

» HONORING ACHIEVERS

Jewish Observer of Central New York

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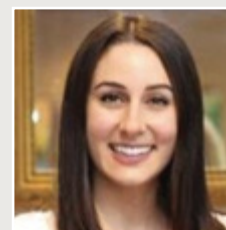
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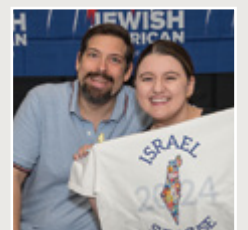
Jewish Humor



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From the Editor



Barbara Davis

Why an issue about Jewish humor? The war is not over; the pain has not subsided; the hostages have not been brought home; thousands have died.

The answer is that, as Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz has said, “Laughter has helped the Jewish people survive. Joy sits at the center of the Jewish soul” and “sometimes, laughter is the right way to grieve.”

It is summer. The days are long and warm. Our community and the entire Jewish world has struggled through a dark winter which seemed to last forever. We have experienced antisemitism and hate at first hand, even though we somehow thought it would never touch us. Teen travel to Israel this summer is down by 90%. Security is now a primary concern for everyone planning events and activities. People are anxious, afraid and wrought up as never before.

We need relief. “Humour is first cousin to hope,” said the always quotable Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. We need humor to allow us to imagine a better future, to imagine a time when we will not be weighed down and dispirited. “I like jokes because they are an unserious way of saying serious things,” Rabbi Sacks wrote. “They get past our defences. What we can laugh at, we can face.”

That’s why this issue is devoted to Jewish humor.

So what is Jewish humor? Jewish humor is said to be characterized by wordplay, irony and satire, with themes that are anti-authoritarian, mocking both secular and religious life. Freud considered Jewish humor unique in that it is primarily derived from mocking the in-group (Jews) rather than the “other.” Significantly, however, it is not just self-deprecating, but contains elements of self-praise. An article in My Jewish Learning, citing *The Big Book of Jewish Humor*, says that it is easier to say what Jewish humor is *not* than what it is. Jewish humor is not slapstick, not physical, not cruel and does not attack the weak or the infirm. It lists four characteristics of Jewish humor:

1. Jewish humor is usually substantive and frequently deals with topics such as food, family, business, antisemitism, wealth and poverty, health and survival.

2. Jewish humor tends to be anti-authoritarian. It ridicules grandiosity, self-indulgence, hypocrisy and pomposity, frequently with a satirical or critical edge.

3. Jewish humor frequently deals with the conflict between people and the power structure, whether it be the individual Jew within his community, the Jew facing the Gentile world, or the Jewish community in relation to the rest of humanity.

4. Jewish humor mocks everyone — including God.

In this issue of the *Jewish Observer*, we look at Jewish humor from a variety of perspectives: biblical humor, funny Jewish movies, Jewish joke books, humorous Jewish wisdom and, of particular note, Israeli humor and post-October 7th humor. Examples of the latter are very pointed. Comedian Alex Edelman, for example, spoofed Hamas’ call for a global Day of Rage by saying, “Yesterday was the day of resistance, today is the day of rage, tomorrow you rest, because you’re tired from all the rage, and then Sunday’s pizza, and then Monday you’re back to rage! And Tuesday’s obviously tacos.” An Israeli comedy show featured the following sketch, which opens at “Columbia Untisemity, where everyone is welcome—LGBTQH,” according to a university student with pink hair and face piercings. She explains that the “H” stands for “Hamas.” Another student, who wears a checkered keffiyeh and studies “queer post-colonial astrology,” chimes

in enthusiastically. “Yeah, I totally simp Hamas, it’s so trending right now.” They decide to video chat with a Hamas militant, expressing concern for his well-being while he berates them: “We will throw you from the roof, you homosexual dirt.” The students are delighted. “Did you hear? They want to throw me a rooftop party!”

While this is not everyone’s cup of comic tea, these examples illustrate the truth of the observation by Israeli comedian David Kilimnick that “the Jewish people in general, and the Israeli people in particular, have experienced our fair share of tragedy. Some feel that this is the secret to Jewish humor. Hopefully, with time, we will not need to create laughter through tragedy. With time, we will be able to go back to our roots of laughing at the unexpected joys of life, telling the world, ‘We don’t care what you think. And that’s why we laugh.’” I write this as I sit here looking over a book published in 1950, two years after the creation of the State of Israel. The title? *Israel Laughs*. By Paul Steiner, the book is “A collection of humor from the Jewish State” and the author of the foreword declares it to offer “the comforting, healing quality of humor in the most tragic of trials” and “an oasis of laughter to the struggling, fighting people of the new Jewish State.” 74 years later, the words resonate.

Jewish humor is very special because it serves a purpose that transcends mere comedy. Again, to quote Rabbi Sacks, “Precisely because the threat [is] so serious, you refuse to be serious – and in that refusal you are doing something very serious indeed. You are denying your enemies a victory. You are declaring that you will not be intimidated... You surround yourself with the single most effective antidote to fear: joy in life itself.”

We sincerely hope that you will enjoy this issue of the *Jewish Observer* and will take it in the spirit in which it intended.

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From the Jewish Federation of CNY President/CEO



Michael Balanoff

We recently received a demographic snapshot of our community from the Jewish Federations of North America, developed using large scale data sets from machine learning paired with processing by the JFNA research team. While nothing earthshaking was revealed, many of our previously-held assumptions about our community were verified by this report. Our community was compared to other intermediate size communities and to all communities in computing the profile.

In terms of age ranges in Central New York, we are slightly above in the 18-24 range, average or slightly above average in the 25-54 age range, slightly below average in the 55-64 range, above average in the 65-75 range and below average in the 75+ bracket.

In terms of length of residence, we are well below average in terms of people living here from 0 to 5 years and well above average in terms of people living here for more than 10 years. We are below average in terms of people having kids in their household (only 25%) and average in that 55% of our cohort is married.

When it comes to income, we find that 55% of our population have incomes over \$150K, which is average and only 30%, which is below average, have incomes under \$50K. 40% of our demographic have wealth over \$750K, which is average, and 40% have wealth under \$25K, again average.

So this confirms what we already knew. We are not an exceptionally wealthy community, we are not a community with a lot of families with young children, and we are a stable community. Fortunately, we do not have a lot of poverty, although we do have a significant number of family units with wealth under \$25K.

What is concerning, however, is that this study estimates that our overall population is 9,400 Jewish individuals including children and does not include “seasonal populations,” which we assume means SU students. In the past, our community was estimated to number 11,000 individuals, and clearly the numbers have declined.

We really didn’t need a survey to confirm this. The evidence has been clear all along. Our synagogues’ memberships have shrunk; schools which once instructed 120 students each year now teach 60 students annually; the JCC’s membership, though larger than ever, is composed of 60-70% non-Jews. Jewish organizations like Hadassah and Naamat have disappeared, as have congregations

like Temple Beth El and Ner Tamid.

This does not mean, however, that our community is not thriving. As our board chair Neil Rosenbaum frequently reminds us, we are not “down-sized,” we are “right-sized” and like Goldilocks, many of us think that Jewish Central is not too big, not too small, but just right.

Comparisons are odious. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, that phrase has been around since 1440 and has been pirated by Cervantes, Marlow, Dunne and, of course, Shakespeare. The Bard rephrased the saying in “Much Ado About Nothing” by declaring “Comparisons are odorous.” In other words, they stink.

I have to admit, I am tired of having Central New York compared to other places – and, of course, found lacking as a result. Recently a friend was trying to dissuade his son from moving from Boston to Syracuse. He pointed out that Boston is home to the fourth-largest Jewish community in the country with 248,000 Jews, 190,600 adults and 57,400 children. The quarter-million Jews in Boston reside in approximately 123,400 household and the population has increased by approximately 5% since the start of the century. Central New York, by comparison, has 9,400 Jews, including children. Is it any wonder then that the Boston Federation raises over \$50 million dollars annually and our Federation raises \$1.5 million? Is it surprising that there are 14 Jewish day schools in Boston and we have one?

But what is the point of these comparisons? We are not Boston; we are not New York City; we are not Chicago; we are not Los Angeles. We are Central New York and we are pretty darn good. We are a full-service community, with synagogues serving every denomination, a Chabad house, a Hillel, a Jewish day school, a Jewish community supplementary school, a Jewish community high school, a Jewish community foundation and a Jewish community center. We have a Jewish community newspaper that was

ranked third best in the nation for overall excellence and a security program that is a model for the country. We don’t suffer by comparison with any other place. We are what we are and what we are is very good. We should be proud of it.

