

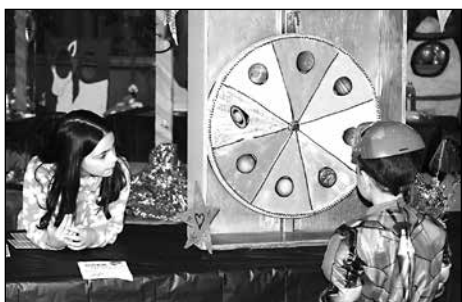
THE REPORTER

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BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

JCC community Purim Carnival on March 1



The community is invited to attend the Jewish Community Center's Purim Carnival on Sunday, March 1, from 12-2 pm. The cost to attend is \$6 per child and \$2 per adult. There will be games, crafts, holiday treats and more. Organizers are looking for volunteers. "If you want to help make the carnival a special event,

you can sign up at [www.signupgenius.com/go/10C044EA9A72AA1F5C70-61710969-purim#/,](http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C044EA9A72AA1F5C70-61710969-purim#/)" organizers said.

Harry Cohen, JCC Arts and Culture director, said, "The Purim Carnival is always a fun event. This year, we will have new inflatable soccer and mini golf games. I hope everyone will come out and celebrate."



At left and right: Community members attended last year's JCC Purim Carnival.

Jewish Film Fest to hold in-person showing of "Soul of a Nation" on March 15

By Reporter staff

The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold an in-person showing of the documentary "Soul of a Nation" on Sunday, March 15, at 11:30 am, at the Jewish Community Center, which is co-sponsoring the event. There is a suggested donation of \$5. Irle Goldman, who has been a clinical psychologist for more than 50 years, will be the moderator. The film, which is in Hebrew and English with English subtitles, "dives into Israel's most perilous chapter in recent

history, a time of profound internal conflict and external danger." Registration for the film and discussion is suggested, but walk-ins are welcome; to register, visit www.jfjb.org. The film fest is co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton and the Jewish Community Center.

The film features interviews with former Prime Ministers Naftali Bennett and Ehud Olmert, Knesset Member Simcha Rothman, former President of the Supreme Court of Israel Dorit Beinisch, former Israeli Ambassador to the United States Michael Oren and former Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Israel Tzipi Livni and Shlomo Ben Ami. It also offers the voices of Nobel laureates, Muslim leaders, peace activists and other figures.

Goldman has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Rutgers University and has worked at a variety of graduate schools helping to train the next generation of therapists. He graduated high school from the Boston Lubavitz Yeshiva. His B.A. from Brandeis University was in Near Eastern and Jewish studies. He spent his junior year of college at Hebrew University in 1964-65 and has been to Israel more than 60 times

to either visit or teach at Lesley University. On the Gazzetely website, Marcus Thorne noted, "The film's strength is its courage to remain in that uncomfortable space, offering a portrait of a specific, traumatic moment in time rather than a prescriptive analysis. It captures the essence of a nation whose defining characteristic may be its perpetual state of unresolved tension, a people united by an ancient history and divided by every possible interpretation of its future." Danielle Solzman wrote on



solzyatthemovies.com that "even during dark times of polarization, 'Soul of a Nation' shows the importance of unity, even when it might seem impossible. Am Yisrael Chai!"

"Join us for this fascinating look on how Israel is negotiating this difficult period of its history," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "The Film Fest Committee and Dr. Goldman hope the discussion is healing and insightful. That is something we all need during this challenging time in our history."



A scene from the film "Soul of a Nation." (Photo used with the permission of A Greenwich Entertainment FILM)

BU Judaic Studies and CJS to screen Jewish silent film with live music on March 5

On Thursday, March 5, at 7:30 pm, the Judaic Studies Department at Binghamton University, together with the College of Jewish Studies, will host a screening of the silent film "The Man Without a World" at Casadesus Recital Hall on the BU campus.

This is the third event in an ongoing series, featuring an original score, composed and performed live by Klezmer violinist Alicia Svigals and pianist Donald Sosin, a practitioner of silent film music. "For years, this extraordinary duo has been bringing audiences to their feet throughout America and Europe with their unique and masterful performances, dedicated to Jewish-themed

cinema," said organizers of the event.

"'The Man Without a World' is a bold independent American film, the conceptual masterpiece of an important artist, a meditation on history, and a very funny and beautiful melodrama," according to KinoLorber.com. "Credited to the legendary (and imaginary) 1920s Soviet director, Yevgeny Antinov, the film was actually made by Eleanor Antin in 1991. This silent drama set in a Jewish shtetl was Antin's 'love letter' to her mother, who had been an actress in the Yiddish theater. When a gypsy caravan and its lovely dancer (played by Antin herself) arrive in the village, the life of the shtetl dwellers - including



Alicia Svigals and Donald Sosin (Photo by Oles Cheresko)

Zionists, religious zealots, socialists, and lovers - is upended. But as the Jewish villagers pursue their dreams for the future, the Angel of Death is ever near..."

The Judaic Studies Department is organizing a shuttle service to and from the venue, with a rendezvous point at the Jewish Community Center at 7 pm, on the night of the performance. Community members not wishing to park at Binghamton University are welcome to avail themselves of this service. Registration information will be available shortly through the community newsletter, or by contacting Judaic Studies at Kschull1@binghamton.edu.

Federation to hold "Rise in Antisemitism" Zoom talk on Feb. 26

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold a Zoom talk, "An Update on the Rise in Antisemitism," with Scott Richman, the director of the Anti-Defa-

mation League's regional office covering New York and New Jersey, on Thursday, February 26, at 7:30 pm. There is no cost to attend. To register for the event, visit www.jfjb.org. The registration deadline is

Wednesday, February 25.

The ADL describes its mission as "stop[ping] the defamation of the Jewish people, and... secur[ing] justice and fair treatment to all." Richman's work includes

handling incident response, anti-bias education, legislative initiatives, educational programs, fund-raising and leadership development - all designed to fight antisemitism. See "Talk" on page 6

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Opinion

From the Desk of the Federation Executive Director

Witnessing tragedy

SHELLEY HUBAL

The world was recently stunned and heartbroken as we witnessed the senseless shooting death of Alex Pretti at the hands of federal law enforcement in Minnesota. Jewish tradition teaches that life is sacred. We are all created in the image of the Divine and we weep as one when there is tragedy, violence and loss.

My prayer is that we remember it is a choice to label our-

elves and those around us as "red" or "blue." What we really need to do is see beyond the labels and politics, and embrace that which makes us human; our compassion and the ability to love one another. For in the end, that is what God asks from us.

Many in the community are feeling overwhelmed or alone, so this is the time to reach out to friends, family and neighbors to check in. If you are feeling depressed, I

suggest you find a way to engage and connect with others. We have several synagogues here in the Southern Tier that offer communal worship and fellowship that will help to heal a weeping heart.

Above all, let us set an intention to make compassion, love and respect for one another a priority. That is how we will heal ourselves and our country.

America's 25 most impactful Jews

By Bill Simons

Our semiquincentennial – America at 250 – prompts reflection on the centrality of Jews to the nation since its 1776 founding. Hence, this columnist's eclectic selections of America's 25 most impactful Jews, listed alphabetically, follow. Nearly half were immigrants or the children of immigrants. Rationales are not all positive. Thanks to readers for their nominations.

1. Irving Berlin. Berlin celebrated his new homeland, composing many of the Great American Songbook's standards. Played in war and peace at patriotic, sporting and civic gatherings, his "God Bless America" became the soundtrack of the American Dream.

2. Leonard Bernstein. Towering musical composer and conductor, he led the New York Philharmonic at age 25, mentored Young People's Concerts, and created "West Side Story" and other classics. Bernstein supported Black Panthers, but collaborated with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and composed "Kaddish."

3. Louis Brandeis. The crusading "People's Attorney" pioneered employment of sociological data in legal briefs. As the first Jewish Supreme Court justice, Brandeis wrote liberal dissents that ultimately expanded civil liberties. By word and deed, he argued persuasively for the compatibility of Zionism and Americanism.

4. Albert Einstein. The father of modern physics rendered his great scientific contributions before escaping Nazi Germany. However, as an American, Einstein persuaded President Franklin D. Roosevelt that Germany had the resources and intent to make and use an atomic bomb, thus altering history.

5. Betty Friedan. Friedan invested second-wave feminism with ideology, organization and leadership. Her book "The Feminine Mystique" broke the silence concerning the unhappiness and subordination American women endured in post-war America. With royalties from the book, she founded the National Organization for Women.

6. Hank Greenberg. As antisemitism peaked during the

1930s, the Detroit slugger emerged as baseball's first Jewish superstar. Coming within two of Babe Ruth's home run record and refusing to play on Yom Kippur, he provided significant affirmation to fragile Jewish egos.

7. Ernest Gruening. Harvard M.D., crusading journalist, territorial governor of Puerto Rico and Alaska, and the latter's senior senator, he was one of two senators to vote against the resolution justifying U.S. escalation of the Vietnam War.

8. Sidney Hillman. Hillman embraced the strike and mass organization of American workers. President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and a Congress of Industrial Organizations founder, he spurred labor victories on picket lines and through New Deal legislation.

9. Henry Kissinger. As national security advisor and secretary of state, he facilitated diplomatic relations with China, Soviet détente, a belated end to the Vietnam War and the Camp David Accords. Critics hold Kissinger's

See "Jews" on page 8

When even an "Israeli" menu item becomes distasteful

By Stephen M. Flatow

(JNS) – The University at Buffalo Student Association recently issued a solemn public apology. Not for harassment. Not for silencing a speaker. Not for misconduct. The offense, it turns out, was a social-media post that described a falafel bar at an upcoming campus food festival as "Israeli."

According to the student government's statement, the description was "offensive," "culturally insensitive" and left members of the campus community feeling "antagonized, minimized and very appropriately disappointed." The post was taken down. The "impact" was addressed. A commitment to "justice and humanity" was reaffirmed.

What the apology never explained was why the word

Israeli – alone among all national descriptors – required contrition.

The original flier promoting the university's International Food Fiesta from February 9-12 listed offerings identified as Ghanaian, Ethiopian, Palestinian and Israeli. After the backlash, the African nationalities remained intact. The Israeli label disappeared. The Palestinian tag was also quietly removed, presumably to restore balance. Falafel survived. Identity did not.

At first glance, this looks like standard campus silliness. There is no such thing as Israeli falafel or Palestinian hummus. These are Levantine foods shared across borders and cultures, enjoyed by Israelis and Palestinians, Lebanese,

Syrians and anyone else who appreciates chickpeas, tahini and the fixings that go with it. Treating the menu for a food festival as a geopolitical document is absurd.

But the absurdity isn't the point. The apology is.

The student association did not say that the label was inaccurate. It did not say that the wording was confusing or poorly chosen. It said that it was offensive. More revealingly, it acknowledged that the backlash was "very appropriately" felt. That is not neutral language. It is a moral judgment – one that quietly declares outrage over Israel's mere mention to be justified.

Notice what else is missing. The apology does not name

See "Item" on page 11

One Perspective from Israel

Ghost of Purim past

JEREMY M. STAIMAN

This article originally appeared in the Times of Israel on March 18, 2024, and is being reprinted with permission.

