

Happy Thanksgiving!

# Jewish Observer of Central New York

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

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## JEWES AND MONEY



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## From the Editor



Barbara Davis

In *The Haves and Have-Yachts*, Evan Osnos, who is of Jewish descent, writes: “On January 20th, 2025, Donald Trump took his oath of office on a stage filled with billionaires. Off his left shoulder stood the world’s three richest people: Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, and Elon Musk. A few feet to the right were Sergey Brin, the co-founder of Google and Tim Cook, the CEO of Apple.” Of the five, two (Zuckerberg and Brin) were Jewish. Given that only 2.4% of the U.S. population identifies as Jewish, the number of ultrarich Jews on that stage was extraordinary. Is it any surprise that many people hold the perception that Jews are disproportionately wealthy?

This issue of the *Jewish Observer* examines the theme of “Jews and Money” from a variety of perspectives. We chose this theme for our November issue for several reasons. The topic is one that is closely aligned with antisemitism, which is on the rise, and which we need to fight against through education. We also celebrate Thanksgiving this month and while Thanksgiving is a holiday based on appreciation for what we have (with an emphasis on food), it also can also inspire acts of financial generosity—food drives, community dinners and donations to organizations that help those in need.

Oddly enough, Thanksgiving has a direct tie to money. During the Great Depression in 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt moved Thanksgiving up a week in order to extend the shopping season and stimulate the economy. That year, the holiday was dubbed “Franksgiving.” And, of course, today Thanksgiving is immediately followed by “Black Friday,” the biggest shopping day of the year.

For Jews, this year in particular, the celebration of Thanksgiving underscores Jewish belonging in America. Unlike religious holidays tied to Christian traditions, Thanksgiving is a civic holiday that Jews can embrace without tension. At Thanksgiving, American Jews can both express gratitude for the freedoms they enjoy in the United States and honor their own ethical traditions around generosity and community care.

Combining Jews, money, and Thanksgiving is a way to revoke a stereotype and to emphasize a synthesis. The November holiday of appreciation allows American Jews to affirm both their Jewishness and their Americanness, using the blessings of financial resources not only for their personal well-being but for the benefit of others. In doing so, the deeper truth of the holiday can be revealed: wealth and gratitude are not meaningful unless they extend outward, beyond one’s own Thanksgiving table, into the wider world.

But getting back to “Jews and money.” This is clearly a touchy (some might say dangerous) topic. Our goal in this issue is to examine some of the myths and truths of the subject in as objective a manner as possible (throwing in a bit of humor, of course). Our hoped-for result is to enlighten our readership and to challenge the myths and stereotypes that still shape perceptions today. Confronting antisemitic stereotypes head-on is both risky and necessary. Left unchallenged, tropes about Jewish power, money, or loyalty circulate and reinforce prejudice, so naming them directly and explaining their falsehood is often the most effective way to dismantle them.

Confronting misinformation is especially important now.

A recent Anti-Defamation League survey revealed that 85% of Americans believe at least one antisemitic trope, a significant increase from 61% in 2019. The survey also found a substantial increase in the number of Americans holding multiple antisemitic beliefs, with 20% believing six or more tropes, up from 11% in 2019. The conflict in the Middle East has led to a surge in antisemitic rhetoric and incidents and further blurred the line between criticism of Israel and antisemitism. We hope that nothing in this issue upsets our readership. Our intent is to reinforce the understanding that Judaism views money as neither inherently good nor bad, but rather as a tool that can be used for *tikun olam*, the repair of a world which is sorely in need of it.

Thanksgiving is a time to count our blessings, and in Jewish life we express that gratitude through *tzedakah*. By giving, we transform thankfulness into action—ensuring that others, too, have reason to give thanks. That is why other articles in this issue focus on game-changing giving, local philanthropic foundations and their leadership, *tikun olam* in the economic sphere and the success of the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York. It is clear that there are in many in our community who are mindful of the Talmudic teachings that “No community is judged except by the charity it gives” [Shabbat 139a] and “*Tzedakah* is equal in importance to all the other commandments combined.” [Bava Batra 9a].

Also at this time of the year, it is appropriate to remember that every gift to the Federation’s Annual Campaign is an act of *tzedakah* that keeps our community strong and connected. Donors are not just giving dollars—they are giving hope, comfort, Jewish learning, dignity, and a sense of belonging. Together, they are writing the story of a caring Jewish community where no one stands alone.

We know these are difficult times. The news from Israel and Gaza can feel overwhelming and stir many emotions. But giving to Federation isn’t about politics—it’s about people. Your gift makes sure our Jewish community here at home stays strong, cared for, and connected. It supports children learning Jewish values, seniors who need companionship and care, and families who turn to us in moments of hardship. And Federation’s support for Israel goes solely and directly to people. Our dollars don’t go to the government—they go for families displaced from their homes, to children who need trauma counseling, to seniors who need food and care, to communities rebuilding their lives. Federation’s support is always about people helping people. Now more than ever, our community needs *tzedakah*. Your support says: no matter what is happening in the world, we will continue to take care of each other.

As we gather with family and friends in celebration of Thanksgiving, let us reflect on what we are grateful for and honor the diverse histories and cultures that make up our nation. As we give thanks for our food, our loved ones, and the blessings in our lives, may we remember the people and land of Israel, and may gratitude, joy and peace fill all our homes today and always.

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**MESSAGE FROM MARK SEGEL**  
*Federation President & CEO*



The second of the pillars I set forth in my five-point plan for my first year as President & CEO of the Federation was Community Resilience and Preparedness. I promised that, building on our security efforts, we would continue to revise our comprehensive community resilience plan to ensure we are prepared for future challenges—be they natural disasters, public health crises, or acts of hate.

Eric Fingerhut, head of the Jewish Federations of North America, recently reported that “a typical Jewish organization now spends 14% of its annual budget on security,” noting “these measures are critical for Jewish life to flourish” since 60% of Jews

say that security precautions make them feel safer. “They see the addition of police, security guards, and hardening of buildings as the most effective.”

Day schools, JCCs and synagogues all over the country (and the world) are installing cameras and hiring guards not out of paranoia, but out of necessity. And perhaps most sobering of all: they’re getting used to it. The massively increased costs for security due to rising antisemitism and threats has come to be known as the “Antisemitism Tax.”

In Central New York, the Federation has created the Magen Circle (*magen* is Hebrew for “shield”), an ad hoc committee of local Jewish community members who have demonstrated their commitment to safety and security through their actions and their advocacy. This group will advise the Federation on security-related issues such as identifying gaps, fundraising, and dealing with a rapidly changing threat environment. The formation of this team is timely in that our current Director of Community Security, Susan DeMari, has announced her retirement at the end of the year. Members of the Magen Circle will serve on the search committee. We are also delighted to announce that Dr. Robert Weisenthal has agreed to serve as chair of the committee. In accepting this leadership position, Bob told us that he was “pleased and honored to help in any way I can in this essential mission to protect our community. It is important to be proactive and vigilant.”

Jews remain the religious group most targeted by hate crimes in North America. As a response to the rise in terrorist attacks on synagogues and other Jewish spaces, JFNA launched LiveSecure to protect Jewish communities across North America from violent antisemitism. JFNA advocates tirelessly on Capitol Hill, in state capitals, and in each of our local communities for the priorities of our people. By educating lawmakers about Jewish issues, we advocate for the government to safeguard Jewish institutions, combat antisemitism, and foster a thriving democracy for all citizens.

Our community—its synagogues, schools, and the JCC—have all benefitted from the efforts of JFNA that have allowed us to access security enhancements that safeguard high-risk nonprofits and communities, advance community safety and support partnerships with law enforcement to combat hate crimes and other hate-fueled threats. These efforts benefit both the Jewish and the general community.

The JFNA agenda is not limited to security measures. It is important for our community to know that JFNA, our umbrella organization, advocates strongly for legislation to combat all forms of hate, extremism, racism, and discrimination, including those targeting marginalized communities and the LGBTQ+ community. This includes laws against hate crimes, which prevent abuse and harassment, and ensure fairness and equal treatment for everyone. Our overriding goal is to foster a stable and safe environment in which all communities can flourish.



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## Israel And Us - We Need Each Other!

by Rabbi Moshe Saks, Temple Adath Yeshurun



The land of Israel is much more than a piece of real estate the size of New Jersey. It is a religious principle, a Jewish value concept, a place where the physical and spiritual are merged as one. It is the place where all Jews are supposed to live and be buried. It is where the Messiah will someday first appear. Its history goes back to the very origins of our people, with Abraham and Sarah first meeting God. Israel is the fulfillment of our 2000-year exile, and our hope for the future. Israel today is a complicated, vibrant society, representing many viewpoints and ideologies. But through it all, we are one People, with one God.

Of course, it's both a historical fact the not all Jews (at least 60% of us throughout the world) do not live in Israel. There are many reasons for this, both personal and societal. It's not my intention to deal with this subject; this is a personal decision; I'll leave it at that. What I will say, is this: With all my heart and with all my soul, as a religious Jew and as a rabbi, I sincerely believe that, no matter how you embrace Judaism and your Jewishness, you must visit Israel at least once to fully realize yourself as a proud Jew. This is not only an obligation, but something, which I believe, your Jewish soul yearns for; without it, there is a huge emptiness in your being a part of the Jewish people. To make pilgrimage to the many holy sites in the country, to make a tangible connection with the Bible, with Jewish history, with the essence of the Jewish experience cannot be done by watching a video or reading a book. It must be experienced in the flesh.

Today (and I would not have used this as a reason 20 years ago), we all need to visit Israel as a matter of self-strengthening. Antisemitism is here to stay (as it was for most of the last 2000 years). I don't need to go into great detail about this. All one must do is look at the world news to see how deeply rooted it has become, especially when a "politically correct" way of being antisemitic is to be "anti-Zionist." Visiting Israel, especially now, is to be in a safe place, in a country that welcomes our visit, and is ready to share with us the burden of fighting antisemitism. It's something only Israel can provide, to see our Jewish homeland fighting against evil and proclaim its righteousness, even with the political

turmoil and subsequent protests that are a part of democratic society.

And yet, there is another crucial reason that we must visit Israel, especially now. Just as Israel provides for us a safe space to feel welcome, you must know that the Israeli people, as resilient as they are, have a great deal of pain. The deaths of their brave soldiers, the bombs which have fallen during this period, the terrorist attacks, and of course, the hostages. So, there is a unique opportunity here, especially at this time. The conflict is almost past two years old. We can be **strengthened by Israel** and we can **strengthen Israel** by visiting, and being a small part of the story.

Now comes the *tachlis*, the real motive here. I'm sure that have head about a Jewish Community of Syracuse Trip to Israel, led by the four rabbis from our four congregations. The trip is open to anyone in the community who wishes to take part. We will visit the major sites in Israel. We are arranging some Israeli speakers to give us an insight on the trials and tribulations of Israeli society. This will not be a typical trip in this regard. We will travel to the Nova site, a profound experience. This trip is meant for first timers. However, if the last time you visited Israel was many years ago, this trip is for you as well. In addition, since it is during February Winter Break, families are also invited to sign up.