But the question that we must all address going forward is, now that the data are plain for everyone to see, what do we do differently going forward? Half of our community is older than 45, with 35% falling in the 55-75 age

range. These are our biggest donors. The bottom half of our community does not give as generously. How will we replace these donors as they age out? How will we replace them as members and volunteers? Will they need services, and can we provide them? What do we need to change and how do we go about doing it? How do we engage the younger generation the way their parents and grandparents were engaged? How do they envision the Jewish community of Central New York in the second half of the 21st century?

What are YOUR ideas??

Lions and Pomegranates Benefit for Magen David Adom



The women’s philanthropy groups of the Jewish Federation of Central New York recently held a fashion show and soiree, featuring the silk creations of local artist Katya Krenina, to benefit Magen David Adom. Federation Campaign Chair Nan Fechtner spoke about the importance of women’s philanthropy, noting that women are the drivers of family philanthropy. Katya then described her artistic journey from the Ukraine through success as an illustrator of Jewish children’s books to the fashion world of New York City, from where she is now headed to Paris followed by shows in Milan, London and Dubai. Guests enjoyed the beautiful models and outfits and a lovely shopping experience, the proceeds of which will benefit Israel’s emergency medical services.

Thoughts on *Shavuot* 2024

by Rabbi Ilan Emanuel,
Temple Concord

One of my favorite Talmudic stories tells of Rabbi Baroka of Huza who enjoyed visiting the local marketplace. One day he bumped into the prophet Elijah there (as you do!) and the rabbi asked, "Is there anyone here who will have a share in the world to come?" Elijah started to say no, but then two people entered the marketplace and Elijah answered, "Those two will have a share in the world to come!" Curious, Rabbi Baroka asked the two, "What is your occupation?" "We are jesters," they replied. "When we see a person who is sad, we cheer them up. And, when we see two people quarreling, we try to make peace between them."



Jewish history is full of difficult and challenging times, dark realities and relentless enemies. Yet despite it all, Jews and Judaism have always been uniquely focused on hope. A significant element of that has been a focus on humor and laughter. When Abraham and Sarah are told they will have a child in their senior years after so long trying, Sarah cannot help but laugh. The Talmud tells us that the great teacher Rabba began his classes with a series of jokes to make his teaching more effective and that even God dedicates an hour a day to laughter. And

in modern times the joke is that a book on Jewish sports heroes would be a pamphlet, but a similar tract on Jewish humorists would fill volumes.

Perhaps this focus on humor is not despite the dark times so many Jews have experienced, today and in the past, but because of them. Ecclesiastes tells us that there is a time to weep and a time to laugh and perhaps we laugh because otherwise we would cry, and laughter brings hope to difficult days. By making fun of the arrogant and self-important, we hope not to take them or ourselves too seriously. By laughing at the misfortunes and absurdities of life, we hope to lessen their sting. As a people so often put upon by the bullies of history, we hope, like the rabbi in *Fiddler on the Roof* when asked if there was a proper blessing for the tsar, that our humor can keep the tsar and other enemies "far away from us!"

A joke tells of a group of elderly retired people who gathered each morning at a café in Tel Aviv, sitting for hours discussing all the troubles of the world. Given the state of the world, the tone of their discussions was usually quite gloomy. One day Moshe startled the others by saying: "You know what? I'm an optimist!" The others were shocked but then one of them asked: "Wait a minute! If you're an optimist, why do you always look so worried?" Moshe responded: "You think it's easy being an optimist?"

It's not easy, but we are called to be optimists, to be jesters like those in the market in the Talmudic story, who bring joy and laughter to others and ourselves even in the face of a terrible world. In laughter we seek to maintain the hope we need, as our ancestors did in dark times of their own, to bring light and laughter into the world now and to work towards a future in which all can laugh and find peace together.

» BOOK REVIEW

***The Einstein Effect: How the World's Favorite Genius Got into Our Cars, Our Bathrooms, and Our Minds* by Benjamin Cohen**

Reviewed by Michael Gordon, Ph.D.

If you search for Albert Einstein on Facebook, you'll be one of more than 20 million devoted souls who follow him, knowing full well that he died in 1955. From beyond the grave, this most celebrated of all scientists will post photos, articles about his work, interviews of those he's inspired, responses to questions and more – all thanks to his modern-day avatar and whisperer, Benjamin Cohen.

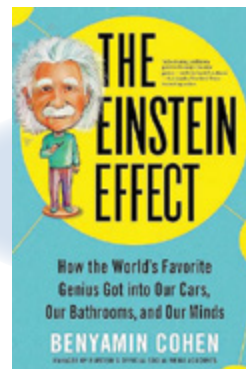
This 40-something Jewish writer who lives in the hills of West Virginia spends much of his days being Einstein, without the genius part (he describes himself as "at best, a likable idiot"). Under the auspices of the Einstein Archives at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, an institution Einstein co-founded, Cohen manages the legendary genius's social media pages. He also wrote a funny and eye-opening book entitled, *The Einstein Effect: How the World's Favorite Genius Got into Our Cars, Our Bathrooms, and Our Minds*.

It is fair to wonder whether the world needs yet another book on Einstein. Professor Google will tell you that there are at least 2000 books on the topic, and more are released each year.

Cohen's rationale for writing this book seems twofold: 1) he has a unique

insight into Einstein's hold on the public imagination and scientific community given his ever-increasing popularity within social media; and 2) his access to the archives provides endless opportunities for offering insights into Einstein's genius as well as his ongoing influence on large swaths of modern life. In my opinion, the author succeeds in making this account of Time Magazine's "Person of the Century" a worthy addition to the burgeoning list of Einstein-related books.

Although I have long given up on retaining even a glancing understanding of Einstein's theories, Cohen has helped me appreciate how they continue to undergird new discoveries and inventions to this day. GPS, photoelectric cells, nuclear power, space travel and even paper towels were all based on Einstein's



theories. They keep exerting impact on research into black holes, time travel, quantum theory and other domains of theoretical physics.

Cohen details Einstein's profound influence on culture, from movies, television shows, art and even toys (I now have a high-end Einstein bobble-head doll in my office), to initiatives in philosophy, pacifism, civil rights, Zionism and humanitarianism. I also learned what I should have already known – that Einstein was the co-founder of the International Relief Council, the premier relief organization still at work today. Unlike so many other geniuses, he aimed to use his celebrity for good,

not for further self-promotion.

What I have always most appreciated about Einstein's legacy is his well-documented humility. This most famous and admired scientist in history seemed never to have taken himself seriously. He constantly made fun of himself while expressing amazement that he should be so celebrated. From his standpoint, he achieved success not by being the smartest, but by being imaginative and inquisitive. Cohen does an admirable job of illustrating how being down to earth can, among other things, promote a novel understanding of the universe.

In his writing, Cohen strives to emulate what he seems most to admire about Einstein – his boundless curiosity, playfulness and humanity. The author takes you on a kind of adventure as he tries to experience what it would be like to be Einstein (from walking around barefoot to letting his hair grow wildly). He also interviews people who have an Einstein connection – physicists searching for alien life, theorists working on time travel, directors of some of the many films that have an Einsteinian vibe and so on. It's a delightful journey.

The only issue I have with Cohen's work is that he doesn't expend much effort exploring some of the less admirable aspects of Einstein's life. For example, he was neither a faithful husband nor an attentive father, even though he had a reputation for being unusually accessible and supportive to those outside his family. He likely preferred to connect at the level of ideas, not emotions. If you're an Einstein, I suppose it's an understandable preference.

Biblical Humor

If Moses had received the Ten Commandments via text message:

- I. no1 b4 me. srsly.
- II. dnt wrshp pix/idols
- III. no omg's
- IV. no wrk on w/end
- V. pos ok ur m&d r cool
- VI. dnt kill ppl
- VII. :-X only w/ m8
- VIII. dnt steal
- IX. dnt lie re: bf
- X. dnt ogle ur bf's m8. or ox. or dnkey. myob.



HA HA!



Bloopers by Students writing about the Bible

- Noah's wife was called Joan of Ark.
- Jacob, son of Isaac, stole his brother's birthmark.
- Moses led the Hebrews to the Red Sea, where they made unleavened bread which is bread without any ingredients.
- The Egyptians were all drowned in the dessert. Afterward, Moses went up on Mount Cyanide to get the ten amendments.
- The seventh commandment is Thou shalt not admit adultery.
- Moses died before he ever reached Canada. Then Joshua led the Hebrews in the battle of Geritol.
- David was a Hebrew king skilled at playing the liar. He fought with the Finklesteins, a race of people who lived in Biblical times.
- Solomon, one of David's sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.

Biblical Riddles

What did God say after He created Adam?

"I can do better than that." And so, He created woman.

What kind of man was Boaz before he got married?

Ruth-less.

What did Adam and Eve do after being expelled from the Garden of Eden?

They raised Cain.

The ark was built in three stories. The top one had a window to let in light. How did the bottom two stories get light?

They used floodlights.

Which of God's servants was the most flagrant lawbreaker?

