

» HAPPY 2025!

Jewish Observer

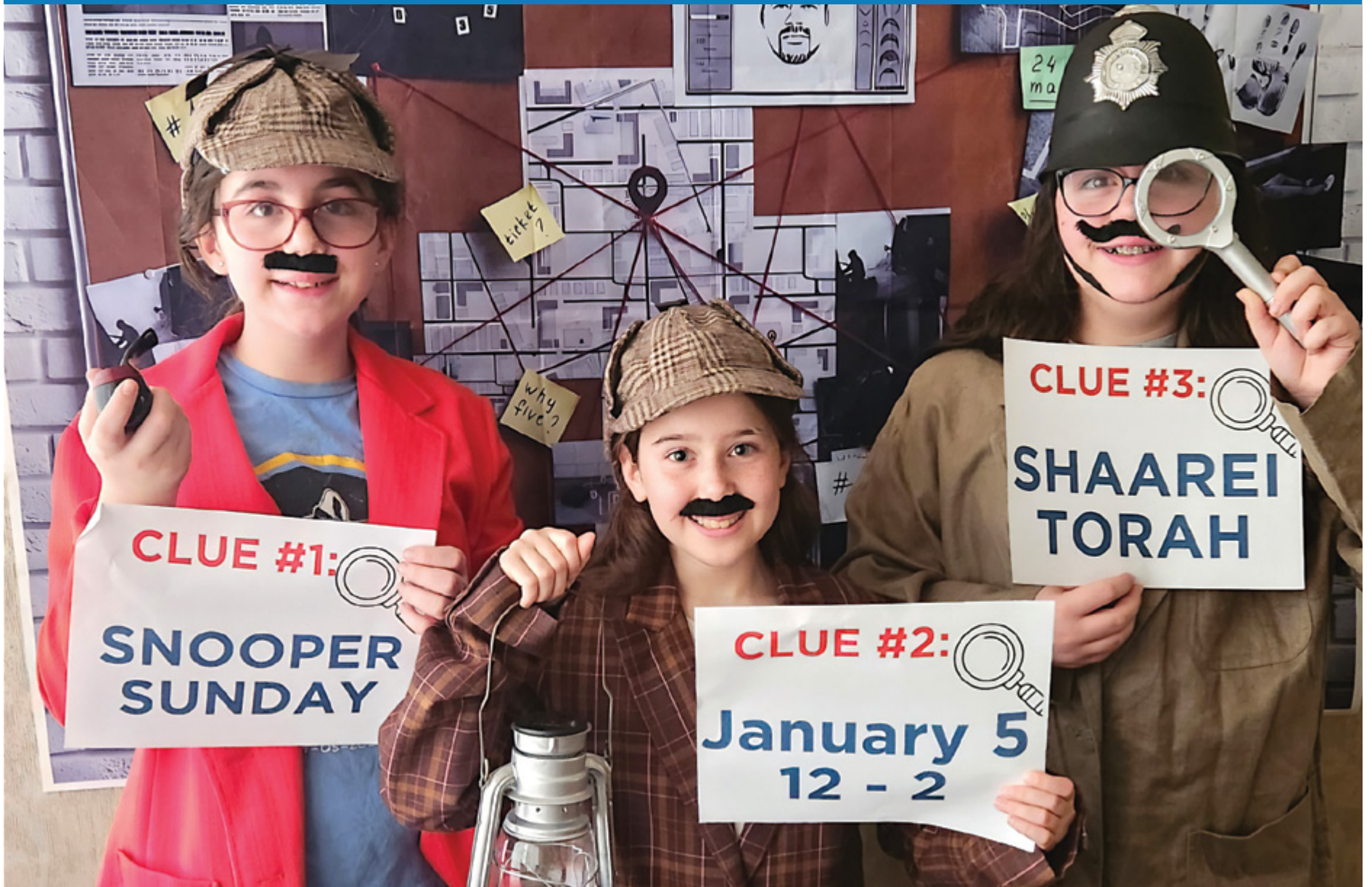
of Central New York

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

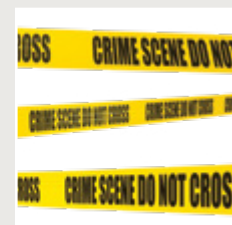
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JANUARY 2025 | TEVET-SHEVAT 5785



LOOK:
ON
SHAME
(5)



INSIDE:
JEWS
AND CRIME
(6)



DON'T MISS:
JEWISH
DETECTIVES
(7)

From the Editor



Barbara Davis

Why an issue about Jews and crime? Is this not “a shanda fur die goyim”? Does it play into antisemitic tropes when we least need that? Hopefully, the answer is no. Research indicates that Jews are far less likely to be involved in criminal behavior than other groups (white collar crime being the exception) and the focus of this month’s issue of the *Jewish Observer* is not just criminals but detectives and solving crime.

So what is the connection between Jews and crime? An article by Jordan Levy-Bograd, entitled “Jewish Gangsters Throughout History,” synthesizes the Jewish connection to crime: “The Jewish stereotype that we know today is that of a highly educated person, or even a genius, but also a ‘nerd’ who does not believe in violence. We tend to look back on Jewish gangsters throughout history with some pride, as ‘tough Jews.’ However, it is important to remember that these criminals contributed to the anti-Semitic sentiments within the communities in which they operated. Moreover, most of the victims of these Jewish criminals were actually other Jews.”

Levy-Bograd goes on to say that “the secularization that took place in Europe in the late 18th century and, especially, the emancipation policy that followed, had a significant impact on the Jews and their reputation. Thousands of Jews found their way up the European social stratum and became senior executives, inventors, business owners, famous academics, etc. Despite this, not only was organized Jewish crime not banished, but it often became even more sophisticated and deadly due to the march of progress. It may even be said that organized crime in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries began with the immigration of Eastern European Jews.”

So there goes another Jewish myth. Jews were not meek, weak Torah scholars who would never think of breaking the laws of Shabbat much less the laws of the country in which they lived. The reality was quite different. Take the case of Samuel Levine. Born in Ohio in 1903, Levine was called “Red” because of his bright red hair. Levine always wore a kippah beneath his fedora. He was an Orthodox Jew. He ate only kosher food. And he also happened to be the preferred hitman of Lucky Luciano.

The seamier side of Jewish life became the subject of scholarly investigation in the 20th century. Jenna Weissman Joselit’s *Our Gang: Jewish Crime and the New York Jewish Community 1900-1940* describes the activities that immigrant Jews engaged in: disorderly conduct, pickpocketing, fencing, protection, arson and horse-poisoning. As time went on, they branched out into more sophisticated criminal enterprises such as bootlegging, racketeering, moneylending, bookmaking and eventually, murder for hire. Joselit says that Jewish immigrants “chose crime as their vehicle of upward mobility.” *But He Was Good To His Mother: The Lives of Jewish Gangsters*, by Robert Rockaway, offers another perspective on the most notorious Jewish criminals – the tender and loving relationships they had with their girlfriends, wives, children and other family members, especially their mothers. Not that this dissuaded them from murder and mayhem, of course.

In “The Fall of the Jewish Gangster,” Joel Kotkin brings Jewish criminality into our own day. “In recent decades, the nature of Jewish crime changed,” he writes. “Violence, as Meyer Lansky noted, has always been ‘a poor substitute for brains.’ Crooked Jews looked for more ‘respectable’ ways of relieving the unwary of their money; there were few multi-generational Jewish crime families. The new wave is personified by Madoff, Bankman-Fried, Weinstein and Epstein, all creatures of middle-class suburban families.”

So the articles in this issue of the *JO* offer fascinating insights into an aspect of Jewish life that is rarely held up as a model. But there are also articles about crime fighters, ranging from fictional detectives to a local medical examiner, whose autobiographical account of her work is reviewed by a local pathologist. There are also two articles related to crime: one reporting the infiltration of UNRWA by Hamas and the other reporting on a hotline to report incidents of antisemitism in K-12 schools. And there is a wonderful d’var Torah about restorative justice.

Sticking with the detection theme, we also highlight the Federation’s campaign kick-off event, “Snooper Sunday,” at which we will attempt to figure out which clues will lead our wonderful solicitors to access even higher levels of charitable giving by our generous community members.

Published by
Jewish Federation of Central New York
5655 Thompson Road
DeWitt, NY 13214

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jewishfederationcny.org



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The Jewish Federation of Central New York is a proud member of the Jewish Federations of North America.



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Submissions:

Submit stories and photos no later than the 1st of the preceding month prior to publication to jo@jewishfederationcny.org.

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THE JEWISH OBSERVER OF CENTRAL NEW YORK (USPS 000939) (ISSN 1079-9842) Publications Periodical postage paid at Syracuse, NY and other offices. Published 12 times per year by the Jewish Federation of Central New York Inc., a non-profit corporation, 5655 Thompson Road, DeWitt, NY 13214. Subscriptions \$36/year; student \$10/year. POSTMASTER: Send address change to JEWISH OBSERVER OF CENTRAL NEW YORK, 5655 Thompson Road, DeWitt, NY 13214.

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Why Do We Need a Jewish Federation?

As the Federation's Campaign Cabinet gears up for Super Sunday, this year cleverly reenvisioned as "Snooper Sunday," I would like to address a question that many people ask, not just this year, but every year: "Why do we need a Federation?"