We have all been strengthened by the establishment of our homeland and by the generations before us who dreamed and fought for us. This is Israel. This is why, if you haven't yet visited our Holy Land, you must do so now. "May it be, Adonai, that this land of Israel be the flowering of our redemption." Amen.

# Jews & Money: The Story of a Stereotype

## by Abraham Foxman

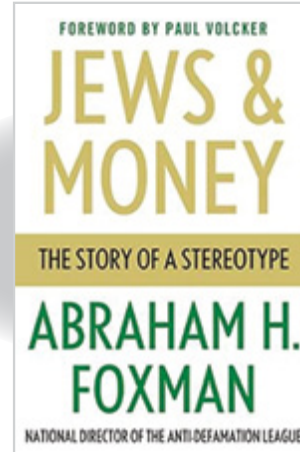
Reviewed by Jackie Miron

Abraham Foxman has an interesting story, which is helpful to know before reading this book. Born in 1940, the only son of Polish Jews, just after the Soviet Union took possession of his hometown, Foxman emigrated to the United States with his parents in 1950, earning both a legal degree and doing graduate work in Jewish studies. Foxman was the national director of the Anti-Defamation League from 1987 to 2015 and wrote *Jews & Money* during that time. He is the author of three other books.

The date of publication, 2010, should be noted. On the one hand, it is sad that it needed to be written at that time and is still relevant today. The stereotype persists even in current times. However, readers should note that it closely followed the financial crisis of 2007-2009, and the downfall of Bernie Madoff, where extreme cases can reinforce the stereotype.

Foxman does a good job of dismantling many of the incorrect assumptions about Jews and their level of wealth and control

of money. He uses statistics and insights to show that Jews are really not much different from others. There are lots of Jews who are poor, and lots of extraordinarily wealthy people who are not Jewish. He gives examples of important figures who have made varying statements about Jews, to show that the narrative does not just exist with uneducated people. If leaders are validating the stereotype, it is likely larger groups of people will do so.



Readers picking up the book now will have to focus on the views of antisemitism at this time, and not since the more recent resurgence since October 7, 2023. In addition, Foxman might have made a stronger argument if he used more historical examples, such as Jews in ghettos going back through almost 2000 years. But the concise nature of the book serves the reader well to grasp the unfortunate current trend that still persists. His point that

since the age of the internet, conspiracy theories have increased, is very well written. He says, "Today's Internet is a kind of Wild Wild West where any unfounded or outrageous accusation can reach a global audience and assume a patina of truth."

One of the more interesting and surprising chapters involves his analysis of Jewish humor, and there are certain nuances that allow us to embrace, appreciate, and even admire Jewish comedians as "it works by turning those stereotypes on their heads in a creative way."

Readers will respect the author's points of view when seen through the lens of his leadership of the ADL, as he fights intolerance of Jews every day. He believes in education, first and foremost, and our collective responsibility to stand up to bigotry in our choice of ways.

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# MYTHS & TRUTHS ABOUT JEWS AND MONEY



Few stereotypes have been as pernicious and as enduring as those negatively linking Jews and money. The myths, rooted in religious, economic, and political history, have had vicious, even life-threatening consequences for the Jewish people. Antisemitic tropes about Jews and money have fueled pogroms, discrimination, exclusion from society, and even genocide. Today these myths flourish on social media, in coded political language and in conspiracy theories.

Confronting, dispelling and combatting these untruths is essential for both Jews and non-Jews. Jews are not a monolith, and there is no special relationship between Jews and money beyond the one created by centuries of oppression, exclusion, and survival. The best way to counter these harmful myths is with education, empathy, and truth.

## MYTHS

### *“Jews Are Obsessed with Money”*

Like all communities, Jewish people vary in their financial circumstances, values, and attitudes toward money. The myth of Jewish greed has been used for centuries to dehumanize Jews, making them scapegoats during times of economic crisis. It ignores the ethical teachings in Judaism that emphasize justice (tzedek), charity (tzedakah), and communal responsibility over personal wealth.

### *“Jews Control the Banks and Global Finance”*

While it is true that individual Jewish people have been prominent in finance—just as individuals from other backgrounds have—the idea that Jews as a group “control” global finance is false and rooted in antisemitic propaganda. This myth became widespread in the 19th and 20th centuries through forged documents like The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and has persisted in various forms, from Nazi propaganda to modern-day internet conspiracies.

### *“Jews Were Moneylenders Because They Loved Money”*

In medieval Europe, Jews were often forbidden from owning land or joining trade guilds. At the same time, the Church forbade Christians from lending money with interest, but did not impose that restriction on Jews. As a result, moneylending became one of the few economic roles available to Jewish people. Far from being a choice driven by greed, it was a means of survival in a society that severely restricted Jewish participation.

### *“Jewish Success Means They’re Privileged”*

Jews have been expelled, ghettoized, excluded from universities and professions, and murdered in pogroms and genocides—often because of economic success, not in spite of it. Economic advancement has often led to increased suspicion and resentment from majority populations, not protection.

### *“Jews Use Money to Influence Politics”*

In reality, people of all backgrounds contribute to political campaigns, support causes, and advocate for their communities. Singling out Jewish political influence without acknowledging that every group participates in politics is both hypocritical and dangerous. It echoes the false belief that Jewish people operate behind the scenes for their own gain—an accusation that has led to horrific violence in modern times.

## TRUTHS

*“Those who submerge themselves in the desire for money are always in debt.”* Rabbi Nahman Ben Simha

Jewish tradition has a long, complex, and ethical view of money. While Judaism does not idealize poverty, it places a strong emphasis on *tzedakah*, which is viewed as a religious obligation, not optional generosity. There are many sayings in Judaism which emphasize the superiority of wisdom over wealth. Ibn Gabirol wrote, “Wealth brings anxiety, but wisdom leads to peace of mind.” Proverbs teaches “Riches profit naught in the day of wrath” and “Who trusts in his riches shall fall.” In *Kohelet*, we read “Whoever loves money will never be content with it.”

*“A man is more concerned about the loss of his money than of his days; yet his money does not help and his days will never return.”* Ma’avar Yabok

The Torah and the Talmud place much greater emphasis on righteousness than on wealth, including an emphasis on fair business practices, with many laws about honesty in trade, worker rights, and fair weights and measures. In *Devarim*, we read, “You shall not mistreat a needy and destitute laborer, whether a fellow countryman or a foreigner in your communities. You shall pay him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is in want and urgently depends on it.”

*“If you see a man giving liberally, it means his wealth will grow; if you see one who shuns charity, it means his wealth will dwindle.”* Midrash Mishle

Jewish communities have historically created structures to care for the needy, educate children, and support widows and orphans. Money is seen as a tool -- neither inherently good nor inherently bad -- to be used in the service of justice and community. Maimonides wrote, “Nobody is ever impoverished through the giving of charity” and Proverbs states, “Who gives to the poor shall not lack.” Rabbi Nachman warned, “To him who has the means and refuses the needy, the Holy One says: Bear in mind, fortune is a wheel!”

## THE TALMUD ON MONEY



**“Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot.”**  
 – Pirkei Avot 4:1

**“Wealth is a crown to the wise, but it is a stumbling block to fools.”**  
 – Pesachim 50a

**“The blessing of a house depends on the generosity of its owner.”**  
 – Ta’anit 23a

**“Greater is the one who causes others to give than the one who gives himself.”**  
 – Bava Batra 9a

**“Even a poor person who survives on charity is obligated to give charity.”**  
 – Gittin 7b

**“Wealth is not due to wisdom, nor is poverty due to foolishness.”**  
 – Pesachim 113b

**“When the community is in trouble, a person should not say, ‘I will go home and eat and drink and all will be well with me.’”**  
 – Ta’anit 11a

**“He who increases his possessions increases his worries.”**  
 – Pirkei Avot 2:7

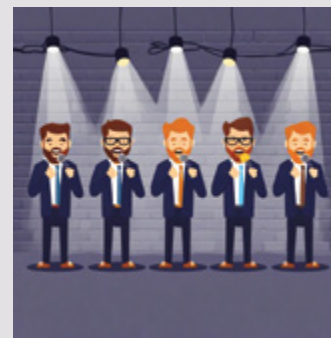
**“Wealth is like a wheel: sometimes up, sometimes down.”**  
 – Midrash Tehillim 119

**“Why was Israel exiled? Because they loved money and hated one another.”**  
 – Tosefta Menachot 13:22

**“Wherever there is wealth, there is arrogance.”**  
 – Sanhedrin 105a

**“Whoever increases gold and silver increases anxiety.”**  
 – Kohelet Rabbah 5:9

**“Do not seek greatness for yourself, and do not desire honor; let your deeds exceed your wealth.”**  
 – Derech Eretz Zuta 1



## JEWISH COMEDIANS ON MONEY

**Money is not the most important thing in the world. Love is. Fortunately, I love money.**

Jackie Mason

**I’ve got all the money I’ll ever need, if I die by four o’clock.**

Henny Youngman

**Money is better than poverty, if only for financial reasons.**

Woody Allen

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

Sophie Tucker

**Money frees you from doing things you dislike. Since I dislike doing nearly everything, money is handy.**

Groucho Marx

**HAPPY Thanksgiving**

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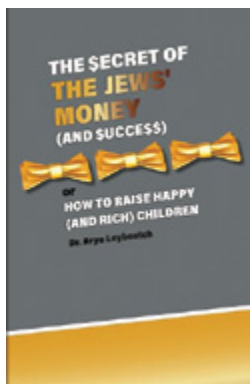


Jewish Wisdom for  
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Lessons for the Tora...  
★★★★★ 129



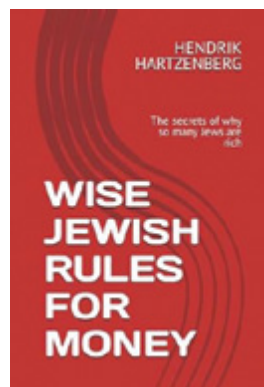
The Hidden secret of  
Jewish Wealth: How to  
prosper like the jews...  
★★★★★ 29

There are a lot of them. The selection above, from Amazon, shows that some of them are not only popular but valued. Still, for a Jewish person to see a book titled *The Secrets of the Jews' Money (and Succes\$)* is a bit unsettling, even or perhaps especially, when the subtitle is *How to Raise Happy (and Rich) Children*. The JO decided to dive a bit deeper.



wise and pithy sayings in this volume, but his conclusion has nothing to do with financial success: “Be happy, be energetic, learn and accumulate knowledge, try hard, have respect for your partner, be nice to others. Encourage everyone around you with positive words, and not only with actions. Choose a good environment for yourself and your children. You will be successful.” Invest your money more wisely than in this book.