Moses, because he broke all 10 commandments at once.

Why didn't Noah go fishing?

He only had two worms.

How long did Cain hate his brother?

As long as he was able.



HA HA!!

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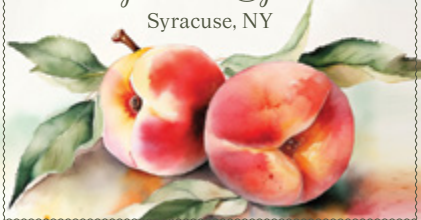
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Better Nutrition.
Better Eggs.®

Jewish Jokebooks are Serious Business

There's the *Official Jewish Joke Book*, *The Big Book of Jewish Jokes*, *The Ultimate Book of Jewish Jokes* and *The Mammoth Book of Jewish Jokes*. There are *Old Jews Telling Jokes* and *Jewish Jokes for Kids*. There's the *Kosher Companion of Jewish Jokes* and *Jewish Jokes for the John*. There are books which are almost Jewish jokes: *A Priest and A Rabbi Walked into A Bar* and *Some of My Best Jokes are Jewish*. There are compendiums of Jewish jokes from Alan King, Isaac Asimov, Jackie Mason, Sarah Silverman, Topol and Milton Berle. There are Jewish joke calendars, Jewish wedding jokes, Jewish joke eBooks and even jokes for the weekly Torah portion. There are scholarly tomes like Joseph Telushkin's *Jewish Humor*, Arthur Asa Berger's *Genius of the Jewish Joke*, *God Laughed: Sources of Jewish Humor* by Hershey H. Friedman and Linda Weiser Friedman, *The Haunted Smile* by Lawrence J. Epstein, *Shtick Shift: Jewish Humor in the 21st Century* by Simcha Weinstein and *No Joke* by Ruth R. Wisse. There's even a book titled *God has Brought Me Laughter* by Steve Sheffey which contains jokes for each of the weekly Torah portions. The Friedmans note that "the people of the book may truly be the people of the joke as well."

What makes a joke Jewish? Rabbi Telushkin says "Obviously, it must apply to Jews, but more significantly, it must express a Jewish sensibility. Merely giving individuals in a joke Jewish names, or ascribing the joke to Jewish characters, does not a Jewish joke make." "Jewish humor," says Lawrence Epstein "is tinged with a sadness. It is haunted by the Jewish past, by the deep strains in American Jewish life – the desire to be accepted and the concern for a culture disappearing – by the centuries of Jewish life too frequently interrupted by hate."

Few aspects of Jewish life escape joke treatment: family, relations with God, antisemitism, assimilation, relationships with gentiles, stereotypes and much more. "By laughing at the absurdities and cruelties of life, writes Nathan Ausubel, in his *Treasury of Jewish Humor*, "we draw much of the sting from them." The funniest Jewish jokes reflect the pride Jews take in being quick-witted. "The abiding themes of Jewish humor are not sex and superiority," writes Jim Holt in *Stop Me If You've Heard This*, "but logic and language." Jewish jokes will provide great entertainment for you and all to whom you retell them.

Rabbi Rabinovitz answers his phone.

"Hello?"

"Hello, is this Rabbi Rabinovitz?"

"It is."

"This is the Internal Revenue Service. Can you help us?"

"I'll try."

"Do you know Sam Cohen?"

"I do."

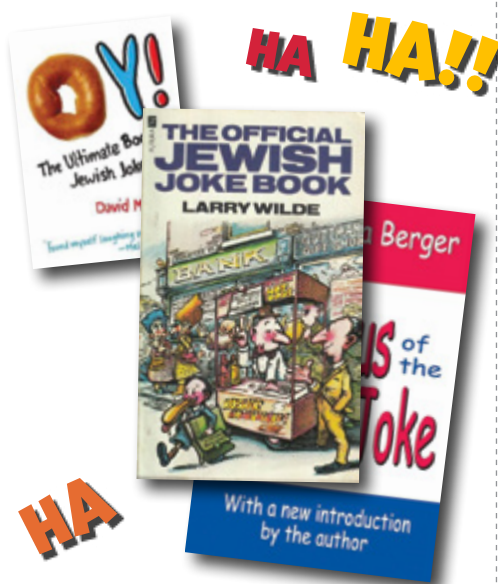
"Is he a member of your congregation?"

"He is."

"Did he donate \$10,000 to the synagogue building fund last year?"

"He will!"

Morris calls his son in Chicago and says "Benny, I have something to tell you. However, I don't want to discuss it. I'm merely telling you because you're my oldest child, and I thought you ought to know. I'm divorcing your mother." Benny is shocked and asks his father to tell him what happened. "I don't want to get into it. My mind is made up," replies his father. "But Dad, you just can't decide to divorce Mom after 54 years together. What happened?" "It's too painful to talk about. I only called because you're my son, and I thought you should know. Call



your sister and tell her. It will spare me the pain." "But where's Mom? Can I talk to her?" "No, I don't want you to say anything to her. I haven't told her yet. But I've made my decision. I have an appointment with my lawyer on Friday." "Dad, don't do anything rash. I'm going to take the first flight home. Promise me that you won't do anything until I get there." "Well, all right, I promise. Next week is Passover. I'll hold off seeing the lawyer until after the seder. Call your sister and break the news to her. I just can't bear to talk about it anymore." A half hour later, Morris receives a call from his daughter who says that she and her brother and their families will be arriving the day after tomorrow. "Benny told me that you don't want to talk about it on the telephone but promise me that you won't do anything until we both get there." Morris promises. After hanging up, Morris turns to his wife and says, "Well, it worked this time, they're coming for seder, but we are going to have to come up with a new idea to get them here for Rosh Hashanah."

Jews, Cartoons and Comics

Jews and cartoons have a long and illustrious history. Jews created the first comic book, the first graphic novel, the first comic book convention, the first comic book specialty store, the underground comix movement, MAD magazine and some of the most famous comic book heroes including Superman, Spiderman, X-Men and Batman. And that does not even touch on the role of Jews in the animated cartoon world.



At the beginning of the 20th century William Randolph Hearst had his political cartoonist, Frederick Burr Opper (Jewish) draw a comic strip called "Happy Hooligan" and a later series called "Alphonse and Gaston." Moses Koenigsberg (also Jewish) started King Features Syndicate in 1913 and it became the largest worldwide distributor of comic strips. In 1914, Harry Hershfield (Jewish) introduced Abie Kabibble, "the wandering Jew taking a short rest in the suburbs of the world." "Abie the Agent" was called "the first adult comic strip in America."

Many of the most prominent practitioners of comic strip creation were and are Jewish: Al Capp (Alfred Gerald Caplin), Jules Feiffer, Rube (Reuben Lucius) Goldberg, Milt Gross, Jerry Siegel, Joe Shuster, Sam Leff, Moe Leff, Mel Lazarus, Jerry Marcus, Hy Eisman, Howard Schneider, Irwin Hasen, Will Eisner, Art Spiegelman, Al Hirschfeld, Herblock, R. Krumb, Jeffrey Katzenberg, Saul Steinberg, William Steig, Carl Rose, Syd Hoff, Anatole Kovarsky, Mischa Richter, Dave Pascal, Abe Birnbaum, Al Roth, Barney Tobey and Roz Chast.

The origin story of Jews and cartooning is not especially funny. According to comics legend Al Jaffee, Jewish illustrators and writers entered the comic-book field because other areas of commercial illustration were closed to them. "We couldn't get into newspaper strips or advertising; ad agencies wouldn't hire a Jew," he says. "One of the reasons we Jews drifted into the comic-book business is that most of the comic-book publishers were Jewish. So there was no discrimination there." Will Eisner, another legendary cartoonist, adds that the comic book business was "the bottom of the social ladder, and it was wide open to anybody. Consequently, the Jewish boys who were trying to get into the field of illustration found it very easy to come aboard.... Creating comic books appeared to be a way out of poverty and into a legitimate, hopefully lucrative, artistic career."

There is a plethora of books about Jews and the comic book field. Here is just a sample: *Disguised as Clark Kent: Jews, Comics, and the Creation of the Superhero* by Danny Fingeroth, *From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books* by Arie Kaplan, *Jews and American Comics: An Illustrated History of an American Art Form* by Paul Buhle, *Up, Up, and Oy Vey: How Jewish History, Culture, and Values Shaped The Comic Book Superhero* by Simcha Weinstein, *Superman Is Jewish?: How Comic Book Superheroes Came to Serve Truth, Justice, and the Jewish-American Way* by Harry Brod, and *Is Superman Circumcised?: The Complete Jewish History of the World's Greatest Hero* by Roy Schwartz. Reading about this topic is fascinating and funny too.