Uncle Abe was a brilliant architect, who worked his entire career at a world-renowned firm in Manhattan. He was a key member of the teams which developed the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, the Sydney Opera House, the Bank of China headquarters in Hong Kong, and many other prestigious landmarks.

Today, Uncle Abe is declining with dementia. His work was his life, and he never had children, so we, his nieces and nephews, are his closest kin. His rapid descent began around seven months ago, not long before the war, and we have made an effort to visit him in the Queens, NY, facility he now calls home. Since October 7, we have not traveled, as most of the time our two sons have been in the Army, and they and their families have been our top priority.

When they were released (at least for now) from the IDF about a month ago, it was time to plan another trip to see Uncle Abe.

And to visit family, and to celebrate the bat mitzvah of a great-niece.

And yes, to breathe in some air which was not saturated with the heaviness of our war. Not to escape the reality which has surrounded us, but to de-stress with a change of scenery, and spend time with our families in the USA.

Is that so terrible?

Believe me, we agonized about whether it was the right thing to do. My son has repeatedly told us that he and all the others are fighting in Gaza so that the rest of us can lead a normal life, and continue moving forward. It's important to the soldiers that we do things to enjoy ourselves, and not allow ourselves to be paralyzed by the events which, for most of us, are the greatest national trauma we have experienced in our lifetimes.

We went. We enjoyed. Immensely. We will soon return to Israel.

But somewhere along the travels of this trip, I was abruptly hurled back 47 years, to the first great trauma of my life.

After visiting Uncle Abe, we spent the night at a cousin's place in Manhattan, just across the street from the new Lincoln Square Synagogue, famously founded and led for many years by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, who was later was a founder of the beautiful city of Efrat.

In the morning, our cousins took us for breakfast several blocks away. It was then that I saw it. The subway station at 72nd Street and Broadway.

I don't know whether that stop is considered a historical landmark, or if the NYC Department of Public Works is running behind in their renovations, but the station looks exactly the same as I remember it from Purim eve, 1977.

I was instantly transported back to that very same station, an innocent 15-year-old, a walking zombie, sobbing along with a group of walking zombies, all headed to the subway, on our way back to our dormitory in Riverdale.

None of us would ever be the same.

See "Purim" on page 8



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of Greater Binghamton

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OPINIONS

The views expressed in editorials and opinion pieces are those of each author and not necessarily the views of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton.

LETTERS

The Reporter welcomes letters on subjects of interest to the Jewish community. All letters must be signed and include a phone number; names may be withheld upon request.

ADS

The Reporter does not necessarily endorse any advertised products and services. In addition, the paper is not responsible for the kashruth of any advertiser's product or establishment.

DEADLINE

Regular deadline is noon, Wednesday, for the following month's newspaper (see deadline dates on page 3). All articles should be e-mailed to TRReporter@aol.com.

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BD luncheon on March 14 on the Kaddish prayer: from grief to growth

Beth David Synagogue's March luncheon will be held on Saturday, March 14, and feature clinical psychologist and psychotherapist Dr. Irle Goldman, who will speak about the *Kaddish* prayer. Even though it is recited to commemorate someone's death, the prayer is devoid of a key word. What is that word, and why is that the case? Goldman's talk will answer that question and also offer answers to the following questions: how can one of the oldest prayers in the Jewish religion help us become our best selves? How does this prayer provide meaningful ways to deal with our disappointment and suffering? And how can one see a relationship between this prayer, spirituality and psychotherapy?



Dr. Irle Goldman
(Photo courtesy of Dr. Irle Goldman)

"As a psychotherapist and a committed Jew who celebrates so many Jewish rituals," Goldman reflected, "ever since my brother died two years ago, I have been pondering the *Kaddish*, one of the major prayers in Judaism. I've come to realize that to understand the ultimate goal of religion, psychotherapy and specifically our Jewish tradition, we need to look closely at this prayer, and that is what I look forward to doing with attendees at my talk at Beth David."

After he completed his Jewish day school education in the Boston area, Goldman attended Brandeis University,

spending his junior year studying at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He then pursued his Ph.D. in psychology at Rutgers, graduated in 1971, and has been a licensed clinical psychologist and psychotherapist ever since.

"Those of us who have had the pleasure to hear Irle deliver a talk know what a gifted and insightful speaker he is," organizers say. "We at Beth David are honored to have him as our March 14 speaker. We look forward to sharing services, the luncheon and Irle's talk with the community!"

Beth David Synagogue's Shabbat services begin at 9:30 am, with the luncheon and program following the conclusion of services. The monthly series, which includes the luncheon, is free

and open to the community. Since its continuation depends on the generosity of contributors, Beth David welcomes donations to the Luncheon Fund. Donations can be made in honor of, or in memory of, someone, or to mark a special occasion. Those wishing an acknowledgment to be sent to the person being honored, or to the family of someone being remembered, can indicate that, along with the necessary information. Donations can be sent to Beth David Synagogue, 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905, Attention: Luncheon Fund. Partial or full sponsorships of a luncheon are also available.

BD Sisterhood to host pre-Passover workshop on March 11

Beth David Sisterhood will hold its annual Community Pre-Passover Workshop on Wednesday, March 11, at 7 pm, in the Beth David Synagogue social hall. The workshop is open to everyone in the Jewish community, men and women, whether or not they are affiliated with Beth David Sisterhood or Beth David Synagogue.

Rabbi Zev Silber will update attendees on changes to products which were previously acceptable for Passover use, and alert them to new kosher for Passover items available this year. Copies of the OU Passover guide will be available for distribution.

Silber will also answer questions concerning Passover

and Passover preparations. If the question might require research, it would be appreciated if it was submitted to Silber in advance at rabbisilber@stny.rr.com.

"Attendees may take this opportunity to share favorite Passover recipes, tips, shortcuts and other useful information which may make cleaning or cooking easier this year," said organizers of the workshop. "The evening will conclude with Rabbi Silber speaking about some of the rabbis mentioned in the haggadah, and their relevance to Passover and the haggadah. Remember, we collect food for CHOW at every meeting, so start cleaning out your pantry early and bring your *chametzdik* donations to our meeting."

Sochor promoted to Reporter executive editor

By Reporter staff

Diana Sochor, *The Reporter's* longtime layout editor, has been appointed executive editor of the paper by *The Reporter's* Editorial Committee. A longtime Vestal resident, Sochor grew up in Downsville, NY, and graduated from Wells College with a B.A. in English in 1993. Her family was a member of the Jewish Community Center for years while her daughter attended the ECC, Kids Connection and Camp JCC.

Previously, she had worked at *The Walton Reporter* as its staff proofreader, a columnist and a reporter. She began her tenure at *The Reporter* in May 1996, when then Executive Editor Marc Goldberg hired her as the editorial assistant, promoting her to assistant editor in June 1999. In 2001, she was promoted to layout editor by then Executive Editor Judith Huober, a position she has held, with increasing responsibilities, through Executive Editors Rebecca Goldstein Kahn, Andy Gross and Rabbi Rachel Esserman. She became interim executive editor when Esserman retired.

"Diana is the heart and soul of *The Reporter*," said Federation Executive Director Shelley Hubal. "Her commitment



Diana Sochor
(Photo by Katie Sochor)

to the paper and its professional standards over the last nearly 30 years has been outstanding. We are pleased that she will be stepping up as executive editor and helping our community stay connected and vibrant in the coming years. Thank you, Diana."

Sochor's responsibilities over the years have grown to include administrative responsibilities; working with the paper's longtime volunteer proofreaders; editing local and national news articles; writing occasional local news articles; working with the Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania staff to publish its monthly community newspaper; maintaining the master

publication schedule for both papers; keeping track of articles/photos for both newspapers; full responsibility for the layout of the newspapers; soliciting information for the bar/bat mitzvah, wedding and family living sections, as well as the annual Community Guide; assisting the advertising representative as needed, including writing advertisers' write-ups for certain ad sections; liaising with the printer and the Post Office; helping readers and See "Editor" on page 8

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to the *Eve Berman* on the death of

her brother,

Charles Berman

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to *Richard Schneierson* on the death of his mother,

Charlotte (Rubenstein) Schneierson

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to *Flora and Bernard Rosefsky* on the death of their daughter,

Dr. Carrie Ruth Rosefsky Wickham

DEADLINES

The following are deadlines for all articles and photos for upcoming printed issues of the monthly REPORTER.

ISSUE	DEADLINE
April	March 11
May	April 6*
June	May 6
July	June 10

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

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Off the Shelf

Jews and Christmas

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

I enjoy reading and reviewing books with similar subject matter because they often complement each other, giving me more insight into the topic than either would alone. That's why, after receiving a review copy of Scott D. Seligman's "The Great Christmas Boycott of 1906: Antisemitism and the Battle Over Christianity in the Public School" (Potomac Books), I could not resist asking for a copy of "Christmas in Yiddish Tradition: The Untold Story" by Jordan Chad (New York University Press). The disagreements about the place of Christmas in public schools in the past, and when I was growing up in the late 1960s and early '70s, still continue today. However, I had never heard of any connection between Yiddish and Christmas, a subject that relates to Seligman's work by showing how Jewish customs changed when Yiddish-speaking Jews immigrated to the United States.

Seligman specializes in writing about lesser-known Jewish events that offer lessons beyond their seemingly narrow scope. His previous works have focused on kosher meat wars and a riot at a rabbi's funeral in New York City, and the Jewish community in Manchuria.* His new work looks at the call for Jewish children to boycott attending school on the day that Christmas pageants were being performed in the New York City public school system in 1906. However, in order to understand how this came about, the author begins with the development of "free schools," now known as public schools, which were supported by public funds and available to children of all religions. While they were said to be nondenominational, it was clear that their curriculum was based on Protestant ideas and ideals. What is interesting is that the first objections to these schools did not come from the Jewish population. Rather, it was

the Catholic Church that saw the schools as attempting to teach Catholic children Protestant ideas and turn them away from the church. It led to the development of private Catholic schools that would offer children lessons about ethics and morals from a Catholic point of view.

As the Jewish population of New York City increased, this Protestant leaning became problematic for some, especially when it became clear that some educators believed that to be a good American one had to be a good Christian. The Jewish community was torn about what to do. One group preferred not to make waves: they worried about the antisemitic backlash that might occur if they spoke up publicly. Others believed that teaching Christianity in the schools went against the U.S. Constitution and New York state law. This group was willing to fight against any mention of Christmas as part of the school curriculum, partly because they saw the schools as trying to convert the Jewish students to Christianity.

While it is clear that there was no systematic attempts to convert Jewish children, immigrant parents didn't always trust the schools. That was partly because the information shared with parents was often in a format or language they didn't speak or understand. One such misunderstanding led Jewish parents to believe that their children were having surgery done by the medical staff, rather than just having their adenoids inspected to see if they needed more medical care. However, it was not just the Jewish population that was misinformed: Italian mothers also stormed a school for the same reason.

