

# THE REPORTER

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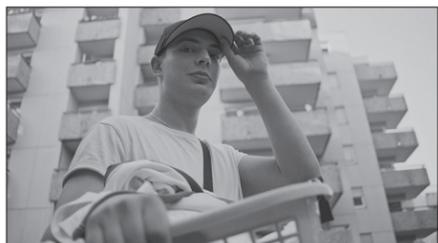
BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

## Film Fest to hold virtual showing of “White Right” and “Masel Tov Cocktail”

By Reporter staff

The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of a documentary by Deeyah Kahn and the short film “Masel Tov Cocktail.” Stephen A. Lisman, distinguished teaching professor emeritus in psychology at Binghamton University, will moderate a discussion of the films.

People will be able to register for links to the films and the discussion on the Federation website, [www.jfgb.org](http://www.jfgb.org). The films can be streamed at no cost and will be available for viewing beginning Sunday, February



Alexander Wertmann in a scene from “Masel Tov Cocktail.” (Photo courtesy of Go2Films)

27. The viewing links will be viable until the discussion begins on Thursday, March 3, at 7 pm, when Lisman will facilitate the online video discussion of the film.

In “White Right: Meeting the Enemy” (55 minutes), Emmy Award-winning film-maker Deeyah Khan joins the front line of the race wars in America, sitting down face-to-face with Neo-Nazis and fascists. Speaking with racists, fascists and proponents of alt-right ideologies, Khan attempts to discover new possibilities for connections and solutions. As she tries to see beyond the headlines to the human beings, her own prejudices are challenged and her tolerance tested.

“White Right” received a PeaceJam Special Jury Prize at the Monte Carlo Television Festival and an Emmy Award for International Current Affairs. It was also a BAFTA Award Nominee for Current Affairs. Khan received a Best Director – Documentary award from the Royal Television Society.

“Masel Tov Cocktail” (30 minutes) tells the story of Dima, a German-Jewish teenager, who gets into a fight at school. When asked to apologize to the person he punched, he notes how he doesn’t really feel sorry. Dima then talks directly to the audience about the hypocrisy he sees in his school and society.

“Masel Tov Cocktail” has won numerous awards at film festivals, including the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival 2021, Anchorage International Film Festival 2020, Boston Jewish Film Festival 2020, Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival 2021, Cleveland International Film Festival 2021, Filmets-Badalona Film Festival 2020, Flickerfest International Short Film Festival 2021, Florida Film Festival 2021, International Film Festival Etiuda and Anima 2020, Jaipur International Film Festival 2021, La Cabina Valencia International Medium-Length Film Festival 2020, London Short Series Fest 2020, Moscow Jewish Film Festival 2020, San Francisco



Deeyah Kahn in a scene from “White Right: Meeting the Enemy.” (Photo courtesy of Women Make Movies)

Jewish Film Festival 2020 and Unabhängiges FilmFest Osnabrück 2020.

“I am so pleased the Film Fest Committee decided to show these films,” said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton. “I was truly riveted by each of them. Each film focuses on hate, anger and antisemitism, but it in two very different ways. If you are interested in understanding why people hate, this is the event for you. The discussion is sure to be compelling.”

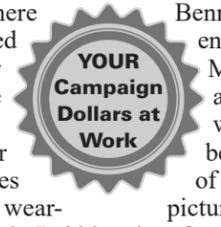
## Federation to hold “March Into Spring Family Get-Together” on March 6

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold a “March Into Spring Family Get-Together” on Sunday, March 6, at noon, at the Jewish Community Center’s playground and pavilion. (The snow date for the event will be Sunday, March 13.) The event is co-sponsored by the PJ Library program and Hillel Academy, and is open

to family members of all ages. There is no charge, but families are asked to register at [www.jfgb.org](http://www.jfgb.org) so they can be contacted if the snow date needs to be used.

There will be activities for children of all ages, including ones focusing on Purim, although the wearing of Purim costumes is optional. Rabbi



Benny Kellman will play his guitar and entertain the younger children. Rabbi Moshe Shmaryahu will also lead an activity. Hillel Academy students will sing a few songs. There will be a service project, where children of all ages can write letters or draw pictures for isolated seniors. Therapy dogs from the Therapy Dogs 607 group will

also be in attendance. Refreshments will be served, including hamentashen.

Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation, said, “After a long winter, we want to get Jewish families together for a fun celebration. Everyone will be able to enjoy the fresh air, make new friends and celebrate our Jewish roots. We hope you will be able to join us.”

## Rabbi Andrea L. Weiss to lead two Zoom programs at Temple Concord Feb. 26-27

Rabbi Andrea L. Weiss, Ph.D., will lead two programs for Temple Concord via Zoom. Both programs are free and everyone is invited in person or via Zoom. People who want to attend in person at the synagogue should notify the office at 723-7355. They must wear masks, provide proof of vaccinations and practice social distancing.

On Saturday, February 26, from 9:15-10:30 am, Weiss will lead Temple Concord’s Torah study with a program titled “Give us a holding among our kin’: The Inception and Reception of ‘The Torah: A Women’s Commentary.’” Weiss served as associate editor of that work. On Sunday, February 27, at 1 pm, Weiss will speak about “What can we do to create light together?” Interfaith Insights from American Values, Religious Voices.” Temple Concord Sisterhood is sponsoring the Sunday program. Invited to attend the program are WRJ Sisterhoods, including the Temple Concord Sisterhood, Temple Israel Sisterhood and Beth David

Synagogue Sisterhood.

Temple Concord Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell won Weiss’ presentation in a Women of Reform Judaism Auction held in 2021 and donated it to Temple Concord Sisterhood. “It was one program and Rabbi Weiss was gracious enough to offer to do it in two sessions,” said organizers of the event.

“During the Saturday program, Weiss will talk about how in the Book of Numbers, the five daughters of Zelophehad boldly assert their right to inherit their deceased father’s land since they have no brothers,” organizers added. “This story provides a fitting symbol for ‘The Torah: A Women’s Commentary.’ Rabbi Weiss will tell how the commentary came about and show why a women’s Torah commentary matters today more than ever.” Also to be studied will be that week’s



Rabbi Andrea L. Weiss, Ph.D. (Photo by Laurie Beck Peterson)

Torah portion – Vayakel – with materials from “The Torah: A Women’s Commentary.” The program will be held in person at Temple Concord and on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3CVxM14> or <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88298087579?pwd=eTVkMDRVVlpwTmZvMk-dYTm1OK0w1Zz09>, meeting ID number 882 9808 7579 and passcode 676707.

During the Sunday program, Weiss will discuss the “American Values, Religious Voices: 100 Days, 100 Letters” campaign, which sent a letter a day to the president, vice president and members of Congress for the first 100 days of the Trump administration in 2017, and the Biden administration in 2021. Weiss explained, “The letters were written by a multi-faith group of scholars who connected core American values to our

different religious traditions. We will sample several letters and reflect on the project as a much-needed model of interfaith partnership and dialogue around shared values.” People who want to join the Sunday program via Zoom should register at <https://bit.ly/3rbAQkw>; once registered, a Zoom link will be sent out.

Weiss is the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel provost and associate professor of Bible at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. She is the founder of the American Values, Religious Voices campaign, co-editor of “American Values, Religious Voices: 100 Days, 100 Letters” (University of Cincinnati Press, 2019), and associate editor of “The Torah: A Women’s Commentary” (CCAR Press, 2008). Her other writings include “Figurative Language in Biblical Prose Narrative: Metaphor in the Book of Samuel” (Brill, 2006), and articles on metaphor, biblical poetry and biblical conceptions of God.

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## Second *yahrzeit*: Searching for Izzy, Part II

BILL SIMONS

Two photos of the adolescent Izzy Demsky reflect very different takes on his coming of age in Amsterdam, NY. In one, Izzy's smiling mother, Bryna, pulls him close, their heads and shoulders touching. The mother's loving embrace appears protective while the son seems withdrawn and timid. In the other photo, Izzy poses with other high school yearbook staff. Occupying the center of the group shot, Izzy, wearing a fraternity sweater, brims with assurance and vitality—already a preliminary sketch of “Spartacus.” When Izzy, at age 68, returned to Amsterdam for Kirk Douglas Day in 1985, his rise from hard circumstances was noted, but the emphasis was on the imagery projected by high school triumphalism and the ascent to cinema stardom.