“I’ll Have What She’s Having”

by Sam Young

Woody Allen begins his 1977 Academy Award-winning movie “Annie Hall” with the following dialogue: “There’s an old joke. Two elderly women are at a Catskills mountain resort, and one of ‘em says: ‘Boy, the food at this place is really terrible.’ The other one says, ‘Yeah, I know, and such small portions.’” Allen continues: “That’s essentially how I feel about life. Full of loneliness and misery and unhappiness, and it’s all over much too quickly.”

In many ways, these few lines typify Jewish humor in the movies. Jewish humor has long permeated American cinema, especially comedy movies, for nearly the entire century-long history of the “talkies,” and certainly for the last sixty years. For a people who occupy only 2-3% of the American population, our humor has had an outsized role in American cinema.

Jewish immigrants and their children founded and ran the major Hollywood studios: Paramount Pictures (Adolph Zuckor), Fox (William Fox), MGM (Louis B. Mayer), Warner Brothers (Harry, Albert, Sam and Jack Warner), RKO (David Sarnoff) and Columbia (Harry and Jack Cohn and Joe Brandt). In its early days, when other professions and industries were closed to Jewish immigrants, Hollywood was wide open. And American Jews flocked to this industry, finding jobs as producers, directors, writers, actors and agents. As comedian Dave Chapelle recently quipped on SNL: “I’ve been to Hollywood... It’s a lot of Jews. Like, a lot.”

At first, the Jewish studio heads were hesitant about producing content that would be seen as “too-Jewish” or niche. After all, in the early days of film, going to the movies was a ritual enjoyed by an estimated 90 percent of Americans. The content being produced by the studios had to be something that was relatable and enjoyable by the broad swath of the movie-going public.

But as Jewish voices began to emerge and then dominate in the writing rooms, first in radio, then in television and movies, Jewish characters and humor took their place in American cinema. Writers like Mel Brooks, Carl Reiner, Neil Simon, Larry Gelbart and Woody Allen brought the humor of their life



experiences onto the small and big screens. Later generations of writers like Nora Ephron, Aaron Sorkin and the Coen brothers picked up the torch and incorporated the Jewish humor of their upbringing into more universal stories. Before the 1950s and 1960s, it was rare to see Jewish characters, subject matter and humor depicted in Hollywood productions. However, as the civil rights movement of the 1960s gave way to multicultural awareness of the 1970s and 1980s, Hollywood became more comfortable telling Jewish stories, especially through humor.

Common elements of Jewish humor in film include all of the following: self-deprecating humor and self-analysis (Woody Allen, Neil Simon), witty, fast-paced dialogue (Aaron Sorkin, Coen brothers), in-group jokes and tropes (Mel Brooks), and over-the-top physical humor and farce (Mel Brooks, Sasha Baron Cohen, and Adam Sandler).

Everyone has their own list of greatest Jewish-American comedies. While these lists can be controversial and much debated, here is mine:

The Producers (1967), written by Mel Brooks, starring Zero Mostel and Gene Wilder (two ethically challenged Broadway producers hatch a scheme to bilk investors out of their money by producing a guaranteed musical comedy flop, featuring a singing and dancing Hitler).

Annie Hall (1977), written by Woody Allen, starring Allen and Diane Keaton (angst-ridden Jewish intellectual writer pursues on-again/off again relationship with mid-western-raised Protestant free-spirit.)

The Frisco Kid (1979), written by Michael Elias and Frank Shaw, starring Gene Wilder and Harrison Ford (Western buddy-film, in which an Orthodox Rabbi from Poland is traveling cross-country to assume a pulpit in San Francisco,

guided by a morally ambiguous outlaw.)

History of the World Part 1 (1981), written by and starring Mel Brooks (farcical, sketch-based history of the world, from the Old Testament to the French Revolution, featuring sketches guaranteed to simultaneously cause laughter and offense.)

Brighton Beach Memoirs (1986), written by Neil Simon, starring Matthew Broderick (a fifteen-year-old boy in a working class, multi-generational Brooklyn Jewish family writes his

memoirs as his family contends with life during the depression and the beginnings of WWII.)

Crossing Delancey (1988), written by Susan Sandler, starring Amy Irving and Peter Riegert (New York Jewish women and book-store employee, part of the liberal intelligentsia, allows herself to be set up with the traditionally Jewish Sam the pickle-man.)

Keeping the Faith (2000), written by Stuart Blumberg, starring Ben Stiller, Edward Norton, Jenna Elfman (a rabbi and a priest both fall in love with their childhood friend, though the romance is hindered by the religious convictions of both men.)

A Serious Man (2009), written by Joel and Ethan Coen (a modern retelling of the Book of Job, in which a Jewish man and father living in suburban Minnesota sees his personal and professional life crumble, causing him to question his faith).

Enjoy these films, or explore your own favorites, from the rich library of titles written and directed by the scores of Jewish writers and directors telling Jewish stories on the “silver screen.”



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Witty and Wise Jewish Aphorisms Across the Ages

*A joyful heart is good medicine,
but a broken spirit dries up the bones.*
Proverbs 17:22

HA HA! HA!
HA HA! HA!

Time magazine reported that in the late 20th century, 80% of American comedians were Jewish even though Jews comprised less than 3% of the population. According to a 2020 Pew research poll, 34% of American Jews considered “having a good sense of humor” more basic to their Jewish identity than following *halacha* (15%). The list of Jewish comedians is long and impressive and includes the Marx Brothers, Danny Kaye, George Burns, Mel Brooks, Carl Reiner, Jackie Mason, Joan Rivers, Woody Allen, Gilda Radner, Billy Crystal, Fran Drescher, Adam Sandler, Jerry Seinfeld, Sarah Silverman, Larry David, Jon Stewart, Rita Rudner, Alex Edelman and many others. ANU, the Museum of the Jewish people in Tel Aviv, has a whole exhibit devoted to Jewish humorists. So what is the vital connection between Jews and humor?

“There are plenty of theories to explain Jewish humor — most devised by Jews,” says editor Mark Horowitz. “Saul Bellow, channeling his inner Kierkegaard, thought Jewish humor combined ‘laughter and trembling.’ Freud believed Jewish humor was a defense mechanism: a form of sublimated aggression that lets victims of persecution safely cope with their condition. Or as Mel Brooks put it: ‘If they’re laughing, how can they bludgeon you to death?’” Professor Arie Sover, author of *Jewish Humor: An Outcome of Historical Experience, Survival and Wisdom* says, “Jews laugh at themselves like no nation does.” He adds that constant antisemitism and the tragic experiences of Jews living as a minority under Gentile control have engendered the production of “a psychological weapon”: “If you laugh at yourself, at a bad situation, then, psychologically, you take yourself out of the situation and look at yourself as a spectator. It’s a psychological process that enables you to keep on living.”

Columbia University professor Jeremy Dauber wrote *Jewish Comedy: A Serious History* in which he divided the topic into seven categories: what’s so funny about antisemitism, nice Jewish doctors, the wit of the Jews, a view from the bottom, the divine comedy, the tale of the folk, Jewish comedy — hold the Jewishness. Dauber traces 2000 years of Jewish comedy but concludes, “Any comic observer of human nature comes away with one unavoidable conclusion: that the essential aspects of our condition are inescapable, eternal and unchanging. And it’s that impossibility of change that results in our greatest disappointments, but also, luckily, the wisdom that allows us to laugh at our frailty.” But perhaps the best answer to the question of the Jews and humor connection was provided by Mel Brooks who famously said, “Humor is just another defense against the universe.”

Following is a collection of aphorisms of Jewish wit and wisdom throughout the ages, followed by a couple of jokes which exemplify the Jewish ability to laugh at ourselves under almost any circumstances.

Rejoice not at thine enemy’s fall - but don’t rush to pick him up either.

- Traditional proverb

Experience is what we call the accumulation of our mistakes.

- Folk saying

If you want to give God a good laugh, tell Him your plans.

- Yiddish proverb

Anytime a person goes into a delicatessen and orders a pastrami on white bread, somewhere a Jew dies.

- Milton Berle

There are two things that are infinite: the universe and man’s stupidity,... and I am not sure about the universe.

- Albert Einstein

I’ve been rich and I’ve been poor. Rich is better.

- Sophie Tucker

Insanity is hereditary; you get it from your children.

- Sam Levenson

It takes 20 years to make an overnight success.

- Eddie Cantor

Ninety percent of the politicians give the other ten percent a bad reputation.

- Henry A. Kissinger

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending, then having the two as close together as possible.

- George Burns

A committee is a group that keeps minutes and loses hours.

- Milton Berle

Marriage is the chief cause of divorce.

- Groucho Marx

I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it through not dying.

- Woody Allen

The reason grandparents and grandchildren get along so well is that they have a common enemy.

- Sam Levenson

There are really only three types of people: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who say, “What happened?”

- Ann Landers

Men don’t care what’s on TV. They only care what else is on TV.