Although Seligman does an excellent job outlining the characters involved in a less than successful Christmas boycott, the most interesting parts of his work offer intriguing

thoughts about the place of Jews in the U.S. He notes that many Jewish immigrants did not trust the government for excellent reasons: Many of these immigrants "had come to America to flee harassment, conscription, censorship, expulsions, conversion efforts, and pogroms. They believed things would be better in America, but old prejudices die hard." Unfortunately, some of these prejudices turned out to be true. The backlash from the attempt to limit Christmas activities in the schools showed how rampant antisemitism was in the U.S. The author writes of those who felt "that Jews were either not true Americans or somehow lesser Americans—latecomers merely tolerated by early arriving Christians." They saw Jews as being ungrateful for being allowed into the country. Others were clear that they would be doing Jewish children a favor by turning them into Christians.

Seligman follows the debate into contemporary times, showing that not much has actually changed. The list of "Dramatic Personae" and a "Chronology" were helpful to keep track of the numerous characters and the events that occurred. The author writes clear prose, which makes this a work of popular nonfiction. It would also be an excellent selection for book clubs as it offers much to debate about the place of Jews in the U.S.

While Seligman shows Jewish resistance to Christmas and Christian culture in public schools, Chad shows the Jewish response to Christmas in Europe. Well, that is not a completely accurate statement: the author shows winter solstice pre-Christian behavior and the customs Jews and non-Jews practiced during what was considered a dangerous time of the year. It was only later that some of these customs became part of religious Christian observance. The author also explores how Jews who immigrated to the U.S. distanced themselves from the customs they used to follow.

These folk traditions were based on the idea that dangerous creatures walked the earth during the winter solstice. The author notes that "in the Middle Ages, the winter solstice was one of the four periods that Europeans (both Christians and Jews) believed to be exceptionally ominous times, when demons were unabated and free to pollute the earth." Jewish tradition notes that specific angels guarded the world at that time, while Christians marked the solstices as fast days. When Christmas became attached to the solstice, Christmas Eve was still considered a fearful time, an evening when dangerous creatures—werewolves, vampires or ghosts—would roam the world. Some scholars believed that Jews shared those beliefs, even as they adapted them to Jewish traditions.

For both groups, Christmas Eve was an unholy time, a time to make merry and not worry about religion. For Jews that meant one evening a year free from the study hall, in addition to being permitted to do things, such as play cards, which were normally forbidden. Each group, though, assumed the dangers of the night came from a different source. For example, Christians believed that Jewish demons roamed the world, while Jews believed that Jesus restlessly wandered the earth and that studying—the Jewish ideal—would allow him to rest. The Jews believed that Jesus was wandering to do penitence for his sins, which were the basis for the oppression of the Jewish community. The games they played on Christmas Eve denied him the rest that he sought.

Both Christian and Jewish religious leaders disapproved of the frivolous be-

havior, in part because the members of the two religions celebrated in what their leaders considered inappropriate ways. Chad notes that Jews did celebrate a kind of holiday then, but not one related to Christ and ritual religious behavior. He adds that "Jews and Christians were enmeshed in a single Eastern Christmas culture that encompassed the two groups exchanging festive foods and covertly poking fun at each other. They agreed that Christmas should be reserved as the merriest time of the year, when responsibilities are vanquished and playtime is earned. They only disagreed on why." While readers might quibble about whether this meant the Jews were actually celebrating Christmas, they were certainly observing customs and rituals of some type of holiday that night.

Chad notes that something changed when Jews moved to the United States. According to the author, religious leaders were less concerned about Jews converting to Christianity than them assimilating—meaning that they were worried they would no longer follow Jewish customs and rituals. A sort of collective amnesia occurred, including the claim that Jews had never taken part in joyous celebrations on Christmas Eve. Rather, it was said that Christmas Eve had been a dangerous time in Europe because it was the night when Christians attacked Jews. Stories and poems in the American Yiddish press portrayed that night as one of horror, of terrified Jews looking to escape Christian violence. As for the Christians, Christmas Eve was also being re-imagined. Gone were the supernatural creatures who threatened them. Christmas evening and Christmas day came to be a time of "peace on Earth, good will to men." This re-imagining became extremely successful, both as a religious and secular idea. Because Hanukkah was truly a minor holiday in the Jewish immigrant community, it was not used to compete against Christmas during the early years of immigration. That would occur later for other reasons.

It's during the discussion of the early part of the 20th century that Chad and Seligman's books overlap, although they focus on different aspects of Jewish behavior. What is interesting is that Albert Lucas, who was the force behind the call for the Christmas boycott, was born in England to a family of Dutch Jews. That leaves readers to ponder whether he was familiar with Eastern European customs and how he would have felt about them because he is not mentioned in Chad's work. However, since Seligman focuses on the U.S. and the legal aspect of Christmas observance in public school, what occurred in Eastern Europe does not play a role in his work. However, this overlap made it more interesting to consider the books together in one review.

"Christmas in Yiddish Tradition" is the more scholarly-written work, although its prose is still easy to read. Those interested in folklore will be fascinated by the different and overlapping customs of Christians and Jews in Eastern Europe. The work also shines a light on how the two communities were not totally separate entities, regularly interacting in ways that are often overlooked in some scholarly writing.

*To read *The Reporter's* reviews of these books, visit www.thereportergroup.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-women-and-the-war-over-kosher-meat-prices?entry=375596, www.thereportergroup.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-jews-in-manchuria?entry=462580 and www.thereportergroup.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-a-funeral-and-a-riot?entry=488130.

PASSOVER Greetings

April (Deadline: March 12) Personal Greetings and Health Care Greetings

Passover is traditionally a time for sharing with family, friends and strangers. While your seder table may not be large enough to fit all these people, you can share the warmth of this holiday with the entire local Jewish community by placing a Passover greeting in *The Reporter*. You may choose from the designs, messages and sizes shown here - more are available. You may also choose your own message, as long as it fits into the space of the greeting you select. (Custom designs available upon request.) The price of the small greeting is \$21 (styles I & J), the medium one is \$40 (styles G & H), and the next sizes are not shown. The next actual size is 3.22" x 2.958" and is \$59. The largest size is 3.22" x 3.95" and is \$78. To ensure that your greeting is published, simply fill out the form below and choose a design that you would like to accompany your greeting, or contact Kathy Brown at 607-724-2360, ext. 244; or e-mail advertising@thereportergroup.org. Checks can be made payable to *The Reporter* and sent to: The Reporter, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

Style G • \$40 Actual Size: 3.22" x 1.975"

Wishing you and your family
peace, health
and happiness
this Pesach

Your Name(s)

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Passover
Blessings

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PASSOVER Greetings

April (Deadline: March 12) Personal Greetings and Health Care Greetings

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Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

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Community Spotlight

Raychel Reilly

The Reporter is starting a new feature called "Community Spotlight" highlighting community members and finding out more about them. If you want to be among the participants, e-mail reporter@aol.com.

First up is Jewish Community Center Chief Operating Officer Raychel Reilly.



Raychel Reilly
(Photo by Melinda Prince Photography)

1. What is your hometown? Paramus, New Jersey
2. What is your earliest Jewish memory?

It is hard to say exactly which came first, but I have wonderful memories of celebrating holidays at my grandparents' house, going to preschool at a JCC, or resting my head on my grandma's shoulder in synagogue listening to her sing.

3. What is your favorite Jewish food or dessert?

This is a hard one, because I have a lot of answers for this. I am a big fan of matzoh ball soup. My whole family adds the "mini mandel," which we have all referred to as "crunchies" for as long as I can remember. Now the kids in our family ask for "crunchies" anytime we have soup, which feels like a perfect little piece of tradition being passed down.

I actually asked my family what they think my favorite Jewish food is, and they unanimously said brisket. So, it seems the official answer might be brisket... but in my heart, it's probably both.

4. What is your favorite Jewish holiday?

Passover, with Purim as a close second. I have such amazing memories of large seders with family and friends, and am now trying to create that same magic for my children.

Every seder had its own unique vibe, but all would be filled with laughter, tradition and, of course, lots of off-key singing. I fondly remember my grandpa Bert being asleep at the head of the table (because on this night we recline, of course... and he was 80) and then suddenly pop awake and bang on the table yelling "dayenu."

Last year, we hosted 42 people between the two nights at our home here, and it was wonderful to share some of our family traditions with new friends. Over the years, I've collected Passover parody songs that are laminated and tucked into the back of the haggadah. Favorites include "Sweet Kosher Wine" (to the tune of "Sweet Caroline") and "Take the Jews Out of Egypt" (to the tune of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame"). I'm always happy to pass the collection along to anyone who wants to add a little extra joy to their seder table.

5. What has been the biggest influence on your Jewish identity?

The biggest influence on my Jewish identity has been visiting Israel. I've been fortunate to go 13 times and each trip has deepened my connection in a new way. Being in Israel makes me feel like I am both at peace, and part of something greater. Walking through Jerusalem, standing at the Kotel, and experiencing Shabbat when an entire country pauses reminds me that Judaism is not just a religion – it's a people, a culture and a living history.

Growing up, I always felt that you had to be religious to be Jewish and would refer

to myself as a "bad Jew" because I didn't keep kosher or observe Shabbat. Israel helped me see that Jewish identity isn't just about religion; it's about peoplehood, resilience, culture and continuity. Going 13 times has allowed that connection to grow roots. Each visit strengthened my pride, broadened my perspective and reminded me why being part of the Jewish story matters so much to me.

6. Do you have any children and/or pets?

Both of my children are with me at the J every day, enrolled in our exceptional early childhood program. My son, Jack, who will be 4 soon, proudly considers himself the "mayor" of the JCC. My daughter, Noa, is 7 months old and part of our infant program.

It brings me tremendous peace and gratitude to know how deeply cared for they are here. They are not only nurtured and supported, but truly thriving – surrounded each day by a community that feels like family.

7. What are your hobbies?

Spending time with family, traveling, hiking, playing and watching sports, and I absolutely love to read. I am really working on getting myself back to the pickleball courts, but may need a nudge.

8. What makes you happy?

Spreading happiness by bringing people together. I've always loved connecting people and watching joy unfold because of it. Whether it's actual matchmaking (yes, I can take credit for a few weddings!), introducing friends who I think will really click, or hosting a big event, I genuinely love creating spaces where people feel connected.

It's especially important to me that no one ever feels excluded. Creating environments where everyone feels welcomed, included and part of something bigger is what truly makes me happy, and it's one of the biggest reasons I love my job at the J so much.

9. What do you like most about living in Binghamton?

The people. We intentionally chose Vestal because of the community here. We were looking for strong public schools and, even more importantly, a place filled with good people. Of course we hope our children grow up to be smart and athletic – but above all, we want them to be good humans.

We see that happening every day, through the culture of kindness at the JCC and throughout the greater community. We've lived in cities with immense wealth, but what stands out here is something far more meaningful. People may not always have much, but they will give you the shirt off their back if you need it. There is a genuine generosity of spirit here that is both humbling and wonderful.

10. Anything else you would like to share?

Fun fact, I am a triplet! My brother Matt, sister Jess, and I all went to preschool at a JCC in New Jersey. They are both coming to visit with their families for the JCC's Purim Carnival this year!

