reading about them interesting. Rabin offers us the Biblical heroes as spiritual models for ourselves today and this makes his book wonderful to read and ponder.

Steven Kepnes is Professor of Religion and Jewish Studies, Director of Chapel House, Colgate University. He is a member of Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevre Shas and Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse.

Getting Away From It All

“Travel increases your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.” This dire warning on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention homepage has plunged many into despair, particularly as weather forecasters predict a very snowy Central New York winter. But armchair travel through reading can bring escape, as two reviews on this page demonstrate.

As part of its Regina F. Goldenberg Author Event series, Temple Concord will present Sue Eisenfeld, author of *Wandering Dixie*, on Sunday, December 20 from 3:30 to 5 pm. Mike Fixler previewed the book for *JO* readers.

Wandering Dixie: Dispatches from the Lost Jewish South reviewed by Mike Fixler:

“Sue Eisenfeld has elegantly written a memoir, travelogue and examination of a part of American Jewish history in *Wandering Dixie: Dispatches from the Lost Jewish South*. She travels to small towns that mostly have “lost” their Jewish populations, discussing key aspects of American history that touched those places. She has numerous encounters with the last vestiges of the Jewish communities and explores aspects of their history.

The key question the book confronts is: How did and do Southern Jewish people accept the South’s history of enslavement of Blacks and at the same time recognize the history of the Jewish people? As one descendant of Jewish slave owners says, “To me, it’s all history. We can’t do anything about history. I’ve spent my life apologizing for slavery.... It’s a heavy burden to live with.”

Eisenfeld presents her own introspection on these issues, as well as an examination of her thinking about Judaism then and now. Throughout the book, we find that we have gotten to

know the author and lived with many of the issues with which she has grappled. She spends a good deal of time in Charleston (not one of the lost Jewish communities), a city where Judaism thrived early on in the United States. But Charleston is also the place where the Civil War began, and this gives her a chance to really come to face the inconsistencies of Jewish people owning slaves and reading from the *Haggadah*. She says at one point, “I struggle to recall if I ever felt more like a stranger in a foreign land in my own country as I felt here.” Eisenfeld has painted a vivid picture, and reading this book will take one along on the journey with her.”

Another book that seems designed for these trying times is *Exile: Portraits of the Jewish Diaspora* by Annika Hernroth-Rothstein. Jackie Miron reviewed this one for the *Jewish Observer*:

Exile: Portraits of the Jewish Diaspora by Annika Hernroth-Rothstein reviewed by Jackie Miron “At a time when international travel is all but halted, consider reading a book published in January 2020 just before the global pandemic grounded us to our homes. *Exile: Portraits of the Jewish Diaspora*, by Annika Hernroth-Rothstein, will draw you into a portrait of two years of travel to little-known Jewish communities throughout the Diaspora.

The Diaspora is a term familiar to Jews and is defined as ‘a scattered

population whose origin lies in a separate geographic locale...usually involuntary.’ It refers to dispersion from a homeland. Most of us are familiar with aspects of the 2000+ years of the Jewish Diaspora and the settling of Jews in the United States, Europe and Israel. Jewish people have displayed a continuity of strength, resilience and thriving throughout history. In *Exile*, Hernroth-Rothstein introduces us to Jewish people, culture and practices that show the heroism and perseverance of all kinds of Jewish people.

Exile will intrigue you, whether you are interested in history, religion, sociology or just plain travel. You will learn about the author’s time spent and interaction with small enclaves of Jewish people in intriguing and exciting places. You will love the descriptions of foods and meals and how they differ from place to place. The more you read, the more curious you will become and will begin to wonder where the author will bring you next. How about the Jewish diaspora in Morocco, Siberia, Uzbekistan, Cuba, Iran, Palermo, Finland, Sweden (the author’s home), Turkey and Venezuela?

All are included.

The diversity of time, experiences and stories makes the reading alluring, thought-provoking and exciting. It is also sad to learn of the fragility of some of the communities, their survival uncertain. It is surprising to learn of the relationship of the Jews to their fellow countrymen in majority Muslim places and what kinds of rules and restrictions are in place.

The book is short (208 pages), but engaging nonetheless, readable by all ages regardless of your individual practice of Judaism. In the most faraway places, Jews can find the unique commonalities of tradition, worship, history and culture which have kept us alive for so long.”

According to studies conducted by the *Journal of College Teaching and Learning*, 30 minutes of reading can lower one’s heart rate and blood pressure and reduce the psychological distress of social isolation during a pandemic. These two books offer enlightenment, enrichment and a chance to get away from it all.