- Jerry Seinfeld

HA HA! HA!
HA HA! HA!
HA HA! HA!



Moishe and Miriam were sitting down to eat at the dinner table. Miriam commented, “You know, Moishe, when we were first married, you took the small piece of brisket and gave me the larger. Now you take the large one and leave me the smaller. You don’t love me anymore?”

“Don’t be meshugenah, honey,” replied Moishe, “you just cook better now.”

A man had eight o’clock reservations at a downtown restaurant. It was nearly eight and he couldn’t find a single parking spot. He circled around the block with no luck. Finally, he called out “God, please help me find a parking space!”

Still no luck.

“God, if you give me parking spot, I’ll go to shul every day.”

No spot.

“God, I’ll keep kosher!”

All of a sudden, right in front of the restaurant, a car pulled out — leaving a large parking space. Eagerly, the man maneuvered into it, while calling out, “Never mind God, I found one!”

And finally, hard as it may seem, here are two Holocaust jokes:

A Jewish fortune teller tells Hitler that he will die on a Jewish holiday.

“How can you be so certain of that?” the Fuhrer demands.

“I’m certain,” the fortune teller replies, “because any day you die will be a Jewish holiday.”

A Nazi sees a Jew walking toward him on the street.

As the Jew passes by the him, the Nazi calls out “Schwein.”

The Jew tips his hat and replies, “Cohen.”

This column features businesses owned by members of our community and is generously sponsored by RAV Properties.

Momentous Media Group Wins Gold

Gali Moodie, a native of Belarus, made *aliyah* to Israel over a decade ago. During her time in Israel, she played a prominent role as a rabbi's wife, teaching Torah, and serving as a women's leader in the city of Tzfat. Facing challenges such as the COVID pandemic and a devastating house fire, Gali emigrated to the United States with nothing but the clothes on her back.

Despite the challenges of being a mother of three, including a newborn, Gali's resilience and determination led her to establish Momentous Media Group in Syracuse in 2022. MMG crafts content that captivates, inspires, and drives results, whether through video, podcasts or social media. "We'll help you find your unique voice and share it with the world," the company declares. MMG works with a diverse range of clients. They have helped entrepreneurs launch their dream ventures,

retailers drive sales, mobile games go viral and political candidates win elections. "We know what works, and we're ready to bring that expertise to your project" is their promise.

In 2024, Momentous Media Group rose to the top of the political spectrum by winning the Covenant Pollie Award for Best Use of Social Media in the digital category, presented by the American Association of Political Consultants. The Pollie Awards, known as "The Oscars" of political advertising, are the most prized and sought-after awards in the political communications and public



affairs industries. A blind jury of professional peers selects AAPC awards of excellence winners. What makes Gali's achievement even more remarkable is that she accomplished this feat single-handedly, without the support of a full team, besting 1,500 companies to become one of the top-ranked social media firms in the nation.

MMG works with retail businesses such as restaurants, boutiques and service providers seeking to enhance their local presence and connect with their

community and innovative technology firms including startups and established companies seeking effective online marketing strategies to build a strong digital brand. They also serve online gaming platforms and channels, including gaming content creators and influencers, who want to expand their reach and target a wider audience and political candidates who are looking for digital campaign support to engage with voters and strengthen their online presence.

As a social media agency, MMG prioritizes staying ahead in the digital landscape, bringing a creative and forward-thinking mindset to its projects. They offer "innovative ideas, top-notch production quality and a team that genuinely cares about your success." As an Orthodox Jew, Gali's success is a testament to her unwavering dedication and perseverance. MMG's mission, Gali says, "is to reignite the passion and excitement you once had for your business. We want to help you remember why you started in the first place and connect with your customers on a deeper level. With our expertise and creativity, we'll help you fall in love with your business again - and make your audience fall in love with it too!"

Menorah Park's Shining Stars



Menorah Park held its 14th Shining Stars event, honoring all its elder residents. This year, special honorees were individuals who bring light and faith to Menorah Park's residents. Pictured, from L: Steven Sisskind, event co-host; Rabbi Evan Shore; Cantor Francine Berg; Reverend Suzi Harriff; Gwen Kay; Wayne and Faye Rheume of the Holy Cross Pastoral Care Team; Jessie Kerr-Whitt; and Robin Sisskind, event co-host.

County Provides Funding for 3GNY to Reach All of Its Schools

Onondaga County will spend \$30,000 for antisemitism education in partnership with 3GNY with the goal of reaching every middle and high school in the county. County Executive Ryan McMahon announced the funding for 3GNY's hallmark "We Educate" program at a press conference at the Pomeranz JCC on May 9. "By partnering with schools and communities throughout



Onondaga County, we aim to cultivate a generation of upstanders who are equipped to recognize and counter antisemitism and other forms of hatred," said 3GNY Executive Director David Reckess. "Education and understanding history are key to stopping hatred and to bring people together," McMahon said. "This is a start, and we want this initiative to be very successful moving forward. We hope that this is a model that other communities embrace and

can follow across our country in these trying times."

Federation President/CEO Michael Balanoff said, "We remember the Holocaust to remind society of what can happen to civilized people when bigotry, hatred and indifference reign. It is important not only to curse the darkness of the past, but to illuminate the future and to acknowledge the humanity in all people so that the world can become a

better place for posterity. The history of the Holocaust offers an opportunity to reflect on the moral responsibilities of individuals, societies and governments, and to reaffirm the need for the people to remain vigilant against hatred and persecution. Schools are anchors of our community. They create opportunities for students to learn about multiple cultural narratives and celebrate diverse perspectives and values. They have a unique and pivotal role to play in confronting antisemitism and educating students and community members about the Jewish community. Addressing the issue of antisemitism must begin in our children's schools. That is why the Jewish Federation of Central New York is so appreciative of the funding provided by Onondaga County to 3GNY."

Ride to Remember 2024

The mission of the Jewish Motorcyclists Alliance (JMA) is to create a global environment whereby members of the Jewish faith who ride motorcycles can



congregate in person and/or electronically to share and exchange ideas and opinions about matters of concern to the Jewish community at large as well as issues specifically concerning motorcycles and motorcycle riding. Each year, riders from each of the member clubs, whose numbers have grown from 5 to 38, meet in a different city, socialize, ride, interact with members and organizations of the local Jewish community and raise funds in support of a different organization dedicated to Holocaust education and awareness. The Ride to Remember or R2R is the principal annual event of the JMA, dedicated to Holocaust education and awareness. In 2024, local riders Dave Feldman, Joel Stein and Gary Stevens are excited about the Ride to Remember to support the Holocaust Museum in Toronto.

Pierson 4 under 40★ Award Winners

The Marjorie Oberdorfer Bronner Pierson and Theodore Pierson Family Endowment for the Jewish Future's "Four Under 40" celebrates four noteworthy Jewish Central New Yorkers, all 40 years old or younger, who make Central New York and the larger community better by bringing energy and new ideas to religion, philanthropy, the arts, learning, social action and inclusion. These talented young adults are changing our community for good by building a more just society and creating community in innovative ways.



MAURA KOENIG is a natural connector who is always putting in the time, effort and energy to create, build, grow and foster community, not only locally, but beyond as well. During the pandemic, a time when people were more desperate than ever for community and connection, Maura launched "Challah At Me." She used her personalized offering of fresh baked challah for purchase to create a space for community connections in addition to events, both virtually and, later on, in person.

Maura teaches in the Epstein High School's Hebrew program, helping to connect youth to Hebrew language and Israel. In the wake of October 7th, Maura took a lead in organizing for Millet Ben Haim, a survivor of Nova Music Festival, to come speak to students on Syracuse's campus and for a community-wide event as well. More than 100 students attended to hear her campus testimony, and more than 80 attended the community event. Maura is always eager to create spaces for the local community, and all communities, to thrive and grow together.

Maura works for the URJ on a team that brings Reform Jewish teens from all over North America to Israel on 3-, 4-, or 5-week immersive Israel trips during the summer. Her job focuses on partnership building, recruitment efforts and getting to be creative while educating and spreading love of Israel.

Maura grew up in Syracuse and was very involved at Temple Concord. She moved back to Syracuse four years ago, and her enthusiasm for Jewish life and Israel had brought many meaningful initiatives that she created and worked on for our community. Maura worked at CBS-CS as the youth director last year.

Maura served on the steering committee for the Israel at 75 Syracuse community celebration last year which brought in over 400 people and is on the planning committee for Yom HaAtzmaut this year. She is on the committee of NexGen which is trying to restart and create Jewish community for 21+ year olds.

Maura makes Central New York and the larger community better by bringing energy, new ideas, learning and social action. She is an essential leader and team worker to our community.