"American Jews in the Civil War Era"

TC/TI Adult Education program on April 19

The Adult Education Committee of Temple Concord and Temple Israel will hold a program and light brunch on Sunday, April 19, from 10 am-noon, at Temple Israel, 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal. Richard Kreitner will speak on "American Jews in the Civil War Era," focusing on Jewish engagement in debates and issues of the period.



Richard Kreitner
(Photo by Eva Deitch)

"Focusing on the moral and political dramas of the Civil War era, Richard Kreitner tells the story of Jewish engagement through the lives of six American Jews who shaped the complexities of the time," said organizers of the program. "Among those who are included are Judah P. Benjamin, a brilliant Louisiana senator who became Jefferson Davis' confidant, and Ernestine Rose, an ardent abolitionist. As they struggle to make sense of a polarized time, American Jews debated with one another about religion, morality and politics – conversations that prefigure many of our own."

Kreitner is the author of "Fear No Pharaoh: American Jews, the Civil War, and the Fight to End Slavery"; "Break It Up: Secession, Division, and the Secret History of America's Imperfect Union"; and "Booked: A Traveler's Guide to Literary Locations Around the World." He has written for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Nation*, *Slate*, *Raritan*, *The Baffler*, *Jewish Currents* and other publications. He lives in Beacon, NY.

"The entire community is welcome to attend what promises to be an informative and fascinating program," said organizers. There is a suggested donation of between \$5-20 per person.

For more information and to RSVP, contact Temple Israel at 607-723-7461 or e-mail office@templeisraelvestal.org; or Temple Concord at 607-723-7355 by Monday, April 13, so that enough refreshments can be prepared. See "April" on page 8





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Happy Purim

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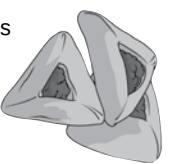
We Remember You 2026

JFS Accepting Purim Donations



Jewish Family Service will once again be collecting funds to fulfill the Purim mitzvah of *matanot le'evyonim* (gifts for the poor). These donations will be distributed to more than 16 local Jewish families who are experiencing extreme financial difficulties. In order to assure a timely distribution of these gifts, please be sure your contribution reaches our offices by February 23.

Thank you for your support for your neighbors in need. Please mail or bring your donation to Jewish Family Service, 500 Clubhouse Road, Vestal, NY 13850. Contact Merryl Wallach, JFS Director, at 607-724-2332, ext. 339, with any questions.



Hillel Academy celebrated Tu B'Shevat

Hillel Academy's Tu B'Shevat seder was hosted at Schaefer's Gardens, where students enjoyed a hands-on Tu B'Shevat experience. During the seder, the children read selections from the Tu B'Shevat haggadah, including passages from the Torah, Mishnah and Talmud, in both Hebrew and English. "They enjoyed the fruits of the Land of Israel, sang together, celebrated and filled the space with joy," noted Hillel Academy staff.



Hillel Academy students participated in a Tu B'Shevat seder hosted at Schaefer's Gardens.



Students had the opportunity to place plants in planters.



A Schaefer's Gardens employee described a variety of plants to the students.



Rabbi Moshe Shmaryahu led the Tu B'Shevat seder.



Two students held their plants. (Names withheld on request.)

At left: Hillel Academy students, staff and chaperones visited Schaefer's Gardens for a Tu B'Shevat seder.

Talk Continued from page 1

and combat hate in all its forms. He speaks about these issues on his weekly national podcast called "From the Frontlines," which can be found at <https://soundcloud.com/scott-richman-2>. He has been called an experienced advocate dedicated to developing community partnerships and initiatives that speak to the ADL's mission.



Scott Richman (Photo courtesy of the Anti-Defamation League)

Before coming to the ADL, Richman worked for the American Jewish Committee as regional anti-director for Westchester (NY) and Fairfield (CT) counties. Prior to that, he served for 10 years at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee aiding the rebirth of Jewish life in the former Soviet Union, and three years as the founding director of Dor Chadash, a non-profit startup that engaged young professionals in the New York area.

"As we see an alarming rise in antisemitism, it is important for our Jewish community to stay informed," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "As the regional director of the ADL, Scott has a wealth of knowledge and leadership experience. We look forward to learning more about the rise in hate and how we can combat it."



On the Jewish food scene

Curing the common cold

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Whenever we were sick or injured, my mother would smash up 3-4,000 milligrams of vitamin C to help us heal. A fan of Linus Pauling, who was a proponent of vitamin C, she claimed that the reason I still have an eyebrow after a bike accident when I was a kid is because of the doses of vitamin C she gave me. Back then, she would put the smashed up tablets (she considered them more effective that way) into a glass, add some hot water and orange juice, and make us drink the concoction. I still follow this family custom, but now ingest the smashed pills in unsweetened applesauce and then make sure to rinse my mouth to get rid of the acid.

While this is not exactly a folk remedy, I thought about it when reading an article on The Nosh website called "7 Jewish Recipes To Cure Your Cold." (To read the article, visit www.myjewishlearning.com/the-nosh/7-jewish-recipes-to-cure-your-cold.) What was fun was that while I knew about chicken soup, most of the items were unfamiliar. OK, so I know and like sauerkraut (although do people really make their own sauerkraut?), but I'm supposed to watch my sodium,

so I'm not sure how much of that I could eat.

Looking at the different items confirmed something about which we don't always think: there is no such thing as Jewish food, but rather food Jews eat in the different countries they have lived in across the world. Most of the foods listed were either made exclusively by Eastern European Jews or exclusively by Yemenite Jews. As Jews emigrated across the world, they were forced to use local food items to create kosher dishes. No matter how much you might like a certain recipe, if the ingredients are no longer available, then you either can't make the dish or have to find substitutes.

My favorite example of this change is how, in Eastern Europe, goose was once the fowl of choice. But geese need space, so as Jews moved from villages to cities like New York City, chicken became the easier choice. Just think: that Friday night chicken dinner might have once been roast goose. That sounds like something out of a Charles Dickens novel rather than a story about life in a Jewish shtetl in Russia or Poland.

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 **Jewish Federation** of Greater Binghamton

TI 10th anniversary dedication and celebration in July

The community is invited to join Temple Israel as it celebrates the 10th anniversary of the opening of its rebuilt synagogue with a dedication program followed by a barbecue lunch. The dedication program will take place on Sunday, July 26, at Temple Israel.

"We gather after 10 years in our new building to honor the generations whose dedication to Torah, worship and community laid its foundation, and to recognize our members today who continue to carry that legacy forward," said organizers of the event. "This anniversary marks a powerful chapter in our story. In December 2013, our original building suffered a catastrophic roof collapse due to heavy snow and ice. Though the structure was deemed a total loss, our congregation endured—continuing to gather, pray and support one another while planning for the future. We are deeply appreciative of the Jewish Community Center for welcoming us into their facilities for services, offices and High Holy Day celebrations during a pivotal time in our history. Following a groundbreaking in May 2015, we joyfully opened the doors of our newly rebuilt synagogue on Deerfield Place in July 2016."

Temple Israel's current home stands

on the same site and preserves elements from the original building, including the 900-pound "Burning Bush" wrought iron doors, their accompanying stained glass panels and the Ner Tamid (Eternal Light)—"enduring symbols of continuity, faith and resilience," noted organizers.

In addition to the dedication program and luncheon, there will be an archives display spanning 140 years of Temple Israel's history. The celebration will also include raffle baskets and a 50/50 drawing.

There is no charge for the barbecue lunch. Reservations are required and must be received by Friday, July 10. "We ask that you indicate whether you will be attending the event which includes the procession, program and barbecue luncheon, just the procession and program, or just the barbecue," said organizers.

Details for the broader anniversary celebration continue to be finalized, and temple members and friends are encouraged to watch for updates or to volunteer. For more information or to assist with the celebration, call 607-723-7461 or e-mail office@templeisraelvestal.org. Additional details will appear in future issues of *The Reporter*.

"We look forward to celebrating this meaningful milestone together," said organizers.

The Reporter now sending out e-blasts between print issues

By Reporter staff

The Reporter has begun sending a monthly e-blast, "The Reporter Notes," to supplement the monthly printed edition to those community members who have provided e-mail addresses. The first e-blast was sent out on February 5 from Federation Executive Director Shelley Hubal's e-mail address. It included links to new articles on The Reporter's website, www.thereporter.org, about upcoming events that were happening too

late for a print edition of the newspaper, as well as links to articles of upcoming events or interest that appeared in print and are already posted on the website. Future e-blasts will come from The Reporter's new editor@thereporter.org address; the address is only for sending the e-blast and will not be checked regularly.

"Even though we've gone to a monthly printed edition, we still want to provide the community with local news in between. See "E-blasts" on page 12

Passover Center

Find everything you need for a Zissen Pesach, all strictly Kosher for Passover.

<p>9.99 with AdvantEdge Card SAVE \$4 WITH 5.99 Final Price LIMIT ONE COUPON PER OFFER PER CUSTOMER</p> <p>Streit's Passover Matzos 5 Lb.</p>	<p>2/\$6 with AdvantEdge Card SAVE \$1 WITH 2/\$5 Final Price WHEN YOU BUY 2 LIMIT ONE COUPON PER OFFER PER CUSTOMER</p> <p>Streit's Cake Meal, Matzo Meal or Farfel 16 oz. •Select Varieties</p>
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<p>2.99 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Breakstone's Whipped Butter 8 oz. •Salted</p>	<p>10.99 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Ungar's Gefilte Fish 20 oz. •Select Varieties</p>	<p>1.99 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Silver Spring Horseradish 5 oz. •Select Varieties</p>
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<p>18.99 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Empire Kosher Boneless Chicken Breasts 2 Lb. •Frozen</p>	<p>13.99 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Meal Mart Frozen Chicken & Turkey Nuggets Passover •21 oz.</p>	<p>9.99 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Meal Mart Kosher Frozen Ground Beef 16 oz.</p>
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<p>2/\$4 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Streit's Matzo Ball & Soup Mix 4.5 oz. •Select Varieties</p>	<p>2/\$5 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Streit's Potato Starch 12 oz.</p>	<p>6.99 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Streit's Meringue Cookies 2 oz. •Select Varieties</p>
<p>2/\$7 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Terra Chips 5-5.5 oz. •Select Varieties</p>	<p>2/\$6 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Manischewitz Chicken Broth 17 oz. or Low Sodium</p>	<p>3.99 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Manischewitz or Streit's Macarons 10 oz. •Select Varieties</p>
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<p>2.99 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Golds Borscht 32 oz.</p>	<p>3.99 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Granny's Toasted Coconut Marshmallows 10 oz.</p>	<p>2/\$7 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Granny's Marshmallows 10 oz. •White or Mini</p>

<p>2/\$6 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Streit's Egg Matzos 12 oz.</p>	<p>2/\$7 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Manischewitz Egg Matzos 10.5 oz.</p>	<p>2/\$6 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Manischewitz Matzos 16 oz.</p>	<p>2/\$5 with AdvantEdge Card</p> <p>Streit's Passover Matzos 16 oz.</p>
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Yom HaShoah

Holocaust Memorial Program
at the JCC
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Thursday April 16, 2026
7:00 - 9:00pm
Viewing of the film
"We Don't Say Goodbye"
Southern Tier People Remember the Holocaust

Followed by a lecture & discussion led by Rabbi Lance Sussman
published historian of American Jewish history who has had a long, multifaceted career as a rabbi, historian, educator, author, and interfaith leader. His work spans academic scholarship, innovative synagogue leadership, national and international dialogue, and community engagement.

