

THE REPORTER

Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton

May 20-June 2, 2022
Volume LI, Number 10

BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Federation to hold 2022 Annual Meeting on June 15

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold its 2022 Annual Meeting on Wednesday, June 15, at 7 pm. There will be no program, although ice cream sundaes will be served. The event will include the election of the new Board of Directors. The Federation's Annual Report will be available at the meeting in hard copy. It will also appear on the Federation website, www.jfgeb.org, and in

the June 3 issue of *The Reporter*.

"Because of concerns of the increasing cases of COVID, while we hope to hold the meeting in person, we're aware that we might have to go virtual at the last minute," said Federation Executive Director Shelley Hubal. "That's one reason why we are not scheduling a program for the event. Our priority is to keep everyone safe."

Hubal also noted that community mem-

bers should call her at 222-9026 on the day of the meeting in case there is another COVID surge and the meeting has to go virtual.

Board of Directors

◆ Executive Committee: Suzanne Holwitt, president; Howard Warner, immediate past president; Mark Walker, vice president; Jeffrey Shapiro, treasurer; Lee Schechter, assistant treasurer; Eileen Miller, secretary; Brendan Byrnes, assistant secretary; Marilyn Bell, Campaign chairwoman; Michael

Wright, endowment chairmen; and Randy Friedman, community relations chairman.

◆ Board members until 2023: Nancy Dorfman, Mark Epstein, Dennis Foreman and Cathy Velenchik.

◆ Board members until 2024: Sondra Foreman, Charles Gilinsky and Tara Kaminsky

◆ Board members until 2025: Rita Bleier, Steve Gilbert, Jeff Platsky, Josh Shapiro, Rose Shapiro, Susan Walker and Arieh Ullmann.

Federation raises more than \$11,000 to aid Ukraine

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton announced that its Ukraine Emergency Fund raised more than \$11,000. The monies are going to the Jewish Federations of North America to help meet immediate needs in Ukraine and for Ukrainian refugees in surrounding countries. All funds will be used in these efforts; no overhead costs will be deducted from the monies raised.

Federation Executive Director Shelley

Hubal noted how proud she was of the local community. "The Binghamton community may be small in number, but it's large in heart," she said. "I am so pleased we were able to raise these funds to help those in desperate need in Ukraine."

By the end of April, JFNA had raised more than \$50 million in aid to Ukraine. Some of the organizations who have received funds include:

◆ The Jewish Agency for Israel, which is providing food, supplies and shelter to those fleeing Ukraine.

◆ The American Joint Distribution Committee, which is providing support for members of the Ukrainian community and supplies such as food and medicine.

◆ World ORT, which is focusing its aid on those connected to six Ukrainian schools who have chosen to remain in the country.

◆ Chabad, which is also providing food, medicine and shelter to those who choose to remain in Ukraine.

◆ HIAS, which is focusing on protecting refugees.

◆ The Israel Trauma Center, which is assisting those in Ukraine and surrounding countries in coping with psychological trauma caused by the invasion.

Anyone still planning to make a donation can do so by visiting <https://jewishfederations.org/crisis-in-ukraine2022>.



Information for Federation calendar due June 8

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton is collecting information for its 2022-23 calendar. Dates for meetings, events and communitywide celebrations are due by Wednesday, June 8, and should e-mailed to Executive Director Shelley

Hubal at director@jfgeb.org. The Federation will collate the dates and make certain there are no conflicts.

"Sima Auerbach, former Federation director, started coordinating the community calendar many years ago," said Hubal.

"We are a small, but active community. It is important make sure there are no conflicts so we can all enjoy the wonderful things our community has to offer us."

The calendar can be found on the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton's website

at www.jfgeb.org/community-calendar. "The calendar is a quick and easy way to see what is happening in the community," Hubal added. "It includes everything from lectures to board meetings. You might be surprised to see just how active our local organizations are."

Reporter wins three Syracuse Press Club Awards

By Reporter staff

Rabbi Rachel Esserman, executive editor of *The Reporter Group*, won three Syracuse Press Club Awards this year. "This is the first year, I've won in more than one category," Esserman said, "so this is very exciting."