The question is not new, but it is certainly relevant. We know that both philanthropy and the Jewish community have changed in the 21st century. As David Bernstein, founder of the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values, recently wrote, "We live in a Keurig and a Pandora world, where services are measured in customization. Community, which Jewish Federations appropriately claim to 'build,' simply matters less and less."

But is that true? Does community, particularly Jewish community, matter less? Or matter to fewer people? Or, in a post-October 7th world, where we face a tremendous increase in American and global antisemitism, anti-Zionism, intermarriage and the dramatic lessening of ethnic and religious ties of all kinds, **does it matter more than ever?**

We know that Federations were created as centralized community fundraising agencies, designed to meet local, national and international needs, mostly but not exclusively for Jews. Has that mission become obsolete? Have other organizations and technologies made dinosaurs out of Jewish Federations?

I would argue strongly that the opposite is true. In today's Jewish world, we know the following:

- The ability to mobilize, to lead and to plan represents the historic trademark of the Federation system. When it comes to crisis-intervention efforts, no other entity has the experience or capacity to mobilize communal resources to deal with challenges, whatever their nature. Whether it's raising millions of dollars for Israel, millions of dollars for security or millions of dollars to combat antisemitism and meet the needs of the vulnerable both at home and abroad, Federations remain the only way to harness the collective power of the Jewish community, enabling North American Jewry to respond more effectively to sudden crises like wars in Israel and natural disasters or slower-moving challenges like Jewish assimilation and antisemitism. No one ought to underestimate or minimize Federations' capacity to mobilize communal resources.
- Federations play a central role as a convening body, helping Jewish institutions determine how best to collaborate, bringing disparate voices together to find common ground, and bridging links between legacy institutions and the start-up organizations that today dot the communal landscape. At a time of deep social and political divisions, Federations are a safe space for candid discussions of Jewish concerns. There is no better place than Federation to serve as the locus of such policy discussions. The neutral ground that Federations offer encourages open and essential dialogue and debate on the many issues that today divide and distance our communities.
- In partnership with others, Federations have the opportunity to seed and support new and essential programming that will be critical to strengthening Jewish learning, promoting Jewish engagement and advancing Jewish social activism now and in the future. Federations focus first and foremost on building community, even ahead of raising money. They help to refine the definition of "community" in a world of new expressions of what it means to "be Jewish." Federations advance new points of access and engagement for a diversity of Jewish seekers, while also supporting on-going Jewish learning opportunities both formal and informal.
- Federations constantly push back against threats to the Jewish community and to the larger civic order, where antisemitism, anti-Zionism, racism and other forms of hate must be countered, while promoting models of coalition building and advancing social justice.



Jewish Federations have been reinventing themselves since their inception to meet the changing needs of Jewish communities. And they still raise millions of dollars every year to support the education of Jewish children and teens, the care of Jewish elderly, poor and infirm, the engagement of Jewish families and support for close and meaningful Diaspora-Israel connections.

But Federation cannot do its work as an organization without **YOUR** support (make a pledge!) and **YOUR** engagement (let us know how you feel!). We need a Federation because Federation is **US**. It represents **US**. It works for **US**. It is there for **US** when we need it in a crisis. It is there for **US** each and every day in all of our Jewish social and educational spaces.

Federation doesn't tell us *how* to be Jewish. It simply helps us to be Jewish. Federation doesn't tell us *why* to be Jewish. It simply supports and sustains us in being Jewish. It doesn't tell us *when* to be Jewish. Whatever, however, whenever or whether or not you define yourself as "being Jewish," Federation will assist you, protect you and support you, as a member of our Jewish community.

In return, we ask only that you support Federation, not only with words and deeds, but (candidly) with funds. When you get the call, text or email on Snooper Sunday, or when you get a letter in the mail with a pledge card or see a QR code in the *JO* or in *Community Happenings*, please respond generously so that we can continue to work on your behalf, to send kids to camps, to send volunteers to Israel, to educate students, to engage teens, to feed seniors, to sustain our agencies, to support the mikvah and the matza bakery and KlezFest and the Sunday Cinema Series and the Teen Taste of Israel and Beit Tikvah for those with developmental disabilities and mobility scooters at the Zoo and Safe Haven and High Holiday security.....

I could go on and on but I know you get the picture. You don't need to be a detective to read these clues. Thanks for reading all of this and best wishes for a happy 2025.

Barbara Davis,
Interim Federation President/CEO

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On Teshuva, Forgiveness and Restorative Justice: The Model of Joseph and Judah in Genesis

by Rabbi Ethan Bair, Campus Rabbi, Syracuse Hillel and Jewish Chaplain, Hendricks Chapel

The Book of Genesis, which we have been reading weekly from the Torah since Simchat Torah, is replete with family and sibling rivalry, including crimes such as Cain murdering Abel and Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery. The first *parsha* of January 2025 following Chanukah is *Parshat Vayigash*, the denouement of the story of Joseph and his brothers. In it, Judah demonstrates his sincere and complete *teshuvah* as he approaches this man, second to pharaoh (whom he'll soon discover to be his brother Joseph), and pleads to be taken prisoner instead of Benjamin. Judah's impassioned speech causes Joseph to reveal himself to his brothers, crying and kissing each one. Judah's *teshuvah* and Joseph's forgiveness repair the family, create the possibility of shared blessings for all brothers and



establish Israel's sons as the heads of a unified Israel. It is the most important example of restorative justice in Genesis.

Rabbi Abahu bar Ze'ira said: "Great is *teshuvah*, for it existed in the world before Creation," (Genesis Rabbah 1:4). Commenting on this *midrash*, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz (born in Jerusalem in 1937) writes: "The implication of this remarkable statement is that *teshuvah* is a universal, primordial phenomenon... It is embedded in the root structure of the world... Before we were created, we were given the possibility of changing

the course of our lives." (*Kol HaNeshamah Machzor*, 8).

In our current age of mass incarceration in which enormous racial disparities exist in prison and the prison system itself has been identified as "the new Jim Crow," (Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*), it is important to note that despite Joseph's brief stay in pharaoh's jail for being falsely accused of seducing his master's wife, prison scarcely exists as a form of punishment in Torah. The major punishments in Jewish courts have been capital punishment (with very strict and narrowly applied parameters) and monetary fines. Because of the emphasis on one's ability to do *teshuvah* (repent) and be forgiven, our tradition discourages even labeling someone as a "sinner" in favor of identifying sins as behaviors that can be changed. It is horrifying that today the U.S. imprisons 1 of every 106 White American adults, 1 of every 36 Latino American adults and 1 of every 15 Black American adults. The U.S. also imprisons both the highest total number and highest per capita percentage of its population as compared with any other country on Earth. (Rabbi Lev Meirowitz Nelson, Ed., *A Handbook for Jewish Communities Fighting Mass Incarceration, T'ruah: The Rabbinic call for Human Rights*, 13). Unlike the Jewish tradition of making capital punishment public, the entire prison system in the U.S., including solitary confinement and capital punishment, happens out of sight, far from population centers and in the middle of the night. This mirrors the justice system itself and how out of step sentencing is from the needs and healing of victims.

Restorative justice offers a new way to approach and encourage the *teshuvah* of those who have caused harm and the forgiveness of those who have been harmed. In a restorative justice model, a person who has caused harm to others takes responsibility for it. The person who has done the harm and the party who has been harmed rebuild a relationship. This is what the Torah models for us in the relationship between Judah and Joseph in *Parshat Vayigash*. And this model ought

to guide and inform how our criminal justice works – to train and prevent repeat offenders. In our community, we can help to keep recidivism low by hiring returning citizens and removing the stigma against those who have served their sentence upon their return to society.

Famously, the Talmud teaches that there were hooligans in Rabbi Meir's neighborhood who harassed him greatly, and Rabbi Meir prayed for their death. His wife, Beruriah said to him, What are you thinking? The verse says, "May sin disappear" (Ps. 104:35) – does it say "sinners"?! It says "sins"! Go to the end of the verse—"and the wicked be no more." If sins disappear, will the wicked be no more? Rather, pray that they do *teshuvah*—and they will no longer be wicked. He prayed for them and they did *teshuvah*. (Talmud Brachot 10a)

Our Jewish teachings prioritize care for every person in our greater community because every person is *tzelem Elohim*, made in God's image. God created both justice and mercy because humankind would not survive without both. By all Jewish opinions, punishment is never an end in itself. Rather, the goal is to return the criminal to paths of righteousness. Our American justice system (which is without parallel in biblical or medieval Jewish communities) needs to consider the social ills of tearing families apart through long prison terms and make it easier for those returning to society to land on their feet without further impediments to their success once their terms are served. Mandatory minimums and solitary confinement do not make sense for the purpose of rehabilitation. The whole system as it is calls out for reform. As Jews, we need to do our part to oppose mass incarceration and focus, as our tradition does, on dismantling unjust systems of punishment that do not adequately emphasize rehabilitation and the restoration of relationship.

To learn more, see: <https://truah.org/resources/handbook-for-jewish-communities-fighting-mass-incarceration/>



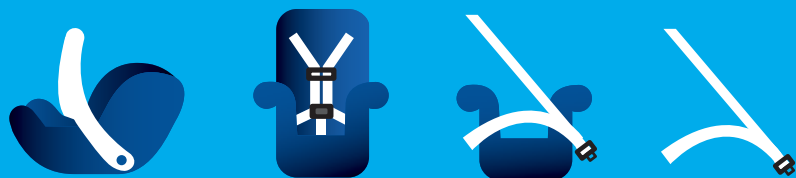
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» BOOK REVIEW

Here, Where Death Delights

by Mary Jumbelic, MD

Reviewed by Jerry Abraham, MD



“Once when some middle school friends were at the house, someone asked [her son] David what I did for a living. ‘She cuts up dead people,’ David said, emphasizing the word ‘dead.’ ‘She’s a real doctor.’”