How The Holocaust Touched One American Community
Lance J. Sussman & May Rose

"We Don't Say Goodbye"
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TC Sisterhood held annual book review



Deb Daniels introduced Rabbi Rachel Esserman at Temple Concord Sisterhood's annual book review.



Roz Antoun thanked Rabbi Rachel Esserman for delivering Temple Concord Sisterhood's annual book review. (Photos by Rachel Coker)



Rabbi Rachel Esserman discussed three books at Temple Concord Sisterhood's annual book review.

Rabbi Rachel Esserman delivered her annual book review presented by Sisterhood on February 8 at Temple Concord. This year's books were "Children of the Book: A Memoir of Reading Together" by Ilana Kurshan; "One of Them" by Kitty Zeldis and "Fagin The Thief" by Allison Epstein. Volunteers led by Deb Daniels and Roz Antoun coordinated a brunch before the book talk.

Jews. Continued from page 2

realpolitik responsible for Cambodian carnage and abuses in Latin America.

10. Emma Lazarus. An advocate for immigrants, the poetess composed America's most iconic lines of welcome. Lazarus' verses, enshrined on the Statue of Liberty, celebrate diverse and humble origins, "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

11. Mickey Marcus. A West Point graduate, he indicted gangsters, parachuted into Normandy on D-Day and assisted in the prosecution of Nazi war criminals. The first

Israeli general since biblical times, Marcus was the last casualty of the Israeli War of Independence.

12. Louis B. Mayer. His MGM lion announced blockbuster films and the biggest stars, amongst them Clark Gable, Judy Garland and Joan Crawford. Producer/studio chief at Hollywood's largest and most influential movie studio, Mayer, a controlling paternalist, celebrated, idealized and molded American values.

13. Adolph Ochs. Owner-publisher of *The New York Times* from his 1896 purchase until his 1935 death, Ochs built America's most influential and authoritative newspaper. Recruiting top reporters, and emphasizing investigative journalism, Ochs adopted the motto, "All the news that's fit to print."

14. Robert Oppenheimer. Although ambivalent about his Jewish heritage, Oppenheimer condemned the Nazis for taking his people to the death camps. Oppenheimer led the scientists who developed and tested the atomic bomb. Subsequently advocating for diplomacy, he opposed development of the hydrogen bomb.

15. Admiral Hyman Rickover. A graduate of the Naval Academy and an officer for a record 63 years, Rickover oversaw the building of the nuclear fleet. An abrasive but brilliant engineer and motivator, he also initiated production of atomic energy for commercial use.

16. Philip Roth. The novelist chronicled Jewish American life from the cusp of World War II through the first decade of the 21st century. Roth's Portnoys and Zuckermans traversed Jewish ideals, ambitions, insecurities and sexuality.

17. Julius Rosenwald. Under his leadership, the Sears, Roebuck and Company catalogue created the first dominant mail-order business template. As a philanthropist, he was a major benefactor to African American education.

18. Dr. Jonas Salk. A virologist, Salk's research resulted in the first viable polio vaccine. Eschewing personal profit, he facilitated international dissemination of his vaccine, thereby saving millions of lives. Salk advocated tirelessly for the universal vaccination of all children.

19. Haym Salomon. Providing critical assistance to the fledgling U.S. government and army, Salomon loaned and bequeathed considerable sums of money in support of the American Revolution. An advocate of the Franco-American alliance, his patriotism twice resulted in British imprisonment.

20. David Sarnoff. As Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and National Broadcasting Company (NBC) head, he played a major role in making radio and television central to American communications and culture.

21. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. Critics once deemed *haredim* a fading anachronism: the Lubavitch Hasidic Rebbe proved them wrong. By founding Chabad and guiding its global outreach, Schneerson provided a spiritual lifeline to Jews imperiled by assimilation, isolation and coercion.

22. Barbra Streisand. Her commanding, resonant and adaptive voice, propelled bychutzpah and passion, animated distinctive vocalizations from "People" onward, arguably making Streisand America's top female pop singer. Brooklyn's "Funny Girl" is also an Academy Award winning actress, frequently portraying memorable Jewish characters, amongst them Fanny and Yentl.

23. Elie Wiesel. Shoah survivor, then an American citizen, he became, through his writing, teaching and public speaking, the conscience of the Holocaust and an advocate for universal human rights. "Night," Wiesel's autobiographical account of concentration camp life and death, gives authentic voice to those silenced.

24. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. Founder of NYC's Free Synagogue, his sermons, civic activism and writings made Wise America's most influential Reform rabbi. A force for social justice and political liberalism, his calibrated resistance to Hitler proved tragically overcautious.

25. Mark Zuckerberg. A Facebook and Meta creator, the wunderkind entrepreneur and innovator enlarged and reshaped the domain of social media while negatively impacting print media and in-person interaction.

Acknowledging that many more merit recognition, future columns will examine Jewish achievement in specific fields.

Purim. Continued from page 2

As part of Rabbi Riskin's high school, we had assembled at his *shul* for the megillah reading and the Purim *mesiba* (party) earlier that evening. We had practiced a Purim *shpiel* (play), which good-naturedly poked satirical fun at our school, at our teachers and at Rabbi Riskin.

And, at our *menahel* (principal), Rabbi Pinchas Bak. To his friends and colleagues, he was "Pinky," but never to us students.

Although a young man of only 33 years, he was very accomplished. Rabbi Bak was warm, talented and beloved. I remember my interview with him before I got into the school. I was a small-town boy interviewing at the hot start-up New York school. I was probably trembling at the time. He smiled and said to me: "Don't be nervous." Suddenly, I wasn't.

I played the part of Rabbi Bak in the *shpiel*, but we never got to finish the performance.

Somewhere in the middle, Rabbi Bak keeled over and fell to the floor.

An ambulance came, after what seemed like far too long. People crowded around. The students were ushered outside the building.

After some time, Rabbi Riskin gathered us into the legendary circular sanctuary of his *shul* and we sat awaiting news. As I recall his words, he quoted the verse from Tehillim (Psalms): "'Precious in the eyes of God are those of his righteous who die.' No one really understands what those words mean. Rabbi Bak is gone."

There was nothing the paramedics could do. There was nothing anyone could do. He had died on the spot. They called it a cerebral hemorrhage. He left a wife with five young children and twins on the way.

And he left us literally in a state of shock. For most of us, it was unlike anything we had ever experienced. We had never seen death up close. We had never lost a close leader and mentor.

We had never lost someone who could smile and tell us not to be nervous.

In a reversal of the original Purim story, which brought us from darkness to light in an instant, this Purim cast us down from our joy and merriment to profound mourning in the blink of an eye. Rabbi Bak's funeral would take place on Purim day, back in the round *shul* where we had just received the devastating news.

But until then, the hour was late, and we needed to go back to our dorm and get some sleep. So we walked as a group toward the 72nd Street subway station, our huddled group shuffling along in a stupor as we wept.

Secretly, I wondered if God had missed, and maybe He meant to hit the kid who had been playing Rabbi Bak in the *shpiel*.

I remember a man passed us and smiled. I knew what he was thinking.

"Look at that group of Purim-drunk teenagers. They must have gotten smashed, and they're so wasted that they're crying."

I wished he was right.

The war in Israel is a generational trauma. Purim 1977 was a personal trauma. I've tried to think about which one was greater for me.

On the one hand, Purim has never been the same. The "Ghost of Purim Past" looms large over me annually during this season. In recent years, we have spent the most uplifting and meaningful Purim meals with family and friends, and I can almost say that the specter looming over Purim since 1977 may finally have subsided for me.

On the other hand, I don't think that Simchat Torah will ever be the same, for me or any other Jew. We will try. We will celebrate. But we will remember. We will shudder as we remember. We may shed a tear and then we will determinedly return to dancing with the Torahs.

On Simchat Torah, 1,300 families will shed many tears, as they remember their loved ones, reciting *Kaddish* on that day for the rest of their lives.

Which trauma is the greatest for me? I don't think I have to choose. I think I have to keep moving forward.

After all, that's what our soldiers tell us they're fighting for.

Editor. Continued from page 3

organization representatives, as well as the liaison of the Scranton newspaper, with questions they may have; mailing the three subscription drive letters; and working with *The Reporter's* production associate to process photos for publication in the papers, create/update existing ads and process camera-ready ads for publication in the papers.

"I've had the privilege of working with and learning from five of the best, dedicated, community-minded executive editors in my nearly 30 years here at *The Reporter*, and am honored that I am being entrusted to ensure our Jewish community has a one-stop local news source," Sochor said. "I truly believe having a printed community newspaper is important to ensure all community members can stay connected and involved. Like many other newspapers, we've had financial difficulties for a number of years. *The Reporter* is now a monthly publication to help mitigate those difficulties, and our small, part-time staff is committed to continue keeping the community informed and connected."

April. Continued from page 5

The TC/TI Adult Ed. Committee gratefully acknowledges a gift from The Community Foundation for South Central New York - The David and Virginia Eisenberg Fund, which helped to underwrite this program.

The Reporter is offering sponsorships!

Celebrate your simcha with the community or honor your loved one.

There are four levels: Bronze \$200, Silver \$400, Gold \$600 and Platinum \$1,000.

To arrange for a sponsorship or for answers to questions, contact Rabbi Kathy Brown at advertising@thereporter.org.

Bountiful baskets: Last-minute spreads and snacks for Purim

By Ethel G. Hofman

(JNS)—Purim commemorates the survival of the Jewish people, who were marked for death by their Persian rulers in the fifth century B.C. In the face of destruction and an evil plot, Jews not only survived but went on to flourish.

In ancient Persia, Queen Esther and her cousin Mordechai save the Jewish people, as read in the Megillat Esther (“Scroll of Esther”). During Purim, Jews listen to the raucous retelling of the story by hearing the megillah (and sounding the gragger), dressing up in costume, watching comedic shpiels and other performances, and sharing in a festive meal. But before all that, the tradition – the mitzvah, actually – is to give gifts of food (*shalach manot*) to family, friends and neighbors. Truth be told, the mitzvah is fulfilled by handing out just two food or drink items to a single person, so no need to get carried away if you are unable to. (And don’t forget *matanot l’evyonim*, “charity to the poor,” in the form of food, donations, money or even a gift card.)

The joyous holiday will be observed in Jewish communities worldwide this year from the evening of Monday, March 2, until sundown on Tuesday, March 3. For Jews in walled cities, like Jerusalem, Shushan Purim starts on March 3 and lasts through the evening of Wednesday, March 4.

Wartime nonetheless, Israel will take time for joy. All over the country, public parties and private celebrations will bring out popular characters like Queen Esther, Mordechai, Queen Vashti, King Ahasuerus and the evil Haman. Everything from zombies, clowns, courtesans, princesses, paupers and bunnies elbow through crowds in the backdrop of blaring music and dancing in the streets. Call it raucousness, call it resilience, call it Israel – call it life!