JULIET MALOFF has always been a giver of her time to many organizations, volunteering her whole adult life. Maloff holds a bachelor's degree in communications from Syracuse University. She is communications manager at the Central New York Community Foundation and serves as president of the board of directors of the Public Relations Society of America - Central New York Chapter.

Recently she has become more active in the Jewish community helping organize the recent gatherings on Genesee Street to call attention to the hostages in Gaza. She also played a pivotal role in bringing a survivor from the October 7 attack to Syracuse, arranging and booking her travel accommodations, speaking appearances at Syracuse Hillel, Cornell Hillel and Temple Concord. She acquired media coverage from multiple local news outlets and provided on-site support. She designed and procured enlarged signs of Israeli hostages to use



MENDY RAPOPORT recently assumed the duties of Chabad rabbi at Syracuse University, and his work is already having an impact. Chabad-Lubavitch is a philosophy, a movement and an organization and is one of the most dynamic forces in Jewish life today, especially on college campuses.

Mendy was born in Syracuse where his family has run the Chabad since 1981, briefly attended the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and then attended yeshivas around America and in Israel. He worked for *Mayanot* Birthright in Jerusalem, was a paratrooper in the IDF and interned at Chabads in Hebron, Atlanta, Mexico, Vietnam and Dubai.

He married Lakey in 2022. Lakey grew up in Hartford, Connecticut, where her family runs the Chabad Chevra at the University of Hartford. After a year studying at a teaching seminary in Tzfat, she worked for Chabad Chevra at the University of Hartford and taught Judaic Studies to elementary and middle school students in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Mendy and Lakey moved to Syracuse in the summer of 2023 and are now fully and enthusiastically committed to creating and being a home away from home for every Jewish student at Syracuse University. Their daughter was born in 2023.

Mendy has many talents. While a soldier in the IDF, he wrote a poem about *Yom haZikaron*, Israel's memorial day:

*A soul from the battlefield heavenward ascends,
its mission on this earth ends.
He hasn't been discharged, merely reassigned,
because the oath that he took forever does bind.*

*Many a victory throughout our long history
have come to fruition miraculously
and to these soldiers of heaven do we owe our thanks
for not all battles can be won with just planes and tanks*

*Though down here for him we mourn
that from his body his soul was torn,
let us know comfort albeit small,
he hasn't left the battlefield at all.*

*Arriving in heaven he'll proudly tell,
"Another soldier reporting for duty;
I've served my people well."*

*While those still on the battlefield fight,
fiercely do they pray
for the imminent arrival of ultimate peace;
may we live to see that day.*

You have to see Mendy in action to appreciate not only his commitment but his enthusiastic approach to his work. This short YouTube video gives a glimpse into his style: https://youtu.be/JV3vWVGyRdE?si=9PEa_QPST6-oJggH

during peaceful stands in front of Shaarei Torah.

She is a member of the End Antisemitism Now group and collaborates with fellow committee members to acquire speakers from all parts of the world to speak to our Syracuse community to spread knowledge and support about the State of Israel, Jewish culture and combating antisemitism. As a committee member of NextGenCNY, she plans and implements Jewish gatherings and events for local young Jewish community members to connect, celebrate their Jewish heritage and cultivate support for the Jewish Federation of CNY. She is a Committee Member of Women United Against Antisemitism and Hate and designed and distributed United Against Antisemitism and Hate yard signs to community members, houses of worship and community leaders. As a volunteer at Menorah Park, she visited and developed friendships with residents.

She has also been active in the larger community, serving on the gala planning committee for Sarah's Guest House, a Book Buddy Volunteer with United Way of Central New York, a volunteer with CNY SPCA and the Salvation Army and the Onondaga County Dental Society, providing marketing and social media support to these organizations.



Calle Schueler Is passionate about Jewish education in all its forms. She has a bachelor's degree in history from Columbia University and another in Ancient Judaism from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America which also awarded her a master of arts degree in Jewish education. She was an Education Fellow at the NYU Bronfman Center and was assistant director of Family Life and Learning at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in New York City.

Calle's educational leadership philosophy is guided by the Jewish ideals of *tikkun olam* ("repair the world") and *lo ta'amod al dam re'echa* ("do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor"). She says, "I strive to create spaces that are inclusive and celebrate the diversity of Judaism and the secular world. I believe it is the responsibility of Jewish leaders and educators to consider how race, class, gender, dis/ability and sexuality interplay with Jewish identity and tradition and to ensure that all Jewish spaces are accessible to all Jews."

Calle is committed to practicing and uplifting a trauma-informed and anti-oppressive approach to pedagogy that is compassionate, equitable and socially conscious. She says, "I believe that when teaching about traumatizing subjects like the Holocaust, educators have the responsibility to do so without re-traumatizing their students. I also believe that we as a Jewish community have the obligation to speak about the struggles of other minorities with care, honesty and humility."

Calle believes that Jewish tradition, text and ritual are intensely relevant to contemporary life and opportunities for emotional, spiritual and intellectual growth. She says, "I work to inspire a passion for Judaism in my students, encouraging them to situate themselves within Jewish tradition and find themselves in Jewish stories. I encourage students to imagine themselves as the rabbis of late antiquity, as the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Biblical period, as the philosophers of the 1700s, and as the great Jewish activists of the 1960s and 70s."

Winning Fundraiser for Parkinson's Foundation

Moving Day is an inspiring and empowering annual fundraising walk event that unites people around the country living with Parkinson's disease, their care partners and loved ones to help beat PD. Leading up to the event, participants and teams fundraise to help the Parkinson's Foundation provide everything people with Parkinson's need to live better — from lifesaving resources to delivering quality care to the more than 196,700 people living with Parkinson's to improving Parkinson's treatments through research. Moving Day raises awareness of Parkinson's both nationally and in the local community.

For the third year in a row, Henia Zames of Jamesville has been the winning fundraiser in Central New York with her team Grandpas' Grand Legacies and was honored with the ribbon-cutting that started the walk. Zames explains her purpose: "Three years ago, I started my Moving Day team: Grandpas' Grand Legacies. When I was little, both of my grandfathers were diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Being so young, I didn't quite understand what living with this disease meant for them. I knew that they were sick, but I also thought that because I loved them, they would be around forever. Sadly, Parkinson's disease took my Grandpa Leslie's life in September 2019. He was a passionate, loving cheerleader for his entire family who always wanted the best for us. A few months later, in April 2020, my Grandpa Ira passed away. He always reminded his family what a proud grandfather he was, and he always made sure we knew how amazing we were.



"These two losses hit me like a ton of bricks. I was determined to make sure that no one would have to feel the sorrow and grief that I felt because of my grandfathers' battles with Parkinson's disease. I took to my computer, searching for ways I could make a difference



for people living with PD. I found an incredible organization, resource and most importantly, community: the Parkinson's Foundation. By joining the PD community, I have been able to carry on my grandfathers' legacies and make life better for those living with Parkinson's disease. Thanks to Moving Day, I have been able to raise the awareness that We Care. We Fight. We Move."

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Rudd and Goldwein Honored With OHA Medal

Dave Rudd and Debbie Goldwein of Dalton's American Decorative Arts were honored for their work at the 2024 OHA Medal Breakfast Ceremony on May 23rd at the Syracuse Marriott Downtown. "It takes the legacy of many hands to build a community," states the Onondaga Historical Association in describing its OHA Medal Award, which recognizes distinguished contributions to the cause of preserving and interpreting Onondaga County history. "The OHA Medal is the highest honor that we can bestow upon an individual or organization for contributions made to the cause of preserving and interpreting our heritage. Since OHA is the only general comprehensive history organization in this community, one might also consider this medal the highest tribute that can be awarded on behalf of the entire Onondaga County community to those who ensure history remains a vital part of our future," said OHA director Lisa Moore in introducing Rudd and Goldwein.

The Gustav Stickley House Foundation was formed to plan for and aid in the restoration, preservation and interpretation of the Gustav



Stickley house and make relevant the legacy, ideals and work of Gustav Stickley and the American arts and crafts movement that helped guide social change beginning in the early 20th century. David Rudd is the president of the foundation and, for a time, owned the Stickley house in the early 1990s. Debbie has been a strong supporter of the American Arts and Crafts Movement and has served on the board of the Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms. They have both been involved with the Arts and Crafts Society of Central New York.

Local Poet Celebrates Local Musician

The Syracuse Poster Project, founded in 2001, brings together community poets and artists to create an annual series of illustrated poetry posters. The process begins with a call for poetry. Over the summer, the project solicits haiku and other short, three- to four-line poems. Poets submit work about downtown, the city at large or the nearby countryside, and as of 2024, about historical Central New York characters. Each year, approximately 100 poets participate, each submitting up to three short poems.