In her memoir *Here, Where Death Delights*, Mary Jumbelic, MD reveals much more than the details about her career as a medical examiner/forensic pathologist, presenting a carefully curated selection

of “adventures” from her life in an open writing style that leaves the reader knowing much about how her life events shaped her personality, career decisions and family dynamics.

This reader, a pathologist, initially did not know what to expect from such a book. Would it be a series of observations of how the medical detective brilliantly solved challenging mysteries? But, no... it does incorporate matter-of-factly how ‘Dr. J’ approached and solved many death investigations, but it also gives glimpses (in concisely presented examples) into how forensic pathology has a much broader role in individual lives, criminal justice and public health.

In real life, most pathologists spend little of their time doing autopsies. Most work by non-forensic pathologists involves the living, working with clinicians in interpreting the results from biopsies and other laboratory tests to arrive at the correct diagnosis to help determine the best treatment plan. Recognizing the etiology (cause) of the disease, when possible, is also an important part of the practice of pathology. This aspect of pathology is especially important in the practice of a medical examiner – as Dr. Jumbelic shares in her book.

Her stories are vividly presented with facts but also with the feelings and personal communications with families of the deceased, colleagues and others --- exposing the broader ramifications of a single investigation.

For many, the idea of autopsies is disturbing. The religious beliefs of Jews and others favor great respect for the deceased, with no disturbance of the body and burial as soon as possible. However, there are exceptions, when such investigations will aid life going forward, and in potential criminal situations. As Dr. J documents in one of her stories, it is possible to respect the religious traditions for a family while at the same time helping to bring closure by explaining what happened to their loved one. Autopsies can explain medically confusing situations and can help reveal underlying conditions which may be of importance to families going forward.

Another role of autopsies is not widely recognized either: public health and preventive medicine. The true story of the observation and follow-up documentation of a life-threatening



hazard to young children by ‘Dr. J’ – driven in part by her own curiosity as a scientist – describes the effort required in her pursuit of sharing this information with the public in order to educate and to prevent other tragic deaths. She even includes the recounting of her own life-threatening illness.

Each of the vignettes Dr. J. has chosen to share contains not only the facts of the case, but how it affected her and her family.

The details of her cases are to be read and absorbed. Thus this reviewer has not reiterated the details but wants to encourage readers to experience them directly. Some may be disturbing and trigger memories of events in our own lives, local and global -- such as local murders, accidents, or tragic epidemics, disasters (e.g. hurricanes, plane crashes) or terrorist activities (e.g. 9/11). Dr. Jumbelic, as a result of her national and international experience and reputation, was called upon to assist in many such investigations. In fact, how she dealt with these (and continues to deal with them many years later) provides further examples of her resilience and openness, and demonstrates the need we all have to compartmentalize aspects of our lives in order to move forward.

Jerry Abraham, MD has been a pathologist for over 50 years, the last 41 at Upstate Medical University.

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Your mission should you chose to accept it...

is to support the Jewish Federation’s mission and help kick off the 2025 annual campaign at Snooper Sunday on January 5th!!

Super Sunday used to be an all-day telethon. This year, for the second time, organizers have turned it into a young, family-friendly event with a snooper-spy-mystery theme. Mystery arts and crafts tables, fingerprinting, invisible ink notes, a photo station, PJ Library activities, a caution-tape maze and fun prizes are all part of the excitement. Families are encouraged to come dressed up as their favorite spies, anyone one from Sherlock Holmes to James Bond to Jason Bourne.

Ben Fechtner and Sandra Malinowski, Snooper Sunday co-chairs, are excited to present two fun-filled hours for families, including a light lunch. “Of course, we cannot forget the compulsory phone bank, where dedicated volunteers start the campaign off with the first solicitations of the year,” says Sandra. “Our main goal is to reach out to the Jewish community to raise funds that are much needed for the Federation annual campaign,” adds Ben.



“Our marvelous volunteers will be calling you on January 5 and asking for pledges and donations. Please give generously,” encourages 2025 Campaign Chair Nan Fechtner. “Your gift to the Federation’s annual campaign will bring dignity and care to the vulnerable and elderly, build and strengthen the Jewish identity of our children and young adults, support vital community programs and create meaningful Jewish life across Central New York and beyond.”

Anick Sinclair, Federation’s campaign development officer, is eager to remind everyone that “the Jewish Federation supported 29 agencies in the last year, sponsored 27 events and 23 programs, all from the funds contributed to by our incredible local community. When our community needs us, we are there. And we need you to be there for us. Answer the call! Make your pledge for 2025. We need you, more than ever.”

It’s elementary, Watson.

Luminary Society donors constitute only 5% of campaign givers but contribute 30% of the campaign. Federation is very grateful to these generous benefactors and this year’s Luminary Society brunch celebrated not only their generosity but the history of Jewish entrepreneurship in Central New York.



On Shame

by Michael Gordon, Ph.D.

We Jews are considered expert at experiencing guilt and shame – or at least that’s what the stereotype would have you believe. Maybe it’s because Adam had to start wearing fig leaves after he ate that fateful apple. Or the speed at which angels of death would take you out if you transgressed. Or the success of *Portnoy’s Complaint* in cementing the (dubious) notion that all Jewish teenagers are riddled with remorse, thanks largely to hypercritical mothers. Or all those Woody Allen movies portraying characters who were incapacitated by anxiety and guilt over the smallest of perceived lapses. Or almost the entirety of Yom Kippur.

My Catholic friends scoff at the notion that Jews have the guilt market cornered. They point out, correctly, that while we are presented with a compendium of mitzvot (good deeds) we should pursue, they grow up learning long lists of sins, both mortal and venial. Over the centuries, their priests have riffed off the Ten Commandments to specify the many ways you can sin in daily life. Just the commandment “Thou shalt not commit adultery” has been expanded to include prohibitions against divorce, fornication, pornography, prostitution, rape, homosexuality, and masturbation. Also, don’t forget that they are into the idea of original sin, while we’re more into being pure and of free will at birth.

Most consider guilt and shame as unhealthy emotions that restrain a person’s opportunity to be happy and productive. Of course, at a certain level those emotions can certainly be problematic and even lethal. Feeling overwhelmingly guilty all the time limits your options for managing your life successfully.

Maybe that’s why our culture nowadays makes such an issue of shaming others. You hear about body shaming, slut shaming, age shaming, identity shaming, victim shaming, addiction shaming, and more. Putting someone down for being who they are is rightfully considered cruel and destructive.

But I’ve been thinking that, in many circumstances, shame as a concept is unfairly maligned. My contention is that some of us should feel *far more* shame when we do or say things that are legitimately appalling.

Intentionally lying to prove your point is shameful. Blatant hypocrisy is shameful. Blithely disregarding reality and history because it doesn’t fit your world view is shameful.

Criticizing someone for no reason other than to make yourself feel superior is shameful. Going behind someone’s



back to cause harm is shameful. Cheating in any form is shameful. Withholding what is rightfully another’s is shameful. Taking all the credit undeservedly is shameful. And willfully hiding exculpatory evidence is especially shameful.

Do you know what you call someone who is truly shameless? Who experiences little if any guilt or anxiety?

A psychopath.

They don’t experience the uncomfortable emotions that can keep the rest of us from doing wrong. Guilt and shame can put the brakes on our behavior when we might otherwise see benefit to crossing lines. We’d like to engage in questionable conduct but fear that we will feel poorly about ourselves (and suffer other consequences) if we’re not careful.

I bet if you look at many of the world’s problems, you can trace them to people who should have felt ashamed of themselves but ignored the guardrails shame imposes. They pursue power over service, dishonesty over integrity, impunity over accountability, hostility over kindness, and divisiveness over inclusion – and all without any concern for the impact on others. They literally feel no shame (and act accordingly).

I have often heard parents see as their goal the elimination of stress, anxiety, and guilt from their children’s experience. They somehow feel that those negative emotions inevitably cause poor self-esteem and should be avoided.

I cringe when I hear mothers and fathers voice that position because, in my view, children should learn how to cope with uncomfortable feelings. If a youngster does something wrong, they should understand the consequences of their actions and feel at least a little bad for having misbehaved. No, they shouldn’t be tied to a stake or belittled or made to feel they have forever caused disappointment and shame. But they should understand that to err is

indeed human, and feeling bad about committing some of those errors can be instructive. It’s generally good policy to fess up, apologize, and move on.

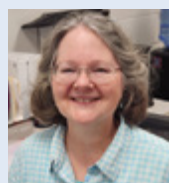
Children of all ages need to accept that it’s okay to experience remorse when they’ve transgressed. No one’s life has been irrevocably diminished just because they felt a bit guilty about having screwed up.

To the contrary, a measure of guilt and shame can guide us all along a more righteous path.