The reciprocal appreciation and affection expressed between its most famous native and his hometown on Kirk Douglas Day yielded to a wave of anger upon the 1988 publication of the actor's autobiography, “The Ragman's Son.” An anti-Douglas faction emerged in Amsterdam, and it took several years for the polarization to subside. Infuriated by Douglas' depiction of the city as a “dirty

mill town,” former Mayor Mario Villa fumed, “I will go to my grave regretting my part in putting a park in his honor here.” As late 20<sup>th</sup>-century Amsterdam struggled for revitalization, boosters also resented the book's claim of a pervasive antisemitism that subjected Izzy to gang beatings and excluded his father, Harry, for employment in the carpet factories. Even more explosive, Douglas revealed his relationship with a respected Amsterdam teacher.

According to “The Ragman's Son,” Louise Livingston, a 47-year-old high school English teacher, initiated a physically intimate relationship with a student, 14-year-old Izzy Demsky. Amongst my Amsterdam correspondents, opinion ranged from denunciation of Mrs. Livingston as a pedophile who ought to have been imprisoned to “people were kinder in those days.” A Mount Holyoke graduate and by all accounts an outstanding teacher, passionate about literature, Mrs. Livingston was a widow with a grown son. Under the pretext of helping with papers, Izzy would visit Mrs. Livingston's comfortable lodgings at 17 Mohawk St. in the evening. When Mrs. Livingston retired in 1955,

the school yearbook, to which she long served as faculty advisor, was dedicated to her. A moving tribute read: “To Louise Livingston – who gave me her friendship, help, and guidance at a time I needed it most. I wish all of you seniors much success and happiness... But no greater wish can I give you than that you all find a ‘Louise Livingston’ in your lives.” Those words were written by Kirk Douglas.

Izzy's years at Wilbur H. Lynch High School were a time of growth in terms of physical maturation, confidence and skills. He acquired proficiency in writing, public speaking and acting. In his high school yearbook, no one listed more activities than Izzy – amongst them: Alpha Beta Gamma fraternity, basketball cheerleader, junior prize for speaking, lead roles in plays, senior class treasurer and second prize for a school paper article. The quote beside his yearbook photo brashly proclaimed: “Not to know him argues yourself unknown.” And in high school, friendships deepened that lasted for a lifetime: Wolfie Churchitt previously saved Izzy from drowning in a ditch; Sonya Jacobsen Seigal

See “Izzy” on page 8

## Opinion

### In My Own Words

## Majority, minority and fear

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

“Chairman Bob Menendez (D-NJ) today defended his and [Deborah Lipstadt's]... denunciations of Republican Senator Ron Johnson's (R-WI) previous comments in support of the January 6 insurrectionists. The Wisconsin Republican demanded an apology for being called out by Senator Menendez and Professor Lipstadt after he told a radio host he would have felt threatened had the insurrection been organized by Black Lives Matter and Antifa supporters instead of Trump supporters 'who love this country' and 'truly respect law enforcement.'” – From a press release issued by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Fear, deep heart-rending fear: that's what many white, Christian Americans are experiencing, perhaps for the first time in their lives. Fear of becoming a minority, fear of losing their piece of the pie, fear of someone replacing them, fear of being treated as other minorities have been (and are currently being) treated in the United States. I can sympathize a bit: Jews have lived for centuries as a minority in countries that, at first, welcomed us, then demonized us and finally expelled or tried to destroy us. We know just how horrible it can be to live in fear. But are the feelings of white, Christian Americans being manipulated by those in power, or are they right to worry?

My real question is this: Why would whites think that they would be badly treated if people of color became the majority in the U.S.? Maybe it's as simple as their assuming that whichever majority controls the government will treat

minorities poorly. To take one example, their fear of the Black Lives Matter movement. The movement has never said that white lives don't matter. Its concern is that Black lives have been treated as expendable, that something as simple as a traffic stop can turn deadly and that, while white teenagers may be given the benefit of the doubt when arrested for a crime, too many black youths arrested for the same crime are given jail sentences. Now, imagine that scenario is flipped: replace Black with white in those sentences. Policemen would automatically think that a white driver is dangerous. White teenagers would be assumed to be habitual criminals, rather than being released to their families and given a second chance. Does anyone *really* think that is going to happen? If so, then that's not only a sad commentary on our country, but humanity in general.

The idea that only Black violence is dangerous is in itself a dangerous thought. Why was Senator Ron Johnson so blind to the violence that took place on January 6, 2021, when protesters attacked the Capitol Police, threatening to harm members of Congress? Did he think that those who carried a noose and called for the hanging of Vice President Mike Pence were joking? How can anyone call them true patriots who love their country when they were trying to overthrow the rule of government? Wait, I take that back: they may consider themselves patriots. But their version of the United States is scary: it's one where whites control the government and upitty minorities – that includes Blacks, Hispanics, Jews,

Asians, etc. – know their place. But is that truly the United States in which we want to live? Is that really the American dream? No! The American dream offers opportunity to *all*, regardless of skin color, ethnicity or religion.

It's this vision – a country that offers freedom and choice to everyone – that makes the U.S. a magnet for people across the world – people who are willing to risk their lives to move here. But that dream is being threatened by those in power who know they can only remain in power if they divide us – making us fear each other, rather than helping us work together for the good of all. Those trying to manipulate us pretend that minorities are part of some secret cabal looking to destroy America and ruin our lives. Some of these conspiracy theories are so far-fetched it's hard to believe anyone does believe them, but fear prevents us from thinking clearly. It makes us easy to manipulate, especially when people claim that someone of a different skin color, ethnicity or religion is out to demolish our way of life.

People who truly love this country don't seek to divide its citizens into “us” vs. “them.” They know that if we stand together and work together, we can create a society where no one is left behind and no one is hungry. That may sound unrealistic, but we'll never know if we can succeed if we don't try. I believe this can happen, but only if we reach out a hand to each other and work together to create the American Dream of a better future for all.

### Letters

## Federation and community thanked for support

To the Editor:

When Rivky and I arrived in Binghamton at the very end of 1984, we were struck by the close-knit fabric of the Binghamton Jewish community. In fact, someone advised us never to speak disparagingly to anyone about someone else because “they are all related.” With time, we grew familiar with the Binghamton “families.” With more time, we learned something much more profound. People here really do act like family; we look out for each other, whether we are blood relatives or not.

A recent example of this is the decision on the part of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton to allocate a

one-time gift to each of the area synagogues and the Chabad Center. Coming on the heels of the pandemic that had us all reeling, this gift is a vote of support that was greatly needed and is deeply appreciated.

Michael Wright, president of the board of Chabad, joins me in writing this letter. We, together with everyone at Chabad, want to thank the entire community who contribute to the Federation for this gift. We are deeply grateful for this funding and promise to use it in the best way possible.

May Michael and I be so bold as to propose that each person who contributes to Federation consider putting aside a dollar a week – that's all we are suggesting, one dollar

– and add those \$52 to their annual gift to the Federation. By doing so, we would collectively strengthen our entire Jewish infrastructure and help to ensure the future of our Jewish community. This is a relatively painless way in which we can try to make up for the lost revenue due to our shrinking demographics.

It is true that our numbers are much smaller than they were, but the Binghamton Jewish community still shines as an example of what can be done when people care.

In appreciation,  
Rabbi Aaron Slonim, Executive Director, Chabad Center  
Michael Wright, President, Chabad Center



**Jewish Federation**  
OF GREATER BINGHAMTON

Suzanne Holwitt, President  
Shelley Hubal, Executive Director

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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 weekly deadline is noon, Wednesday, for the following week's newspaper.