The author of the abovementioned work is Dr. Arye Leybovich, who self-identifies as a “retired International tax planning and trusts lawyer, whose books are cited by the Israeli Supreme Court, who also served as president of companies in the construction and finance sector.” Despite the dollar signs in the title, there are no reviews of this book on Amazon unlike the volumes pictured above. Even ChatGPT has never heard of it. So it is to be hoped that the author, who wrote the book for his son, has other sources of income, as his royalties from this effort will likely be paltry. Perhaps that is a deserved result of a book that really doesn’t deliver on its titular promise. Although Leybovich says he is going to reveal “principles for success in every aspect of life, inherent in Jewish tradition, alongside tips for success in financial and business endeavors, investments in education, provided by the Jewish sages” and will show the reader “how you too can apply these tips, tools and techniques that have brought the Jewish people to the top tiers of success in many areas, including business, science and literature, far beyond their marginal percentage of the global population,” he really doesn’t deliver. There are many

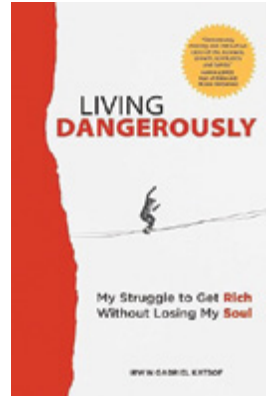


The title of another book is also a little suspect: *Wise Jewish Rules for Money*. The subtitle, *The secrets of why so many Jews are rich*, is definitely cringy. The book itself is...a bait and switch? A fraud? Click bait? There are no “secrets” in Hendrik Hartzenberg’s book. There are no formulae or algorithms for making money. There are no revelations about “why so many Jews are rich,” despite the fact that the back cover proclaims that “this book can help you turn your life around and teach you the secrets of money.” In fact, there is very little text at all in this book. Instead, there are 62 entries beginning with “Establish distinct financial objectives and develop a plan to achieve them” (#1) through

“Regularly monitor and manage your investments” (#31) all the way to “some wise words and ideas about crypto currencies” (#62). The first five pages of the book contain platitudes concluding that “there’s nothing fundamentally wrong with wanting to be financially successful, but Jewish teachings stress the need to strike a healthy balance between material and spiritual goals.” The book’s final pages conclude with: “Remember that financial success is a means to a life of meaning, abundance, and fulfillment as you complete this chapter and go on to the next stage of your financial journey. Accept a humble lifestyle, look after your money, and use your fortune to improve the world for both you and others.”

What do we know about the author of this work? Who is Hendrik Hartzenberg? A search for the answer found that he is “not the *New Yorker* writer Hendrik Hertzberg (born 1943, journalist, speechwriter). Instead, Hendrik Hartzenberg is a self-publishing author of around 19–20 books across various fields, with *Wise Jewish Rules for Money* being one of his more prominent and niche-focused works.” It is doubtful that a more appropriate response could have been forthcoming. Do not buy this book. Instead, give *tzedakah*. It is a wiser Jewish rule for money.

An even more recent book is *Living*



*Dangerously: My Struggle to Get Rich Without Losing My Soul* by Rabbi Irwin Gabriel Katsof. This memoir is an exploration of wealth as a double-edged sword. Rabbi Katsof started out with a noble goal: “I wanted to give. I wanted to share. I wanted to be a blessing to others—to be blessed with abundance ... There was a sincere part of me that truly wanted to serve ... But there were other parts too—parts that craved recognition

... that were trying to prove I was worthy.”

The book jacket elucidates: “A young rabbi working as a fundraiser for Jewish outreach decides that he’d rather be a rich man giving away money instead of asking for it. He has seen up close how his wealthy donors got into the 1% and he thinks he is smart enough to duplicate their moves. And he is sure God is on his side. So he goes for it. But success eludes him and as his debts mount, he begins to understand why they say, ‘If it was so easy, everyone would be rich.’” The rabbi’s bold and risky transition into business led him to boardrooms and negotiations with world leaders. But the further he became enmeshed in the world of deal-making, the more his original sense of purpose began to fade. This duality—noble mission versus personal validation—forms the memoir’s central tension.

Katsof doesn’t demonize money; he sees it as a tool with vast potential for good. In his early ventures, he made arrangements that blended commerce with spirituality, such as partnering with Rabbi Yehoshua Zilberman of Jerusalem. Under this unusual agreement, Katsof handled negotiations and deals while Zilberman prayed daily for their success. A portion of the proceeds funded Torah learning in a model of wealth generation tethered to purpose.

Yet the memoir shows the danger of incremental compromise, small moral concessions justified in the name of a greater good. Over time, Katsof felt a creeping erosion of his core identity: “I realized that my pursuit of wealth, fame, and validation was creating a growing disconnection from my soul.” Once aware of this, Katsof frames the rest of his journey as an act of realignment and *teshuvah*. He doesn’t reject ambition; rather, he learns to embed it within a framework of values and spiritual practice. He incorporated prayer, study, and intentional time for family and community into his business dealings.

*Living Dangerously* offers the cautionary message that pursuing wealth is neither inherently corrupting nor inherently virtuous. It can be a force for good if anchored to integrity, humility, and higher purpose. Without that tether, it risks becoming a source of disconnection, even self-betrayal.

# Who Funds the Jewish Observer?

Jewish journalism, like all niche media, is undergoing a period of profound transformation. Jewish newspapers, which have historically served as vital community anchors, are dealing with the challenges of a shifting media environment and the unique financial pressures of their mission-driven model.

Local Jewish newspapers matter far beyond the mechanics of reporting; they are pillars of communal life. They chronicle lifecycle events, organizational milestones and obituaries, serving as living archives of Jewish life and telling stories that rarely make it into mainstream press. At the same time, they strengthen Jewish identity and connection by linking readers to one another and to the wider Jewish world, offering context for global events—such as antisemitism or developments in Israel—through a distinctly Jewish lens while also highlighting local initiatives and voices.

Jewish newspapers traditionally relied on a diverse and often precarious mix of revenue streams, but resources like advertising and subscriptions waned in the digital age. In many communities, including Central New York, Federation and individual philanthropists provide the most significant financial support for a Jewish newspaper, seeing it as essential for fostering community cohesion. In addition to the 200 individual donors who support the annual *JO* Appeal, the *Jewish Observer* is fortunate to have several sponsors, without whose support, we would be unable to operate. The Federation provides an allocation which covers the editor’s salary and postage. The *JO* is also given a generous annual subsidy of \$10,000 from the Pomeranz, Shankman, Martin Charitable Foundation Inc., a column sponsorship from RAV Properties, and significant recurring annual gifts from two donors who wish to remain anonymous. The Appeal provides 25% of the budget.

Boston’s *Jewish Advocate* closed its doors. *The New York Jewish Week* put its paper’s weekly print edition “on hiatus” and went all digital. The more than 100-year old *Forward* newspaper ended its print operation to become online-only, as did New Orleans’ *Crescent City Jewish News*. But the *JO* is still going strong, thanks to its benefactors, who believe that a local Jewish newspaper is a community lifeline, preserving preserve memory, reflecting identity, fostering conversation and sustaining connection across distance and change.



The Jewish community of Central New York can be rightfully proud of its local newspaper, which was first published in 1978. In 2022, the *JO* was recognized by the Syracuse Press Club’s with awards for Best Newsletter or Trade Publication and Best Front-Page Design. In 2024, the *Observer* won a Simon Rockower Award for Excellence in Jewish Journalism from the American Jewish Press Association. The award stated: “The *Jewish Observer* is a publication of the Jewish

Federation of Central New York and does what a federation-sponsored organization should do—it covers the community from the perspective of Jewish organizational life. But it punches above its weight when it publishes cover stories like “What Color Are Jews?”. With the headline superimposed on a rainbow flag, the piece addresses a contemporary issue deeply and sensitively. Impressive for a publication required to draw readers from all segments of the political spectrum.”

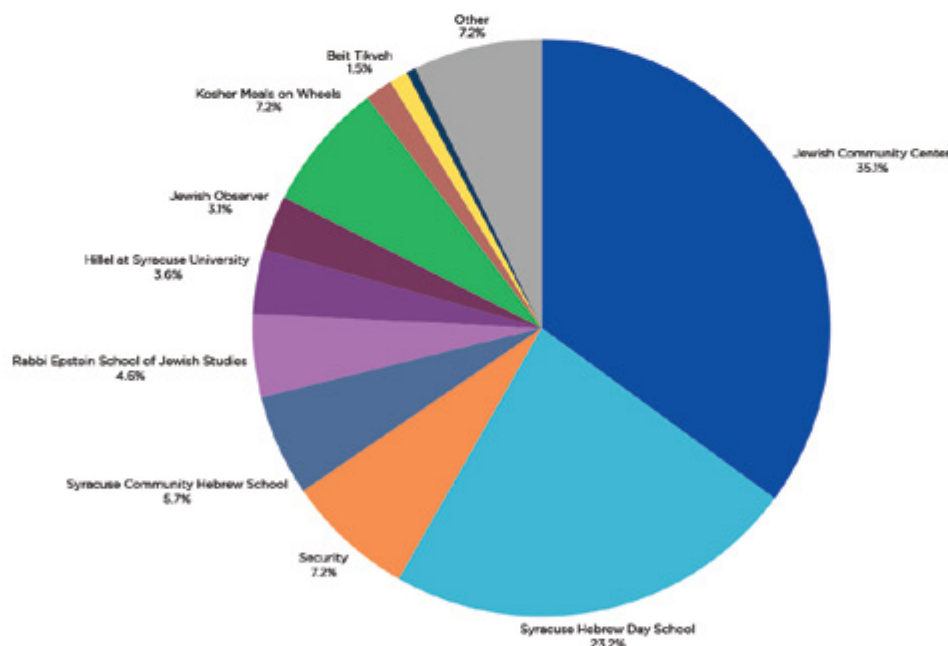


Thank you  
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**Together we raised  
\$1,334,048**

to date, for the 2025 Annual Campaign for Jewish Needs, thanks to 581 donors, including 217 increased donations and 72 first-time gifts.

## Our local allocations for this year:



Your gift to the Annual Campaign brings dignity and care to the vulnerable and elderly, builds and strengthens the Jewish identity of our children and young adults, supports vital community programs, helps coordinate and implement efforts to ensure community security, and creates meaningful Jewish life across Central New York and Israel.

\$200,200 has been allocated to agencies which provide aid to Israel for civilian need and humanitarian support.

Be part of our impact!  
Scan here to pledge. Thank you!



# The Success of the Jewish Community Foundation

by Neil Hoyt, Chair of the Foundation Investment Committee



The Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York, custodian of more than \$30 million in philanthropic assets, continues to demonstrate strong stewardship, a thoughtful investment strategy and expanding community impact. As fiscal year 2025 closed and the first half of FY26 unfolded, the Foundation's diversified and values-driven investment approach delivered steady growth and meaningful results across Central New York.

As we anticipate the celebration of Thanksgiving, our community has much to be grateful for when it comes to the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York. I am delighted to share exceptional news about our FY25 performance and the continued strength of our Foundation.