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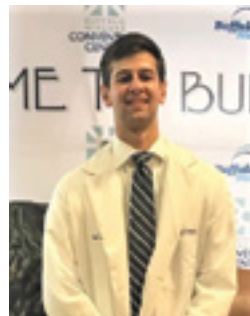
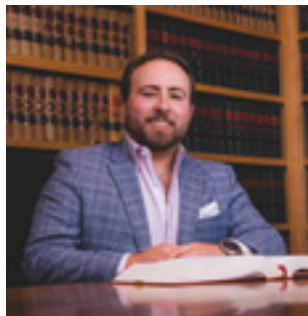
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Like Father/Mother, Like Son

There can be no greater compliment to a parent than to have a child follow in their footsteps. There can be no greater compliment to Central New York than to have young professionals chose to locate here to pursue their careers. The *JO* is pleased to highlight three young professionals who have made both of these wonderful choices.

“I never expected to be a lawyer, let alone join my dad’s practice,” recalls Alex Fischer. “I spent my whole life telling myself I would not be a lawyer.” After rejecting a planned engineering career, Alex began to rethink his options, affirming that he “most definitely would not follow in my father’s footsteps and return to Syracuse to attend law school at Syracuse University.” In 2018, attorney Alex Fischer became the newest member of the legal team at Hill and Fischer, P.C., having earned his law degree from the Syracuse University College of Law. Alex joined the firm founded by his father to provide legal counsel in the areas of estate planning, real estate and traffic law. He enjoys working with his dad “because although we tend to focus on different areas, real estate vs. estate planning, they intersect quite a bit. I get the benefit of seeing my father on a regular basis, and he provides me with a



huge advantage in terms of practicing law and managing a business. I have not had to make the mistakes he did as a burgeoning attorney thanks to his mentorship and advice.” For his part, Seth Fischer says, “I am a very lucky man to have such a wonderful addition to our practice. Since joining my firm, Alex has brought a great new perspective and has already grown his side of the practice enormously.”

Dr. Karen Lawitts was born and raised in Syracuse. She received her D.D.S degree from Northwestern University, completed a post-doctoral dental residency program at Upstate Medical Center and opened her own practice. This year she was thrilled to announce that her son, Dr. Joshua Wolhandler, had joined her practice. Josh received his dental degree from Indiana University and completed his dental

residency at Miami Valley Hospital in Dayton, Ohio. His dental interests include cosmetic dentistry, pain management and helping patients who have fear of the dentist. He attended the Rochester Institute of Technology, majoring in finance. After briefly working in that field, he decided to pursue a career in dentistry. His wife, Dr. Katie Fiori, is a fourth year OB/GYN resident in Cincinnati, who will be joining him in Syracuse next summer. They enjoy playing tennis together, skiing and cooking elaborate meals at home.

Alex Fischer and Josh Wolhandler have been friends since both were students at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School. Alex also got married recently, to the former Rachel Bocard, who just earned her doctorate in physical therapy and is practicing in Syracuse. Josh was Alex’s best man and

Alex was one of Josh’s groomsmen. Like Josh, Alex finds Central New York a great place to live, noting that “Many of my friends and family are still here or have returned to the area and it has been advantageous in parlaying my area connections into expanding my practice.” Josh adds, “The sense of community that Syracuse and the surrounding area has to offer is one of the many reasons I decided to move back.” One of his goals is to give back to the community to those that need it most.

Also following in parental footsteps is another SHDS graduate, Corey Stein. Corey did his undergraduate work at SUNY Geneseo and is expected to graduate from SUNY Buffalo School of Dental Medicine in 2023. His dad, Dr. Jeffrey Stein, graduated from the same school 23 years earlier, did additional training at the Eastman Dental Institute at University of Rochester and completed a residency at Columbia University, receiving a specialty certificate in endodontics in 1990. “I’m excited that Corey is following the same path I did,” says his dad. “I hope that he will enjoy his chosen profession.” Corey is definitely looking forward to it. He chose to go to dental school “because it seemed interesting to work with your hands a lot, and seeing my dad be in charge of his own work schedule and watching him in practice definitely lead me to make dentistry my profession.”

The Epstein School’s Most Illustrious Alumnus: Rabbi Daniel Lehmann

“Judaism views education as one of the primary joys of life,” said Dan Lehmann in a 1980 *JO* interview about the Rabbi Jacob H. Epstein School of Jewish Studies. “In fact, Heaven is described as a place of perpetual study.”