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www.thereporter.org

# Chabad's Women's League to offer local and national *shalach manot* service

Women's League for Chabad is currently accepting orders for its annual *shalach manot* service. Binghamton residents can send packages of food and holiday greetings to local friends and acquaintances on Purim day, which will be celebrated this year on Thursday, March 17. "It's Purim made easy," says Ilene Pinsker, project chairwoman. "It's a stress-free, very reasonably priced way to fulfill the mitzvah of *mishloach manot*, sending gifts of food on Purim, and a wonderful way to show your friendship and care. We do all the work for you, and your friends get fabulous packages from you!"

The Women's League is offering a new way for people to perform the mitzvah. Each person on the suggested list (more than 200 names) will receive a Purim package from the Women's League. For \$180, people can choose to have their name appear as a sender on each package.

Additional packages can still be sent to those not on the list for \$6 each. For \$20, the Women's League will send three packages to people who live in Binghamton, Vestal, Johnson City, Endicott and Endwell; additional packages are \$6 each.

For individuals who want to say "Happy Purim" to their friends outside of the community, the Women's League offers Purim greeting cards that can be sent anywhere in the continental U.S. for a charge of \$4. "In the last few years, many of our friends have moved from the Binghamton area. We have listed many of them so you can be reminded of who you might want to send a card," explained Pinsker.

Anyone who has not received a complete information packet and order form, or is seeking additional details should call the Chabad Center office at 797-0015. All orders must be received by no later than Thursday, March 3.

The Women's League is also in need of volunteers to assist in assembling the packages and their delivery on Purim day. Anyone willing to help with the project is asked to contact the Chabad office.

## Wedding, engagement photos wanted

The Reporter is looking for photos of couples who became engaged or married in 2021 for the annual Wedding, Prom and Party Guide issue (coming March 11).

Please e-mail these photos with identification, including maiden names. Please do so by Tuesday, March 1. Photos can be dropped off Monday-Thursday 8:30 am-5 pm; and Friday 8:30 am-4 pm. They can be e-mailed, in TIF or JPG format, to TReporter@aol.com; please note in the subject line that a wedding/engagement photo for The Reporter is attached and include the necessary information in the message.



## BD Sisterhood to celebrate Purim on March 10

The Beth David Sisterhood will hold its Purim meeting on Thursday, March 10, at 7 pm, via Zoom. The event is open to the entire community. The Zoom link will be sent to everyone who receives e-mail from Beth David Sisterhood or Rabbi Zev Silber's weekly updates. Others who wish to receive the link should contact the Beth David Synagogue office at 722-1793 or bethdavid@stny.rr.com, or Rabbi Zev Silber at rabbisilber@stny.rr.com.

"For the second year in a row, many people's Purim plans are being impacted by COVID," said organizers of the event. "While attending parties, shows, or concerts in person may justifiably concern us, Beth David's Sister-

hood is providing a *simcha-dig* Zoom alternative Purim program. We are proud to once again be presenting for your enjoyment the Kellman Family Players. Rabbi Benny and his talented family will weave a *shpiel* of the Purim story, perform stand-up comedy and regale you with three of their original Purim songs. You'll laugh. You may cry, but only if someone stomps on your foot while laughing. You will certainly feel joyous energy."

A short business meeting will be held before the entertainment. "We hope you will join Beth David Sisterhood for this pre-Purim celebration," organizers added. "Costumes are optional."

## JCC hamantashen fund-raiser

The Jewish Community Center is holding a hamantashen fund-raiser. Pre-orders are due by Friday, March 4, for pick-up at the JCC, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, on Monday, March 14, from 9 am-5 pm. Each order is \$15 (per dozen) and includes an assortment of funfetti (chocolate), peach, raspberry and blueberry. To pre-order and prepay, visit <https://forms.gle/G4mEHq2uNsRVddDT8>, call the JCC at 724-2417

with a credit card or stop at the JCC office. "Daffodils, robins - spring always reminds you of Purim, which reminds you of hamantashen, doesn't it?" asked organizers of the fund-raiser. "Well, you're in luck. The JCC is holding a hamantashen fund-raiser to support the Youth Department and its programs. Staff volunteers, coordinated by Harry Cohen, will be preparing the traditional cookies. Your yum is waiting."

## TC to hold HIAS Refugee Shabbat on March 4

Temple Concord will take part in a "HIAS Refugee Shabbat," on Friday, March 4, at 7:30 pm. Now in its fourth year, with hundreds of congregations and thousands of individuals participating, Refugee Shabbat will be an opportunity to raise awareness in local communities, to recognize the work that has been done, and to reaffirm commitments to welcoming refugees and asylum seekers. People can attend the service in person, on Zoom or on the Temple Concord Facebook page. Those attending in person must show proof of vaccination and be masked.

"Temple Concord will be a proud participant in HIAS' Refugee Shabbat, during which Jews in the United States and around the world will take action for refugees and asylum seekers," said organizers of the event. "We are excited to have just welcomed a family from Afghanistan to our community through the BRAIN (Binghamton Regional Afghan Immigration Network) sponsor circle under the guidance of HIAS. Many in our community have joined together to support this sponsor circle and two others to help these Afghan families settle in our community. Please join us to celebrate this important work, hear more about what we are doing and learning, and to learn more about other efforts we can take."

Organizers noted, "With more than 84 million people worldwide who have fled their homes due to persecution and violence, we are now witnesses to one of the largest humanitarian crises in human history. This past year, as the number of displaced people continued to grow, our hearts have swelled at the massive global effort to

evacuate and find safe homes for Afghans fleeing for their lives; and they have broken seeing people whose

See "HIAS" on page 7



### HAMANTASCHEN COOKIE FUNDRAISER

Pre-Order your Dozen for \$15 or 1/2 dozen for \$10 each order will come with an assortment of flavors:  
Fun Fetti (Chocolate)  
Peach  
Raspberry  
Blueberry

Pre-order by Friday, March 4  
Pick up order on Monday, March 14

Follow this link to pre-order & pay (or scan code):  
Google form link: <https://forms.gle/G4mEHq2uNsRVddDT8>



607-724-2417 JCCOFFICE@BINGHAMTONJCC.ORG 500 CLUBHOUSE RD., VESTAL, NY 13850  
WWW.BINGHAMTONJCC.ORG

Proceeds raised from this event are going to support our Kids Connection Youth Program.  
All cookies are made in our Kosher kitchen and are dairy.

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to **Ruth Buschman** on the death of her husband,  
**Howard Buschman**

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to **Fran Newmark** on the death of her mother,  
**Rhoda Seidel**

## DEADLINES

The following are deadlines for all articles and photos for upcoming REPORTER issues.

ISSUE	DEADLINE
March 11-24.....	March 2
March 25-April 7.....	March 16
April 8-21.....	March 30
April 22-May 5.....	April 13

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

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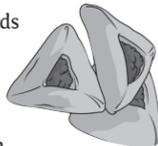
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## JFS Accepting Purim Donations



Jewish Family Service will once again be collecting funds to fulfill the Purim mitzvah of *matanot l'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 March 9, 2022.



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



## Off the Shelf

# Yiddish in pictures and words

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

The interest in Yiddish literature seems to be increasing. Books – from newly discovered works to writings ignored for decades – have been translated for an English-speaking audience. These translations include two recent books: the historical graphic novel “When I Grow Up: The Lost Autobiographies of Six Yiddish Teenagers” by Ken Krimstein (Bloombury Publishing) and Mikhah Yosef Berdichevsky’s short story collection “From a Distant Relation” edited and translated by James Adam Redfield (Syracuse University Press).

“When I Grow Up” is a fascinating book, which not only tells the story of how these autobiographies were recovered, but the thoughts and interests of the six European Jewish teenaged writers featured. The impetus for these works was a contest sponsored by YIVO in the mid-1930s: writers 13-21 years old living in Europe were asked to tell the true stories of their lives. A grant prize of 150 zlotys (which Krimstein says was worth about \$1,000 in 2021) would be awarded. The autobiographies would be published anonymously, which was done to

encourage the teens to be honest about their lives. Unfortunately, the day the prize was to be announced was the day the Nazis invaded Poland, which was the start of World War II. Fortunately, a group of librarians managed to hide the autobiographies, first from the Nazis and then from Stalin years later during his anti-Jewish crusades. It wasn’t until decades later that they became available again.