The articles that won awards are:

◆ Best Column: First place, "Being a chaplain, not a theologian" (www.thereportergroup.org/past-articles/opinion-articles/opinion-stream/old-opinion-stream-manual-update/in-my-own-words-being-a-chaplain-not-a-theologian)

◆ Best Critique: Second place, "Black and

a slave, white and a Jew" (www.thereportergroup.org/past-articles/feature-book-review/feature-book-review-stream/book-review-stream/off-the-shelf-black-and-a-slave-white-and-a-jew?entry=394389).

◆ Best Editorial: Honorable mention, "We lost a year" (www.thereportergroup.org/streams/executive-editor/executive-editor-stream/in-my-own-words-we-lost-a-year-by-rabbi-rachel-esserman?entry=375595).

"The column and the editorial were very personal pieces," Esserman said. "I was nervous about writing 'Being a chap-

lain, not a theologian' and am grateful for Shelley Hubal's [executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton] encouragement. I spoke to her about the article and whether it was something appropriate for a Jewish newspaper. She said it was something she would like to read so I decided it was worth writing."

"We lost a year" refers to people's reactions to the pandemic. "I had some difficulty when, at the start of the pandemic, people were complaining about all they were missing," she said. "There was nothing wrong with their doing that, but it raised emotions

and issues from my past. The best way for me to deal with those was to write about them. The editorial helped me put what was occurring into perspective."

Esserman noted that the book, Laura Arnold Leibman's "Once We Were Slaves: The Extraordinary Journey of a Multiracial Jewish Family," she reviewed in "Black and a slave, white and a Jew" was one of the most interesting books she read last year. "It offered information about a little known chapter of Jewish history," she said. "It also featured a fascinating look at the See "Awards" on page 7

Spotlight

Jennifer Steil discusses her novel "Exile Music"

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

The Morning Book Club at Temple Concord will be held on Wednesday, June 1, with author Jennifer Steil appearing on Zoom to discuss and read from her novel "Exile Music." For more information, see Temple Concord's notes on page 6. The Reporter's review of the book can be found at www.thereportergroup.org/streams/executive-editor/executive-editor-stream/off-the-shelf-two-sides-of-world-war-ii-part-1-by-rabbi-rachel-esserman?entry=366308. The following e-mail interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Rabbi Rachel Esserman: "Exile Music"

is a different type of World War II novel because the characters settle in South America. Why did you decide to have them emigrate to Bolivia? What ideas/problems/thoughts did that allow you to explore in your novel that you wouldn't have been able to do if they'd emigrated to the U.S. or Canada?

Jennifer Steil: The story of the Jewish refugees in Bolivia before, during and after the war is a largely untold and ignored story. I myself was unaware of the stories of this part of the Diaspora until I moved to La Paz, Bolivia, in 2012 and met some of the survivors still there.

We moved to Bolivia because my hus-

band, Tim Torlot, took a job as head of the EU delegation in La Paz. Early on in our time there, he came home from a meeting with the Austrian honorary consul one evening and said, "Did you know there were 20,000 Jewish refugees here in Bolivia during World War II?"

I hadn't known.

By 1938, Bolivia was one of only three countries in the world offering visas to Jews fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe. The others were the Dominican Republic and Japan-occupied Shanghai. So most refugees didn't choose to come to Bolivia; they had no choice.

Not long after I had that conversation with my husband, I met John Gelernter in La Paz. His parents fled their village that had been part of Poland, then Ukraine and then the U.S.S.R. They had lost their 2-year-old daughter and their parents and the entire Jewish population of their village.

John was born in La Paz and lives there still. He used to run into Klaus Barbie on the street. He is a violinist and has been a concertmaster at the Bolivian Symphony Orchestra founded by Erich Eisner in 1945.

John told me his family's story, and introduced me to other refugees. The most See "Novel" on page 8

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JEWITICA festival

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Opinion

From the Desk of the Federation Executive Director

With gratitude

SHELLEY HUBAL

Here we are again: another mass shooting. This time the perpetrator is from Broome County. He could have very easily carried out his hate-filled mission here in our community, but chose to target the Black community of Buffalo. My heart aches for the citizens of Buffalo, but beyond that, I am sad for all of us. Guns, violence and hate are now the norm in this country. Is this the world we want to leave for our children and grandchildren?

So, what can we do? Last week, the Federation held a security seminar with local law enforcement, intelligence and emergency providers. The Vestal Police Department

offered to hold an “active shooter” training with us. I plan to take them up on that. Please watch future issues of *The Reporter* and your e-mail for more information on that. I urge you to attend. Knowing how to react in a terror situation could save your life and the life of others. What can be more important than that?