» BOOK REVIEW

The Talented Mrs. Mandelbaum by Margalit Fox

Reviewed by Kay Davidson



The Talented Mrs. Mandelbaum by Margalit Fox is a cross between a biographical novella and a history lesson. It’s a well-researched biography of a self-made entrepreneur in New York City during the Gilded Age, a period of rapid industrialization, wealth accumulation and extravagance that lasted from the 1870s to the 1890s. On her immigration

to the U.S. in 1850, Mrs. Mandelbaum worked as a peddler on the Lower East Side. By the end of her professional career, she had accumulated multi-national real estate holdings, warehouses full of luxury goods, jewelry and precious stones worth upwards of \$2.4 million in today’s currency. The caveat is that it was all stolen.

“Ma” Mandelbaum was a professional fence and ringleader of the best burglars and bank robbers for hire on the East Coast. Fox does a good job exploring how a Jewish wife and mother went from peddling to fencing to blackmail to smuggling. She explains the culture, economics and politics surrounding Ma Mandelbaum succinctly and clearly. As an amateur historian, I loved this aspect of the book. Fox makes Mandelbaum’s choices seem logical and cohesive, even shrewd, considering the lack of opportunities for escape from poverty as a female Jewish immigrant. However, the pages are dense with footnotes that interrupt the flow of the story and make it hard to remember the nefarious characters who formed Mandelbaum’s inner circle. Fox ends her chapters with a little “teaser” like you get in a murder mystery, but she fails to deliver. The historical research buries the reader in an avalanche of facts.

Despite the increasing scale of Ma’s criminal endeavors, I wanted to respect her as a survivor, someone who did what she had to in order to survive. Ma herself made that hard for me. When she fled the country to escape prosecution, she left with a vast



fortune that would have set her up for life. Once there, she employed the same tactics that she had used in New York. This time, she wasn’t breaking the law to survive but to enrich herself. It was a decision I found hard to reconcile with her Jewish heritage—with any moral values that I share, except for the predominant “family first” ethos.

This book broadened my understanding of the economics, politics, and culture of New York, enough that it seemed like a treatise on the era, in which the multi-faceted Mrs. Mandelbaum does shine like the diamonds she so adroitly collected.

Kay Davidson is a published columnist and former business owner, now serving the Jewish community in Central New York.

JEWES AND CRIME

JEWES AND CRIME

Jews and crime have been studied from many different angles. A contemporary study, titled “Religiosity, criminality and types of offences of Jewish male prisoners,” found that the percentage of religious criminals (3.7%) was far below the percentage of religious people in the population (20%), and that both religious and non-religious prisoners in general had committed the same types of crimes. The exception was that religious criminals committed more sex and white-collar crimes and fewer security crimes than non-religious criminals.

An article in *Issues in Criminology* stated that Jews have a lower overall crime rate than that of non-Jews and other religious groups, and a crime rate lower than would be expected based on the Jewish proportion of the population. However, it also noted that the Jewish crime rate tended to be higher than that of non-Jews and other religious groups for white-collar offenses, such as fraud, fraudulent bankruptcy and embezzlement.

An interesting in-depth piece by John Klier in the *Yivo Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, under the heading “Crime and Criminals,” delves into the history of Jewish crime, explaining that “the physical location of Jews on the borderlands of empires and their concentration in urban settings and in certain types of trade and commerce made certain criminal activities stereotypically ‘Jewish.’ Foremost among these was smuggling. The porous and artificial nature of national frontiers in Eastern Europe, the capricious nature of import duties, protectionism, and the sizable profits to be made ensured that smuggling was a common phenomenon. As the predominant trade and commercial class

in the Russian, Austrian, and German borderlands, with connections across frontiers, Jews were well situated to engage in such activity. All manner of goods were smuggled, including tobacco, specie, and counterfeit banknotes.” Klier further details the involvement of Jews in criminal activities such as bootlegging, illegal tavern keeping, the fencing of stolen goods, especially livestock, people-trafficking and white slavery, and international prostitution. It’s not a pretty picture, even though Klier concludes that “the stereotype of ‘Jewish criminality’ was, in essence, a judeophobe myth, but one that enjoyed widespread belief.”

But not so fast. A recent online article by urban studies scholar Joel Kotkin, entitled “The Fall of the Jewish Gangster,” paints a less positive picture. Kotkin writes, “Antisemitism has always partly been driven by envy; Jews attract a unique resentment for their disproportionate intellectual achievements in literature, science, education and, particularly, finance. At the same time, however, this success can be inverted. Historian Fred Siegel calls this ‘the flip side of cleverness,’ a tendency among some to apply their

minds to illegal activities.” He further explains that “Not surprisingly, Jewish community leaders have tended to downplay the criminal element of their tribe. It’s understandable that they prefer to focus instead on Jews’ extraordinary portion of Nobel Prizes...than engage in discussions about gangsters and schemers. The Holocaust has also tended to dominate community consciousness, given the impact on many of our families. But focusing on Jews largely as martyrs and moral exemplars constitutes, as the author Dara Horn notes, a preference, if you will, for dead Jews — as long as they provide ‘a service to mankind’ — over living ones.” But Kotkin goes on to point out that Arnold Rothstein is widely regarded as the founder of American organized crime and that “later Bernard Madoff, Sam Bankman-Fried as well as the odious Jeffrey Epstein and Harvey Weinstein have carried on this grim tradition, albeit with usually less lethal means.”

The Jewish Virtual Library has a very extensive review of the involvement of Jews in criminal activity. It says that “Jews in the Diaspora have generally been less involved in crime than the populations among which they lived. Their closely knit communities, cohesive family life, high educational standards, moderation in the consumption of alcohol, their solidarity, consciousness of mutual responsibility, and readiness for mutual help are regarded as the main causes for the generally low crime rates among Jews.” However, it goes on to note that,

despite a paucity of actual data on Jewish criminality, “crime rates were lowest where Jews were discriminated against and increased after Emancipation.... [And] crimes committed by Jewish offenders were generally different in character in countries of discrimination and persecution from those committed by members of the dominant population groups. The more the Jews became emancipated and were enabled to participate in social, economic, and cultural life, the more the crimes committed by them became similar to those of the majority population.”

So the good news is that Jews are less likely than others to commit homicide and physical assault, but not very much less likely to be involved in other criminal activities. That might explain the significant number of books that deal with Jewish criminals:

- *The Kosher Capones: A History of Chicago’s Jewish Gangsters* by Joe Kraus
- *But He Was Good to His Mother: the Lives and Crimes of Jewish Gangsters* by Robert A. Rockaway
- *We Only Kill Each Other - The True Story of the Life and Bad Times of Bugsy Siegel* by Dean Jennings
- *Tough Jews : Fathers, Sons, and Gangster Dreams* by Rich Cohen
- *Uncle Charlie Killed Dutch Schultz: The Jewish Mob: A Family Affair* by Alan Geik
- *The Jews of Sing Sing* by Ron Arons

It is unfortunate that Jewish criminality is a fact of Jewish life, but it is also a reality and not a new one. The Torah tells us, “The world was corrupt in front of God and the land was filled with crime.” (*Bereshit* 6:11) Perhaps by learning more about Jewish crime, we can work harder to eradicate it.

CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS

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CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS

FICTIONAL JEWISH DETECTIVES

Stories about Jewish detectives are often written to investigate themes of Jewish identity within American culture, which is what sets them apart from other books of this genre. Rabbi Lawrence Raphael was an expert on Jewish mysteries. Editor of the anthologies *Mystery Midrash: An Anthology of Jewish Mystery and Detective Fiction* and *Criminal Kabbalah: An Intriguing Anthology of Jewish Mystery and Detective Fiction*, Raphael fell in love with Jewish detectives while in rabbinical school. He was of the opinion that there are “cultural Jewish novels” like those of Kinky Friedman in which “often the God of their ancestors has been forgotten but the cooking of their mothers has been remembered,” and others by writers such as Faye Kellerman, Rochelle Krich and Harry Kemelman “in which Judaism is used to advance the plot,” and a third category in which authors “combine the desire to solve a crime with the desire to illuminate some aspect of Judaism or the Jewish community.” But fundamentally, Raphael pointed out, “the best of all mysteries allows us to confront the bogeyman and provide a credible central figure who can hold back the darkness for one more day.”

Laurence Roth, author of *Detecting Jews*, argues that Jewish detective stories offer insights into the construction of ethnic and religious identity. Roth uses the term “kosher hybridity” to define the desire of Jewish writers to both be different from, and the same, as other Americans. He postulates that the writers of Jewish detective stories, characterized by contradiction and irony, formulate idioms for American Jewish identities that intentionally and unintentionally create social, ethnic, and religious syntheses in American Jewish life. Roth sees fictional American Jewish detectives—including Harry Kemelman’s Rabbi Small,

Faye Kellerman’s Peter Decker and Rina Lazarus, Stuart Kaminsky’s Abe Lieberman, and Rochelle Krich’s Jessica Drake—as reflections of Jewish acculturation to American life.