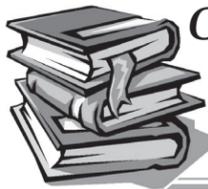
Krimstein illustrates the story of how the works were hidden, but uses a graphic novel format for the six autobiographies. Although he features the words of the young writers, he does add his own clever touches, for example, stamps that discuss whether letters to the U.S. would be answered. The beauty of these autobiographies is that the teens wrote about everyday life, which offers readers a glimpse of a world that vanished during World War II. For example, some of the teens unselfconsciously discussed arguments with their parents about religion, school and clothing. Some of the writers were interested in politics; others preferred the arts. Readers learn about Zionist youth

groups and life in a yeshiva, going to dances and parents who separate and divorce. A few writers were aware that the world was becoming more dangerous for Jews, but none contemplated the horrors their communities would face during the war. The stories contain surprises, so it would be unfair to reveal too many details, but they are moving and absorbing, and feel as if the writers were truly revealing their deepest thoughts and secrets.

While the identity of only one teen in “When I Grow Up” is known, scholars are far more aware of Berdichevsky’s work, at least that which appeared in Hebrew. According to Redfield, the works the author published in Yiddish were not as appreciated. Although it’s impossible for me to compare the two types of writing (I’d never heard of Berdichevsky before reading “From a Distant Relation”), I found his Yiddish stories engaging, interesting and, at times, moving. Most are vignettes; many of these are monologues where a character talks to the writer, asking for money or trying to explain his/her life. While the

characters verge on the edge of stereotype, they also feel real, as if Berdichevsky was writing about the people he knew from his hometown. As befits a scholarly work, Redfield includes notes after each story, placing events into context and commenting on allusions to biblical and talmudic texts.

Among the stories that stood out were “The Fife,” which is a variation of my favorite High Holiday tale, one that shows how purity of heart can lift prayers to heaven; the surprising “The Nest Egg,” where the narrator learns how first impressions can be misleading; and the moving “The Broken String” about the power of music. There are too many stories – more than 65 tales are included – to comment on, but many feature general themes. For example, the difficulties of making a living is the focus of many of them. Also of great concern are the differences between the generations: the younger generation wants to expand their world, rather than conform to the mores of the Jewish community. Anyone interested in Yiddish literature will definitely want to read “From a Distant Relation.”



## Off the Shelf

# Looking at the Torah through the eyes of social justice

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

When writing a card congratulating 13-year-olds on their *b'nai mitzvah*, the note usually includes the words “wishing you well on your continuing Jewish journey.” That’s because learning – particularly Torah study – is part of a never-ending journey. Numerous books focus on different aspect of biblical verses and search for new ways to understand the text. The latest work in my continuing Torah journey is “The Social Justice Torah Commentary” edited by Rabbi Barry H. Block (CCAR Press). Block sees it as a companion to his 2020 book “The Mussar Torah Commentary: A Spiritual Path to Living a Meaningful and Ethical Life.” (To read *The Reporter’s* review of that book, visit [www.thereporter.org/past-articles/feature-book-review/feature-](http://www.thereporter.org/past-articles/feature-book-review/feature-)

[book-review-stream/book-review-stream/off-the-shelf-exploring-the-torah-with-mussar-principles](http://www.thereporter.org/past-articles/feature-book-review/feature-off-the-shelf-exploring-the-torah-with-mussar-principles).) In his latest collection, the writers teach lessons about social justice they’ve learned from the Torah text.

As Block notes in his introduction, this work is “not meant to be all-inclusive of the social justice challenges facing the world today”: instead, “each author or pair of authors was asked to plumb a specific *parasha* (weekly Torah portion) and to derive a social justice argument from that process.” The writers focus on the United States and Israel, and look at such contemporary issues as racism, women’s rights, voting rights, disability, climate change, reproductive choice, religious freedom and immigration, to note a few.

Although a few writers were not successful in offering a connection between the *parasha* and their social justice issue, most offered surprising and absorbing ways to understand their Torah portions. For example, Rabbi A. Brian Stoller’s “Unconscious Racial Bias and the Curse of Japheth” about *parashat* Noah offers a personal look, focusing on the writer’s Southern family and how his great-grandmother treated her Black butler and housekeeper. He now recognizes he was shaped by attitudes that were racist: “Painful as it is, I have to admit that I grew up with the assumptions that Black people tended to work for white people and came when you rang, that their neighborhoods were scary because the people there were scary, and that many of them needed the paternalistic hand of white people to get a leg up in life.” Stoller writes that no one taught him these rules: “In fact, my parents raised me to treat all people equally and kindly, no matter what color they were.” However, he absorbed the assumptions offered by the larger culture without giving them thought until he was an adult.

When looking at Vaera, Rabbi Lauren Tuchman discusses “Moses, Internalized Oppression and Disability.” Her focus is on Moses’ feelings of inadequacy and how those feelings affected his ability to lead the Israelites. She notes that “God must assure Moses twice that he is truly fit to lead and that a reasonable accommodation is not a burden but simply needed.” As “the only blind woman ordained to the rabbinate,” she shows the importance of not internalizing the way society tries to marginalize those with disabilities.

Block offers his view of Kedoshim in “What We Leave for the Poor.” He notes that we are required by God to help the poor: this is a given – a commandment – not a choice. Allowing the poor to harvest their fields meant less profit for the farmer, but,

as Block writes, “the mitzvah is not fulfilled when charity does not cost us anything.” The fact that the poor were required to gather the harvest themselves also helps them “retain their dignity...earning the produce by harvesting it.”

God’s commandment telling Moses to take a census of the Israelites sparks an intriguing look at identity in Ilana Kaufman’s look at Bamidbar, “Counting Justly: Lifting Up Every Head.” She discusses the narrow ways contemporary censuses categorize people, offering simple choices for many who have complex identities. Racial choices such as white, Black, Hispanic, etc. do not take into consideration their family histories. Also emphasized is the need for the Jewish community to make certain that it counts its Jews of Color and offers them full membership.

“The Rights and Duties of Citizenship” is Rabbi Seth M. Limmer’s focus when writing about *parashat* Shelach Lecha. He notes that “in Judaism, the needs of the whole take precedence over the rights of the individual.” This, however, clashes with American culture, with citizens debating personal freedom versus communal obligations. Limmer shows how Judaism requires us to offer the same protections to all members of our society – citizen or “stranger.” As he notes, “Since there is one Torah for citizen and stranger, we uphold a Jewish obligation to extend to noncitizens freedom from want and harm, the privileges citizens enjoy.”

The essays in “The Social Justice Torah Commentary” were consistently well done and thought-provoking. The book is perfect for those looking for exciting and interesting new ways to view the Torah text. It also makes an excellent companion piece to “The Mussar Torah Commentary”: readers can work on improving themselves, while learning how to make the world a more just and ethical place.

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

### Did you know?

(NAPSA) – To help people with Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis understand their treatment options, the Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation offers online tools that explain the pros, cons and trade-offs of various treatments. Learn more at the Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation’s IBD Help Center, 888-MY-GUT-PAIN (888-694-8872) and [www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org](http://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org).