I am proud to report that our investment portfolio achieved outstanding returns of 12.53% for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025. This exceptional performance significantly exceeds market benchmarks and demonstrates the effectiveness of our disciplined investment strategy and careful stewardship of our community members' philanthropic investments.

Our total assets under management reached \$29,748,448 at the close of the fiscal year, representing substantial growth that directly translates into expanded capacity to serve our community. This milestone reflects both the strong investment performance and the continued generous support from donors like you who understand the importance of building lasting philanthropic resources.

This strong financial performance translates directly into increased resources for the vital programs

and initiatives that serve our Jewish community and the greater Syracuse area. Every dollar of growth in our endowment means expanded capacity to support Jewish education, cultural programs, social services, and community development initiatives that strengthen our shared values and traditions.

Our Investment Committee remains committed to balancing prudent risk management with growth opportunities, ensuring that your generous contributions continue to generate meaningful impact for generations to come. The fiscal year's results reflect both favorable market conditions and our strategic asset allocation decisions, positioning the

Our current portfolio maintains a carefully balanced allocation designed to optimize returns while managing risk appropriately for our long-term mission:

- **55% US Stocks** - Providing growth potential through exposure to America's leading companies, with 35% invested in Vanguard US Cap weighted stock market index funds and an additional 7% allocated among Vanguard index funds focusing on small and mid cap stocks and a large cap high dividend

yield stock ETF. The remaining 16% of equities are invested in various American funds which provide an element of active management and are skewed toward "value" stocks

- **15% International Stocks** - Diversifying our equity holdings across global markets, with just over 12% invested in Vanguard's International cap weighted index funds
- **25% Fixed Income Securities** - Primarily US Treasuries, offering stability and income generation
- **5% Money Markets and Cash Equivalents** - Ensuring liquidity for grant-making and operational needs

This balanced approach has served us well, combining the growth potential of equities with the stability of fixed income investments. Our emphasis on high-quality securities, particularly US Treasuries, reflects our commitment to preserving capital while generating the returns necessary to support our community's philanthropic goals.

Our Investment Philosophy is disciplined and cost effective. The Investment Committee operates with a clear set of principles that prioritize your interests and maximize the impact of every donated dollar. We maintain exceptionally low management fees of approximately one-third of one percent (0.33%), ensuring that nearly all investment gains flow directly to community programs rather than to expensive fund managers.

We invest primarily in index funds to

reduce tracking error and maintain clear, understandable positions. This approach provides broad market exposure while keeping costs low and performance predictable. Our portfolio maintains a slight bias toward value investments to reduce volatility, helping preserve capital during market downturns. Additionally, we keep relatively short duration on our bond investments to minimize interest rate risk. We have deliberately avoided "alternative investments" that are typically opaque and illiquid. This philosophy ensures that our assets remain accessible for grant-making needs while maintaining full transparency about our holdings.

Our securities are held at Charles Schwab, providing institutional-quality custody and trading services. Schwab's investment professionals meet with our committee routinely to provide economic commentary and portfolio guidance, ensuring we remain informed about market conditions and investment opportunities while maintaining our disciplined approach to asset allocation and risk management.

The Foundation's carefully considered and disciplined approach to investing has contributed significantly to our strong 12.53% return while keeping risk at appropriate levels for a charitable foundation charged with perpetual grant-making responsibilities.

*Neil Hoyt is the president of Michael Roberts Associates, an independent wealth management firm, and is a recognized and experienced speaker about estate and retirement planning. A Cornell graduate with a degree in economics, Neil is a certified financial planner, who has appeared on the PBS television program Financial Fitness.*



# Strengthening Endowments

In a world that is always changing, endowments protect, empower, and inspire. By contributing to an existing endowment, donors become part of something enduring: a future where kindness, creativity, justice, and service continue to flourish.

At the Federation’s 2025 Annual Meeting, Barbara Davis was honored with a donation in made by the Federation to the Syracuse Hebrew Day School Barbara Davis Scholarship Endowment established at the Foundation when she retired from SHDS in 2013. “This gift was incredibly meaningful for me,” Barbara said, “because it benefits the wonderful community institution that I served for twenty-seven years and will help the Day School and its students for many more years.”



Endowments are the life blood of community institutions. Invested to generate ongoing income, they provide reliable support year after year. The principal is preserved, while a portion of the investment earnings (typically 4% to 5%) is used to fund operations, programs, and new initiatives. Community organizations are often subject to the unpredictability of annual fundraising, grant cycles, and shifting donor

priorities. An endowment helps organizations plan for the long-term, make commitments to staff and programs, and respond to emerging needs without financial panic. An organization with a healthy endowment is less beholden to short-term funding trends or external pressures. It can stay true to its mission, uphold its values, and take risks when innovation is needed—without worrying that one lost grant or donor will jeopardize its survival.

Foundation Executive Director Mark Segel explained, “Donating to an endowment creates a legacy and is a way to honor values, pay forward blessings, and ensure that the work of healing, educating, feeding, or empowering continues for generations to come. Many generous people support community organizations year after year, but when they give to an endowment,

they go one step further, helping to ensure that the organization they care about will still be strong well into the future.”

That is why the Federation made a gift in Barbara’s honor to the SHDS Endowment. Mark Segel added, “Strong endowments don’t just come from million-dollar gifts. They are built by many hands—by people who care, who contribute what they can, and who understand that community organizations need both immediate resources and long-term security. Whether large or modest, your gift to an endowment becomes part of a permanent resource pool that grows over time. A gift to an endowment is a message of faith in the future. It says that this organization matters, not just now, but always.”

*Anyone interested in creating an endowment or adding to an existing endowment should contact Mark Segel at [msegel@jewishfoundationcny.org](mailto:msegel@jewishfoundationcny.org).*

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# Game-Changing Giving in Central New York



In every generation, there are moments when bold giving changes the course of Jewish life. Central New York's history is full of these moments—and its future will depend on the next ones. Whether through a major endowment, a legacy gift, or a visionary act of generosity today, every person has the power to leave a mark that will be felt *l'dor v'dor*, from generation to generation. The question is not whether our community needs such gifts. It's whether we are ready to be the ones to make them.

In the Jewish tradition, giving is more than generosity—it is a sacred act, a partnership with God in repairing the world. Some gifts do more than meet immediate needs; they transform entire communities, unlock new possibilities, and inspire others to follow suit. These are game-changing gifts, investments that alter the course of Jewish life for generations.

Jewish Central New York has felt the impact of such giving from visionary donors who have stepped forward at critical moments. Some donors preferred to remain anonymous, letting the act itself, not the giver, be the focus. On the other hand, public philanthropy has its own power. When donors attach their names to a building, program, or endowment, it can inspire others to give, visibly linking their gift to Jewish continuity. Public recognition is about modeling generosity—showing that investing in Jewish life is something to be proud of.

Our community has many examples of both public and private giving. The Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center was named for a major donor, although not until after his death. A recent large endowment was established by a local donor for KlezFest who wished to remain anonymous. Naming rights were also refused by Gus and Rose Rothschild, whose six-figure gift to the Syracuse Hebrew Day School enabled the purchase of the Genesee Hills School building which now houses the school and the JCC. The Elman Family Fund at the Federation was created to Support programs which educate about the horrors of the Nazi regime and will do so for generations to come. Temple Adath Yeshurun's Goldberg Sanctuary, Miron Family Chapel and Rothschild Early Childhood Center were all named for generous benefactors. Temple Concord has numerous named funds to provide for the needs of the congregation, including building funds, education funds and the Regina F. Goldenberg Cultural Series fund.



Zalie Linn have great compassion for the community's four-legged friends. They contribute their time and make donations to a whole host of animal charities, most notably the eponymous Amur Leopard Woodland at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. The Pachyderm Pavilion at the Zoo was named for generous donors Jerome and Nancy Rifken. The Slutzger Family Foundation and Sidney and Winnie Greenberg have been generous supporters of Syracuse Stage.

The Central New York Jewish community offers many opportunities for philanthropic game-changing giving.

Jewish generosity is not limited to Jewish causes. The naming gift for the M.O.S.T., the Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science and Technology, was given by his family to honor Milton's life-long dedication to science, invention, and engineering." Bob and

For those who are interested in making a game-changing gift, here are some guidelines:

## 1. Think Long-Term

The most impactful gifts are designed to last, often through endowments or capital investments that generate benefits for decades.

## 2. Align Passion with Need

Game-changing philanthropy happens when a donor's deepest values meet the community's most pressing needs—whether in education, youth engagement, or preserving memory.

## 3. Leverage Inspiration

Big gifts don't stand alone; they inspire others to give. A bold act of generosity can set the tone for an entire campaign.

## 4. Build in Flexibility

Needs change over time. Unrestricted or adaptable gifts give organizations the ability to respond to new challenges without starting from scratch.

## 5. Honor L'dor v'dor

When gifts are framed as part of the sacred chain from generation to generation, they carry a sense of shared responsibility—and shared joy—that strengthens the whole community.

The Jewish Foundation of Central New York stands ready to help donors turn their vision into impact, guiding them to make game-changing investments that will sustain and strengthen the community for generations. Foundation executive director Mark Segel says, "With expert guidance and personalized support, the Foundation ensures your generosity creates lasting and meaningful change." **To connect with the Foundation, email [msegel@jewishfoundationcny.org](mailto:msegel@jewishfoundationcny.org).**

## Game-Changing Giving: Lieberman Beit Orchim

Game-changing gifts are characterized by their scale, vision, and alignment with an organization's mission. They often inspire others to join in support and create a ripple effect throughout the community.

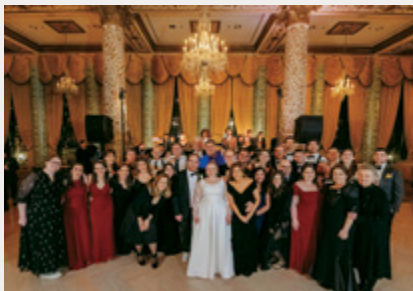


Rabbi Vicki Lieberman and Cantor Robert Lieberman recently made a game-changing gift to Camp Ramah in Wisconsin, a cherished Jewish summer camp known for its unique blend of outdoor adventure and immersive Jewish education and experiences. Their landmark donation, among the largest in the camp's history, will allow Ramah Wisconsin to build the Lieberman Beit Orchim or Guest House, the first winterized facility at the camp, which set up Ramah to host guests, adult staff and alumni in comfort while expanding educational and programming possibilities.

Neither Vicki nor Robert attended Ramah Wisconsin. The camp, however, became a meaningful part of their lives because of the profound impact it had on their daughter Tovah. "Watching Tovah grow at camp was powerful," Vicki says. "She wrote home about her experiences and delighted in sharing care packages with her campmates. Camp gave her the confidence to try new things." After college, Tovah moved to Chicago where her Ramah

friends remained central to her life. Vicki marveled at how those bonds deepened through weddings, children and alumni events. One unforgettable moment crystallized the Liebermans' commitment to Ramah. When Tovah needed emergency surgery in Chicago, Vicki and Robert were in New York. Before they could get to the hospital, Tovah was already in recovery, surrounded by her Ramah friends. Her friends were huddled together under a Vicki-made quilt. Recalling that night, Robert says, "I knew we would do something significant for Ramah's future."