Sam Young's haiku celebrating blues-and-folk musician Elizabeth "Libba" Cotton and Chris Madden's art was one of the 2024 contest winners. The posters premiered at an April 19 reception and are now on display at various downtown sites: at kiosks on South Salina and South Warren streets, in a space by the downtown post office and on panels on the rear of the Landmark Theater.



Freight Train

by Sam Young

**Freight train comes, freight train goes
Libba Cotten picking her guitar
Gone but not forgotten in the 'Cuse**

Young's poem is a tribute to Elizabeth "Libba" Cotten "who was a musical hero to me and many others in Syracuse and throughout the world." He explained that Libba Cotten grew up poor in the South and taught herself guitar at a very young age. Sam said that Libba "developed a unique style of playing, which became known as 'Cotten picking.' Her most famous song was 'Freight Train' which was recorded and covered by many famous artists during the folk revival."

Young describes the genesis of his poem: "Libba moved to Syracuse towards the end of her life, where she continued to play and record music and tour worldwide. When I learned to play guitar, "Freight Train" was one of the first songs I learned to play. I incorporated several key words from her song into my poem along with its rhythmic feel. I love the fact that her guitar style was an influence to so many giants in folk and rock music and that she is such a beloved icon in Syracuse."

Artist Chris Madden explained that "after reading Sam Young's poem, I was immediately intrigued and wanted to learn more about Elizabeth 'Libba' Cotten. After some research, I was inspired to choose her as the subject of my poster. Despite my own lack of musical talent, I'm always in awe of those who possess it. In crafting the poster, I sought to capture the timeless essence of Cotten's musical legacy and the profound impact she had on folk and blues music. Much like her intricate finger picking style, the design weaves together various elements to create a harmonious visual composition."



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Volunteering at Israel's Soroka Hospital

by Kevin Rosenberg, MD

I spent two weeks in Beer Sheva volunteering at Soroka Hospital, where I treated patients from all walks of life, including Jews, Arabs, soldiers and even terrorists. Although my intent was to give my time and energy to help people in the region, I also learned a tremendous amount from this experience.

I witnessed acts of great heroism. During my first week, we operated on a wounded 17-year-old Israeli soldier. He had been injured fighting shortly after October 7 when a piece of shrapnel entered his eye. He kept fighting for another two days before realizing he had an injury. The shrapnel was removed along with his lens. A few months after his initial surgery, we performed a secondary intraocular lens placement with iris repair to restore his vision. Discussing the risks/benefits/alternatives with parents prior to the surgery, I remember thinking to myself that their child was a true *gibor*, or strong one. What had I or my contemporaries done at 17 years old?



together towards a common goal: helping patients maintain and restore their vision. We were all “colorblind” to the patients. A Bedouin woman came in with a macula-involving retinal detachment, postponing the planned, scheduled surgery of another individual, who had been waiting and fasting all day.

It was also humbling to operate in a different country. Although Soroka was well equipped, there were subtle differences that became magnified while operating there, especially during the “heat of the moment” in the OR. All surgeons get into a rhythm in our home OR with our usually scrub techs and circulating nurses, so this new environment was quite a challenge. But it was also a tremendous opportunity for growth. Looking back, I feel extremely fortunate that I was able to help, in a small way, the health care workers as well as the citizens of Southern Israel.



One night I was working in the Eye Emergency Department with a resident when a terrorist was referred to Soroka due to a traumatic eye injury. The patient presented with a white cataract with almost complete zonular loss. In the early morning hours, I performed a pars plana lensectomy and pars plana vitrectomy to save his eye. I learned a great deal from operating with the attending retina surgeons at Soroka, as well as interacting with the nurses and support staff. Jews and Arabs worked

Israeli Consul Visits with CNY Jewish Leaders

Itay Milner, Consul for Media Affairs at the Consulate General of Israel in New York, former Deputy Consul General of Israel in Chicago and Deputy Ambassador of Israel in Serbia, met with members of the Federation Board of Directors and the Presidents, Executive Directors and Rabbis group to discuss current affairs in Israel and learn about the Central New York Jewish community's concerns. His visit was sponsored by Assemblymember Pamela Hunter. Milner believes in the power of community engagement and actively fosters relationships with American influencers and thought leaders to contribute to a positive narrative about Israel.

At the private meeting, Consul Milner said that “every Jew in the world feels what is going on in Israel now, whether they want to or not.” Milner did not attempt to sugarcoat his words. “We had the whole world with us on October 8th,” he said, “and now the Hamas propaganda has changed the narrative. Hamas is winning the PR battle. It is very saddening.” He emphasized Israel's determination to defeat Hamas, however, saying, “Israelis don't agree on much, but all Israelis agree that we cannot give up even one inch.”

Looking ahead, Milner stated, “The war will be over in a few months, but the consequences will take more than a decade to overcome. Israel is badly beaten, and it will take a long time to recover.” But he noted that Israel cannot return to the *status quo ante*. He said



that “we should have done something ten years ago” and not have allowed the situation in Gaza to develop as it did. He emphasized, “We cannot allow this to happen again, but our first priority is the hostages.”

Addressing specific issues, Milner made the following points:

“We need to redeem the term ‘Zionist.’ Zionists believe that Jews should have their own country. Either you are either a Zionist or a non-Zionist. If, out of all of the peoples in the world, the only ones which cannot have their own country are Jews, that is antisemitism.”

“Instead of saying ‘Ceasefire Now,’ answer the question: What else can the Israeli government do?”

“The United States is more than our ally. Is essential for our survival.”

“What's important right now is to be a proud Jew. Our task is to educate young people. Israel is the most progressive nation in the world because it allows the most oppressed and persecuted nation in history to have self-determination.”

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Epstein School Siyum



On May 21, the ten graduates of the Rabbi Jacob Epstein High School of Jewish Studies celebrated their graduation at a *Siyum* (Completion). Members of the Class of 5784/2024, standing with Epstein School head Aaron Spitzer, are Emily Greenblatt, Jonah Jaffe, Guy Juran, Logan Oppedisano, Abe Salomon, Noah Satterlee, Joseph Seidman, Eden Shirilan-Howlett, AJ Sikora and Judah Spitzer.

The 2023 Teen Taste of Israel trip, attended by eight of ten graduates, was chief among the highlights emphasized by writers Logan Oppedisano and AJ Sikora in reflecting on their Epstein experiences. Guy Juran, who delivered the remarks, noted, “We’d like to show our appreciation for everyone who worked to make our trip to Israel happen. Our experience in the Holy Land was truly eye-opening. Being able to experience firsthand what we had been learning about for years took our interests, knowledge and enthusiasm to the next level. We believe every Jewish person should get that sort of experience early on in life, and we are so grateful to have been able to do it. Considering what is taking place there now, the fact that we all have the context of having visited Israel and seen it for ourselves is especially important.”

Juran continued, “Our exposure to Jewish culture, values, and traditions instills in us a sense of identity, community, and social responsibility. These teachings not only enrich our understanding of the world but also equip us with critical thinking skills,

empathy and a deep appreciation for diversity. As we transition to college and the real world, this education will serve as a compass, guiding us to make ethical decisions, embrace different perspectives, and contribute meaningfully to society. It prepares us to navigate challenges with resilience, to seek knowledge with curiosity and to forge connections with people from all walks of life. Ultimately, our education at [the] Epstein School empowers us to be compassionate leaders, lifelong learners, and positive agents of change in our complex and interconnected world.”

The Jewish Federation of Central New York, at the request of the *Yom haAtzmaut* Planning Committee, donated copies of Noa Tishby’s *Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth* to all of the Epstein students. Barbara Davis, pictured here with Epstein students, spoke on behalf of the Federation and shared with the students and parents the community’s feelings of pride and appreciation for their dedication to their studies, to the Jewish people and to Israel.



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Tzofim Friendship Caravan to Visit JCC August 6

by Carlett Spike

The Tzofim Friendship Caravan is back to celebrate Jewish culture and heritage throughout the United States and will stop at the JCC as part of their tour on Tuesday, August 6. The visit will include a day spent with campers plus a chance for the entire Syracuse community to get in on the fun with a special free performance in the JCC's gymnasium at 6:30 pm.

"This group brings a piece of Israel here, and now it's more important than ever to provide that connection," said Pam Ranieri, director of children's programming at the JCC. "The visit is not only educational, but also a great opportunity for the children and the community to immerse themselves in their culture by being in community with these talented young people."

Using song, dance, and story, the Tzofim Friendship Caravan is a group of ten teens from Israel who are selected to share their culture through performance. As a fun and unique way to teach others about Israeli culture, the group visits various locations throughout their national tour including schools, camps and synagogues. Now in existence for more than 50 years, this year's tour is dedicated to the theme "Am Yisrael Chai."

The Caravan will kick off their visit to the JCC by spending the day with campers and participating in some activities. The highlight of their camp visit will be an engaging performance which includes songs in Hebrew, English and Yiddish. Later in the day, the group will also visit with



seniors participating in the JCC's Senior Dining Program to share a meal.