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From JNS.org

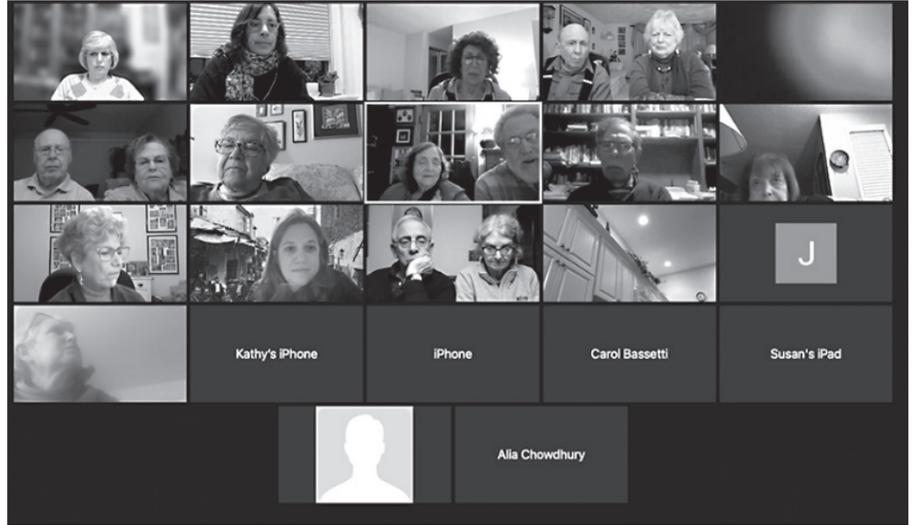
**Israel appoints four new judges to Supreme Court, including first Muslim**

The Judicial Selection Committee in Israel appointed four new judges to the Supreme Court on Feb. 21, including the first Muslim justice to sit on the court. The selections have been named as judges Khaled Kabub, Ruth Ronnen, Gila Kanfi-Steinitz and Yecheil Kasher. Kasher is an attorney from the private sector, while the other three choices are serving judges. According to a report by JNS, a few months ago, Israeli Justice Minister Gideon Sa'ar announced the launching of a new list of candidates for the role, but that the four "leading candidates had already been set." In December, the Judicial Selection Committee canceled a last-minute meeting due to a lack of agreement, which now appears to have been resolved, said the report. At the start of the Feb. 21 meeting, Sa'ar stated: "After three months of intense work since the publication of the first candidates' list, I will today bring before the committee a proposal to appoint four judges to the Supreme Court. This proposal reflects the correct decision according to the three parameters that I set as a compass: excellence, balance and diversity." He described the list as a "crystal of quality that will add a professional, remarkable force to our senior legal court."

**Israel seeks to bump up trade with Morocco to sum of \$500 million**

Israel's Minister of Economy Orna Barbivai met with the Moroccan Minister of Industry and Trade Ryad Mezzour in Morocco on Feb. 21 and signed a trade agreement that would increase annual trade to more than \$500 million. "The annual level of economic and commercial exchange between the two countries, which today amounts to \$130 million, must very quickly reach \$500 million ... and go beyond that," said Barbivai, reported AFP. Mezzour said that the digital, agribusiness, automotive, aerospace, renewable energy and pharmaceutical sectors had "strong investment potential" to grow accordingly. Barbivai arrived in Rabat on Feb. 20. She was on a four-day visit to continue to build ties between the two countries as part of the Abraham Accords normalization agreement signed in 2020.

**Film Fest's "Neighbours" discussed**



The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest held a virtual showing of the drama "Neighbours," a film by writer/director Mano Khalil. Fifty people signed up to view the film. Dr. Dina Danon, associate professor of Judaic studies and Middle East and North Africa studies at Binghamton University, led a virtual discussion of the film on February 10. Shown are some of the 22 computers that were logged on for the discussion.

Looking for this issue's "Jewish Resources"? Visit [www.thereporter.org/streams/miscellaneous-features/miscellaneous-features/tag/80309](http://www.thereporter.org/streams/miscellaneous-features/miscellaneous-features/tag/80309) to see what's happening online.

**Financial Planning**

**How Millennials, Gen X feel about finances now**

(NAPSI) - Americans are navigating a rapidly evolving pandemic environment - and that extends to how they're feeling about their finances, according to the latest Wealth Watch survey.

"As people across the country begin to emerge from the pandemic, they are reporting a combination of emotions - from happy (48 percent) and excited (36 percent) to anxious (21 percent) and overwhelmed (13 percent) - and these feelings are extending to their financial outlook," said Aaron Ball, senior vice president, head of insurance solutions, service and marketing at New York Life. "We saw the starkest differences in financial confidence among Millennials and Gen X, both groups that have faced unique financial challenges before and because of the pandemic."

With priorities shifting across generations, different financial outlooks have developed. Millennials appear to be most concerned about post-pandemic budgets, while also expressing high levels of confidence in their long-term financial futures and retirement preparation. Gen Xers, conversely, are more confident about their short-term budgets, but more uncertain about their financial futures.

Compared to Gen X, Millennials appear to have a more optimistic long-term outlook, with 45 percent (vs. 35 percent of Gen X) showing confidence that their retirement savings will last the rest of their lives and 68 percent (vs. 62 percent

confidence that they will be able to retire at the age they choose. Millennials, however, are feeling a crunch in short-term navigaton of the evolving COVID-19 environment and shifting financial responsibilities day-to-day. Compared to 32 percent of Millennials, Gen X had 61 percent of respondents say that resuming costs that the pandemic otherwise paused would not affect their budgets.

When asked how best to describe their financial strategy, 24 percent of Millennials said they "absolutely" know what they are doing, compared to 18 percent of Gen X who said the same. Millennial men were the demographic most likely to report that they "absolutely" know what they are doing (35 percent), compared to 14 percent of Millennial women, 21 percent of Gen X men and 16 percent of Gen X women.

Both generations have hurdles ahead, whether it be post-pandemic budgets or future financial responsibilities to anticipate. "Protecting yourself and your family against a financial loss, while also taking the right steps to grow your wealth and prosper across all phases of life is a constant balancing act," added Ball. "It's difficult for individuals to navigate that on their own. Guidance from a financial professional helps maintain this equilibrium."

For further facts and stats, and to see the entire report and survey methodology, visit [www.newyorklife.com](http://www.newyorklife.com).

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**Jewish Federation OF GREATER BINGHAMTON**



## Weekly Parasha

Vayakel, Exodus 35:1-38:20

## Time, space and trees in winter: a sacred intersection

RABBI SHIFRAH TOBACMAN, CONGREGATION TIKKUN V'OR

*"On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a Shabbat shabbaton, a complete rest, a holy day for YHVH." (Exodus 35:2)*

*"Take from among you gifts for YHVH. Everyone whose heart is so moved shall bring them." (Exodus 35:5)*

I'm new to this part of the country, and have quickly become enthralled with the beauty of this place.

My spouse and I moved here last summer from North-

ern California when I became the rabbi for Congregation Tikkun V'or in Ithaca. I loved living in California. The Pacific Ocean and redwood forests are spectacular. Even the grassy hills in the area, which would turn to brown for much of the year and feel tiresome, even worrisome during a long drought, were something I appreciated at times. They reminded me of the subtler seasonality of that place, so different from the Ohio terrain of my youth. They

also reminded me of life's fragility and resilience, since at some point wildflowers would bloom in places, and the subdued hillside would be brightened by long awaited rain.

But here, just minutes from my house, waterfalls abound. Hiking and walking trails are abundant through birch, oak and maple forests, along streams, in residential neighborhoods and along the shore of Cayuga Lake. The See "Winter" on page 7

## Congregational Notes

### Temple Israel

Orientation: Conservative  
Rabbi: Geoffrey Brown  
Address: 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal, NY 13850  
Phone: 723-7461 and 231-3746  
Office hours: Mon.-Thurs., 8:30 am-3:30 pm; Fri., 8 am-3 pm  
E-mail: titammy@stny.twbc.com  
Website: www.templeisraelvestal.org

Service schedule: Tues., 5:30 pm; Fri., 5:30 pm; Sat., 9:30 am  
On Fridays and Tuesdays at 5:30 pm, services will be led by Rabbi Geoffrey Brown via Zoom and in-person (masks are required).

On Saturday, February 26, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required). The Torah portion is Exodus 35:1-38:20 and the haftarah is II Kings 12:1-17. At 6:30 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom.

On Sunday, February 27, at 1 pm, Temple Israel and Temple Concord Sisterhoods will hold a virtual event. (For more information, see the article on page 1.)

On Tuesday, March 1, at 7 pm, there will be an Executive Board meeting on Zoom.

On Wednesday, March 2, there will be Torah study from 4-5 pm on Zoom only.