Forty years later, Rabbi Daniel Lehmann has himself added immeasurably to the joys of Jewish education, creating heavens of study in many places. He received his undergraduate degree in philosophy from Yeshiva College. He then earned rabbinic ordination from The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. While at Yeshiva, Lehmann helped establish and led the KIRUV program, a Jewish educational outreach program for college students. He then served as an educator and Rabbi at the Beth Tfiloh Congregation and Day School in Pikesville, Maryland where he also served for several years as the principal of the Upper School. After 8 years at Beth



Tfiloh, he and his wife, Dr. Lisa Lehmann, together with their three children moved to the Boston area where Rabbi Lehmann was recruited to be the founding headmaster of the New Jewish High School of Greater Boston, now Gann Academy. While at Gann he also founded and directed the Berkshire Institute for Music and Arts and created the North American Association of Jewish High Schools

and the national Moot Beit Din program.

Lehmann received the prestigious Covenant Foundation Award for Jewish Education in 2001 and that same year received the Benjamin Shevach award in Jewish educational leadership from Hebrew College. He taught at the Shalom Hartman Institute where he co-founded the Training Institute for Community High Schools of North America, the *Melamdin* Jewish day school teacher training program and the *Hevruta* Gap Year program. He also taught at the Center for Learning and Leadership founded by Rabbi Irving Greenberg, where he was a Wexner Heritage Foundation fellow. He served as the eighth president of Hebrew College in Newton, Massachusetts and as board chair of the Boston Theological Institute. In 2018, he became president of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, the first non-Christian to head the institution. He resigned that position when his pro-Israel views aroused opposition.

Rabbi Lehmann has always been a proponent of pluralistic Jewish education. He earned a Ph.D. in Education and Jewish Studies from New York University with a dissertation on theologies, philosophies and pedagogies of pluralism and their application to Jewish and general education. In an article significantly entitled, “The Promise of Community High Schools,” he asked, “Is it not a fundamental tenet of our tradition that moral refinement is created out of the dialectic interplay of opposing perspectives? . . . [Pluralism provides] an opportunity to create a new type of Jewish interchange that can shape a generation of Jews who understand the particularity of their own commitments in the context of the broader Jewish community.”

The Rabbi Epstein School is enormously proud of the many accomplishments of this distinguished graduate and grateful to have played a small (but perhaps significant) part not only in *his* Jewish education but in that of so many Jewish teens in Central New York for half a century.

Mitch Gelman



Mitch Gelman may be the only Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist to live in Central New York. He was awarded this prestigious honor for breaking-news reporting in 1992. Breaking news and breaking barriers seem to be Mitch's specialty. He produced the first VR (virtual reality) experience for a traditional news organization at the USA TODAY Network, and created a room-scale VR exhibit featuring the Berlin Wall and the Unabomber investigation at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. He was co-founder of Teleport Media, an immersive storytelling production company that worked with Warner Bros. on an eSports-based virtual reality drama series, and of 360videosource.com, a stock footage marketplace for 360-degree video. He was the first editor-in-chief of ESPN.com, a reporter for New York *Newsday* and a consultant for the John S. and James K. Knight Foundation. He helped lead CNN into digital media, has written books and articles on criminal justice, politics, economics, health care, culture and sports, and taught interactive media at the School of Global Communications and Journalism at Morgan State University.

Mitch did his undergraduate work at UC Berkeley, studied economic history at the London School of Economics and executive finance at the Harvard Business School and attended the National University of Singapore on a Rotary Foundation Fellowship. He's a native New Yorker who grew up in Greenwich Village. So how did Central New York get so lucky as to have him move here?

The Yiddish word *besher* means destiny and there is an element of destiny in the coming of this New York City-born, California-bred multi-talented media executive to head WCNY, our local public broadcasting network. His credentials certainly matched a need: "Mitch has a wealth of experience

in the traditional and digital broadcast industries that will help WCNY undergo a digital transformation," said Jeff Scheer, WCNY board chair, announcing his appointment. But there were other attractions: Mitch's wife, Melissa, has family roots in Binghamton, they had a cabin in New York State while they worked at CNN (Melissa is now a veterinarian), and their son loves hockey and fishing.

But what really mattered was what Mitch describes as the ethos of Central New York: "People here take pride in lifting one another up." Having spent most of his career in competitive high-power environments like New York City, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., Mitch didn't realize he was searching for something different – until he got here. He describes the infectious appeal of the CNY ethos, explaining that it inspires questions like, "How can a public broadcaster tell our stories and reflect our community?" and "How can we play a part in raising our region's profile and telling the stories of remarkable people doing selfless things?" One result of these questions was WCNY's "Inspiring New York" series, composed of interstitials that focus on acts of random kindness.