The Ramah Camping Movement has long been a vital institution for Jewish families seeking meaningful summer experiences. The camp combines fun, friendship, and learning in a warm, inclusive environment where campers engage in Hebrew language, producing musicals in Hebrew, Jewish traditions, study and leadership development. Many alumni credit Ramah as a formative influence in their Jewish identity and community involvement. In fact, last March Tovah (nivonim 2004) married Jeremy Drazner (nivonim 2008) with lots of Ramah friends as members of the bridal party and guests. Vicki jokingly refers to the wedding as "a very expensive Ramah reunion."



The Liebermans' gift to the camp is both an expression of appreciation for all that Ramah does and an illustration of impactful game changing giving. "We don't want to wait and leave a legacy after we pass," said Cantor Lieberman. "We want to create a living legacy—to enjoy and see the laughter, the joy, and the dancing." As Ramah Wisconsin welcomes campers in coming seasons, the impact of the Lieberman family's generosity will be felt in every joyful moment, lesson learned, and friendship formed. Their game-changing gift stands as a powerful example of how thoughtful giving can create lasting, positive change.



## THE FEDERATION WILL SEND **\$200,200** TO ISRAEL IN FY2026

### THIS IS WHERE THE FUNDS WILL GO:

**72% TO THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR ISRAEL** which works to strengthen Jewish identity, facilitating Aliyah, providing support to vulnerable populations in Israel, and acting as a bridge between Israelis and Jews globally.

**24% TO THE AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE** which works to rescue Jews in danger, provide aid to vulnerable Jews, develop innovative solutions to Israel's most complex social challenges, cultivate a Jewish future, and lead the Jewish community's response to global crises like natural disasters, public health emergencies, and more.

**3% TO BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL** which provides a free 10-day trip to Israel for young Jewish adults aged 18-26, fostering a connection with their Jewish identity, heritage, and the State of Israel. The program aims to strengthen Jewish identity, community, and connection among participants.

**1% TO THE ISRAEL ACTION NETWORK** which works to build support for Israel and counter its delegitimization through various initiatives. It mobilizes allies, advocates for peace, educates on key issues, trains advocates, and promotes people-to-people programs between Israelis and Palestinians. The IAN also aims to counter antisemitism and efforts to isolate Israel.

We work in partnership with the Jewish Federations of North America and all funds that are sent to Israel are allocated to organizations and programs that address the needs of people in Israel, not to the government's infrastructure or military operations.

# Tikun Olam in the Economic Sphere: Delilah Rothenberg and PDI

Delilah Rothenberg, a graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and the Epstein School of Jewish Studies, is working to change how money flows in the world of big finance. She is the founder and executive director of the Predistribution Initiative (PDI), an organization that pushes large investors—like pension funds and foundations—to share more wealth and decision-making power with workers and local communities.

At the center of her work is the idea of a predistributive economy. This means an economy where money and investments don't only reward shareholders, but also value people, communities, and the natural environment. In this model, investors consider not only profits, but also the risks that workers, communities, and nature bear, along with the value they create. These factors should guide how investments are made, how financial risks are measured, and how profits are shared.

Rothenberg's views come from nearly twenty years of experience in private equity (buying and growing companies), sustainable finance (investing with social and environmental goals),



and project development. Over time, she saw that the financial system

itself is deeply flawed. Even investors who wanted to help were stuck in an old way of doing business that put quick profits ahead of long-term fairness and sustainability. That realization led her to create PDI in 2019. As she explains, "We can't just tweak operations at portfolio companies. We have to address the incentives and models that drive money in the first place."

Under her leadership, PDI questions the traditional "ESG" (environmental, social, and governance) frameworks used by many investors. Instead, it pushes institutions to recognize the bigger dangers tied to inequality, worker exploitation, and climate change. Rothenberg has become a respected voice in international meetings—from Geneva's Building Bridges summit to worldwide discussions on responsible investing. Her message is simple: when the problems are structural, the solutions also have to be structural. Now that PDI is

a fully independent nonprofit, Rothenberg says, "People are hungry for change. We're here to help build the systems that make it possible."

Recently, she returned from the Accelerator for Systemic Risk Assessment (ASRA) in France. There, she saw how the idea of a "polycrisis"—when many global problems collide at once—is no longer abstract. "These risks, ranging from economic inequality and political polarization to climate change and artificial intelligence, are here and increasingly intertwined," she says. "The old models investors used to predict the future are losing relevance. We need new thinking and new approaches." For her, the key question is: What role do investors play in creating these crises, in being affected by them, and in fixing them? PDI's mission is to help answer this by changing how money is invested, priced, and structured so that wealth and influence are spread more fairly.

The foundation of PDI is the belief that there are better, more inclusive ways to manage money. Rothenberg admits that building a nonprofit to bridge finance and global risks is a tough task—but one that is necessary. Around the world, people are demanding change, and while some of the solutions being tried are extreme or risky, they all show a hunger for reform. That's why PDI's strategy starts with listening. "We believe that real progress starts with listening," she says. "That's why we're rooted in the principle 'nothing about us without us,' echoing the call of the U.S. disability rights movement." Through research, direct engagement with investors, and partnerships with workers and community groups, PDI works to give more people a say in how money is managed.

"Our mission is to align how big investors make decisions with the principles of predistribution," Rothenberg explains. "Now, as an independent organization, we're ready to deepen and expand our work. Our goals remain clear: confront inequality, build social trust, and challenge the status quo in financial markets—not through ideology, but through collaboration and evidence-based approaches."

When asked what shaped her passion to fight inequality, Rothenberg points to her family, her upbringing, and her time at Syracuse Hebrew Day School. There, she learned the importance of treating others the way one would want to be treated. Learning about the Holocaust also influenced her thinking, as she came to see economic inequality as one of the root causes of scapegoating and social division.



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**Movies are more than entertainment—they're a mirror of society. If Hollywood is a cinematic amusement park, Israeli cinema is an art gallery—smaller, more intimate and thought-provoking. American movies provide escapism with clear heroes, dramatic arcs and endings that wrap things up neatly. Israeli films, by contrast, dig deep into the Israeli experience: military service, the Holocaust, family dynamics, social tensions, cultural diversity, immigration stories, identity and religiosity. Israeli films don't shy away from moral ambiguity, portraying real-life struggles and complex characters, raw emotions, moral dilemmas, and imperfect human experiences.**

Four years ago, the Federation made a *shidduch* with ChaiFlicks to obtain yearlong licenses for twenty families so that, each month, they can watch a Jewish or Israeli movie at their convenience and then meet on a Sunday afternoon at 4 pm via Zoom to talk about it. Sam Young, a knowledgeable movie buff and wonderful discussion leader, guides the conversations, which are always stimulating and informative.

Below is the list of the movies selected for 5786. They deal with a wide variety of issues, but all are fascinating. (The hundreds of movies and television series on ChaiFlicks are also available to participants at no charge, to be watched whenever they wish.)

**To participate in the SUNDAY CINEMA SERIES, please email [bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org](mailto:bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org). The first twenty people to respond will be given licenses. (The licenses are only for one household; they cannot be shared with others.)**

### October 19: THE CAKEMAKER

A poignant tale of love and loss, this film follows a German baker who travels to Israel to learn about the life of his deceased lover. It's a beautifully crafted story of grief and connection.

### November 16: LESS THAN KOSHER

At 20, Viv was a promising young singer. At 30, her failing music career has forced her back into her mother's basement. But when this self-proclaimed "bad Jew" lands ass-backwards into a job as a Cantor at her family's synagogue, she's thrown into a wild ride of illicit affairs, drug trips, tense family drama, self-discovery and some serious Jewish bops.

### December 7: ARRANGED

Two beautiful young teachers in Brooklyn, one an Orthodox Jew and the other a Muslim, cross boundaries and flout conventions when they forge a powerful and lasting friendship, bonding over their shared experiences of "arranged marriages" through their respective religious and traditional customs.

### January 11: THE GOLDMAN CASE

In 1975, Pierre Goldman, a fiery and controversial figure of revolutionary left-wing activism, was put on trial in

France. Accused of multiple crimes including two murders, Goldman proclaims his innocence. Twenty years before the O.J. Simpson case, the Goldman trial reflects the political, ideological and racial tensions that marked the 1970s in France and Europe. Considered to be the trial of the century, it divided an entire country and widened the gap between the conservative right and left-wing intellectuals.

### February 8: SENIOR MOMENTS

Funny, witty, bold and revealing, the creators of *Senior Moments* document intimate meetings with ten resilient elderly folks surviving old age with a vengeance. The film cohesively samples a cultural variety of personalities in modern-day Israel and provides an inspiring outlook on what it means to be old today.

### March 15: FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA?

An international film which presents an unprecedented and unfiltered view of the conflict in the Middle East. This is not just a conflict over territory, but a profound clash between values, histories, and worldviews that shape the lives of millions. The film crew went to the Middle East to hear directly from those who live in this reality every day. More than examining political disputes or war strategies, the film reveals the motivations that make this conflict an open wound with no foreseeable cure. Understand what

is at stake in this clash of ideologies that is not limited to the Middle East. The consequences of this war are already resonating in our daily lives, and they will inevitably reach us. The question is not if, but when.

### April 19: THAT ORCHESTRA WITH THE BROKEN INSTRUMENTS

A broken string, fractured echo chamber, rusting valves. One brilliant conductor, three gifted composers, and 100 musicians meet for four days of rehearsals. They speak different languages. Their instruments are broken. An orchestra of professional and amateur musicians, young and old, prepare, against all odds, for a one-time-only concert in Jerusalem. A poetic, engaging take on broken and whole presents Jerusalem characters and an attempt to create harmony in a discordant city.

### May 17: GOLDA

Shortly before her passing, Golda Meir was interviewed for Israeli television. After the shooting ended, the cameras kept rolling, recording an intimate talk with the first and only woman to ever rule Israel. As she lit one cigarette off the other, Golda spoke freely, pleading her case for her term as prime minister. Based on that never-seen-before talk, testimonies of supporters and opponents and rare archival footage, *Golda* tells the story of Meir's dramatic premiership—from her surprising rise to power and iconic international stature as "queen of the Jewish people," to her tragic demise.

### June 14: SÜSKIND

Amsterdam, summer 1942. Walter Süskind can count himself lucky that he's found a job with the Jewish Council, which offers him and his family protection from deportation to Germany. It is Süskind's task to arrange for the detainees to be sent to "work" in Germany. But when he discovers what is really awaiting his fellow Jews, he decides to double-cross the Germans. Befriending a high-ranking SS officer, Aus der Fünten, Süskind devises cunning ways to help save many children from certain death.