The Anti-Defamation League, National Urban League, League of United Latin American Citizens, Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC and National Action Network are urging people to sign a petition asking the White House to hold a summit on hate and extremism. This is an

effort to find a plan to combat violent extremism and white supremacy. You can find the petition on the ADL website www.ADL.org. Will a summit make a difference or just be a political show? I don't know, but it can't hurt to sign the petition and let our leaders know the time is now. Hatred, including antisemitism, is growing at an alarming pace and we need real answers.

I pray our leaders have the courage to pass gun control laws. May God grant all nations and all people peace, and let us pray for an end to the hatred, violence and bloodshed that has run rampant.

Meir Kahane and the Jewish Defense League, part II

By Bill Simons

On a bracing Saturday morning in January 2020, I attended Shabbat services at Temple Emanu-El in Manhattan, an iconic Reform synagogue at One East 65th Street and Fifth Avenue, across from Central Park. An immense and beautiful limestone sanctuary, Temple Emanu-El accommodates a seating capacity larger than that of St. Patrick's Cathedral, the famous Midtown Catholic landmark. The Shabbat service was moving, and a friendly congregant provided me with a late morning tour. I learned that synagogue's membership included Michael Bloomberg, former New York City mayor, media mogul and philanthropist. Inside Temple Emanu-El, I felt confident about the place of Jews in America.

Then, I returned to the street in front of Temple Emanu-El. This time it registered on me that the synagogue was ringed by New York City police. Although recent violent attacks on ultra-Orthodox Jews in suburban Monsey, NY, and on Chasidic Jews in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, had announced a resurgence of antisemitism, there was then still a tendency to rationalize that the targeted were highly visible Jews, distinctive and observable by their clothing, grooming and neighborhood.

The October 27, 2018, Shabbat carnage at Tree of Life synagogue – 11 murdered and six wounded, including aged Holocaust survivors – in the comfortable Squirrel Hill section of Pittsburgh should have dispelled the shibboleth that only conspicuous Jews were vulnerable. Finally, in the years that

have followed, the uptick in antisemitic incidents has shattered the illusion the only the most identifiable Jews are at risk.

The terrorist hostage-taking at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, TX, on January 15 has put American Jews on high alert. And the murderous Russian invasion of Ukraine, a land from which the ancestors of many American Jews emigrated, reminds us that a pre-Holocaust Ukrainian Jewish population of more than 1.5 million is now reduced to approximately 43,000.

Contemporary American Jews are alarmed and growing more militant. Police protection of Jewish institutions in the U.S. has grown more commonplace. Some synagogue officials have applied for gun licenses. There are calls for the rabbinic curriculum to include crisis-response training. Indeed, by throwing a chair at a violent, pistol-waving, terrorist invader, Beth Israel's Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker helped prevent the slaughter of congregants. Rabbi Cytron-Walker is adamant, “I encourage all Jewish congregations, religious groups, schools and others to participate in active-shooter and security courses.” Others reconsider the legacy of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane and reflect upon the tactics of his Jewish Defense League.

Amidst the American tumult of 1968, the racist demagogue George Wallace gained a national audience by turning “law and order” into angry code words. Contemporaneously, Rabbi Meir Kahane, a Brooklyn native, played upon the fears and anxieties of older, less affluent, more observant Jews in New York City's outer boroughs and founded the Jewish Defense

League. Kahane's JDL built a platform based on the solidarity of all Jews, Zionism, religious and cultural tradition, the resolve to defend Jewish people by violence and organizational discipline. Protection of New York City's Jewish neighborhoods, rescue of Soviet Jewry and support of Israel were Kahane priorities. Although Kahane denounced the Black Panthers as antisemites, he emulated their paramilitary tactics. The JDL faced terrorist accusations and arrests, relating to plans for bombings and kidnappings. For conspiring to bomb the Iraqi and Soviet embassies and other plots, Kahane was sentenced to a year in prison.

In 1971, Kahane made *aliyah*. Upon moving to Israel, he founded a political party, Kach. Kahane advocated the supremacy of the Torah over secular law, removal of Arabs from Israel, limiting citizenship to Jews, criminalizing sexual relations with Gentiles and instrumental violence. Elected to a single term in the Knesset, Kahane's legislative career was marked by controversy, rather than enactments. Arrested numerous times by Israeli authorities for illegal activities, oft marked by radical racism, he served a six-month prison term for planning armed attacks on Palestinians.