The community is encouraged to participate in the festivities by singing and dancing along during the 6:30 pm performance. The show is free and open to the public. Even if you've seen the Caravan before, no two shows are the same, which means everyone will enjoy the performance.

"We are very excited for the Syracuse community to come together and appreciate Israel and all it has to offer," said Amy Bisnett, associate director of children's programming. For more information about the Tzofim Friendship Caravan's visit, reach out to the JCC at 315-445-2360 or visit jccsyr.org.

Watch & Discuss "We Were the Lucky Ones"

by Sonali McIntyre

"We Were the Lucky Ones", a Hulu Original series based on Georgia Hunter's best-selling novel, is inspired by the true story of a Jewish family in Poland who were separated at the beginning of World War II. Despite every terrifying and torturous obstacle, they are determined to survive and reunite.

Rabbi Moshe Saks and Sonali McIntyre of Temple Adath Yeshurun are pleased to offer an 8-Week "Watch & Discuss" course. Each week, participants will watch an episode of "We Were the Lucky Ones" and then discuss the episode – recurring themes, observations and the feelings evoked. There is no charge to participate and sessions are open to the community. For this session, "Watch & Discuss" will be held in-person at Temple Adath Yeshurun. Participants may watch at TAY or watch on their own and join for the discussion. The eight sessions are scheduled for Tuesday evenings July 9 through August 27, from 7 pm to 9 pm. The one exception is Wednesday, August 14 due to *Tisha b'Av*.

This is the second session of "Watch &



Discuss" TAY has offered. Mid-winter, participants watched and discussed "A Small Light," the story of Miep Gies, an employee of Otto Frank who helped hide the Frank family and others in a secret annex in Amsterdam during World War II. **For more information or to register, please email Sonali McIntyre at sonali@adath.org.**

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A Labor of Love: From A Box to A Gift Shop

by Yolanda Febles

When Linda Herman began her journey with the Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas gift shop over forty years ago, she started with nothing more than a box of items. Today, it is a brick-and-mortar store within CBS-CS, offering a large selection of carefully curated Judaica.

In the early days, with only about \$100 at her disposal, Linda transformed the modest operation into a center for Judaica in the CBS-CS community. She and her husband, Bob, frequently traveled to New York City, forging relationships with artists and carefully selecting items that would resonate with members. Their commitment extended beyond business; it was a family affair that included their son and his family, who lived nearby at the time. Before the age of the internet, buying Judaica was done through catalogs. Linda, Bob, and their son's family would all offer their opinions on what she should purchase.



In the 1990s, as the synagogue expanded, the gift shop found its permanent home, evolving from a small, unassuming area into the inviting space known today as the CBS-CS Gift Shop. Despite its growth, the shop has always maintained a personal touch, reflecting Linda's impeccable design sense and deep understanding of Jewish life.

Linda's contributions go beyond the financial. Through curating ritual items and gifts, she has helped the members live Jewishly, making essential items accessible for special occasions or adding something 'Jewish' to their homes.

The pandemic brought new challenges; with no foot traffic through the synagogue, the gift shop adapted by moving online, continuing to serve the community despite the circumstances.

After 40 years of dedicated service, Linda Herman's legacy at the CBS-CS Gift Shop is one of a 'labor of love' as she calls it. She has passed the torch to other volunteers of the Sisterhood. As the gift shop looks to the future, Linda's contributions are celebrated, and her spirit of community service lives on.

At the May meeting of the Syracuse Federation of Women's Clubs, Temple Concord representative Lori Williamson proudly accepted the Oberlander Memorial Achievement Cup for 2024 on behalf of Temple Concord's Sisterhood. The Oberlander Cup is awarded annually by the Syracuse Federation of Women's Clubs to the member club whose civic contributions in the last year have been most deserving of recognition. Temple Concord's Mitzvah Bag Project won the honor. They received one dozen red roses and a check for \$200 and will have the cup on display at Temple Concord for one year. Elyn Roloff chaired the project which involved participants from both Temple Concord and Temple Adath Yeshurun.

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LIBBY RUBENSTEIN
May 6, 2024

Libby Rubenstein, 86, died with her family by her side in the comfort of her home on May 6. Born on August 27, 1938 in Corning, NY to Morton and Ethel Rosenbloom, she had been a resident of Syracuse since 1962.

Libby was a graduate of Buffalo University. After she and Arnie were married in 1961, they lived in Germany for a year before returning to Syracuse. She taught French and English at Liverpool High School. She was also fluent in German. Once her children Phil and Mara were born, she stopped teaching and became a full-time mom.

She returned to the family business, United Radio, once the children were independent enough to manage without her being home. Libby was the warrantee manager of the automotive division. More

importantly, she was greatly influential in developing the culture of United Radio. She set the bar for the many women employees who were so fortunate to work under her supervision. She was a true trailblazer and coach for women in the workplace.

Libby was a past president of the Women's Division of the Syracuse Jewish Federation and received an award for her outstanding leadership. She was a Lion of Judah and a lifetime member of Hadassah. Libby and Arnie were well-travelled; they visited all 50 states and around the world.

Her family includes her beloved husband Arnie of 62 years, their children Phil (Cami) and Mara (Mark) Charlamb, grandchildren Brian, Jacob, Elle and Peter and her sister-in-law Elaine Rubenstein.

Contributions to perpetuate her memory in lieu of flowers may be made to a charity of one's choice.

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ANITA R. EVERS
May 10, 2024



Anita R. (nee LeVey) Evers, a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend who touched the lives of all who knew her, passed away on May 10. She departed this world peacefully, surrounded by love and leaving behind a legacy of kindness, generosity and warmth.

Anita was the beloved wife of the late Dr. William Evers, the beloved mother of Dr. Wendy Evers (Michael) Gordon and Marcia Evers (Joel) Levy. She was the adoring "Granma" to Alexander (Lucy) Gordon, Joshua (Ashley) Gordon, Robert Kane, Sam Kane and Hayley Levy (Jacob) Kupin. She was "GiGi" to her great-grandchildren Timothy and Elsa Gordon. She was predeceased by her daughter Dr. Aimee Evers Kane and son-in-law Dr. Howard Kane.

Born in Philadelphia, PA to Louis and Rose LeVey, Anita attended Temple University and served as a WAC during WWII and a Gray Lady at Albert Einstein Hospital. She and her husband moved to DeWitt with their children in the 1960s, where Anita worked as office manager and accounts manager for several medical practices. She was also an active volunteer for the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, the Women of the University at the SUNY Health Science Center and, for many years, the Syracuse City Schools Student Mentoring Program.

Anita was a frequent traveler, first with

her husband and then with her children. She enjoyed the Syracuse Symphony, Syracuse University Drama productions and supported numerous charities across the Upstate New York Region and internationally.

The family will be forever grateful to Sharon Glavin and her team at Help & Hugs CNY (Darlene White, Renee Fletcher, Geneva Fortune, and Victoria Queor) for the loving care and companionship they extended, enhancing Anita's final years with love, laughter and kindness.

Donations may be directed to the Crouse Health Foundation, 736 Irving Ave, Syracuse, NY 13210, to benefit the Steinmann Emergency Medicine Education Fund or to the Syracuse Hebrew Day School.

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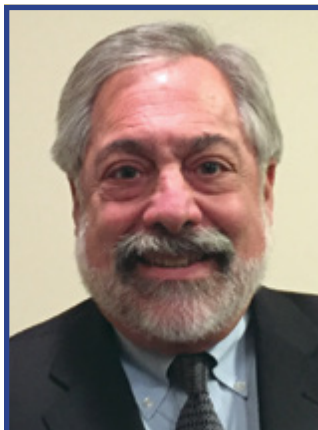


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The Federation had never received a donation from the city's most successful businessman. So the Campaign Chair visited the businessman in his lavish office. The Chair opened the meeting by saying, "Our research shows that even though your annual income is over four million dollars, you don't give a penny to the Federation. Wouldn't you like to give something back to our Jewish community?"

The businessman thought for a minute and said, "First, did your research also show you that my mother is dying after a long illness, and has huge medical bills far beyond her ability to pay?"

Embarrassed, the Chair mumbled, "Uh... No, I didn't know that."

"Secondly," said the businessman, "did it show that my brother, a disabled veteran, is blind and confined to a wheelchair and is unable to support his wife and six children?"

The stricken Chair began to stammer an apology but was cut off again by the businessman.

"Thirdly, did your research also show you that my sister's husband died in a car accident, leaving her penniless with a mortgage and three children, one of whom is severely disabled?"

The humiliated Campaign Chair, completely beaten, said, "I'm so sorry. I had absolutely no idea." And the businessman added, "So, if I didn't give any money to them, what makes you think I'd give any to you?"

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