Mitch's desire to focus on acts of loving kindness may reflect his Jewish background. He was particularly influenced by his grandmother, Frances Golden, an active Jewish-community leader, and his mother, Rita Golden Gelman, author of more than 70 children's books, including *Queen Esther Saves Her People*. Mitch believes strongly in the value of family and in giving opportunities to others. He wants to impact the community in multiple, multicultural, multifaceted ways. He also sees a great role for technology in both Jewish and community outreach, having recently attended his first "Zoomitzvah."

Reflecting on their move to the Central New York and the opportunities it has provided his family, Mitch notes, "We are fortunate to be where we feel both welcome and needed. Sometimes you don't choose a place; it chooses you." We made a good choice.

Sidney Manes



Twelve years ago, attorney Sidney Manes was honored for 50 years of distinguished service by the Federal Bar Association. That did not mean, however, that he intended to retire and rest on his laurels. Today, at 94, Sid still practices law, working at Bousquet Holstein for businesses and organizations in need of legal representation on matters involving environmental law, land use, zoning, eminent domain and administrative agency law.

With over 40 years of experience in local, state and national environmental law, Sidney is an exceptional litigator who has been involved in many of New York State's most influential environmental decisions. He has successfully represented waste recovery companies, emergency response agencies and individuals exposed to hazardous materials. He was among the first lawyers to review and lecture on the National Environmental Policy Act, and helped shape the New York State Environmental Section for both the New York State and Onondaga County Bar Associations. He frequently lectures at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry on environmental regulations and court structure. He also found time to volunteer as a board member of the Manlius Greenspace Coalition, the New York State Hazardous Waste Task Force, the Onondaga County Environmental Management Council and the Federation Campaign Cabinet. And he was an official of the United States Tennis Association and a Northern NY Federal District Court Evaluator.

Sidney's commitment to his Jewish heritage is profound and influences everything that he does in life. Because he is Jewish, he says, "If I see an injustice or an inequity I shall respond and not turn away. I shall support and participate in rectifying what I perceive as a wrong or a denigration of another human being. I shall, by reason of my past, come

forward and provide testimony to defend a wrong and, by my contribution, make what was wrong, right. I am, as a Jew, prepared to accept the scorn to right the wrong and to stand with the accused or the bullied. I shall, as a Jew, never again not rise up, because I have been there."



Wishing you and your family a Happy Chanukah and a Healthy New Year!

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MARLENE KONSENS

October 28, 2020

Marlene Konsens, 73, of East Syracuse, died Wednesday, October 28, 2020 at Crouse Hospital, surrounded by her loving family. She was the daughter of the late Erno and Anna Weinstein.

Marlene was born in Hungry in 1947 and escaped during the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 with her family. After leaving a displacement camp in Austria, they emigrated to and settled in Syracuse, NY.

She was a graduate of Nottingham High School and worked as an Administrative Assistant for the Jewish Community Center and then with the NYS Banking Department. Marlene loved cooking, baking and being the typical Jewish mother taking care of everyone. She always left time to take long walks and of course spend time with her beloved children and grandchildren.

She is survived by her children, Tali Seinfeld, Vardit Smith, and Ziv (Anne Marie Smith) Konsens; grandchildren Michal Seinfeld, Asaf Seinfeld, Elliot Smith, Penny Smith, Max Konsens and Matthew Konsens; and brothers David and Imre Weinstein.

Graveside service and burial were conducted at Frumah Packard Cemetery. The family can be reached at taliseinfeld@gmail.com.

Contributions should be made to the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, 5655 Thompson Rd., DeWitt, NY 13214.

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HENRY FRANK GOLDNER

October 24, 2020

Henry Frank Goldner, 83, died on October 24 at Crouse Hospital. Born on February 24, 1937 in Syracuse to Lewis and Mintha Goldner, he had been a life resident of Syracuse.

Henry was a graduate of Nottingham HS, and Syracuse University. During his professional career he was the owner of Henry F. Goldner Accounting and Tax Preparation in Syracuse. He was a member of Temple Concord, a past 20Y district governor of Lions International, a current member of the Greater Manlius Lion's Club and a member of Mt. Sinai Masonic Lodge; he volunteered at Crouse Hospital Gift Shop.