Through the years, the FBI attributed a number of terrorist acts to the JDL. Transgressions included sequestering a firebomb under the Pan Am loading dock at Kennedy International Airport in New York City on April 28, 1986. The Anti-Defamation League asserted, “Kahane consistently preached a radical form of Jewish See “Kahane” on page 7

In My Own Words

U.S.A. in a dystopian Wonderland

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

“Curiouser and curiouser!” – Alice in “Alice in Wonderland”

Universities are bowing to pressure and rejecting speakers whose views aren't in complete accord with the politics of their most strident students. School boards and local legislatures are banning books not only in school libraries and classrooms, but public libraries. Politicians who claim to believe in free elections are making it more difficult for many citizens to vote, due to what they believe was wide-spread election fraud in the last election, but only in those races where the candidate they supported didn't win. People who were deathly afraid of Muslim legislators being elected for fear we would be forced to follow *sharia* law are now trying to impose extreme Christian beliefs on members of all religions. Some Americans cheered the brutal Russian attack on Ukraine, supporting a dictatorship over a democracy. Those decrying public health measures – “Don't tell me to wear a mask or get vaccinated” – are now hoping to deprive women of the ability to control their own health and bodies.

Some days, I feel like I tumbled down a rabbit hole and found myself in a Wonderland version of America. “Free speech for my point of view only,” both sides seem to be

saying, “We can't agree to disagree because not only is my side the only right side, I won't even credit you with doing what you think is best for our country.” Polarization is the flavor of the day and anyone who disagrees with the most fervid opinions of either side is evil. If you have mixed thoughts – for example, in my case, proudly calling myself a liberal, but yet still thinking that Israel has a right to exist as a nation, even if it's not perfect – you are an enemy to those who think otherwise.

How did we get to this point? Something in our culture has changed, but only someone with the combined skills of a historian and sociologist might be able to pin-point what has occurred and why. (I know many people point their fingers at social media, but social media is just a tool, which can be used for good or evil.) It makes me nostalgic for a past that may never have really existed: the time when we worked together for the good of the country and could be friends even if we disagreed on politics. I don't want to go back to smoke-filled rooms where politicians acted as horse traders, wheeling and dealing to decide our fates. But when everything seems topsy-turvy, I can understand its appeal.

I once read about President Lyndon B. Johnson and the

behind-the-doors political trading that occurred between Democrats and Republicans during his administration. While Johnson was mistaken about Vietnam and was far from a perfect president, he brokered the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Democrats and Republicans both voted for the act, working for the good of the country, rather than saying they can't possibly support legislation put forward by the other party. There was a bit of give and take on both sides, and a kind of respect for the other side that now seems lacking in politics, social media and everyday life.

I don't long for the days when closed door politics were the order of the day or decisions were being made by a select few, but at least people worked together and some of the results benefitted our country. They were also willing to respect each other, even when their opinions differed. If only we could follow the example of the late Supreme Court Justices Antonin Scalia and Ruth Bader Ginsburg: they were on opposite sides of the political spectrum, but managed to be close friends because they recognized each others' humanity. If only we could all do the same because, as I've had to say far too many times recently, our democracy and society are at risk if we don't.



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Extension#/Department ~ 1. Advertising 2. Business Office

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THE REPORTER
Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton
BINGHAMTON, NY

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

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DEADLINE

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

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“The Reporter” (USPS 096-280) is published bi-weekly for \$40 per year by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Road, Vestal, NY 13850-3734. Periodicals Postage Paid at Vestal, NY and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Reporter*, 500 Clubhouse Road, Vestal, NY 13850-3734 or reach us by e-mail at TRREPORTER@AOL.COM.

www.thereporter.org

TC to hold scholar-in-residence event with Kol B'Seder on June 10-12

Temple Concord will hold a musical Solis-Cohen Scholar-in-Residence weekend with Cantor Jeff Klepper and Rabbi Dan Frelander of Kol B'Seder from Friday-Sunday, June 10-12. The event is sponsored by Temple Concord's Solis-Cohen Scholar-in-Residence Fund. All programs will be offered in person and online via Zoom and the Temple Concord Facebook page.

"We are looking forward to gathering together in person and online to celebrate Shabbat together with Cantor Klepper and singer performer Sue Horowitz on Friday night, study and sing with Rabbi Frelander and Cantor Klepper on Saturday, enjoy their concert Saturday night and learn

from Rabbi Frelander about Jewish communities worldwide on Sunday morning," said organizers of the event.