There is great diversity among Jewish detectives. Michael Kaminer, in an article in the *Forward*, notes the frequency with which Jewish women are protagonists in Jewish mystery fiction. There is, he says, “a long line of Jewish women in crime fiction, from Orthodox mothers to Miami Beach beauticians to wisecracking lawyers.” He listed six of his favorite books featuring Jewish women crime-solvers:

1. Sara Paretsky’s *Indemnity Only*, featuring V.I. Warshawski, daughter of a Polish Catholic policeman-father and an Italian Jewish opera singer-mother, who has practically become a folk hero;
2. Ayelet Waldman’s *Nursery Crimes*, the first in a series of books in the Mommy-Track Detective Series, featuring Juliet Applebaum, Jewish housewife and amateur detective;
3. Nancy Cohen’s *Permed to Death* in which Miami Beach salon owner Marla Shore becomes an accidental detective after a client dies while getting a perm in her salon; this is the first of the “Bad Hair

Day” mystery series; 4. Michael A. Kahn’s *Death Benefits*, first of a series featuring “stunning and savvy” Jewish attorney-cum-detective Rachel Gold; 5. Marissa Piesman’s *Personal Effects*, in which perennially single Bronx-born lawyer Nina Fischman get involved with murder and mayhem; and 6. Faye Kellerman’s *The Ritual Bath*, first of a bestselling series in which Rena Lazarus, a young Orthodox widow, and Peter Decker, born a Jew but raised Baptist, team to solve mysteries. Another fictional female crime-stopper is Molly Blume, protagonist of a series by Rochelle Krich. Molly, a Californian from an Orthodox family, writes a police blotter column that launches her foray into crime-solving.

Other unorthodox Jewish protagonists include Rabbi Small, of the eleven classic and very popular novels by Harry Kemelman. The Rabbi Small series details the ways in which the members of the Jewish community of Barnard’s Crossing interact with and often plot to get rid of their uncompromising Conservative rabbi, who uses logic, based on the Talmud, to solve mysteries. *The Yiddish Policeman’s Union*, by Michael Chabon, features world-weary P.I., Meyer Landesman. The novel is set in an alternate present in which 3 million Jews escaped the Holocaust through a resettlement program to Alaska (an actual idea suggested in 1940 by U.S. politician Harold Ickes). The “Frozen Chosen” but now face a dilemma because their lease on the Federal District of Sitka is up. Harri Nykänen’s *Nights of Awe* is a Finnish police procedural that takes place during the ‘Days of Awe’ leading up to Yom Kippur. Ariel Kafka, inspector in the Violent Crime Unit of the Helsinki police is one of only two Jewish policemen in Finland.

Rezach beShabbat BaBoker (The Saturday Morning Murder) by Israeli author Batya Gur brought literary complexity to the Hebrew mystery novel. Gur took readers into the world of Detective Michael Ohayon in a three-volume series, often exploring the moral aspects of such issues as Zionism and Israeli political history. Andy Weinberger is the author of the Amos Parisman mystery which features a semi-retired private investigator from Los Angeles. Richard Steinitz (father of CBS-CS’s rabbi Oren Steinitz) is the author of *Murder Over the Border*, a stand alone mystery following the adventures of Israeli policeman Yossi Abulafia.

The Deadliest Lie by June Trop is the first book in the Miriam bat Isaac series which follows Miriam, a brilliant alchemist with a talent for solving mysteries in first-century CE Alexandria. This book answers the question: Who in her household or among her father’s Shabbat guests stole the scrolls containing the Alchemical League’s valuable formulas?

For Whom the Shofar Blows is the first of Marvin J. Wolf’s Rabbi Ben novels, in which Rabbi Ben, master of Torah, Talmud and taekwon do, computer whiz and a quick study on the dark side of human nature is asked to investigate where the police are unwelcome and discretion is paramount. Example: when \$3 million suddenly appears in a California synagogue’s bank account, its leaders wonder if their prayers have been answered—until the money evaporates as mysteriously as it appeared.

The Great Gimmelmans by Lee Matthew Goldberg, is a novel about a family of Jewish bank robbers who lose all their money in the Stock Market Crash of 1987 and start robbing banks, kids and all, out of the only thing that hasn’t been repossessed: their gas-guzzling RV. The Gimmelmans begin as a secular, reform Jewish family, but by the end, after the FBI, loan sharks, and the mob come after them, each member discovers God and their connection to Judaism in different ways to make it through.

Beat the Devils by Josh Weiss is another alternate history novel, imagining Joseph McCarthy becoming president, elected by xenophobia and barely-concealed antisemitism. Holocaust survivor Morris Baker is tasked to solve a double homicide of a young John Huston and Walter Cronkite before they were able to reach their full potential. Baker sets out to achieve justice in an era where free speech is a sin and uncovers a deep conspiracy.

So in addition to the usual reasons people like detective fiction (the fun of being drawn in by a mystery, the desire to learn the truth and the challenge of using one’s logical deduction skills, and the possibility of an epiphany), Jewish detective fiction offers the bonus of a Jewish character whose skills reveal a unique way to be Jewish in the modern world.



CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS

DO NOT CROSS

Jewish Institute for National Security Report on UNRWA and Gaza

Jack Wells, a 2016 graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and a junior at American University, is a policy intern at JINSA, the Jewish Institute for National Security of America. He recently co-authored an article entitled “UNRWA Terror Ties Extend to Highest Levels of Hamas” with JINSA policy analyst Yoni Tobin.

In October, the Israeli parliament passed two bills related to UNRWA’s operations inside Israel. *The Times of Israel* said that the first bill prevents UNRWA “from operating in Israeli territory by revoking a 1967 exchange of notes providing the basis for its activities,” while the second bans “state authorities from having any contact with UNRWA.” *The Jerusalem Post* reported that the bills, in effect, “shut down [UNRWA] operations in east Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank.” *The Times of Israel* further noted that, “without coordination with Israel, it will be almost impossible for UNRWA to work in Gaza or the West Bank, since Jerusalem would no longer be issuing entrance permits to those territories or allowing coordination with the [Israeli military].”

Israel’s foreign ministry announced that “Israel is committed to international law and to providing humanitarian aid to Gaza and will continue to act on this subject with UN agencies and international organizations such as the World Food Program, UNICEF, the World Health Organization and a number of other organizations, thus complying with its international obligations.”

The JINSA report states: “The Israeli parliament’s ban on United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) activities inside Israel is a response to a mounting pile of evidence that the UN agency, at the very least, has been penetrated and exploited by Hamas. The fact that low-level UNRWA staffers were known to have participated in the October 7 attack, Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar was carrying the passport of an UNRWA teacher when he was killed, and other Hamas leaders were employed by UNRWA demonstrates that the agency’s terror connections run to the highest levels of Hamas. Worse yet, UNRWA top brass knew for months that the agency employed Hamas leaders but took little action.”

The article decries the fact that “despite the overwhelming evidence of UNRWA’s endemic corruption, anti-Israel and



antisemitic incitement, and involvement with terrorism, UNRWA [received] recent near-satirical nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize [which] highlights the international community’s growing amnesia about the agency’s deeply rooted terror ties.”

The article lists “recent additions to the mounting pile of evidence that UNRWA has deep ties to Hamas” including the following:

Mohammed Abu Itiwi, a Hamas Nukhba special forces commander and participant in the October 7 attack, had been an UNRWA employee since 2022.

The head of Hamas’s Lebanon branch, Fatah Sharif Abu el-Amin, served as the head of the UNRWA’s teachers’ union in Lebanon, oversaw 65 schools and roughly 40,000 students and was also a principal at an UNRWA-run school in southern Lebanon. El-Amin was responsible for Hamas’s operations in Lebanon, including coordinating terror activities with Hezbollah, procuring weapons, and recruiting operatives, openly embracing terrorism in a series of social media posts.

At least 30 UNRWA staffers either directly or indirectly aided the October 7th rampage.

Hamas embedded itself in the UNRWA aid process to steal vast amounts of UNRWA supplies, including fuel and aid trucks. Hamas seized an estimated \$500 million in aid since the war began.

At least 9,000 UNRWA employees in Gaza—constituting over 70 percent of UNRWA’s Gaza staff—have ties to Hamas and around 2,000 staffers are registered members of Hamas’s political wing. Israel’s foreign ministry announced in April that more than 2,130 UNRWA employees are active members of Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

UNRWA textbooks are replete with anti-Israel invective and UNRWA teachers have serially posted antisemitic material online. During the October 7 attack, a chat group of over 3,000 UNRWA teachers erupted

with messages of praise for the Hamas terrorists attacking Israel. UNRWA schools’ fixation on terror incitement, including providing children textbooks that use acts of terrorism as examples in mathematics and physics problems—have contributed to the schools producing dismal academic results. In 2007, the most recent year UNRWA’s Gaza schools released test scores, nearly 80 percent of students from grades 4 through 9 failed mathematics and over 40 percent failed Arabic, the native language of Palestinians.

The United States has, according to the article, “traditionally been the largest source of UNRWA’s total funding, including approximately 30 percent of UNRWA’s funding in 2023. The United States has contributed over \$1 billion since January 2021 to UNRWA and over \$5 billion since 2001.” The JINSA report notes that UNRWA staffers’ complicity in terrorism led Congress to freeze all U.S. funding to the agency through March 2025. However, the United States could resume funding to UNRWA again as soon as April under current appropriations law since Congress constructed the funding ban on a calendar

year, rather than fiscal year.

The article’s authors, Tobin and Wells, oppose any resumption of U.S. support for UNRWA and assert that, “given [its] terror links UNRWA should be disqualified, at least until it undergoes significant reforms, from playing a role in rebuilding a Hamas-free Gaza.” Instead, they recommend alternatives to UNRWA, as listed by a task force of former senior U.S. officials in a report entitled *The Day After: A Plan For Gaza*:

“An international trust of European and friendly Arab partners to take on, in the short-term, some of the humanitarian services ostensibly conducted by UNRWA

The greater involvement of other international organizations to replace UNRWA’s functions over time

Outside efforts to develop new Palestinian assistance institutions in Gaza, including extensive vetting protocols for employees, detailed metrics on aid distribution and educational attainment in Gaza’s schools, consistent international oversight, and both internal and external accountability.”