### July 12: FIG TREE

Ethiopian-Israeli writer-director Aäläm-Wärqe Davidian makes a startlingly confident feature debut with this story of lives torn asunder by civil war. Set in Addis Ababa in 1989, the film follows a teenage girl's harrowing coming of age. Mina is 16 years old. The Ethiopian Civil War has been underway her entire life. She lives with her brother and grandmother in a humble house with newsprint for wallpaper. The family is Jewish and is planning to flee Ethiopia for Israel, where Mina's mother awaits their reunion. But this plan leaves out the person Mina loves most: Eli, her Christian boyfriend, who lives in the woods to evade being drafted into Mengistu Haile Mariam's army. Mina hatches a scheme to save Eli, but everyone and everything seems set against her.

### August 9: BEN-GURION, EPILOGUE

It is 1968. David Ben Gurion, one of history's greatest leaders, is 82 and lives in the desert. In this interview, Ben-Gurion's introspective soul-searching provides a surprising vision for crucial decisions Israel needs to make today. At the time of the global leadership crisis, the film also brings thought-provoking insights about the role of leaders in today's complex world.

## Tikvah v'Shalom Mural Installed in SHDS Sanctuary

by Phyllis Zames

The multi-talented Director of Health and Wellness of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, Ashley Lavine, is always looking for ways to improve not only the health of the students, but also the beauty of their learning environment. This summer, Mrs. Lavine completed a gorgeous twelve-by-seven foot mural as a gift to the students of SHDS. Entitled *Tikvah v'Shalom*, or *Hope and Peace* in English, it transports the viewer to a place of Jewish love and comfort.



“As a whole, the artwork reminds us of *Yerushalayim shel zahav*, Jerusalem of gold,” said Melissa Klemperer, head of school. “The longer one watches—and this is a piece that you may truly watch, as each area is a scene that inspires the imagination—the more hidden treats your eyes will find. Symbols of Jewish holidays and history are tucked into the painting for viewers to find and enjoy.”

“I know the mural took her a long time, and it’s really pretty,” said fourth grader Aria Garelick. “Without the tiny details, it’s amazing. But with the tiny details, it makes it even better, because it helps it tell the story. The story is our Jewish background. If you look at it, it makes you imagine a real place in Israel.”

“Our students often start their day in the sanctuary,” Lavine pointed out. “They come to school bright and eager. I wanted to reflect their energy back. I wanted them to come to school every day and know that we believe in hope, peace, and beauty—so they should too.”

The supplies for the project were funded by the Pomeranz Shankman Martin Charitable Foundation, Inc.

## Lighting Up Shabbat Syracuse Community Hebrew School Launches Family Engagement Initiative



The Syracuse Community Hebrew School (SCHS) has long been a bridge-builder in Central New York’s Jewish community. A joint endeavor of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas, Temple Concord, and Temple Adath Yeshurun, SCHS serves 65 students from diverse family backgrounds, with nearly 70% identifying as interfaith households. Now, thanks to a newly awarded grant from the National Center to Encourage Judaism, the school is embarking on a project designed to bring the joy and meaning of Shabbat into the homes of its families.

The “Light Up Shabbat Initiative” will provide families with the tools, experiences, and confidence to make Shabbat not only a classroom lesson but a cherished weekly ritual. The grant makes it possible for SCHS to distribute seasonal Shabbat kits, host model dinners, organize cooking classes, and create meaningful opportunities for families to celebrate together both at home and in the wider community.

“Shabbat is the beating heart of Jewish life,” said SCHS director Ora Jezer. “But for many families today—especially interfaith families juggling hectic schedules—it can feel out of reach. This grant allows us to lower the barriers and bring Shabbat directly to their tables.”

At the center of the initiative are Shabbat kits, curated packages designed to help families celebrate at home. Each kit will include challah, grape juice, candles, blessings in Hebrew, English, and transliteration, *zmirot* (songs) with accompanying recordings by local clergy, and festive recipe cards. Students will create handmade ritual objects like challah covers, adding a personal touch to each family’s Shabbat table. Families will receive these kits three times during the school year, coinciding with major Jewish holidays. The repetition, educators hope, will inspire families to incorporate Shabbat more regularly into their lives.

In addition to home celebrations, SCHS will host model Shabbat dinners at school, giving students hands-on practice with rituals like *Kabbalat Shabbat*, candle lighting, and kiddush. Clergy, cantors, and even local seniors will join the children, creating an intergenerational atmosphere

of warmth and belonging. SCHS is also introducing cooking classes where families can learn to prepare traditional Jewish dishes such as challah, kugel, and tzimmes. Families will also have the option to order fresh *challot* weekly, ensuring that the tastes and smells of Shabbat remain part of their weekly rhythm.

Parents will be invited to share photos of their Shabbat tables in a digital album, creating a tapestry of celebrations that highlights the diversity and creativity of Jewish life in Central New York. Synagogues will amplify the program through newsletters, announcements, and social media, helping reach families who may be on the periphery of synagogue life.

It’s this type of transformation—small moments turning into lasting traditions—that the initiative hopes to replicate across dozens of households. By giving interfaith families accessible entry points into Jewish practice, SCHS aims to strengthen Jewish pride, encourage family bonding, and build a stronger communal identity.

The Light Up Shabbat Initiative is a vision for how Jewish tradition can thrive in modern family life. By weaving together classroom learning, family practice, and communal celebration, SCHS is ensuring that Shabbat becomes a source of joy, pride, and connection for the next generation. “This grant is helping us not only preserve Jewish tradition but reimagine it in ways that meet today’s families where they are,” said Jezer. “Our hope is that children and parents alike will carry these experiences forward for years to come.”

ad COUNCIL

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# Community Packs Back to School Backpacks for Kids in Need

Two hundred and fifty new school backpacks were filled with school supplies by the Lions of Judah and generous community members for the annual Mary Nelson Youth Center annual Back-To-School event, held every August in Syracuse. Dozens of volunteers came to the JCC to help pack the bags which the program provides to students at no charge along with clothing, food, entertainment, and community support to students in need. An ice cream treat rewarded their hard work. The backpack giveaway is a core outreach that Mary Nelson has been hosting since 2002 to ensure that children start school equipped and confident. LOJ project organizer Leah Goldberg said, "We are so thankful for all of the donations and the many community members who joined together to pack new backpacks for students in need. Seeing so many volunteers—especially children—participate in *tikkun olam* is a beautiful reflection of the Jewish values we hold dear."




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# Celebrate the Holidays with the JCC

by Ashley Schmitz

The holiday season is rolling in which means the JCC is ready to celebrate with joyous events for all ages. Festivities kick off November 24 as the tiniest community members, Preschool and Pre-K through the Jerome & Phyllis Charney Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP), gather for a Friendsgiving feast. Each class will share a traditional Thanksgiving meal, decorate their classrooms with handmade creations, and reflect on the season's true gifts: kindness and gratitude.

"As a former classroom teacher, I always look forward to the Pre-K/Preschool Friendsgiving. At this age, children can truly begin to understand and appreciate being thankful for all that they have. They play such an important role in making the meal special, helping with decorations, setting the tables, and more. And of course, the turkey is always a favorite!" said Alana Raphael, Assistant Director of the Early Childhood Development Program.

December ushers in even more holiday celebrations, starting with the JCC's annual Community Chanukah Party filling the gymnasium with Jewish culture, tradition and fellowship on Sunday, December 14 at 12:30 pm. Guests can nosh on favorites like latkes, bagels, sufganiyot, and more, while children bounce between inflatables, crafts, and face painting. The parties continue to the ECDP classrooms on December 18 allowing the children to celebrate and make memories alongside their classmates.

To appreciate and remember the importance of Chanukah, the JCC invites the community to the lighting of their menorah. Community members can gather at the JCC's newly renovated front steps on weeknights during Chanukah at 4:30pm to see the menorah shine bright.

Holidays at the JCC also bring a little light and joy to the seniors, beginning with a delicious Thanksgiving lunch on Tuesday, November 25. Seniors are encouraged to bring their dancing shoes to the holiday celebrations in December, as both dinners will feature live music. The Chanukah Dinner on Monday, December 15 will include joyous klezmer music from local favorites The Kenya Hora Band. On Wednesday, December 31, the New Year's Eve Celebration will welcome Sean Cecily, performing a dynamic mix of genres and decades to ring in the new year.

In addition to celebrating, the community can get into the giving spirit and browse local vendors at the annual Holiday Shopping Soiree fundraiser taking place on Wednesday, December 3. Attendees can browse a wide variety of vendors offering everything from handmade gifts and artisan goods to home décor and accessories.

"This event is a wonderful way to get some much-needed holiday shopping done while supporting locally owned businesses and, most importantly, the Early Childhood Development Program and the children it serves," says Pamela Ranier, Director of Children's Programming.

For those looking for other ways to support ECDP and Children's Programming, the annual Gift Card Fundraiser offers gift cards to a wide range of popular retailers and services, including clothing, dining, health, and travel, making them ideal for holiday gifts or everyday use. Gift card forms can be found on the JCC's website ([jccsy.org](http://jccsy.org)) and are due by December 4. Gift cards will be received by December 11. Reach out to Amy Bisnett at [abisnett@jccsy.org](mailto:abisnett@jccsy.org) for more info on these fundraisers.

**For more information on any of these celebrations, visit the JCC's website at [jccsy.org](http://jccsy.org).**



## The Syracuse Jewish Film Festival Returns for a Second Year!

by Raven Disalvo-Hess

The JCC of Syracuse is excited to once again partner with End Antisemitism Now for the 2025 Syracuse Jewish Film Festival, taking place in October and November 2025.



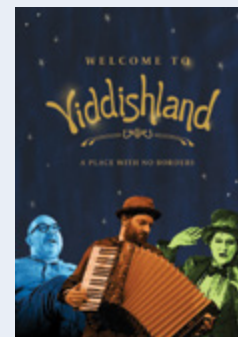
### WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29 Bad Shabbos at 7pm

A dark, sharp comedy about two couples gathering for Shabbat in New York City, where an accidental death (or possible murder) throws the evening into chaos. The film features standout performances from Kyra Sedgwick, David Paymer, and other familiar faces.



### SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2 \*double feature\* Swedishkayt: YidLife Crisis in Stockholm at 11am

*Swedishkayt: YidLife Crisis in Stockholm* follows comedy duo Eli Batalion and Jamie Elman as they bring their Yiddish-ish humor to Sweden, uncovering 250 years of Jewish history and a surprising cultural revival. This heartfelt, hilarious journey celebrates resilience, identity, and the universal joy of Jewish life.



### Welcome to Yiddishland at 1pm

This upbeat, witty documentary follows artists worldwide as they revive the nearly lost Yiddish language through music, theater, opera, and literature. From punk-Klezmer to acclaimed stage productions, this film offers audiences a positive, nuanced, empowered, and inclusive depiction of "Jewishness."



### WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12 Midas Man at 7pm

This funny, thrilling, and moving film tells the true story of Brian Epstein, the legendary manager who discovered The Beatles and propelled them from Liverpool clubs to worldwide fame. Jacob Fortune-Lloyd (*The Queen's Gambit*) delivers a star-making performance as Epstein, co-starring along several notable actors.