Klepper and Frelander formed their musical duo, Kol B'Seder, in 1971. "We are honored to be part of their pandemic-extended 50th Anniversary Tour with their concert Saturday night in the social hall," said organizers. "Jeff and Dan have composed some of the most beloved and enduring Jewish songs of the 20th and 21st centuries. We often sing their Shalom Rav, Haporeis Sukkat Shalom, Modeh Ani and Oseh Shalom at our services."

Klepper, assisted by singer-songwriter Sue Horowitz, will be leading Shabbat Services on Friday night with Rabbi

Barbara Goldman-Wartell. He will also give a sermon in song about "How Contemporary Music has Changed the Sound of the Synagogue." It will feature information about Debbie Friedman's impact on Kol B'Seder and other musicians' music. Horowitz recently moved to Ithaca and has produced five CDs of original music. She has toured, and offered programs to congregations and communities using song. To view the service virtually, visit <https://bit.ly/3hRm-W2Y>, meeting ID: 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330.

Frelander and Klepper will lead in Shabbat song and Torah study on June 11 at 9:15 am in person and on Zoom See "Scholar" on page 5

Intersisterhood program on May 25 to feature Rogers and Sperberstein

The 2022 Intersisterhood program will be "Rogers and Sperberstein: Better Than Never!" The event will be held on Wednesday, May 25, at 7 pm, at Beth David Synagogue. It will feature Robert Rogers and David Sperber performing their parodied versions of Broadway tunes with lyrics they created, all with a Jewish twist. Refreshments will be served.



Rogers and Sperberstein, AKA David Sperber and Robert Rogers

The admission price of \$5 will be collected at the event, and attendees will have an opportunity to be entered into a drawing for door prizes. The event will bring together Sisterhood members from Beth David, Temple Concord and Temple Israel, and is being coordinated by Intersisterhood committee members Dora Polachek, Barbara Zelter and Ani Loew.

So that the Intersisterhood committee can plan accordingly, attendees who have not responded by the May 18 deadline are asked to do so right away by making their reservations through their respective synagogues, either by phone or by e-mail: Beth David at 722-1793 or bethdavid@stny.rr.com; Temple Israel at 723-7461 or titammy@stny.twcbc.com; and Temple Concord at 723-7355 or templeconcordaa@gmail.com.

"This program is particularly à propos," organizers said,

"since Beth David is remembering Paula Rubin, a past Beth David Sisterhood president who passed away in March. Paula was one of the great supporters of the concept of Intersisterhood events and often proposed topics for the committee." In memory of Paula, her family is contributing to a portion of this program. "My Mom loved going to Broadway shows at the Forum, and I loved going to them with her," Rubin's daughter Lisha Levin told organizers. "This program would have

been a highlight for her. I am sure she will be there in spirit! We are so glad to help Intersisterhood in this undertaking!"

Robert Rogers is the director of the Robert Rogers Puppet Company, now in its 42nd year, and has performed locally, nationally and internationally. He and his family moved to Broome County in 2002. David Sperber, after training in NYC in ophthalmology and retinal surgery, moved to the Binghamton area in 1996, and established his practice, Retina Associates.

Rogers and Sperber originally met when they were high school students in New Rochelle, NY, and reconnected in Binghamton. "It wasn't until years later," Rogers noted, "that we realized our home-town connection. By chance,

we both had joined Temple Concord. One Friday night, I heard David's name as he was called up to the Torah, and See "Intersisterhood" on page 5

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to Brooke Shapiro Woods on the death of her mother,
Nancy Price

DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
June 3-16	May 25
June 17-30	June 8
July 1-14	June 22
July 15-28	July 6

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

TC-TI Adult Education to present Bill Simons on June 19

The joint Temple Concord and Temple Israel Adult Education Committee will hold a brunch featuring a presentation by Professor Bill Simons on "The Legacy of Hank Greenberg, Baseball's Pre-eminent Jewish Hero" at Temple Concord on Sunday, June 19, at 10 am. There will be a \$7 charge at the door for the brunch, which will be followed by the talk. Reservations should be made by Thursday, June 16, by contacting the synagogue at 723-7355 or templeconcordaa@gmail.com. Walk-ins will also be welcomed. The program will be available on Zoom, at <https://bit.ly/3vWNAhA>, meeting ID 850 9986 1626 and passcode 623610.