My Israel Quest

by Michal Juran

My Israel Quest continues this month with new and exciting interactive learning opportunities! The community is invited to explore the stories of remarkable Notable Israelis who have left their mark on the world! This month’s activities

introduce the community to inspiring figures like beloved poet and author Leah Goldberg, music superstar Eden Golan, and pioneering astronaut Ilan Ramon. With options for all ages, from interactive games, engaging stories, to fun trivia, music, and printable activities. Each element brings these heroes to life. Families can use an interactive map of Israel to see where each of these notable Israelis lived, helping to appreciate how one small country has made such a big impact. You can access the learning materials by scanning the QR codes. All the content is also available at MyIsraelQuest.com.



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

Syracuse Stage Spring 2025 Season

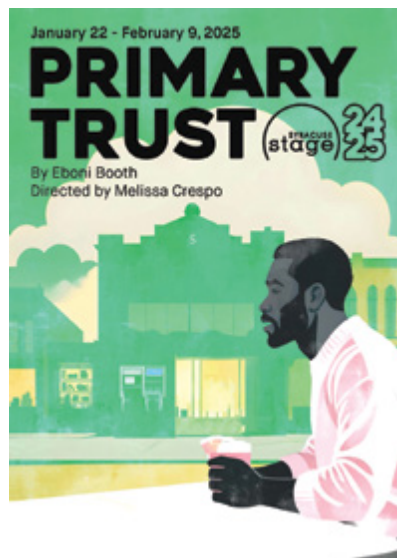
Syracuse Stage is Central New York's premier non-profit professional theatre. Founded in 1974, Stage has produced more than 300 plays in 50 seasons including a number of world, American, and East Coast premieres. As the theatre in residence at Syracuse University, Stage maintains a vital educational outreach program that annually serves over 15,000 students from 14 counties. Performances take place at the Archbold Theatre, 820 E. Genesee St., Syracuse.

Primary Trust

by Eboni Booth

Jan. 22 – Feb. 9, 2025

In Cranberry, New York, 40 miles east of Rochester, 38-year-old Kenneth finds comfort in routine. He's worked at the same bookstore for 20 years and has a standing date with his best friend Bert for happy hour Mai Tais. When the bookstore suddenly closes, Kenneth's small-town existence is upended, forcing him to confront deeply buried traumas. A story of friendship, grief and the heroism of everyday life, Eboni Booth's *Primary Trust* reminds us that we can't fully embrace our future until we let go of our past.



King James

by Rajiv Joseph

Feb. 26 – March 16, 2025

Cleveland, 2003. Basketball wunderkind LeBron James has just been signed to the Cavaliers, and two die-hard fans strike up an unlikely friendship—with high hopes for their new superstar player. As LeBron's career takes him to the height of fame, pulls him away from Cleveland, and brings him triumphantly back to the city, Matt and Shawn's lives play out off-court with all the drama of a championship season: full of slam dunks, huge upsets and the unshakable bond of those who share a love of the game.

Sense and Sensibility

By Kate Hamill, Based on the novel by Jane Austen

April 25 – May 11, 2025

The world of the Dashwood sisters, Jane Austen's destitute but determined heroines, comes playfully to life in Kate Hamill's warm and inventive adaptation. Romance, heartbreak, twists of fate and never-ending gossip follow Elinor and Marianne, the eldest Dashwood daughters, as they navigate 18th century English society in search of stability after the death of their father. Filled with memorable characters, delicious wit and timeless comedy, this whirlwind *Sense and Sensibility* is a joyous celebration of one of literature's most treasured stories.

The National Pastime

written by Rogelio Martinez

A Julie Lutz Cold Read World Premiere commissioned by Syracuse Stage

June 11 – 29, 2025

Cuba, 2016. A mysterious illness rips through the American embassy in Havana. America, 2017. The Houston Astros are stealing signs, praying for a miracle on the field and go on to win the World Series. With tensions heightened from the lead-up and aftermath of an election year, the two nations play a dangerous game in the shadows, with their shared national pastimes – baseball and espionage – as their weapons of choice.

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162ND JCC ANNUAL
MEETING & GALA

SUNDAY, JUNE 22, 2025

Neil Bronstein
HALL OF FAME

Jessica Malzman
KOVOD

Sara Temes
KOVOD GADOL

Brian Raphael
THE LESLIE

FOR SOME, FEELING

LEFT OUT

LASTS MORE THAN A MOMENT.

WE CAN CHANGE THAT.

We've all had moments where we've felt we didn't belong. But for people who moved to this country, that feeling lasts more than a moment. Together, we can build a better community. Learn how at BelongingBeginsWithUs.org

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Brandeis Center and ADL Expand Helpline on Antisemitism in K-12 Schools in New York

The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, the Anti-Defamation League, and StandWithUs, along with a coalition of leading law firms, announced the launch of a helpline in K-12 schools to provide pro bono legal assistance to parents whose children are experiencing antisemitism.



Antisemitic incidents in elementary, middle and high schools have increased significantly over the last year. Incidents in K-12 schools in NY climbed to 173, up from 53 incidents in 2022. The rise in the number and intensity of antisemitic incidents in K-12 schools “have made it clear that parents, students and educators need an option for legal help,” said ADL Vice-President Peggy Shukur. “Particularly in situations where responses to antisemitism are inadequate or worse, access to high-quality legal assistance is a crucial tool to ensure a safe learning environment. By providing these legal efforts, this helpline will empower Jewish students, teachers and parents to take action to fight against antisemitic harassment and bigotry.”

Parents, teachers, and other interested adults can use the Legal Protection K-12 Helpline to report incidents of antisemitic discrimination, intimidation, harassment, vandalism or violence that may necessitate legal action. Lawyers will conduct in-depth information-gathering interviews with persons who file reports. In some instances, they may provide pro bono representation on behalf of victims or provide referrals to organizations that can provide non-legal assistance. The lawyers will also, with permission of the individuals involved, use the reports to better understand the scope of the problem and report it

to officials responsible for ensuring the laws are followed. If schools do not take action, they will be held accountable.

Melissa Garlick, Senior Director, Combating Antisemitism and Building Civic Engagement at Combined Jewish Philanthropies, said, “This initiative will serve as a valuable tool for our community to help address and prevent antisemitism, offering guidance, support, and solutions to foster safe and respectful learning environments. By working together, we’re empowering school communities to not only respond to incidents but to build a culture of inclusion, understanding, and mutual respect.”

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits educational institutions that receive federal funding from discriminating against, or allowing others to discriminate against, students on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, and national origin. Title VI protects Jews based on their shared ancestral and ethnic identity. The Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights recognizes that harassing, marginalizing, demonizing, and excluding Jewish students based on the Zionist component of their Jewish identity is unlawful under Title VI.

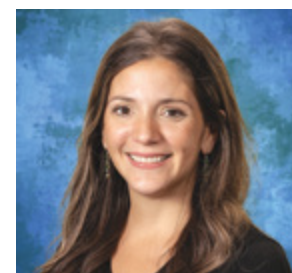
To report an incident at a K-12 school, use this link: <https://www.legal-protection.org/k-12>.

HADASHOT TOVOT



Rabbi Ethan Bair and Imam Amir Duric have received national recognition as Interfaith America Innovation Fellows. The rabbi and the imam, chaplains at Hendricks Chapel, model how friendship and understanding can transcend and transform adversity. Through the Jewish-Muslim Dialogue Fellowship they co-founded, Bair and Duric have helped the Syracuse University campus community unlock the potential of religious and spiritual diversity.

Melissa Klemperer has been named the new permanent Head of School at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School. The Board of Directors has actively been immersed in a search to find the best candidate for the position. It has become clear that Melissa is that candidate. Thus the Board of Directors has unanimously and enthusiastically approved Melissa to continue to lead their beloved school into the future.



Federation Board member Ellen Weinstein, a member of the board of the Jewish Federations of North America and Barbara Davis, interim president/CEO of the Jewish Federation of CNY, recently joined 2500 other Jewish leaders at the JFNA General Assembly in Washington, DC. The conference addressed the need to bring the hostages home, the scourge of antisemitism facing

Jewish communities, how to support both Israel and Ukraine in their respective ongoing wars, and how to chart a path forward as a cohesive North American Jewish community in a time of increasing polarization.



Isaac and Benjamin Bloom earned their black belts from Hanshi Rande Lawrence, head teacher at Lawrence World Class Karate, after a grueling 8-hour test.

Micah Fialka-Felman’s new book, *Opening Doors*, Micah relates his journeys with Circles of Friends, MAPS, PATH, courts, world travel, experience as a university student and now a university teaching assistant and more.



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Emergency Alert
Severe Thunderstorm Warning

Mom



What supplies are we missing? 🙄

Aunty

I'm not sure...

Ready has a list of resources

www.ready.gov/plan



Message



BEING PREPARED CAN BE
AS EASY AS SENDING A TEXT.