**For more information or to register for the Syracuse Jewish Festival, please visit [jccsy.org/film-festival](http://jccsy.org/film-festival) or call 315-445-2360.**

## Community Gathers for Annual “Hava Nagrilla” Shabbat Celebration

As summer drew to a close, one of the community’s most beloved traditions returned: Hava Nagrilla, a joint cookout and Kabbalat Shabbat service hosted at Temple Adath Yeshurun on Kimber Road. Nearly 200 people came together in late August to share food, friendship, and prayer, marking one of the final Shabbat evenings of the season.

The event, a collaboration between Congregation Beth Sholom–Chevra Shas, Temple Adath Yeshurun, and Temple Concord, has become a highlight of the Jewish summer calendar in Central New York. Families and friends gathered outdoors for dinner before transitioning into an uplifting Shabbat service.

Clergy from all three congregations led the service: Rabbi Ilan Emanuel, Cantor Kari Eglash, Cantor Esa Jaffe, Rabbi Moshe Saks, and Rabbi Dr. Oren Steinitz, accompanied by musician Joe Eglash. Each leader infused the evening with their own traditions and melodies, weaving together a service that was both deeply spiritual and inclusive.



Hava Nagrilla reflects the diversity of Jewish life in Syracuse. Temple Concord, founded in 1839, is one of the oldest Reform congregations in the nation; Congregation Beth Sholom–Chevra Shas is a vibrant egalitarian Conservative congregation in Jamesville; and Temple Adath Yeshurun, also Conservative, serves as a vital hub of Jewish prayer and learning on Kimber Road. The evening would not have been possible without the dedication of synagogue staff and volunteers who coordinated food, logistics, and the service itself.

With laughter, song, and shared blessings, the evening carried a sense of unity and celebration. As the sun set and voices rose in prayer, attendees were reminded of the strength of community bonds in a time when togetherness feels more important than ever. Inspired by the success of the Hav Nagrilla 2025, organizers have already announced the date for next year’s gathering: Friday, August 21, 2026.

## JCC receives Donation from Matthews Children’s Foundation

by Erin Hart



The JCC of Syracuse received \$1,000 from the Matthews Children’s Foundation. The Foundation awards grants to nonprofit organizations whose purpose is to support children. The JCC’s Children’s Programming has received continued support for a number of years from the Matthews Children’s Foundation. Pictured is the JCC’s Executive Director, Marci Erlebacher and Immediate Past President, Steven Sisskind.

## “Finding Your Story” Workshop at TAY



Jennifer Shulman led nearly twenty participants in a “Finding Your Story” Workshop hosted by the Sisterhood of Temple Adath Yeshurun. Participants learned about different styles of storytelling, brainstormed experiences of theirs that could be story worthy, and completed writing exercises to help reveal their stories. Participant Abby Scheer commented, “It was such a gift to have the opportunity to reflect on different aspects of my own story and share with and learn from others in the group. Jen’s expertise and gentle encouragement made for a fun, relaxing and fulfilling experience!”

Jennifer Shulman has worked in research and writing for over 30 years and is the founder of Jeneration Stories, a company that helps people turn their personal stories into self-published books. *Learn more at [www.jenerationstories.com](http://www.jenerationstories.com).*

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## Celebrating CBS-CS Ingenuity

by Lawrence Wilde



On Wednesday, August 20th, Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas hosted an Authors Circle to celebrate the tremendous creativity and hard work of four of its congregants. The authors discussed their books, the writing process, and what it means to be a Jewish author. They answered questions from the congregation and showcased the intellect and vibrancy CBS-CS has to offer.

The first author, **Dr. Ruth Stein**, presented *Exile Letters Friedeman-Waldeck*, the story of

Stein's family and her parents' forced separation between 1939-1942 during WWII. The book contains over 100 letters in the original German and English translation, as well as photos and stories from the family. The CBS-CS library is incredibly lucky to have a copy of this book for members to borrow and explore.

**Dr. Michael Gordon**, a distinguished clinical psychologist based in Syracuse, shared the story of his brother in *The Book of David: On Caring for Siblings with Special Needs*. Michael uses his brother's story to offer insights and guidance for sibling caregivers, taking a different view from traditional narratives. "Most books that address life with a special needs sibling focus on the negative consequences that can so often flow from the experience," Gordon writes. Instead, he explores how caregiving "can also enrich us all—individually, within our families, and across the community at large." Michael will be sharing more about his book and his experiences through a special Lunch & Learn at CBS-CS, "Caretaking & Mental Health," on November 1st at 12:30 pm.

**Sarah Young**, a fiction author, shared her fourth novel *Happy Camper*, a captivating tale of love and identity, set against the backdrop of a Jewish summer camp in 2010. When Reina, an out lesbian, is sent to Camp Geshem for the summer, she anticipates an isolating eight weeks back in the closet — because the camp's policy at the time is to kick out LGBTQ+ campers. But when she meets Talia, a fellow camper with secrets of her own, everything changes. Amidst the backdrop of camp rituals and the natural beauty of Camp Geshem, they forge a deep connection that challenges their perceptions of themselves and what it means to truly find a place where they belong.

The fourth author, **Dr. Mickey Lebowitz**, provides insight based on decades of working in medical care for others working in the field in his book *The EQ Zone*. He combines two known concepts, emotional intelligence and the Zone, into one unique paradigm, the Emotional Intelligence (EQ) Zone. This practical structure and strategy are simple, easily learnable and usable in real time, especially when the heat is on and the stressors are high.

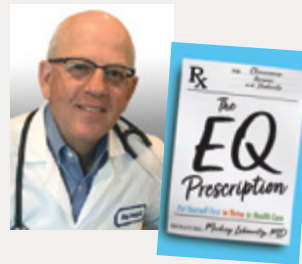
The authors had the opportunity to introduce themselves and their books, talking about their experiences leading up to the books' release. The library was overflowing with congregants interested in learning more about their work. Attendees asked questions about the impact of the authors' personal life on their work, and what role being Jewish played in the authors' careers and writing. They also had the opportunity to purchase the books and share their thoughts with other congregants.

CBS-CS is incredibly proud of the authors for their hard work and dedication to their craft. With the success of this event, CBS-CS looks forward to hosting more in the future with other authors in the congregation. **For more information about CBS-CS events, service times and more, please visit [www.cbcs.org](http://www.cbcs.org) or reach out to [admin@cbcs.org](mailto:admin@cbcs.org).**

## Books by Local Authors

### *The EQ Prescription* by Mickey Lebowitz, M.D.

"Everyone in health care—clinicians, nurses, and students—works too hard, makes too many sacrifices, spends too many hours and too much money training to not fully enjoy their wonderful professions while delivering their best patient care. Instead, they burn out or leave their positions prematurely because of the inevitable and inescapable pain points that are inherent in the health-care system."



The above description, written by Dr. Mickey Lebowitz, provides the reason he published *The EQ Prescription*, a book written to offer health care professionals a new way to thrive on the job. A board-certified endocrinologist and experienced medical leader, Lebowitz wrote *The EQ Prescription*,

which encourages doctors, nurses, and students to "put yourself first" by strengthening emotional intelligence.

Blending personal stories, data, and practical exercises, Lebowitz introduces what he calls the "Emotional Intelligence Zone"—a framework designed to help clinicians make better decisions, build stronger relationships, avoid burnout, and deliver higher-quality patient care. Having served as a hospitalist, VA physician, senior medical quality director, educator, and author, Lebowitz brings a wide-ranging perspective to the challenges facing today's health-care workforce. "The benefits are enormous," he writes, pointing to greater job satisfaction, improved outcomes, and healthier workplace cultures. His message is clear: thriving in medicine isn't just about caring for patients—it starts with caring for yourself.

Lebowitz's first book, *Losing My Patience*, published in 2009, was the autobiography of a successful physician who left his private practice because of the cruel realities of the American health care system. In his new book, Lebowitz provides a remedy for the ills he described in his earlier work. Using stories, anecdotes, data, self-reflections, and practical exercises, *The EQ Prescription* shows practitioners "how to better navigate your zone and the zone of others." He explains that "the benefits of doing so are enormous: better decision-making, stronger relationships, feelings of accomplishment and job satisfaction, greater patient satisfaction and outcomes, enhanced leadership and organizational culture, and less risk of malpractice and burnout."

Seth Kronenberg, M.D., president and CEO of Crouse Health says that *The EQ Prescription* is a powerful guide for staying grounded in the demanding world of health care. Dr. Lebowitz distills complex emotional intelligence concepts into practical tools that help clinicians, nurses, and students thrive—improving team dynamics and patient care."

### *Happy Camper* by Sarah L. Young

Native Central New York Sarah L. Young is the author of *Nice Jewish Boys* (2017), *Plus One* (2018), and *Parsha Poetry* (2022). She began writing at the age of 15 and hasn't stopped since. She earned her BA from Wellesley College in 2020 and her Master of Fine Arts in children's literature and writing for children from Simmons University in 2025. Sarah's latest book is *Happy Camper*.



The novel is described as "a captivating tale of love and identity, set against the backdrop of a Jewish summer camp in 2010. When Reina, an out lesbian, is sent to Camp Geshem for the summer, she anticipates an isolating eight weeks back in the closet—because the camp's policy at the time is not to allow out LGBTQ+ campers. But when

she meets Talia, a fellow camper with secrets of her own, everything changes. As they navigate the complexities of their identities and the shifting attitudes

and expectations of their surroundings, Reina and Talia embark on a journey of self-discovery and acceptance. Amidst the backdrop of camp rituals and the natural beauty of Camp Geshem, they forge a deep connection that challenges their perceptions of themselves and what it means to truly find a place where they belong. *Happy Camper* is a heartwarming and lively exploration of first love, friendship, and the courage it takes to be true to oneself.”

In an interview, Sarah described the genesis of her novel: “For a lot of people (including my parents, who started dating at Ramah Palmer in 1985), camp can be a place where they experience love and dating for the first time. While I also got to experience this, most of the queer kids I know didn’t. I wanted to write the love story that they deserved.” She elaborates, “There’s something called ‘queer magnet theory,’ where basically even before queer people come out, they somehow find each other. Many of my closest friends from camp over the years were queer, whether they knew it or not at the time. Several of my other close friends at camp were adopted, some of whom were people of color. As I wrote this book (and then edited it over the course of several years) I was inspired by things my friends told me about their experiences being queer, being closeted, being people of color, and being at camp as an adopted kid. I wanted to tell our stories, and I wanted it to have a happy ending.”

## ***Exile Letters Friedeman-Waldeck*** by Ruth Stein

Ruth Stein’s *Exile Letters Friedeman-Waldeck* is an extraordinary work of history, devotion, and love. Weighing in at five pounds, it offers a remarkably comprehensive portrait of a family, an era, and a tragedy.