On Saturday, March 5, at 9:30 am, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required). The Torah portion is Exodus 38:21-40:38 and the haftarah is II Kings 7:51-8. At 7 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom.

On Wednesday, March 9, the Ritual Committee will meet at 10 am and Torah study will be held from 4-5 pm on Zoom only.

### Penn-York Jewish Community

President-Treasurer-Secretary: Harvey Chernosky, 570-265-3869  
B'nai Brith: 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.

### Kol Haverim

Affiliation: Society for Humanistic Judaism  
Address: P.O. Box 4972, Ithaca, NY 14852-4972  
Phone: 607-277-3345, E-mail: info@kolhaverim.net  
Website: www.kolhaverim.net  
Chairwoman: Abby Cohn  
Kol Haverim: The Finger Lakes Community for Humanistic Judaism, is an Ithaca-based organization that brings people together to explore and celebrate Jewish identity, history, culture and ethics within a secular, humanistic framework. KH is part of an international movement for Secular Humanistic Judaism and is affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism, a national association with over 30 member communities and congregations around the country. Established in the spring of 1999, it offers celebrations of Jewish holidays, monthly Shabbat pot-lucks, adult education, a twice-monthly Cultural School for children, and a bar and bat mitzvah program. KH welcomes all individuals and families, including those from mixed religious backgrounds, who wish to strengthen the Jewish experience in their lives and provide their children with a Jewish identity and experience.

### Temple Brith Sholom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated  
Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045  
Phone: 607-756-7181  
President: Carol Levine, 315-696-5744  
Cemetery Committee: 315-696-5744  
Website: templebrithsholomcortland.org  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Temple-Brith-Sholom-114006981962930/>  
Service leaders: Lay leadership  
Shabbat services: Either Friday evening at 7:30 pm or Saturday at 10 am from Rosh Hashanah to Shavuot. Holiday services are also held. 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," while the Saturday morning siddur is "Gates of Prayer." The community extends a warm welcome to the Jewish student population of SUNY Cortland, as well as the residents of local adult residences.

Services and programs are held by Zoom on the first and second Fridays of the month.

### Synagogues limit face-to-face gatherings

For specific information regarding services (including online services), meetings and classes at any of the area synagogues, contact them by phone or e-mail.

### Beth David Synagogue

Affiliation: Orthodox Union  
Rabbi: Zev Silber  
Address: 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905  
Phone: 722-1793, Rabbi's Office: 722-7514, Fax: 722-7121  
Office hours: Mon. closed; Tues. 10 am-1 pm; Wed. closed; Thurs. 9 am-1 pm; Fri. 10 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

### 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: 797-0015, Fax: 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](http://www.JewishBU.com/S2020Partnership).

### Temple Beth El of Oneonta

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism  
Rabbi: Amelia F. Wolf  
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.  
Friday night services will be held on March 4; April 1; May 6 and Saturday morning, May 7; and June 3.

### Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism  
Rabbi: Rachel Safman  
Rabbi Emeritus: Scott L. Glass  
Address: 402 North Tioga St. (the corner of Court and Tioga streets), Ithaca, NY 14850-4292  
Phone: 273-5775  
E-mail: rabbi-safman@tbeithaca.org and secretary@tbeithaca.org  
Website: www.tbeithaca.org  
Presidents: David Weiner and Linda Aigen  
Sisterhood President: Gail Zussman  
Director of Education: Rabbi Suzanne Brody  
Services: Fri. 8 pm; Sat. 10 am, unless otherwise announced.  
Weekday morning minyan 7:30 am (9 am on Sun. and legal holidays).  
Religious School/Education: September-May: Classes meet on Sunday, 9 am-12:30 pm and Wednesday, 3:45-5:45 pm. The Midrashah (eighth grade and high school) classes will meet at times designated by their respective teachers.  
Adult Ed.: Numerous weekly courses, several semester-long courses and a variety of mini-courses and lectures are offered throughout the year. Call the temple office for more details.

For upcoming services and events on Zoom, visit [www.tinyurl.com/HappeningAtTBE](http://www.tinyurl.com/HappeningAtTBE).

Friday, February 25, light candles before ..... 5:31 pm  
Saturday, February 26, Shabbat ends ..... 6:33 pm  
Friday, March 4, light candles before ..... 5:39 pm  
Saturday, March 5, Shabbat ends ..... 6:41 pm  
Friday, March 11, light candles before ..... 5:48 pm  
Saturday, March 12, Shabbat ends ..... 6:49 pm

### Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism  
Rabbi: Barbara Goldman-Wartell  
Address: 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905  
Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm  
Phone: 723-7355  
Fax: 723-0785  
Office e-mail: TempleConcordbinghamton@gmail.com  
Website: www.templeconcord.com  
Regular service times: Fri., 7:30 pm; Sat., 10:35 am, when religious school is in session.  
Hebrew school: Hebrew school meets at 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm on Tues. and Thurs. during the school year unless otherwise noted.

Some services and programs are online only.  
Friday, February 25: at 7:30 pm, Shabbat service led by Rabbi Goldman-Wartell. To attend in person, all must show proof of COVID-19 vaccinations, wear a mask and physically distance. Join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/37UQSpK>, meeting ID 829 9450 3102 and passcode 708450, or on the Temple Concord Facebook page.

Saturday, February 26: Shabbat school at 9 am; Torah study at 9:15 am with Rabbi Andrea L. Weiss on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3CVxM14>, meeting ID 882 9808 7579 and passcode 676707 (for more information, see the article on page 1); Shabbat family service at 10:30 am; and "Havdalah with a Bonus" at 7 pm on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3zd0atv>, meeting ID 897 4179 1260 and passcode 408279.

Sunday, February 27: "What can we do to create light together?": Interfaith Insights from American Values, Religious Voices" with Rabbi Andrea L. Weiss at 1 pm. To join via Zoom, register in advance at <https://bit.ly/3rbAQkw>. Once registered, a Zoom link will be sent. (For more information, see the article on page 1.)

Wednesday, March 2: at 10:30 am, Temple Concord Morning Book Club: "The Book of Lost Names: A Novel" by Kristin Harmel will be discussed. Those planning on attending in person should contact Merri Pell-Preus at [merrypell.preus@gmail.com](mailto:merrypell.preus@gmail.com); there is a limit of 12 persons in the library. Masks are required. To join via Zoom, visit <https://bit.ly/3CXVd9b>, meeting ID: 881 6469 4206 and passcode 653272.

Wednesday, March 2: at 6:30 pm, Sisterhood schmooze and 7 pm Sisterhood board meeting.

Friday, March 4: at 5pm, First Friday at the Kilmer Mansion with the Madrigal Choir's "Violinsky," a book signing by Shawn Robinson, and artwork from FASST. The women of the Madrigal Choir will present the music of "Violinsky - Binghamton's Eccentric Entertainer."

See "Concord" on page 8

### Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive  
Rabbi: David Regenspan  
Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815  
Contact: Guilia Greenberg, 336-1523  
Purpose: To maintain a Jewish identity and meet the needs of the Jewish community in the area.  
Adult Ed.: Saturday morning study is held at 10 am. Call for more information and to confirm.

### Congregation Tikkun v'Or

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism  
Address: PO Box 3981, Ithaca, NY 14852; 2550 Triphammer Rd. (corner of Triphammer and Burdick Hill), Lansing, NY  
Phone: 607-256-1471  
Website: www.tikkunvor.org  
E-mail: info@tikkunvor.org  
Presidents: Nomi Talmi and Shawn Murphy  
Rabbi: Shifrah Tobacman, rabbishifrah@tikkunvor.org  
Education Director/Administrative Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky  
Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator: Michael Margolin  
Services: All services currently on Zoom. E-mail info@tikkunvor.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.

# BRAIN welcomes new neighbors to Binghamton

On February 10, the Binghamton Regional Afghan Immigration Network (or BRAIN) traveled to Syracuse to welcome a family it sponsored to Binghamton. "Thank you to everyone who has donated items to furnish their first American home," said members of the group. "We could not have done this without the support of the Broome County community."