VISIT READY.GOV/PLAN

MAKE

A family communications plan

SIGN UP

For local weather & emergency alerts

PREPARE

An emergency kit

Temple Adath Yeshurun to Honor Cantor Jaffe with Concert on February 8

On February 8, 2025, Temple Adath Yeshurun will celebrate Cantor Esa Jaffe's 30th year working at the synagogue. The celebration will feature a concert by Cantor Jaffe titled "Hava Nashira - Let us Sing." The elegant evening will begin with hors d'oeuvres followed by the concert and dessert. Cantor Jaffe began her career at Temple Adath Yeshurun as a teacher and youth advisor. She later became the Director of Education before taking over duties leading services 18 years ago. Cantor Jaffe entered the Cantors Assembly and gained the full title of cantor in 2019.



The concert on February 8 falls on "Shabbat Shirah," a special Shabbat during the year that is named the Shabbat of Song. The concert will feature several original songs composed by Cantor Jaffe as well as new and old favorites, mostly based on liturgy that highlights the connection of prayer and song. As with the Selichot concert the Cantor most recently presented, this will be a participatory experience as everyone in the room joins in making music together. Dr. David Kanter, brother of Cantor Jaffe, will also sing during the concert as Temple Adath Yeshurun recognizes the almost 30 years that Dr. Kanter has led both Shacharit and Ma'ariv High Holiday services. Dr. Kanter is also an accomplished singer who was a member of the a cappella group at Tufts University and sang with Syracuse Opera for many years. The siblings have performed together in the past and enjoy making music together.

The concert will feature songs that celebrate the power of music to create and strengthen community. Cantor Jaffe regularly uses music to bring the Temple Adath Yeshurun congregation and the community at large closer together. Over the past five years, Cantor Jaffe has studied with nationally recognized musicians such as Joey Weisenberg and Deborah Sacks Mintz, learning how to harness the power of music to celebrate, to heal and to form strong communities. For the past three years, Cantor Jaffe has attended the Rising Song Institute Intensive in NYC, a four-day convention focused on music and prayer, and the RSI Summer Intensive. Cantor Jaffe has started a *nigun*/song circle at Temple Adath Yeshurun that began meeting online during COVID and now meets regularly in person. Cantor Jaffe has also spent the past two years composing original music rooted in the liturgy. On Yom Kippur, she premiered an original melody for *Shema Koleinu*. Her original songs and *nigunim* are used during Temple Adath Yeshurun Shabbat services and other synagogue programs. At the 30th anniversary concert, Cantor Jaffe will premiere several new songs.

Lauren Thirer, Temple Adath Yeshurun co-president said, "Cantor Jaffe has graced our congregation with her beautiful voice for 30 years. Her dedication, talent, and warmth have uplifted our community through countless life cycle events and holidays. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to honor her many contributions at the upcoming celebration in February." **For more information about the concert, visit www.adath.org.**

Monthly Shabbat Morning Offerings at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas

by Yolanda Febles

Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas offers an inviting array of Shabbat programs each month, thoughtfully curated to meet the diverse needs of its community. From family-friendly gatherings to deep dives into Torah study, the monthly rotation provides something meaningful for everyone who walks through the doors.

On the first Saturday of each month, CBS-CS gathers for a Lunch and Learn following Shabbat services. It's an opportunity to enjoy a kiddush lunch while exploring Jewish topics, often led by Rabbi Steinitz or guest speakers eager to share their insights.

On the second Saturday of the month at 11 am, families with young children under kindergarten age can join Tot Shabbat, an abbreviated service designed to introduce little ones (under Kindergarten age) to Jewish traditions. With lively stories, prayers, songs, and games, this interactive session makes Shabbat a joyful experience for kids, while older siblings are warmly welcomed to join in the fun.

The third Saturday offers Torah Study Shabbat. Starting at 9:30 am, Rabbi Steinitz leads an engaging exploration of the weekly Torah portion, setting a thoughtful tone before transitioning into a slightly abbreviated Shabbat service.

Families can also look forward to the quarterly Shabbat Squad program for children ages four and up. This joyful gathering kicks off at 9:30 am with spirited songs and storytelling, followed by hands-on activities that

bring the spirit of Shabbat to life. By 11 am, children dive into age-appropriate Torah explorations, making Shabbat both educational and fun.

To support parents in fully experiencing Shabbat, babysitting is available during all Saturday Shabbat services.

Whether one prefers a more traditional Shabbat service or wants to participate in the special monthly offerings, there is something for everyone. For those who cannot join in person, CBS-CS streams all services via Zoom. Most Saturdays, the Zoom experience is fully interactive, allowing participants at home to engage with the live service. However, on the second Saturday of each month, services are "low-tech," meaning they are still streamed online but without interactive features.

All are welcome to attend services at CBS-CS. **To stay in the loop with all upcoming Shabbat service dates and times, as well as special events, visit <https://tinyurl.com/cbscsemails> to sign up for the CBS-CS email list.**

Epstein School Partners with RootOne to Deepen Teen Taste of Israel Experience

by Aaron Spitzer

In February, thirteen 10th and 11th grade students from the Rabbi Jacob H. Epstein School of Jewish Studies will travel to Israel on the fifth Teen Taste of Israel experience, thanks to the generosity of donors at the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York. **This year's program has been significantly expanded through a partnership with RootOne, a national funder of teen travel to Israel and includes two weeks in Israel, as well as expanded educational and volunteer components.**

As part of their preparation, the students participated in a unique program offered by Enter One2One which paired American and Israeli teens for *mifgashim* (encounters). The teens met weekly on zoom for five sessions during November and December, exploring the similarities and differences between life in the United States and in Israel. They will meet in person when the Epstein students are in Israel.

Students on this year's trip will celebrate Shabbat in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, enjoy free time in Shuk HaCarmel, explore the Old City in Jerusalem, experience traditional Bedouin hospitality, climb Masada, and swim in the Dead Sea. However, a significant focus of this year's Teen Taste of Israel experience will also be grappling with the horrors of October 7th and its aftermath, including witnessing the Sderot Police Station and Nova Festival sites and spending time at Hostages Square. Students will also volunteer with a Bedouin community and



hear from those working in Arab and Jewish Israeli circles about their efforts toward building mutual understanding and respect.

Upon their return, the 2025 TTI teens will complete a full year of Israel study, examining modern Israeli culture and history and developing skills in *mahloket le-shem shemayim* (disagreements for the sake of heaven) and they will volunteer at events sponsored by the Federation, at the community commemoration of *Yom haShoah* and at the community celebration of *Yom haAtzmaut*.

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Allison was bawling, she turned to me and said, 'Mom, I got a D.' It was the first time she called me 'Mom.'

Lisa, adopted 16-year-old Allison



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Temple Concord Brotherhood/Sisterhood by Mark Frank

For military veteran caregivers, caregiving often starts earlier in life and lasts longer. **To better care for your loved one, you must also care for yourself.**



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Take fantastic guests:

- Joe Eglash, director of Transcontinental Music Publications and husband of Cantor Kari Eglash.
- Temple Concord members Sarah and Chris Ficken, the couple behind New Moon Farm in Madison County.
- Former Onondaga County Medical Examiner Mary Jumbelic, M.D., author of *Here, Where Death Delights*.

Mix in a great breakfast featuring lox, bagels and home-baked goodies.

Add a dash of engaged, enthusiastic – and well-fed – attendees.

What do you have?

You have revitalized Temple Concord Brotherhood and Sisterhood organizations.

While both groups have continued to hold separate meetings, it's clear that there's strength in numbers – and strength in holding joint sessions where the energy and engagement is palpable.

More than 50 Brotherhood and Sisterhood members attended, and with momentum and through word of mouth, the numbers are sure to grow in 2025.

“It's fantastic to see our groups coming together and our community growing,” said Sandy Gingold, Sisterhood co-president. “I'm looking forward to a great year working with Brotherhood to continue to bring great programming to our members.”

The general sentiment from Brotherhood members is that since settling in at their temporary home at 450 Kimber Road, it's been wonderful teaming up with Sisterhood for certain Sunday meetings and special events throughout the year.

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SEIZE THE AWKWARD   

Prioritize Fitness In The New Year

by Carlett Spike

There's no better time than the new year to prioritize health and fitness, making it the perfect opportunity for both regulars and newcomers to get the most out of the JCC gym and work toward their wellness goals. The JCC's dedicated fitness team is excited to support members on their journey and shared some tips to help anyone looking to kickstart a fresh fitness routine for 2025.

Become a Member

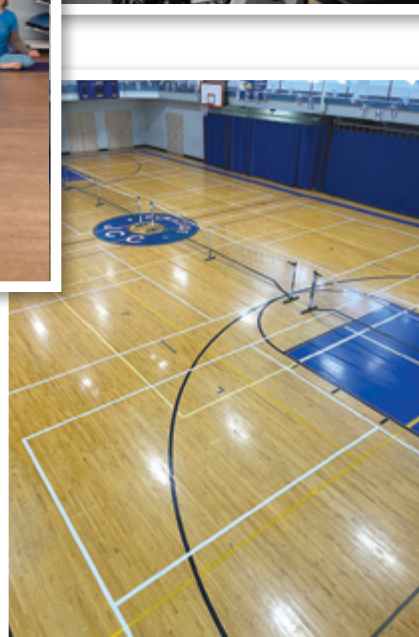
Sign up now. New members can join the JCC gym for just \$1 by taking advantage of the Dollar and a Dream promo by Jan. 31. Those who register through this promotion will receive an exclusive offer for a discounted one-year membership. "It's a great time for people to see what we're all about, with no commitment," said Nick Finlayson, director of membership at the JCC. "So take advantage of it and see if the JCC gym is a good fit for you." Those interested can email nfinlayson@jccsyr.org to sign up.