Traditionally, *shalach manot* or *misloach manot* includes sweets and hamantashen – the three-cornered pastries that resemble Haman’s ears or hat – with

old-fashioned poppyseed, prune and fruit fillings, or more modern flavors such as cannoli cream, salted caramel and chocolate of all kinds. And while the sweet stuff is well and good, with health consciousness in mind, why not add some savory treats?

Queen Esther was said to be a vegetarian. So stuff your hamantashen with spinach and feta, or grated cheddar and cilantro. Store-bought items, many in their own jars, can be tied with colorful ribbons to elevate the most ordinary products to “haute” *manot*. Small Mason jars are a solid choice, but use what you have on hand – empty jars from preserves or seasonings, paper or plastic bowls and plates, or colored paper bags. Let the youngsters help in packing and delivering to instill the meaning of Purim in an inter-generational way.

Below are some last-minute ideas, along with five easy recipes that may just become year-round favorites. And if you yearn for a sweet, fruit dessert to serve at Seudah Purim, Maple-Baked Pears and Walnuts was shared by one of my favorite Florida foodies, Stacey Sevinor.

Enjoy giving in the spirit of the joyous holiday!

Market items:

- ◆ Popcorn, mixed nuts, mini pretzels of various types
- ◆ Small wedges of brie, cheddar, crackers (dust crackers with truffle dust available online)
- ◆ Israeli spice trio: crackers dusted with cardamom, cumin, za’atar and a mini-bottle of wine
- ◆ For kids: peanut butter and jelly finger sandwiches, a bunch of grapes and a mandarin orange

Homemade:

- ◆ Creamy Herb Dip with multi-grain crackers and olives
- ◆ Red Bean Hummus with pita wedges and celery sticks
- ◆ Spiced Catsup with broccoli florets and French green beans
- ◆ Vegan: Curried Cashews and whole-wheat crackers

- ◆ Vinaigrette Salad Dressing with carrot and zucchini sticks
- ◆ Curried Cashews, dried cranberries
- ◆ Include a recipe card in the baskets.

Spiced Ketchup (*pareve*)

Makes 1 cup

- 1 cup ketchup
- 1 tsp. hot sauce
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. smoked paprika

Add ingredients into a small to medium-sized bowl and mix well. Refrigerate until ready to pack.

Balsamic variation: To 1 cup tomato ketchup, whisk in 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, ½ teaspoon garlic powder and a pinch of white pepper.

Vinaigrette Salad Dressing (*pareve*)

Makes about ¾ cup

- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 4 Tbsp. wine vinegar
- 8 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp. dried dill
- ½ tsp. cumin

In a small bowl, whisk together the ingredients. Put into a small glass jar, perhaps in a zip-lock bag to prevent spillage. Pack at room temperature.

Creamy Herb Dip (*dairy*)

Makes about 1¼ cups

- ¾ cup plain Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup snipped fresh chives or basil
- 1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice

1 tsp. Trader Joe’s 21 seasoning (or use a homemade mix of salt, pepper, and dried dill and parsley)

See “Snacks” on page 12



Your wedding checklist

6-12 MONTHS BEFORE WEDDING

- ✦ Determine budget
- ✦ Visit rabbi (ceremony variations)
- ✦ Set day, time and location of ceremony, rehearsal and reception
- ✦ Select a caterer
- ✦ Choose wedding photographer and/or videographer
- ✦ Draw up guest list
- ✦ Obtain floral/rental/music estimates
- ✦ Invite attendants
- ✦ Discuss honeymoon and new home
- ✦ Select gown and headpiece
- ✦ Select music for ceremony and reception
- ✦ Register with bridal gift registry

4 MONTHS BEFORE WEDDING

- ✦ Order invitations and personal stationery
- ✦ Plan reception
- ✦ Plan ceremony and reception music
- ✦ Choose florist
- ✦ Mothers choose gowns
- ✦ Men choose attire
- ✦ Make honeymoon reservations
- ✦ Begin trousseau shopping
- ✦ Arrange motel accommodations for out-of-town guests

3 MONTHS BEFORE WEDDING

- ✦ Make an appointment with gynecologist to discuss birth control, etc.

2 MONTHS BEFORE WEDDING

- ✦ Order wedding cake
- ✦ Select attendants’ gifts
- ✦ Plan to keep gift record
- ✦ Acknowledge gifts as they arrive
- ✦ Finish invitations – mail them 6 weeks before wedding
- ✦ Plan rehearsal dinner
- ✦ Check on marriage license
- ✦ Get rings engraved
- ✦ Plan luncheon for bridesmaids
- ✦ elect gift for groom
- ✦ Go over wedding ceremony details
- ✦ Gown fitting
- ✦ Bridal portrait sitting
- ✦ Arrange for limousine service
- ✦ Make hairdresser appointment

1 MONTH BEFORE WEDDING

- ✦ Make up reception seating charts
- ✦ Check wedding party apparel
- ✦ Final gown fitting
- ✦ Get blood tests for marriage license

2 WEEKS BEFORE WEDDING

- ✦ Make final check on bridal-party clothes and catering
- ✦ Arrange name changes/get marriage license
- ✦ Arrange transportation from reception to airport or wherever you are leaving from for the honeymoon

1 WEEK BEFORE WEDDING

- ✦ Wrap attendants’ gifts
- ✦ Give final count to caterer
- ✦ Confirm music arrangements and check selections
- ✦ Arrange to move belongings to new home
- ✦ Check that your hairstyle complements your headpiece
- ✦ Final instructions to photographer and videographer
- ✦ Final instructions to ushers for special seating
- ✦ Give clergy fee to best man in sealed envelope (he will deliver it)
- ✦ Begin packing for honeymoon

1 DAY BEFORE WEDDING

- ✦ Give ushers guest list
- ✦ Do something relaxing and pamper yourself!

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THE REPORTER
Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

Wedding

*Katherine H. Shuman and Brian Timothy Durant
November 9, 2025
(Photo by Katherine H. Shuman)*

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The joy of an essential connection

RABBIZALMAN CHEIN, DIRECTION OF EDUCATION AND RITUAL, CHABAD OF BINGHAMTON

The month of Adar is a joyous month. Our sages teach, “*Mishenichnas Adar marbim b’simcha*,” from the moment Adar enters, we increase in joy (Ta’anit 29a). This is not merely a suggestion to feel happier as we approach Purim; it is a directive to actively expand our joy and allow it to permeate our homes and our inner lives.

This year, we have an additional reason to feel that joy more deeply. For the first time since the horrific attacks of October 7, there are no longer captive bodies being held in Gaza; they have all been brought to burial.

The story of Adar is inseparable from the story of Purim and the rise and fall of the wicked Haman in Megillat

Esther. Haman cast lots to determine the most auspicious time to annihilate the Jewish people. The lot fell in Adar. Our sages explain that he rejoiced when he saw that Moses had passed away in Adar. To Haman, this was a sign of vulnerability and weakness. Death represents separation, the departure of the soul from the body, a disconnect between the physical and the spiritual. If Moses, the faithful shepherd of Israel, died in Adar, Haman reasoned that this must be a month of misfortune for the Jews.

But Haman’s calculation was incomplete. He knew that Moses died in Adar; he did not realize that Moses was also born in Adar. The very month that marked his passing also

marked his arrival into the world.

When Moses was born, the Torah tells us that “the house was filled with light.” That light was not merely physical illumination. It symbolized a profound, essential connection between Moses and the Divine. Moses embodied a bond with God that was not dependent on his actions, miracles or prophecy. It was an intrinsic connection, an essential oneness that no exile, no destruction and no decree could sever.

Haman saw death and concluded there was abandonment. He saw exile and concluded there was distance. The See “Joy” on page 11

Congregational Notes

Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism

Rabbi: Leah Moser

Address: 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton NY 13905

Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm

Phone: 607-723-7355

Office e-mail: TempleConcordBinghamton@gmail.com

Website: www.TempleConcord.com

Please contact Temple Concord for Zoom links.

Some services and programs are online only. For Zoom links, contact Temple Concord.

Services, ongoing classes and evening prayers at Temple Concord:

Fridays: At 7:30 pm, Shabbat service (in person, on Zoom and on Facebook).

Saturdays: At 9:15 am, Torah study (in person and on Zoom) and at 10:30 am, Shabbat service (in person).

Wednesdays: At 5:30 pm, evening prayers (in person). At 6 pm, adult education classes (in person and on Zoom). Contact the temple office for more details.

Upcoming events:

Sunday, March 1: From 10 am-2 pm, the Sisterhood Rummage Sale will be held in Temple Concord’s basement. Buy one dress, suit, dressy jacket, or blazer and get one free. Shoppers are asked to use the Oak Street entrance.

Sunday, March 1: At 5 pm, Purim spiel, “Pantomime and Rhyme,” followed at 6 pm by an Italian vegetarian dinner (with a gluten-free option) in the social hall. There is a cost for the dinner; RSVP by Friday, February 20.

Monday, March 2: At 7 pm, the Purim evening service will be held.

Tuesday, March 10: At 7:30 pm, there will be a General (Board of Trustees) Board meeting open to members of Temple Concord. Contact the temple office for the meeting link at 607-723-7355 or by e-mail at templeconcordaa@gmail.com.

Tuesday, March 17: At 7 pm, there will be a Social Action Committee meeting. For details, contact the temple office or committee Co-chairs Phyllis Weinstein (pweinste@stny.rr.com) or Debra Saltzman (dsmsw@yahoo.com).

Saturday, March 28: At 6 pm, Community Board Game Night in the social hall for all ages. Pizza and salad will be provided. RSVP to the temple office by Wednesday, March 25. Suggested donation is \$5 per person or \$20 per family to cover the cost of refreshments.

Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive

Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815

Phone: 607-334-2691

Purpose: To maintain a Jewish identity and meet the needs of the Jewish community in the area.

Temple Brith Sholom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated

Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045

Phone: 607-756-7181

President: Mark Suben

Cemetery Committee: 315-696-5744

Website: templebrithsholomcortland.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Temple-Brith-Sholom-114006981962930/>

Service leaders: Lay leadership

Shabbat services: Services are usually on the third Friday of the month and led by a variety of leaders. Check the Facebook page or weekly e-mail for upcoming services. Contact the president to get on the e-mail list.

Religious School: Students are educated on an individual basis.

Temple Brith Sholom is a small equalitarian congregation serving the greater Cortland community. Congregants span the gamut of observance and services are largely dependent on the service leader. The Friday night siddur is “Likrat Shabbat.” The community extends a warm welcome to the Jewish student population of SUNY Cortland, as well as the residents of local adult residences. The Board of Trustees meets on the second Tuesday of the month.

Services and programs are held by Zoom usually on the third Friday of the month.

Beth David Synagogue

Affiliation: Orthodox Union

Rabbi: Zev Silber

Address: 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905

Phone: 607-722-1793, Rabbi’s Office: 607-722-7514

Fax: 607-722-7121

Office hours: Tues. 10 am-1 pm; Thurs. 9 am-1 pm

Beth David e-mail address: bethdavid@stny.rr.com

Rabbi’s e-mail: rabbisilber@stny.rr.com

Website: www.bethdavid.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/bethdavidbinghamton

Classes: Rabbi Zev Silber will hold his weekly Talmud class every Tuesday evening after services.