Anyone who still wants to help can do so by:

- ◆ Donating gift cards to stores where the family can buy groceries.

◆ Volunteering to drive the family to appointments since they don't have a car, or donating a car to the family.

◆ Making a financial contribution by making a check out to Temple Concord (memo: Afghan Resettlement), and mailing it to the synagogue at 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905.

For more information or answers to questions, contact Nancy Dorfman at ndorfma1@gmail.com or 760-2282, or Julie Piaker at juliepiaker@gmail.com or 237-1501.



Members of BRAIN traveled to Syracuse to welcome the family it sponsored. Front row (l-r): Roz Antoun, Dorian Zahka, Phyllis Weinstein, Julie Piaker and Nancy Dorfman. Back row (l-r): Brendan Byrnes and Hekmat Jeehoun (translator).

# Winter . . . . . Continued from page 6

verdant greens of summer are more varied in shade than what's found in California. The fall colors make my heart sing. And the winter, which I had dreaded after so many years of not residing in such a climate, offers gifts I hadn't considered. Winter reminds me of Shabbat.

On a recent walk in a nearby nature preserve, I was struck by how quiet the blanket of snow made things, accenting the sense of dormancy evidenced by the bare branches of the trees against the late afternoon sky. I was reminded that the trees rest from production at this time. Things lie quiet beneath the frozen ground, the sap isn't running through the trunks, the leaves aren't sprouting, or offering shade, or delighting us with an autumnal display. But perhaps winter offers the trees a kind of Shabbat, a time to rest from their energy intensive roles as producers of syrup, acorns and foliated hiding places for other creatures.

Judaism offers deep wisdom about honoring the cycles and seasons of things. In Torah, newly planted trees are not to have their fruit harvested for four years to assure healthy growth, and even then selling from the harvest is limited until the fifth year. (Lev. 19:23-25) Another example is the *shmita* year, in which fields and grapevines are not to be planted. It's a time for cultivated land to go uncultivated, though the fruits that grow anyways can be eaten according to a person's need, without hoarding, and not for commercial gain. It's spoken of as a Shabbat shabbaton, a great Shabbat for YHVH, and the land, and people in need. (Lev. 25:4)

This week's *parasha* opens with Moshe convening the community and saying, "On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to YHVH..." (Ex. 35:2)

"The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals," Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said in "The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man," published by Noonday Press. The architecture of Judaism is found mostly in time rather than space - in Shabbat, holidays, time-based ritual and prayer.

And yet, almost immediately after the reminder of Shabbat in this *parasha*, the Torah begins a long and detailed description of what will be required for the building of the *Mishkan*, the portable tabernacle that will provide sacred architecture for the Israelites'

ritual offerings. Artisans and artists and all those who have in their hearts to participate are to bring the necessary precious metals, stones, and woven fabrics. And the people respond. In fact, they're so generous with their offerings that Moshe has to ask them to stop bringing things! (Ex. 35:5-19)

So creating beautiful sacred space can be an act of communal generosity. And sometimes, the architectures of time and space coincide to create something surprising, and even more beautiful than could happen in one realm alone.

A couple weeks ago, the Torah portion (Terumah) also discussed the building of the *Mishkan*. I sent out a request before Shabbat inviting people to bring something beautiful they could share on-screen during our congregation's Zoom service. The idea was for people to contribute to the building of our virtual sanctuary. As a rabbi, you never really know if people will respond to such a request. But the community responded generously. An abundance of ritual objects - items from nature, artwork, photos, fabric, musical instruments and more - graced our geographically dispersed sanctuary. Not only that, but people told us why those things were sacred to them, why they wanted them to be part of our *Mishkan*. Some offerings were gifts from loved ones, past or present. Some held deep significance in people's spiritual journeys, or were meaningful because of the place in which people got them. Some reminded people of life's joy, or fragility, or both.

When the Torah says in *parashat* Vayakel that the seventh day shall be a "Shabbat shabbaton," and only then goes on to describe the building of the *Mishkan*, it's reminding us to create sacred time. It's reminding us this can be beautiful. And it's reminding us to rest, no matter how important the tasks are that await our attention. Rest is essential.

This sacred time is the gift drawn from everything else. It makes life's preciousness more visible, and in doing so, becomes a precious jewel itself. It can make our individual story more poignant, our connection to each other richer, our daily efforts more vibrant. It allows us to see what we might be missing the remainder of the time. Like the bare branches through which we can see the sky, even as the trees rest in winter.

# Jewish Community Center

## JCC Friendship Club

The JCC Friendship Club met on February 16. This was the first time we met since COVID-19 closed everything. We had to show that we were vaccinated and we had to wear masks. We met in the library and removed our masks when we had snacks. The meeting was called to order by Sylvia Diamond. We sang "Hatikvah" and said the Pledge of Allegiance. Lynne Green said the blessing over the cookies that were brought in by Sylvia and Bruce Orden. The tea was provided by the JCC.

We discussed future meetings and programs. We also talked about going out to eat and going to local places for field trips.

A Purim party will be held at Elderwood on Wednesday, March 9, and the activities director said we were welcome to join them. Elderwood is an assisted living facility that is across the road from the JCC.

We are planning a meeting at the JCC on Wednesday, April 6, at 1:30 pm. Bruce is planning to show a movie. All senior citizens are welcome. If you want to attend, you can call the JCC at 724-2417 or Sylvia at 772-0726. You are welcome even if you don't call.

I look forward to seeing you then.

Sylvia Diamond  
President

# HIAS . . . . . Continued from page 3

lives are in danger being turned away at border crossings around the world. This is a critical moment for all of us to reaffirm and redouble our support for refugees and

asylum seekers. During the Shabbat of March 4-5, 2022, the Jewish community will dedicate sacred time and space to refugees and asylum seekers."

## Moving any time soon?

Whether you're moving across town or across the country, please let The Reporter know so you can stay up to date on community news! E-mail [reporter@aol.com](mailto:reporter@aol.com) with "Reporter Address change" in the subject line to let The Reporter know about your new address.

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- 2) Pledges and payments (checks should be made payable to "Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton") can be mailed to The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Road, Vestal, NY 13850
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NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Fireworks detonated near group of Jewish men walking in Williamsburg, Brooklyn

For the fourth week in a row, the Jewish community in Brooklyn, NY, has been subject to an incident of antisemitism. In the most recent event, on the evening of Feb. 18, a car drove slowly down a street in the Jewish neighborhood of Williamsburg. On security tape, the vehicle is seen stopping close to a group of Chasidic men as someone tosses something on the ground. Moments later, an explosion could be heard as fireworks detonated near the Jewish men. Williamsburg is home to Satmar Chasidim. The United Jewish Organization, a local community group, urged the victims to come forward and report the incident, saying, "We can't reiterate enough the importance to file reports and to share info so that these crimes are investigated and prosecuted." Both the local police precinct and the NYPD's Hate Crimes division are reportedly investigating this latest incident. It came just one day after New York Mayor Eric Adams convened a meeting on Feb. 17 of Jewish community leaders to express his concern about the rise of antisemitic incidents in the city.

Bennett blasts demand by Tehran that IRGC be taken off foreign terror list

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said on Feb. 20 that Iran is demanding the removal of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps from the U.S. State Department list of foreign terror organizations as a condition for agreeing to a new nuclear deal. According to a report by Axios, Bennett's remarks came during a speech to representatives of U.S. Jewish organizations in Jerusalem. He did not say whether or not the Biden administration has agreed to reverse the Trump administration's 2019 move to blacklist the IRGC. "And to cap the chutzpah - Iran is demanding to delist the IRGC. Do you understand? They are now asking to let the biggest terror organization on earth off the hook," said Bennett. He did note that the United States rejected another Iranian appeal that International Atomic Energy Agency inspections into its military nuclear program be halted. However, according to the report, Bennett said that the Americans and Europeans would allow Iran to keep advanced centrifuges in storage in Iran rather than destroying them.