Get Moving

"Struggling to stick to a routine? That's okay, but it's important to keep going," said Will Masiclat, personal trainer coordinator for the JCC. "No workout is a bad workout. I think sometimes people get trapped in an all-or-nothing mindset, but truly baby steps add up and can make a big difference," he said. He encourages members to show up; even a 10-minute walk on the track is worth it.

Take a Class

With more than 45 options for group exercise classes each week, there is something for everyone. Popular classes include Line Dancing, Pilates, Tai Chi and TRX. Many classes have options for beginners and for those more advanced. Paula Pacini, group exercise coordinator for the JCC, encourages members to try different classes until they find a good fit. "The JCC offers the most diverse portfolio of fitness classes in the area for a well-rounded boutique gym experience," she said. In addition to classes, there are programs available, including the Syracuse Chargers Everyone Can Run Beginners' program, an effective six-week training



program beginning February 5, in which a professional coach teaches members how to run. The JCC also has four indoor pickleball courts available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Sundays for the entire community. Visit jccsyr.org for the full class schedule, programs and more.

Set Realistic Goals

Setting unrealistic goals is a common mistake people make, which leads to them quitting on their fitness goals. It's helpful to break down goals into smaller attainable milestones. "It's important to be patient with ourselves as we get into new habits during the new year,"

Masiclat said. "Of course my staff and I are always available to answer questions, offer guidance or give that extra push if members decide to sign up to train with us."

Work with a Trainer

Work with one of the JCC's personal trainers. They are there to help members meet their goals by establishing healthier routines. In addition to more traditional styles of training (resistance, interval, etc.) the JCC also offers Pilates reformer and stability chair training. Reach out to Masiclat at wmasiclat@jccsyr.org to sign up today. New clients who sign up for personal training will get a 10% discount by mentioning this article.

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BETTE S. SIEGEL
November 6, 2024



Bette S. Siegel, 76, died November 6, 2024 after five years fighting Lewy Body Dementia. Bette was born in New York City on July 6, 1948, after which her parents, Ben and Molla Siegel, moved to Saratoga Springs, New York. As a child and young teen, Bette became accomplished in violin, skiing and equestrian sports while displaying a formidable intellect in scholarship. She graduated from Saratoga Springs High School as salutatorian, obtained BAs in French and English at the University of Rochester and then an MA in language studies at Middlebury College). She traveled to Paris and for years taught English to bankers, honing her accent such that the French could not believe she had not been born in Paris near Notre Dame, let alone America.

Bette casually knew her husband Donald in high school. Years later, he sent her a condolence card when he heard her mother died, and then

Bette and he became “pen pals.” They communicated for two years using a traditional technology called ink on paper. Don, not having seen even a picture of Bette for seven years, invited her on a road trip to the American west prior to his doctoral studies in Minnesota. Don still vividly recalls seeing a beautiful European woman in a beige floppy hat stride off last from the airplane. They fell in love two weeks later in San Francisco and never looked back for fifty years.

Bette, Don, and their baby son Micah moved to Syracuse where Don joined Syracuse University as a professor. Bette got accepted to SU law school but twins Esther and Hannah followed soon after and so she plunged instead into volunteerism at Congregational Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas. There, she served in almost every management post from financial vice president to president of the synagogue. She led sabbath and other services and had an adult bat mitzvah.

Bette managed catering at the synagogue, and for over twenty years arguably served the best catered kosher

food in Syracuse. She won multiple blue ribbons for her challah and other breads. Bette’s lentil and other soups could put the “soup Nazi” of Seinfeld to shame. At the drop of a hat, she’d cook a country French meal after seminars for the Earth Science faculty and grad students. Family and friends nicknamed her the “chicken queen” from her weekly Shabbat chicken dishes.

Bette also volunteered at the Syracuse Jewish Community Center, taught art at the day school, and was hired as the editor of the Jewish Observer, a position she held for twenty years. Bette also took on administrative positions for the Women’s League of Conservative Women, including its New York presidency and public policy and advocacy chair. The Women’s League awarded her their medal of valor for all her accomplishments in the Jewish community. CBSCS awarded her and Stephanie Bergman for their work in catering after they stepped down. Bette was adored in Syracuse as a loving person, always there for people in need.

Bette knitted; her hallmark creation consisted of owls dressed in Syracuse

University colors. She was a terrific wife and mother for her three children. She adeptly managed her father’s and Don’s parents’ terminal illnesses and various medical issues within her nuclear family. She was the rock of her family and fiercely loved them and her community in Syracuse.

Bette is survived by her husband Don, sister Laurie Siegel of New York City, children Micah, Hannah and Esther Siegel, daughter-in-law Rachel Siegel, son-in-law David LeBlanc and four grandchildren, Caleb and Ezra Siegel, Layla and Adam LeBlanc, all living in Silver Spring, MD.

Donations in Bette’s memory should be sent to <https://www.cbcs.org/donations> to the Kiddush Sponsorship Fund. This fund pays for luncheons after services for congregants who cannot afford it. Bette prepared hundreds of kiddushes at CBSCS. Expanding that fund would have made her happy.

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IRVING H. GOLDMAN
November 14, 2024

Irving H. Goldman, 93, of Jamesville died Thursday morning in the comfort of his home following a long illness. The son of Dr. Ephraim and Lottie Lamchick Goldman, Irv was a lifelong Syracusan. He graduated from Nottingham High School, Syracuse University and Syracuse University Medical School. Like his father before him, Irv was a surgeon and urologist, joining his father's medical practice first established in the 1920s. Also like his father, he served as a clinical professor of urology at Upstate Medical School, chief of urology at Crouse Irving Memorial Hospital and president of the medical staff there. A doctor in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, he attained the rank of major before retiring.

Irv was also an active member of the congregation of Temple Adath Yeshuran, which was founded in part by his grandfather, Marx Goldman. At Adath Irv served as a member of the board of directors when the synagogue made the move from its downtown location to newly-built facilities on Kimber Road. In later years he was an active supporter of the Menorah Park Continuing Care facility, the successor to the Syracuse Jewish Home, an institution also founded in part by his grandfather Marx.

Always active, Irv grew up hiking and camping and was a pioneering skier and scuba diver. He enjoyed fishing and sailing his Flying Scot on Skaneateles Lake where he maintained a much-loved cottage. His greatest passion, however, was working on vintage automobiles.

He is survived by his beloved wife Dorothy Goldman, sons Dr. Marcus Goldman and Dr. Harold Goldman, daughter Jennifer Carden, daughters-in-law Lori and Galia, son-in-law Matthew, grandchildren Alex, Zach, Jake, Brett, Dylan, Claire, Micah, and Elliot, great granddaughters Eliza and Charlotte, nephews Fred and Danny, niece, Shira, step children Teresa Heagerty of Liverpool, NY, Scott and Leslie Walker of Locust, NC, Christopher and Laura Walker of Concord, NC and multiple grandchildren, and his beloved 1955 Ford Thunderbird. His sister Kaila predeceased him.

The family wishes to express their gratitude for the wonderful loving care provided to Irv by Pam Sisson and her team. Donations in lieu of flowers may be made to the Menorah Park Continuing Care facility.

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AUDREY G. WOLFMAN
November 27, 2024



Audrey G. Wolfman, 91, passed away early Wednesday morning after suffering a stroke just days ago. Born on September 19, 1933 to Solomon and Joan Goldstein in Yonkers, NY, she had been a resident of Syracuse since she and her late husband Richard made this their home here.

For many years Audrey was the beloved pre-school teacher at the Jewish Community Center where her loving care helped to shape the minds of countless children who even now as adults hold those memories in their hearts.

She was a graduate of Connecticut State Teachers College and maintained close relationships with the fellow students she met there. Audrey loved playing mah jongg with her friends at the Senior Center, meeting for brunch, attending Syracuse Stage and SU sports.

Audrey's family includes her daughter Nancy and her husband Manolo Padilla Benitez, her granddaughters Amy Shulman (fiancé Meredith Martin), Julie (Kyle) Wilks and her daughters of the heart Mindy, Barbara, Caroline and Nancy.

Contributions in her memory may be made to the Early Childhood program at the JCC.

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ESTELLE W. SPEVAK
November 25, 2024



Estelle W. Spevak, 83, of Syracuse, died on November 25, 2024, at Loretto Health & Rehabilitation. She was the daughter of Louis and Betty Wallace. She grew up in Walton, New York and attended Davis Elkins College in West Virginia. After graduation, she moved back to Syracuse where she met her husband Stuart and began her family,

Estelle was very active in Temple Beth El and temple groups for many years. She was president and past president of B'nai Brith and could be seen working at bingo and other fund raisers. She enjoyed bowling, playing cards and mah jongg.

Her family, especially her grandkids, were her world. She was known as Aunt Estelle by many of those who knew her and loved her. Estelle was predeceased by her husband Stuart in 2005 and by her brother Herbert.

She is survived by her son, Philip (Alicia) Spevak, grandchildren Marissa, Lucy and Shay, brother-in-law Gerald Spevak, sister-in-law Fran Wallace and many cousins, nieces, nephews and close friends she called family.

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