Temple Beth El of Oneonta

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Cantor: David Green

Address: 83 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY 13820

Mailing address: P.O. Box 383, Oneonta, NY 13820

Phone: 607-432-5522

E-mail: TBEOneonta@gmail.com

Regular service times: Contact the temple for days of services and times.

Religious School/Education: Religious School, for grades kindergarten through bar/bat mitzvah, meets Sunday mornings.

For the schedule of services, classes and events, contact the temple.

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Rabbi: Caleb Brommer

Address: 402 North Tioga St. (the corner of Court and Tioga streets), Ithaca, NY 14850-4292

Phone: 607-273-5775

Website: www.tbeithaca.org

Presidents: Jerry Dietz and Ariel Avgar

Director of Education and Engagement: Calle Schueler

Services: Friday 6:30 pm; Saturday 9:30 am, unless otherwise announced. Weekday morning minyan 7:30 am (9 am on Sundays and legal holidays).

Religious School/Education: September-May: Classes meet on Sundays from 9 am-noon and Wednesdays from 4-6 pm.

Teen Midrasha meets Tuesdays from 6-8 pm.

Adult Ed.: Numerous weekly courses, several semester-long courses and a variety of lectures are offered throughout the year. Call the temple office or email secretary@tbeithaca.org for more information.

Services: All services currently on Zoom. E-mail info@tikunvor.org for the times and links. Contemplative morning services every Tuesday from 8:30-9:30 am. Saturday mornings, Gan Shabbat and other special services at least once a month. Call for the weekly schedule.

Jewish Learning Experiences (JLE) for second through seventh grade classes meet on Sunday mornings. Sixth and seventh grades also meet on Wednesday afternoons. Family programs for kindergarten and first grade held monthly.

Adult Education: Offered regularly throughout the year. Check the website for details.

Friday, March 6, light candles before..... 5:41 pm

Shabbat ends Saturday, March 7..... 6:43 pm

Friday, March 13, light candles before..... 6:49 pm

Shabbat ends Saturday, March 14..... 7:51 pm

Friday, March 20, light candles before..... 6:57 pm

Shabbat ends Saturday, March 21..... 7:59 pm

Friday, March 27, light candles before..... 7:05 pm

Shabbat ends Saturday, March 28..... 8:07 pm

Wednesday, April 1, light candles before..... 7:11 pm

Thursday, April 2, light candles after..... 8:12 pm

Friday, April 3, light candles before..... 7:13 pm

Shabbat ends Saturday, April 4..... 8:15 pm

Tuesday, April 7, light candles before..... 7:18 pm

Wednesday, April 8, light candles after..... 8:19 pm

Yom tov ends Thursday, April 9..... 8:20 pm

Temple Israel

Orientation: Conservative

Rabbi: Micah Friedman

Address: 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal, NY 13850

Phone: 607-723-7461 and 607-231-3746

Office hours: Mon.-Thurs., 8:30 am-3:30 pm; Fri., 8 am-3 pm

E-mail: office@templeisraelvestal.org

Website: www.templeisraelvestal.org

Service schedule: Tues., 5:30 pm; Fri., 5:30 pm; Sat., 9:30 am – all via Zoom and in-person

On Fridays and Tuesdays at 5:30 pm, services will be led by Rabbi Micah Friedman.

On Saturday, March 7, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am. The Torah portion is Exodus 30:11-34:35 and the haftarah is Ezekiel 36:16-38. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 6:45 pm.

On Saturday, March 14, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am. The Torah portion is Exodus 35:1-40:38 and the haftarah is Ezekiel 45:16-46:18. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 8 pm.

On Saturday, March 21, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am. The Torah portion is Leviticus 1:1-5:26 and the haftarah is Isaiah 43:21-44:23. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 8 pm.

On Saturday, March 28, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am. The Torah portion is Leviticus 6:1-8:36 and the haftarah is Malachai 3:4-24. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 8:15 pm.

Upcoming events:

Monday, March 2: At 6:30 pm, the Purim megillah reading will be held.

Mondays, March 9, 19 and 23: “Hebrew with the Weekly Parsha” class with Rabbi Micah Friedman from 6:30-7:45 pm.

Tuesdays, March 3, 10, 17 and 24: “Torah and Our Times” class with Rabbi Micah Friedman at 4:30 pm.

Wednesday, March 4: Executive Board meeting at 7 pm.

Wednesdays, March 4, 11, 18 and 25: Hebrew school at 4 pm.

Tuesday, March 17: Board of Trustees meeting at 7 pm.

Wednesday, March 18: Ritual Committee meeting at 10 am.

Sunday, March 22: Adult Ed. and brunch at Temple Israel at 10 am.

Penn-York Jewish Community

Treasurer: Beth Herbst, 607-857-0976

B’nai B’rith: William H. Seigel Lodge

Purpose: To promote Jewish identity through religious, cultural, educational and social activities in the Southern Tier of New York and the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania, including Waverly, NY; Sayre, Athens and Towanda, PA, and surrounding communities.

Rohr Chabad Center

Affiliation: Chabad-Lubavitch

Rabbi Aaron and Rivkah Slonim, Directors

E-mail: aslonim@binghamton.edu

rslonim@chabadofbinghamton.com

Address: 420 Murray Hill Rd., Vestal, NY 13850

Phone: 607-797-0015, Fax: 607-797-0095

Website: www.Chabadofbinghamton.com

Rabbi Zalman and Rochel Chein, Education

E-mail: zchein@Jewishbu.com, rchein@Jewishbu.com

Rabbi Levi and Hadasa Slonim, Downtown and Development

Chabad Downtown Center: 60 Henry St., Binghamton

E-mail: lslonim@Jewishbu.com, hslonim@Jewishbu.com

Rabbi Yisroel and Goldie Ohana, Programming

E-mail: yohana@Jewishbu.com, gohana@Jewishbu.com

Regular service times: Daily 7:30 am, Friday evening 6 pm, Shabbat morning 9:30 am, Maariv and Havdalah one hour after candle-lighting time, Sundays 9:30 am.

To join the mailing list, for up-to-date information on adult education offerings or to arrange for a private tutorial, for details concerning the Judaica shop and resource center, or for assistance through the Piaker Free Loan Society or Raff Maasim Tovim Foundation, call Chabad’s office at 797-0015.

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

Israel's World Baseball Classic team says more Major Leaguers, high-end pitching depth than ever

By Jonathan D. Salant

(JNS)—San Francisco Giants outfielder Harrison Bader leads the Team Israel roster in the World Baseball Classic, being held in March.

A leading defensive center fielder and former Gold Glove winner, Bader is one of several major leaguers on the roster who will play in a round robin with the Dominican Republic, Netherlands, Nicaragua and Venezuela. The top two will advance to the next round, as Israel did in 2017.

Team Israel's pitching staff is led by Baltimore Orioles pitcher Dean Kremer, an Israeli citizen who played on the 2023 World Baseball Classic team that failed to advance past the opening round. With a 1-3 record, it automatically

qualified for this year's tournament.

"From a roster construction standpoint, we've secured more Major League experience and high-end pitching depth than at any point in our history," Team Israel general manager Simon Rosenbaum told JNS.

"In a short-series format, talent and preparation can beat prestige," he said. "We've done it before, and we feel very confident that we've put together a group that can compete with any lineup in our pool."

Kremer told JNS in December that the worldwide spike in Jew-hatred and anti-Israel feeling since October 7, 2023, gave him "even more of a reason to do it and wear the colors and wear the flag with even more pride."

Pittsburgh Pirates infielder Spencer Horwitz and Philadelphia Phillies catcher Garrett Stubbs, veterans of the 2023 team, are also on the roster. So, too, are several other players with major league experience, including Stubbs' brother, C.J. Stubbs, a catcher in the Toronto Blue Jays organization who played in the major leagues with the Washington Nationals; Matt Mervis, who played with the Chicago Cubs and Miami Marlins, and is now in the Nationals organization; and Tommy Kahnle, who pitched in the 2024 World Series for the New York Yankees. Mervis and Stubbs also played on the 2023 squad. The team also includes Jake Gelof, an infielder in the Los Angeles Dodgers organization and brother of Athletics infielder Zack Gelof, a member of the 2023 team.

Another Jewish ballplayer, Chicago Cubs third baseman Alex Bregman, is playing on Team USA.

Israel's Mekorot signs strategic water deal with Kazakhstan

By JNS staff

(JNS)—The Mekorot Israel National Water Company has signed a strategic agreement with Kazakhstan to construct and upgrade water infrastructure in the Turkestan Region in that country's south.

The deal, estimated at tens of millions of dollars, is among the first concrete outcomes of Kazakhstan joining the Abraham Accords in November 2025, Israel's Channel 12 reported on February 10.

The agreement was promoted by Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen, who said, "The agreement with Kazakhstan is an important step that will strengthen Israel's position as a regional energy power and a global leader in water technologies."

Under the agreement, Mekorot will develop, operate and maintain a regional water system using advanced Israeli technologies, Channel 12 reported. The project includes measurement and monitoring systems, a central command-and-control infrastructure, and cyber defenses aimed at improving efficiency, reducing water loss and increasing supply reliability.

The Turkestan Region, home to more than two million residents, spans approximately 116,000 square kilometers (45,000 square miles) — about five times the size of Israel. Roughly 75 percent of the population lives in rural

areas. The region is characterized by an arid climate and an economy "heavily reliant" on agriculture. While the region is not lacking in natural water resources, outdated infrastructure has led to water losses exceeding 50 percent. By comparison, Mekorot's water loss rate stands at approximately 3 percent, one of the lowest in the world, Channel 12 reported.

Mekorot acting CEO Daniel Soffer said the company is proud to "be partners in the vision of turning water scarcity into an engine of growth. Mekorot is simultaneously promoting a number of other initiatives in the country and sees Kazakhstan as an essential strategic growth channel."

Mekorot has become a leading Israeli infrastructure company in Muslim countries, including Jordan, Bahrain, Morocco, Azerbaijan and now Kazakhstan.

Global Water Intelligence (GWI), a publisher and events organizer for the international water industry, reported in January that the Kazakhstan project "adapts methodologies developed in Israel to continental-scale systems."

Barak Graber, CEO of Mekorot Development and Enterprise (MDE), the arm of Mekorot responsible for international projects, told GWI that Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan "are not replicas of the Israeli model. The solutions are tailored to each country and each water sector."

Item.....Continued from page 2

Israel. It does not name falafel. It does not explain what cultural harm was done or to whom. The offense is treated as self-evident, requiring no articulation. The community is thanked for its "prompt feedback," but only one set of voices is acknowledged. Jewish or Israeli students—those most likely to feel erased by the episode—are nowhere to be found.

That omission matters. Groups such as StopAntisemitism were quick to note what many Jewish students already understand: When acknowledging Israel's existence is treated as antagonistic, the issue isn't food. It's intimidation. As Israeli writer and activist Hen Mazzig observed, when even the word "Israeli" is deemed offensive, one identity has been made unacceptable.