New immigrants arrive in Israel from war-torn Ukraine

"Everyone is just talking about the war," said Yana Koblenko from Ukraine, who arrived in Israel on Feb. 20 with a plane of 74 other new immigrants. "Until the last minute, I was worried the flight would be canceled." The Koblenko family - Yana, her husband

Yevgeny and their young daughter - had planned to come to Israel for some time. The rest of Yana's family, including her parents, had made aliyah just before the pandemic. "It's scary in Ukraine right now," Yana said as she arrived at Ben-Gurion International Airport. "We are very happy to have the opportunity to live in Israel." The aliyah flight was brought to Israel through the joint efforts of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, Israel's Immigration and Absorption Ministry and the Jewish Agency for Israel. The effort was funded by the Fellowship, which raises money primarily from Christian supporters of Israel from around the world. "The arrival of the immigrants to Israel is the essence of Zionism," said Fellowship President Yael Eckstein. The plane from Ukraine was carrying 75 people, including 21 children under the age of 18. In addition, 46 individuals between the ages of 18-45 arrived, 20 between 46-60, 19 between 61-80 and one individual who was 81. More than half of immigrants will be living in northern Israel, said the Fellowship. The rest are spread out between the center and southern Israel. "Our message to the Jews of Ukraine is very clear," said Immigration and Absorption Minister Pnina Tamano-Shata: "Israel will always be your home. Our gates are open to you in normal times and in times of crisis."

Israeli grows world's heaviest strawberry, according to Guinness World Records

An Israeli farmer has grown the heaviest strawberry ever recorded, according to Guinness World Records. The accomplishment was widely reported over the Feb. 20 weekend. The strawberry, which weighs 289 grams, and is seven inches long and 13 inches in circumference, was developed by Israel's Volcani Institute and was planted and harvested by Chahi Ariel. The strawberry was grown and picked last year, Ariel told Reuters. The Ariel family photographed the fruit and then stored it in the freezer for proof. "When we heard, it was an amazing feeling," said Ariel. "I jumped in the car, laughed and sang. We've been waiting for this for a long time." The previous record was held by a Japanese strawberry that weighed 250 grams and was harvested in 2015.

Palestinians furious with P.A. over corruption, suspension of hospital construction

The Palestinian Authority and its leader, Mahmoud Abbas, face sharp criticism for stopping the construction of a new Palestinian hospital to treat cancer patients, even though the funds were already raised for the project. According to a report by the Middle East Media Research Institute, Abbas had laid the cornerstone of the hospital in 2016, and in 2018, issued a decree establishing the Khaled Al-Hassan Foundation for Cancer Treatment and Bone Marrow Transplantation with the purpose of assisting in "the establishment of the Palestinian hospital specializing in the treatment of cancer." Then in January, the Palestinian Quds news network reported that Abbas had recently signed a presidential decree changing the function of the foundation to serve existing hospitals. The report evoked public outrage, according to the news outlet, and the decision was described as corruption and theft of public funds. For example, journalist Majed Al-Aroui called for an investigative committee and threatened to launch protests against the P.A. Some teachers submitted an official request for the P.A. to reimburse them for funds that had been deducted from their salaries for building the hospital. Responding to the outrage, the P.A. Health Ministry announced that construction was frozen for now and assured the public that the funds were with the foundation. The turmoil follows "extensive" public criticism of the corruption and mismanagement of the P.A., as well as undemocratic measures and abuses of power, said the report.

Qatar rules out normalizing relations with Israel

Qatar ruled out normalizing relations with Israel during an interview with Axios the week of Feb. 4. According to the report, the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, said his country had previously maintained ties "when there were prospects for peace" with the Palestinians, but that it "lost hope" after the 2008-09 Israeli ground incursion into the Gaza Strip. He said that while Qatar continues to have a "working relationship" with Israel to help the Palestinians, he does not envision the country joining the Abraham Accords "in the absence of a real commitment to a two-state solution." The country has been involved in ensuring that Israel help move over aid to Palestinians in Gaza and has itself transferred hundreds of millions of dollars of aid to Hamas.

Concord.....Continued from page 6

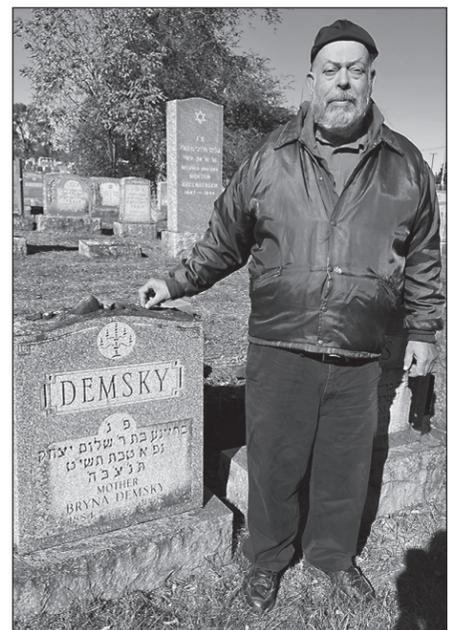
Friday, March 4: at 7:30 pm, HIAS Refugee Shabbat Service with Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell. To attend in person, all must show proof of COVID-19 vaccinations, wear a mask and physically distance. Via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/37UQSpK>, meeting ID 829 9450 3102 and passcode 708450, or on the Temple Concord Facebook page. (For more information, see the article on page 3.) Saturday, March 5: Shabbat school at 9 am; Torah study at 9:15 am on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3CVxM14>, meeting ID 88298087579 and passcode 676707; Shabbat family service at 10:30 am; and "Havdalah with a Bonus" at 7

pm on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3zd0atv>, meeting ID 897 4179 1260 and passcode 408279. Sunday, March 6: from 10 am-2 pm, Sisterhood Rummage Sale, buy one dress, suit, dressy jacket or blazer, get one free. Shoppers should use the Oak Street door and wear a mask. Tuesday, March 8, at 6:30 pm, Executive Board meeting and at 7:30 pm, general board meeting. The meeting is open to members of Temple Concord, Sisterhood or Brotherhood, without a vote. For the meeting link, contact the temple office at 723-7355 or [templeconcordaa@gmail.com](mailto:templeconcordaa@gmail.com).

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Izzy.....Continued from page 2

early on began a scrapbook about the friend she thought would go far; and Peter Riccio persuaded the ragman's son to apply to St. Lawrence University, where he would become a champion wrestler and board the trajectory to becoming Kirk Douglas. Izzy loved his "Yiddishe momme." He named his film company, Bryna Productions, in her honor. In late fall 1958, Bryna was terminally ill and hospitalized at the former Albany Hospital. An attending doctor, Henry Tulgan, then a young intern, wrote the following decades later, "Kirk Douglas spent every day of his mother's last days at her bedside. He was an absolute gentleman and interacted with all her caregivers with great courtesy. He smiled at the student nurses who couldn't keep their eyes off of him and was very appreciative of all the care everybody was rendering." Age 74, Bryna died on December 12, 1958. Dr. Tulgan remembered: Douglas "mother was an Orthodox Jew and when she did die, we made certain that all the rituals necessary for burial were followed, for which he was very grateful." Bryna is buried in a Jewish cemetery on the outskirts of Albany, near where she lived with a married daughter after leaving Amsterdam and an abusive marriage years before. Harry is buried in another Jewish cemetery. In the photo shown here, taken on November 5, I am placing a stone on Bryna's memorial. Some of her daughters lie close by. The Hebrew inscription on the gravestone translates to "May her soul be bound up in the bonds of life." Kirk Douglas lived to be 103. Bryna would have taken pride that her Izzy



Bill Simons placed a stone on the gravestone of Bryna Demsky, mother of Kurt Douglas (AKA Isadore "Izzy" Demsky) on November 5. (Photo by Fred Bucalos)

renewed Torah study in his later years, celebrated a second bar mitzvah and did "a beautiful Kaddish." Bill Simons is a professor emeritus at SUNY Oneonta where he continues to teach courses in American history. He is also the co-director of The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture, and served as a speaker for the New York Council on the Humanities.

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