Professor Bill Simons (Photo by Armand La Potin)

Simons' lecture will examine Hank Greenberg's 1934 decision not to play during a play-off game that was held on Rosh Hashanah within the context of the national and international zeitgeist of the time. A PowerPoint presentation will employ photographs and other supporting materials. In addition to the 1934 High Holiday decision, the lecture will discuss the full arc of Greenberg's Hall of Fame baseball career, military service, role in facilitating the racial integration of baseball, and evolving relationship to Judaism and legacy, as well as a comparison to Sandy Koufax and contemporary Jewish major leaguers. Questions and comments will follow the formal presentation.

"Despite a career abbreviated by four-and-one-half years of World War II military service, Greenberg, a 6'4" first baseman-outfielder, ranks as one baseball's greatest sluggers and stands with pitcher Sandy Koufax, a fellow Hall of Famer, atop the list of the game's most iconic Jewish players," said organizers of the event. "In the equivalent of nine-and-one-half seasons, Greenberg hit 331 home runs, accumulated 1274 runs batted in, averaged .313, four times led the American League in both home runs and runs batted in, won two Most Valuable Player Awards, and led his team to four pennants. Until 1998, no right-handed batter exceeded Greenberg's 1938 season total of 58 home runs. His .605 career slugging percentage is exceeded by only five other players."

Organizers added, "In contrast to Koufax, whose 1961-1966 pitching peak coincided with a period of general acceptance of Jews in America, Greenberg's 1933-1940 prime seasons took place amidst resurgent domestic antisemitism, fueled by victims of the Great Depression who

blamed hard times on the Jews, and isolationists who believed that Jews sought to provoke a war between Nazi Germany and the United States. Moreover, Greenberg played for the Tigers, who shared a Detroit home with Henry Ford and Father Charles Coughlin, arguably America's two most notorious antisemites. Automobile manufacturer Ford republished 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,' a venerable forgery purporting to document a Jewish conspiracy to control international finance and world government. Coughlin, a Catholic priest with a national radio show, railed against Jewish dominance of the American economy, manipulation of politics, and support of Communism. During the 1934 baseball season, public attention to Greenberg's Jewishness peaked both amongst co-religionists and Gentile Americans.

"The Tigers entered September 1934 battling for the American League pennant for the first time since 1909, and the 23-year-old Greenberg, the team's top slugger, was crucial to Detroit's chances," organizers continued. "With the automobile industry devastated by the Great Depression, baseball provided Detroit with one of its few strong bonds of social cohesion. When Greenberg indicated that he might not play in Detroit's September 10 home game against the See "Simons" on page 5

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Off the Shelf

Unexpected consequences

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Any choice a person makes can result in unexpected consequences. After all, no one can predict the future. But some choices are more fraught than others, for example, surrogate motherhood or having an affair. Those actions occur in two recent novels: Jacqueline Friedland's "He Gets That From Me" (SparkPress) explores whether blood or love makes one a true parent, while the results of an affair not only affect the spouses involved, but their eldest child in "The Tenderest of Strings" by Steven Schwartz (Regal House Publishing).

In "He Gets That From Me," Jewish Maggie Fisher has already made several bad decisions by the time she decides to become a surrogate mother in 2007. After dropping out of college, she traveled from the New York City area to Arizona. Working in retail as a cashier is not her idea of a career, but she's trying to put money aside to go back to school to become a teacher. That becomes more difficult after she becomes pregnant. Her boyfriend Nick, who is also Jewish, is ready for them to marry, but Maggie finds herself unable to commit. She loves Nick and their young son, Wyatt, but marriage doesn't feel right at that moment. When Maggie sees an ad for someone looking for a surrogate mother, she decides to explore her options. Nick doesn't approve, but Maggie knows the money will allow her to fulfil her dream of becoming a teacher.

The non-Jewish Donovan and his husband, Chip, are

the gay couple that chooses Maggie to carry their children. Both men fertilized the eggs of an unknown donor, two of which are placed in Maggie and result in the birth of twins. Teddy is clearly the son of Chip, while Kai resembles Donovan. Then in 2018, when the boys are 10, Donovan sends away for genealogy results to continue a project the boys did for school. Yet, something is not right: while the results clearly show that Teddy is Chip's son, Kai is not related to anyone in the family, including his half-brother, even though they should have had the same mother. Against Chip's wishes, Donovan searches for an answer, one that upsets not only this family, but Maggie's.