Defenders of the apology insist that this has nothing to

do with Jews or antisemitism. They argue that describing falafel as "Israeli" amounts to cultural misappropriation—or worse, political propaganda (it would be an interesting experiment to have named it Iraqi or Greek falafel, and see what would happen.) Some go further, calling Israel a "colonizing apartheid state" and claiming that the label erases Palestinian history.

Even granting that argument for the sake of discussion, it doesn't justify the response. Disagreement over culinary origins does not require a public apology framed in the language of harm, justice and moral failure. It does not require erasing one identity to placate another. And it certainly does not require treating the word "Israeli" as uniquely radioactive while other national labels remain untouched.

The fix itself exposes the problem. Rather than explain or defend the original post, the student association scrubbed the wording and then apologized for it. Conflict was avoided not through discussion, but through deletion. The lesson to students was unmistakable: Some identities are safe to name; others carry consequences.

That is how language policing becomes identity policing. Universities pride themselves on inquiry, debate and complexity. Yet here, confronted with something as trivial as a food label, an institution retreated into vagueness and moral posturing. No clarification. No acknowledgment of competing views. Just an apology—and a pledge to "justice and humanity" that somehow required silence about Israel.

This is not inclusion. It is appeasement. And appeasement, even when wrapped in the language of sensitivity, always teaches the same lesson: Choose your words carefully, keep your head down, and learn which identities the room will tolerate.

Falafel will survive this flap. Jewish students can, too. But a campus culture that treats "Israeli" as an offense, rather than a fact, is not preparing students for pluralism. It is training them to fear it.

If a student government feels compelled to apologize for naming Israel in any way, shape or form, then the problem is no longer what's on the menu. It's what has been quietly removed from the dinner table—or rather, lunchtime conversation.

Stephen M. Flatow is president of the Religious Zionists of America. He is the father of Alisa Flatow, who was murdered in an Iranian-sponsored Palestinian terrorist attack in 1995, and author of "A Father's Story: My Fight for Justice Against Iranian Terror." (The RZA is not affiliated with any American or Israeli political party.)

Jewish Community Center

JCC Friendship Club

The JCC Friendship Club met on January 24 in the library at the Jewish Community Center. Thanks to Bruce Orden, who brought his computer and connected it to a large television screen, we saw a movie. We watched "The Court Jester" starring Danny Kay. It was hilarious. Bruce may show another movie in the future. All suggestions are welcomed.

The next meeting will be at Castle Gardens in Vestal. It will be a Purim party on Tuesday, February 24, at 2 pm. Come join us and make noise with the groggers. There will be entertainment and refreshments. Come join us at the Castle Gardens nursing facility on Tuesday, February 24, at 2 pm.

Sylvia Diamond, president

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Brown professor wins federal grant to use AI to study Jewish texts

By Jessica Russak-Hoffman

(JNS) – Digital humanities scholars have been using artificial intelligence for some time, but it’s been tough to unleash such tools at scale to probe ancient texts, particularly those in Hebrew and Aramaic, according to Michael Satlow, professor of Judaic studies and religious studies at Brown University.

Satlow, who self-identifies in a bio as an “amateur painter, gardener, cheesemaker and fisherman,” won a \$249,956 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the U.S.-Israel Binational Science Foundation to fund a three-year project on “knowledge transmission and cultural interactions through the ages,” an analysis of Jewish texts using artificial intelligence.

“It is, in general, a problem using digital tools to analyze humanistic works because they are, by and large, unstructured,” Satlow told JNS. “Computers are very good at pattern detection, but their ability to find patterns in streams of words that may be in complex and unanticipated formats,

and include other languages and references, is mixed.”

Difficulties deepen when one is using languages that have multiple dialects, conventions and abbreviations, like Hebrew and Aramaic, according to the professor. “We could never have even contemplated a project like this, on this scale, without the development of large language models,” he told JNS.

He and colleagues aim to use the technology to look at more than 130,000 Hebrew and Aramaic texts dating between 200 and 2000 C.E. The texts reflect centuries of debate across the Jewish world, so the researchers are also testing how artificial intelligence can compare different assumptions, arguments and even spelling variations.

“This is the advantage of using large language models,” Satlow said. “We will probably have to supply a number of examples to teach the large language model, but they are often quick learners.”

A central focus will be extracting and analyzing citations, a defining feature of rabbinic writing.

“Rabbinic literature is highly referential,” the professor told JNS. “Rabbis cite other rabbis all the time, and later texts cite opinions of earlier rabbis.”

By determining who cites whom, and how those citations function within arguments, the research team hopes to identify key figures, places and periods in the transmission of knowledge.

Satlow is most excited about giving visual form to that network of citations. “Once we are able to describe that network, we can analyze it again using machine learning tools,” he told JNS.

Satlow plans to work with Binyamin Katzoff, associate professor of Jewish studies at Bar-Ilan University; Maayan Zhitomirsky-Geffet, professor of information science at Bar-Ilan University; and Jonathan Schler, a professor of computer science at the Holon Institute of Technology.

Most of the texts the four intend to analyze in the project will come from the already digitized Bar-Ilan Responsa database.

Fewer U.S. Jews identify as Zionist, but support for Israel remains strong, survey finds

By Jessica Russak-Hoffman

(JNS) – Newly released data from the Jewish Federations of North America’s national survey suggests that declining identification with the term “Zionist” among American Jews should not be interpreted as opposition to Israel’s existence.

The findings (www.jewishdatabank.org/databank/search-results/study/1277) come from JFNA’s “Survey of Jewish Life since Oct. 7,” which was conducted March 5-25, 2025, and has been released in stages. The data published on February 5 focuses on attitudes toward Israel, Zionism and Jewish identity.

While only 37 percent of respondents said they identify as Zionists, 88 percent affirmed that Israel has the right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state.

“It’s easy to draw incorrect conclusions from the data, so let’s be clear: the falling identification with the word ‘Zionism’ does not mean large numbers of Jews are turning

against the existence of Israel itself,” Mimi Kravetz, chief impact and growth officer at JFNA, told JNS. “That’s even true among younger Jews.”

Among respondents between the ages of 18 and 34, 76 percent said Israel has the right to exist, despite comparatively low levels of Zionist self-identification within that cohort.

The survey also suggests that perceptions of the term “Zionism” beyond its traditional definition play “a significant” role. Respondents who said they were not Zionists

often associated the word with ideas such as unconditional support for Israeli government actions, the ideology of Israel’s ruling class or specific territorial claims – rather than its traditional definition as support for Jewish self-determination in Israel.

At the same time, the survey found that overall emotional attachment to Israel remains high, as 71 percent of Jewish respondents said they feel emotionally attached to Israel, compared to 58 percent in 2020. Additionally, 60 percent said that Israel makes them proud to be Jewish.

E-blasts . . . Continued from page 7

those issues,” said Diana Sochor, executive editor of *The Reporter*. “*The Reporter’s* monthly e-blast will be separate from the Jewish Federation’s ‘What’s Happening in Your Jewish Community’ weekly e-blast, as it will include links to local news articles posted on our website, as well as features that readers may have missed in the print edition. We want to be sure that area Jewish organizations are able to get the word out about their upcoming events to as many community members as possible.”

Those interested in being added to *The Reporter’s* e-blast mailing list should e-mail treporter@aol.com with “Reporter e-blast address” in the subject line.

To receive a copy of the print edition and/or website-only deadlines for the year, those interested can contact the paper at treporter@aol.com, with “Reporter deadlines requested” in the subject line. The deadlines are also noted on *The Reporter’s* website, www.thereporter.org.

OK board rejects Jewish charter school bid over court precedent

By JNS staff

(JNS) – The Oklahoma Statewide Charter School Board voted unanimously on Feb. 9 to deny an application from the Ben Gamla Jewish Charter School Foundation to open a virtual Jewish public charter school, citing a “binding legal precedent” established by the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

The decision serves to block what would have been one of the first religiously affiliated, publicly funded charter schools in the state. It followed a 2024 court ruling that determined that faith-based charter schools are unlawful under the Oklahoma Constitution. That ruling, which stemmed from litigation over a proposed Catholic charter school, was left in place by a 4-4 split at the U.S. Supreme Court last May.

Eric Baxter, an attorney for Ben Gamla and senior counsel at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, stated that the actions of Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond “have hung a no-religious-need-apply sign on the state’s charter school program.” He noted that “we’ll soon ask a federal court to protect Ben Gamla’s freedom” to serve these families, which he added “is a right that every other qualified charter school enjoys.”

Ben Gamla, which operates four charter campuses in Florida, had pitched the online K-12 program as a “rigorous, values-based education” combining state academic standards with Jewish learning and open to students of all faiths, according to Becket.

“Parents across the Sooner State deserve more high-quality options for their children’s education, not fewer,” stated Peter Deutsch, founder of the Ben Gamla network. “Yet Attorney General Drummond is robbing them of more choices by cutting schools like Ben Gamla out.”

Brian Shellem, chairman of the board, said the panel faced limited discretion under existing law, but welcomed action by the state Legislature, Ben Gamla and others seeking to align Oklahoma law with the U.S. Constitution.

“Merit should be the deciding factor if a charter is awarded to an applicant,” Shellem stated. “Families deserve more high-quality, publicly funded schools from which to choose, and our nation’s collective future depends on improving its education system.” He added that “alienating proven, successful partners runs contrary to us achieving that goal, which is why this deserves resolution at the highest level with the U.S. Supreme Court.”

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Snacks Continued from page 9

In a bowl, combine all ingredients. Refrigerate until needed to pack and deliver.

Red-Bean Hummus (Pareve)

Makes 1½ cups

1 (15-oz.) can small red beans, well-drained
½ cup tahini
5 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
1 tsp. cumin
½ tsp. salt
¼ cup of olive oil

Place all ingredients in a food processor. Process until smooth.

Add enough cold water to make desired thickness, 3 to 4 tablespoons.

Sprinkle with dill and/or paprika (optional). Drizzle with olive oil (optional).

Curried Cashews (Pareve)

Makes 1 cup

1 cup of cashews
2 tsp. vegetable oil
½ tsp. curry powder
½ tsp. kosher salt

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Toss ingredients together in a bowl and place on a small baking sheet lined with aluminum foil.

Bake in preheated oven for 10 minutes until golden. Cool before packing.

Stacey's Maple-Baked Pears and Walnuts (Pareve)

Serves 4-6

Cook's tips:

- ◆ Substitute pecans for the walnuts.
- ◆ Honey may be used instead of maple syrup.
- ◆ Add ¼ cup dried cranberries.

3 large pears, unpeeled, cored and cut into ¾-inch chunks
1 cup walnuts
2 Tbsp. maple syrup, divided
1 tsp. pumpkin spice

Preheat oven to 375°F.

In a 1½-quart baking dish, place the pears, walnuts, 1 tablespoon of maple syrup and pumpkin spice. Toss to mix. Drizzle with remaining maple syrup.

Bake in a preheated oven for 45 minutes, or until the pears are soft and the nuts are crisp.

Serve warm.

For a dairy meal, top each serving with a scoop of vanilla ice-cream or frozen yogurt.

Ethel G. Hofman is a syndicated American Jewish food and travel columnist, author and culinary consultant.

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