The Friedeman-Waldeck collection includes 162 letters written between 1939 and 1942. Most are from Jewish teacher and cantor Simon Friedeman, in exile in England, to his wife Gerda, who fled first to the Netherlands and then to the United States. Ruth is the daughter of Gerda and Simon Friedeman. The collection also contains the letters Gerda and her siblings received from their parents, Henny and Carl Waldeck, who remained in Münster until they died in concentration camps in 1944. Their children, who were able to emigrate, preserved

the letters their parents sent them. These letters later became part of the *Exile Letters* project of the Institute for Comparative Urban History, now available online at [www.exileletters.de](http://www.exileletters.de).

The project catalogues, edits, and annotates first-person Jewish-German documents, especially family correspondence from Münster. Letters from emigrants describe flight, exile, and new beginnings, while letters from those who remained reveal persecution, precarious living conditions, and the looming threat of deportation. All letters are transcribed, translated into English, annotated, and accessible with facsimiles and search functions. The goal of the project is “to contribute to the generation of empathy and to enable future generations to remember when no contemporary witnesses are left.”

In 1988, Gerda donated her parents’ letters from 1940–1941 to researchers Gisela Möllenhoff and Rita Schlautmann-Overmeyer for the exhibition “History of the Jews in Münster.” These letters, along with Simon’s correspondence from England, preserve the voices of lives torn apart by Nazi persecution. The original letters and their transcription into German and translation into English appear in the book, along with many family photographs. Reflecting on the project, Ruth Federman Stein says, “These letters present new insights into the lives of my parents and grandparents. Our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren will also learn more about the struggle for survival during the Holocaust and how my parents were finally reunited.”



This column features businesses owned by members of our community, as well as artists and musical programs and is generously sponsored by RAV Properties.

## Joe’s Buds



“My favorite job ever was selling marijuana,” says Boston criminal defense attorney Joseph Simons. “I did it in high school and a little bit after until I got arrested and charged with possession of marijuana and some other related crimes. And that led me down to a path of becoming a defense attorney, because I felt like nobody should be prosecuted for marijuana and no one’s freedom should be taken away. I felt like treatment should really be the option. So that led me to becoming a defense attorney even though I never thought I’d be a defense attorney.”

Joe is a surprising as well as an enterprising person. “I was a high school dropout, I was in a rock band and thought I wanted to make music my career. Being a defense attorney has been great: I’ve helped a lot of people, I’ve been in a lot of courts, and I’ve had a lot of success. But now I’ve come full circle and got back into the marijuana selling business with my new venture, Joe’s Buds.” Joe is an attorney with offices in Boston and Salem Massachusetts, Central New York’s first licensed marijuana seller, and he also just completed a two-year term as president of his local synagogue.



Joe opened Joe’s Buds Cannabis Company, in 2024. He grew up in Oneonta and chose Syracuse for the dispensary because “it’s the population center” of the Central New York region. “Central New York is where I’m used to, it’s where I grew up,” he says. “I want to use the dispensary to help revitalize the community, attracting good jobs and tax money. It’s my way of giving back, redeeming myself so to speak.” The name “Joe’s Buds” refers both to cannabis and to the friendly atmosphere he has created at the store. The staff is friendly and knowledgeable, and the attractive and approachable layout helps customers easily find the products they are looking for.

Joe’s Buds is located at 4658 Onondaga Boulevard in Syracuse and offers offer a large selection of cannabis flower, cannabis pre rolls, cannabis vaporizers, cannabis concentrates, cannabis edibles, cannabis tinctures, cannabis topicals, cannabis accessories, gummies, and creams.

## 70<sup>TH</sup> YAHRZEIT OF RABBI YISRAEL MARKOWITZ

Members of the Markowitz and Zachai and Katz families gathered in Syracuse on August 5, 2025, to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> yahrzeit of Rabbi Yisrael Markowitz, a former rabbi from Poland whose family legacy is closely tied to the city's Jewish history.

The day began at Sha'arei Torah Congregation, where Rabbi Evan Shore of Sha'arei Torah delivered opening remarks in memory of Rabbi Markowitz reminding everyone in attendance how G-d runs every aspect of the world, and that each and every one of us needs to do our part in this world. Moshe Yitzchak Markowitz conducted a siyum (celebration of completing a Talmudic tractate), followed by remarks from Rabbi Avrohom Zachai and others. The family also visited the former home of Rabbi Moshe Yitzchak Jacobson and his wife Masha, daughter of Rabbi Yisrael Markowitz. Rabbi Jacobson once served as rabbi of Young Israel of Syracuse, a congregation that later merged with the current Sha'arei Torah Congregation.

The family then visited Rabbi Markowitz's gravesite, where several generations of descendants paid their respects. Among those in attendance were family members from Baltimore, MD, Queens, NY, and Lakewood, NJ, including great-grandsons Rabbi Avrom Zachai, Moshe Yitzchak Markowitz (named after Rabbi Jacobson), Yisrael Markowitz (named after Rabbi Yisrael Markowitz), as well as numerous great-great-grandchildren.

Rabbi Avrohom Zachai said that "it brought me back to my youth just coming to Syracuse. Not that I remember my grandfather, as I was only 6 years old at the time of his passing, but I was able to remember my family talking about him and his devotion to Judaism. The fact that we had a minyan of great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren for the first time in 70 years was incredible. I felt that I was experiencing the eternity of the Jewish family, eleven descendants following in his footsteps and embracing his dedication to Torah and Judaism."

Attendees received commemorative gift bags containing family historical materials, before touring the site of the city's former Young Israel synagogue building. For the younger generation, the day was a powerful reminder that the traditions and values of Rabbi Yisrael Markowitz continue to live on through them.



## MORDECHAI LEVI KONSENS

September 1, 2025

Mordechai Levy Konsens, beloved father and grandfather, passed away peacefully on September 1, 2025, at the age of 81.

Born on January 15, 1944, in Ramat Gan, Israel, Mordechai was a proud sabra, tough and determined on the outside, yet soft, kind, and devoted at heart. He grew up in Israel, where he attended high school before enlisting in the Israel Defense Forces. Mordechai served honorably as a paratrooper, embodying the courage and resilience that defined his character throughout his life.

After completing his army service, Mordechai traveled to New York to visit his uncle, Chaim Zager, in Queens. It was there that he met Marlene Weinstein. They married and then lived in Queens, Syracuse, and Israel, raising three children together. Mordechai instilled in them a deep love of Israel and Zionism, a legacy they proudly carry on today as strong supporters of the IDF and the State of Israel.

In Syracuse, where his children spent most of their upbringing, Mordechai was a constant presence. He especially enjoyed being involved in their school activities and was always their number one cheerleader at sporting events.

Those who knew Mordechai will remember his unwavering devotion to his family, his warmth, and his unique balance of toughness and tenderness. He will always be remembered as a true sabra—tough and stubborn on the outside, but soft and loving on the inside. He adored his grandchildren and always loved spending time and joking around with them. Mordechai was extremely handy and was the person to go to when anything needed to be fixed. He enjoyed gardening and spending time outdoors. One year while in Israel, he made it his mission to swim in the sea every day of the year. He worked in the transportation business for 45 years, where he enjoyed meeting people from all walks of life.

Mordechai is survived by his sister Sara (Danny) Deker of Ramat Gan, Israel, his three loving children, Tali Seinfeld of Scarsdale, Vardit Smith of Fayetteville, and Ziv (Anne Marie) Konsens of Liverpool. He is also survived by his grandchildren, Michal and Asaf Seinfeld, Elliot and Penny Smith, and Max and Matthew Konsens, along with his three nephews and their families in Israel.

Donations in his memory can be directed to the Syracuse Hebrew Day School. His memory will forever be a blessing.

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**SIDNEY LAMAR LIPTON**  
September 20, 2025



Sidney Lamar Lipton, 93, passed peacefully, in the arms of his loved ones, on September 20, 2025. A man of infinite kindness and generosity, Sidney passed his final days surrounded by those whose lives he'd touched, and, when his time came, he simply closed his eyes and moved on.

Born in Valdosta, Georgia, Sid spent his formative years in Claxton, Georgia, where his parents, Rubin and Rose Lipsitz, ran the town's general store. After graduating high school, he enrolled at Georgia Tech University at the tender age of sixteen. A member of Tau Epsilon Phi fraternity, he graduated with a degree in aeronautical engineering in 1952.

A commission in the Air Force followed, which led eventually to a posting at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. It was there he met the love of his life, the future Mrs. Donna (Rappaport) Lipton. After a whirlwind romance of four months, the two were married on June 20, 1956, and would be inseparable to the very end.

Following the Air Force, Sid attended the Wharton School of Business, graduating in 1958. Soon after, he took a job with General Electric, and the young couple moved to Syracuse and made that town their home. Sid left General Electric to take a position with Syracuse Research Corp., and then joined Niagara Mohawk as a software engineer, where he remained until retirement. From the very first, Sid committed himself to his new community, and, to his dying day, worked tirelessly to build bonds formed of love and empathy.

Sid was a great appreciator of beauty and was moved to share the beauty he saw. His passion for art led to the creation of the Central New York Art Open, a venue that provided a showcase for hundreds of local artists over several decades. His love of tennis would bring him together with other enthusiasts, and ultimately to the founding of the Tennis Association of Central New York, which he served as inaugural president. His devotion to his faith brought him to the nascent Congregation Beth Sholom (later Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas), his spiritual home for more than sixty years.

It was after retirement that Sid found his second greatest passion (after his undying love for Donna). In Klezmer music, Sid discovered the perfect confluence of his love for beauty, his heritage, and his faith. Inspired, he soon found others who shared this passion and before too long, this collaboration brought forth the Keyna Hora Klezmer Band, and not long after, Syracuse

KlezFest. Born of his zeal and inspiration, they both stand as tributes to his desire to promote love over hate, understanding over ignorance. It was fitting that, in his final hours, Sid had a chance to lead the band once more.

Sid's loss will be felt by many, but the family urges you to forsake sadness and remember his smile, his passion, and, above all, his unequalled generosity. The next time you meet a stranger, think of Sid, and greet them as a friend.

His family includes his beloved wife, Donna (Rappaport) Lipton, his son, Michael Lipton, daughter, Joanna Lipton, grandsons Jesse (Rebecca) Allen and Joshua Lipton; three great-grandchildren Sloan, Ian, and Kinsley, and his sister, Dorothy (Lipsitz) Scharff. He was predeceased by his son, Mark Lipton.

Sid's family would like to express their undying gratitude to the people who shared Sidney's last days and helped to sing him to a blessed rest. Special thanks go to the staff of Crouse Irving Hospital, who lifted us up when we thought we might falter.

Contributions to perpetuate Sid's memory may be made to Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas.

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Steven L. Sisskind

# Sisskind

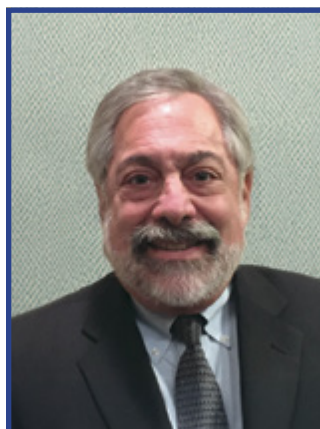
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