His family includes his wife Susan of 37 years, children Tobey A. (Neal) Seidberg, Amy R. (Scott) Schaefer, Jon R. Goldner, Michael M. (Michele) Goldner; grandchildren Alyssa, Samantha, Jennie, Hali, and Jonathan; and his sister Faye Bette (Bernard) Rosenberg.

Private graveside services in Frumah Packard Cemetery were for the immediate family. Contributions in his memory may be made to Lions Club International Lionsclubs.org.

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SHEILA (PEARLMAN) FREEDMAN

October 14, 2020

Sheila (Pearlman) Freedman, sister of Carol Chottiner, daughter of Rose and Simon Keller, passed away on October 14, 2020 at the age of 72.

She graduated from Monticello High School and later attended Syracuse University for her bachelor's degree. She received her master's degree at New Paltz in special education as teacher of the visually handicapped. She worked at the Sullivan County BOCES as a teacher of the visually impaired.

Sheila valued the close relationships she had with some of her SU classmates. Every year, they would have a "reunion" where they spent the weekend together. She liked going to Broadway plays and dancing. Best of all, she loved being with her grandchildren and participating in their activities.

Sheila is survived by her sons Scott Pearlman (Kathy Lyons) and Jeremy Pearlman (Tara) and grandchildren Maddy, Gianna, Braden and Nathan Pearlman. She is also survived by her sister Carol Chottiner.

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JANE ELKIN

October 14, 2020



Jane Elkin, 96, died on October 14, 2020 at Menorah Park. Jane was a life resident of Syracuse. She was devoted to three things: her family, her faith, and her students.

Jane spent her lifetime teaching in the Liverpool public schools, especially at Nate Perry Elementary School, touching some families across two generations. As "Momma Bear and her Cubs" she set a standard for what a classical classroom education can and should look like, which is emulated even today.

That love of learning and teaching was extended into the Jewish community as she took a leadership role in so many different organizations. She was an integral part of the small Jewish community in North Syracuse, helping to organize and lead their school. She was a counselor and advisor for Young Judea. She was committed to Temple Beth El, serving as a leader on their board, and singlehandedly available to crochet any number of custom yarmulkas for whatever simcha was at hand. Jane was a passionate supporter of Hadassah, and made as many trips to Israel as her years allowed. She and her sister Libbie Eisen z"l were devoted and dedicated members of the Syracuse Jewish Cemetery Association, lovingly representing the Workman's Circle Cemetery for many years.

And, then there was her family, the reason she lived as she did. Jane was devoted to her parents, Abe and Dora, and forever bound to her sister Libbie. Her memory was like a steel trap when it came to who was related to whom and how, and her heart was extended to each as her own. She survived for many of these last years as that love was returned in kind by her devoted cousins Joe (Dale) Roth and their family, and Elaine (Dr. Lewis) Dubroff and their family, and from afar by her nephew Rabbi Robert (Debby) Eisen, her grandnephew Alex (Carly) Eisen and the most recent arrival, her great-grandniece Reese Brie Eisen.

Special thanks are extended to everyone at Menorah Park. Jane was the third generation of her family who was tended to by their caring hands.

Graveside services and burial were in Beth El Cemetery. Contributions in Jane's memory may be made to Hadassah or Menorah Park.

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ARNOLD S. GOLDSTEIN

October 23, 2020

Arnold S. Goldstein, 79, passed away peacefully on October 23, 2020 at The Inn at Menorah Park. He was born on July 10, 1941 in Boston and lived the majority of his life in Syracuse. He was predeceased by his parents, Philip and Charlotte Goldstein.

Arnold graduated from Northeastern University College of Pharmacy. He retired from Rite Aid Pharmacy after 25 years and continued working for them and Kinney Drugs part-time.

In his free time, he enjoyed his mineral and book business, The Showcase, woodworking, making stained glass art and soldering projects. He mastered any challenge presented.

After Arnie retired, he and Michele began their next adventure, visiting countries they had never been to.

During winter months they spent their time playing in warmer climates and making new friends. Their fondest memories were taking family vacations with their daughters while they were growing up, and later with their grandchildren.

His family includes his wife and best friend, Michele, his children, Jacquelyn (Dale) Johnson, Kimberly LaFrance, and grandchildren, Abigale and Matthew Johnson, and Kayden Pugh.

Private graveside services were held at Frumah Packard Cemetery on October 25. Contributions in Arnie's memory may be made to safehavenmuseum.com.

You were one of the good guys and we will forever miss our Papa, Eddie and Nutzy. We love you.

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