Most readers will figure out the plot twist, but that's not the most important part of the novel. That's Friedland's exploration of what it means to be a parent. The chapters focus alternately on Maggie and Donovan, showing their strengths and weaknesses. Readers may find themselves rooting for one or the other, something that makes this work perfect for book clubs since there is no absolute right and wrong, only humans trying to do their best – sometimes succeeding and other times failing. The final chapter, which features a different character, puts the plot into perspective and makes this novel well worth reading.

While "He Gets That From Me" focuses on two families, "The Tenderest of Strings" concentrates on the Rosenfeld family. Reuben and his wife, Ardith, recently moved from

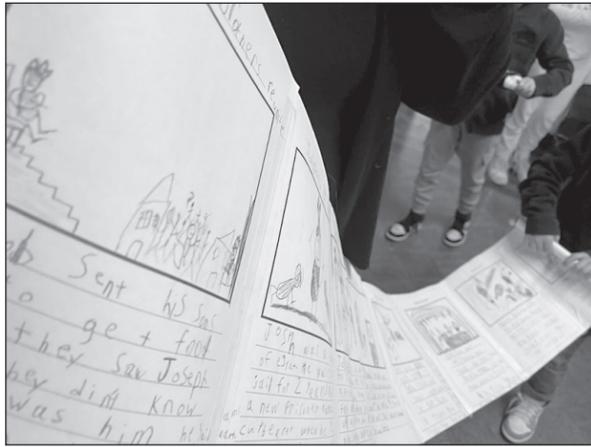
Chicago to a small town in Colorado, where Reuben now owns the town's local newspaper. Part of the reason they moved is that the cleaner air is supposed to be better for their younger son, Jamie, who has asthma. They also hope it will help their teenage son, Harry, whose antisocial behavior scares them. While Reuben spends his days learning the ins-and-outs of a community newspaper, Ardith struggles to discover her place since she's unable to find work. It doesn't help that the old house they bought needs a great deal of work; although Reuben has promised to do the repairs himself, he never finds time. Then Ardith has an affair, which, at first, goes unnoticed by her husband, until a hit-and-run accident reveals secrets that might destroy the Rosenfeld family.

Schwartz does an excellent job showing a 20-year-old marriage unraveling. In addition, he portrays how parents can feel useless when it comes to helping their children, particularly Harry who has more and more difficulty in school. Reuben is Jewish while Ardith is not, and that comes to play a role in their new feelings for each other. "The Tenderest of Strings" is a morally complex work that explores life's grey areas. Both main characters are deeply flawed, which makes them unappealing at times, although that also makes the story feel true to life. Book clubs whose members enjoy dissecting relationships will find much to discuss.

TC Religious School class project



Students from the Temple Concord Religious School displayed the Torahs covers they made.



A closer look at the students' hand-made Torah scroll, which contains writings and drawings about the stories from the Torah the Temple Concord Religious School students learned about in the last year.



Orly Shoer, director of the Temple Concord Religious School (far left), and teacher Karen Hammer (far right, back) helped the students display their work.

Hillel Academy celebrated Israel Independence Day



Students of Hillel Academy worked on their map of Israel.



A map of Israel drawn and colored by students from Hillel Academy.



At left: Rabbi Moshe Shmaryahu, head of Jewish studies, passed out falafels during the celebration.



Hillel Academy students celebrated Israel Independence Day by marching with Israeli flags.



Hillel Academy students listened to the shofar being blown as part of their celebration.

JEWETICA festival to be held in Utica on June 12

JEWETICA, Utica's new Jewish cultural festival, will be held on Sunday, June 12, from noon-8 pm, at the Jewish Community Center, 2310 Oneida St., Utica. Admission is free. There will be games and activities for children, food trucks, cooking demonstrations and rabbis who can answer questions at the "Ask a Rabbi" tent. The event will be held rain or shine.

Headlining the musical acts will be the Isle of Klezbos, who have been called "one of New York's finest klezmer bands." The six female musicians swing with traditional and updated music from eastern European shtetls such as those found in Ukraine and Poland. The Village Voice said, "These women will make you shake your tushies!" Musicians from the local Jewish community will also perform.

Jeffrey Yoskowitz, co-author of "The Gefilte Manifesto" cookbook, will be on hand to demonstrate how to make

kosher dill pickles and cheese blintzes. He'll also teach how to make the cheese for the blintzes from scratch. Yoskowitz is also a scholar of historic Jewish foodways and will give a presentation on "Food from the Shtetls."

"Everyone is welcome to this festival to explore Jewish culture and life," said organizers of the event. "As your bubbe (Yiddish for Jewish grandmother) would say, 'If you miss this event, it will be a *shanda* (a sin)!'"

Hungry Ear to present Jewish humor on May 23

The Broome County Library's Hungry Ear Program will feature two stories of Jewish humor on Monday, May 23, from 5:30-6:30 pm, in the Decker Room. Bernard Malamud's "The First Seven Years" will be read by Deb Williams, and tells about a father's search for a husband

for his daughter. John Carey will read a story about a man determined to have a relationship with a smart woman in "The Whore of Mensa" by Woody Allen. The program is free and open to the public. For more information, call the library at 778-6400.

Simons

Continued from page 3

Boston Red Sox because it conflicted with Rosh Hashanah, the press retorted that the Tigers needed Greenberg on the playing field more than even during this crucial phase of the pennant race. Detroit sportswriters emphasized Greenberg's obligation to his teammates and to the fans."

As professor emeritus and former chairman of the History Department at SUNY Oneonta, Simons continues to teach courses on "Jazz Age and New Deal," and the "Athletics, Society, and Sports." He is a recipient of both the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence Teaching and for Excellence in Service. Simons earned degrees from Colby College (B.A.), the University of Massachusetts (M.A.), and Carnegie-Mellon University (D.A.). He is the longtime co-director of the Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American History, an annual academic conference on the national pastime co-sponsored by the National Baseball Hall of Fame and SUNY Oneonta. He has been a columnist for *The Reporter* since June 2020.

Simons received the American Jewish Press Association 2021 First Place Award for Excellence in Writing About Sports for his column about Hank Greenberg.

Simon has served as editor and contributor to 12 baseball anthologies published by McFarland press. His articles, reviews and essays have appeared in numerous journals and books, including "Addressing Antisemitism and Racism in Statuary and Text: A Pedagogical Approach" in *Israel Journal of Israel Foreign Affairs*; "Jackie Robinson and the American Mind: Media Images of the Reintegration of Baseball," from "Jack Johnson to LeBron James: Sports, Media, and the Color Line"; "Greenberg at the Bat: A Twenty-first Century Jewish Moonlight Graham," Cooperstown Symposium; "Baseball and American Culture: A Seminar," in "Baseball in the Classroom: Essays on Teaching the National Pastime"; "Hank Greenberg: The Jewish American Sports Hero," in *Sports and the American Jew*; "Sports," *Jewish-American History and Culture*;

"Andy Cohen: Second Baseman as Ethnic Hero," in *The National Pastime: Baseball History*; "The Athlete as Jewish Standard Bearer: Media Images of Hank Greenberg;" in *Jewish Social Studies*; and "Bloomfield: An Italian Working Class Neighborhood," in *Italian American*.

Simons has delivered many lectures on a wide variety of topics to a numerous museums, libraries, colleges and Jewish organizations in New York state, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Maryland. Many of his presentations were as a speaker for the New York Council on the Humanities. For many years, Simons served as the co-advisor to the Jewish student group at SUNY Oneonta. A labor activist, he served 16 years as president of the Oneonta chapter of United University Professions. Simons lives in Oneonta.



Intersisterhood

Continued from page 3

that's how we became good friends thereafter." Rogers recalls bantering back and forth with Sperber about theatrical trivia. "I worked in the performing arts," Rogers added, "and if David hadn't become a physician, I think he would have loved to be in the theater."

Their debut as a musical comedy team came when they performed together at a Saturday night Temple Concord congregational dinner. "We were a hit," Sperber quipped, "and our personae evolved into what we currently are: Rogers and Sperberstein, the unsung and unknown Jewish musical theater duo!"

At another Temple Concord dinner event, Sperber

rewrote the lyrics to "Brush Up Your Shakespeare" from "Kiss me Kate" as "Brush Up Your Torah." "At which point," Sperber added, "Robert realized that I could write much better than I could sing. We continued writing new Yiddish lyrics to classical show tunes, and have performed our act numerous times - twice, to be exact."

"With their sense of humor and talent for adding some Jewish surprises to Broadway hits," organizers say, "this Intersisterhood event is just what the doctor ordered. Both Robert and David look forward to entertaining us at what will surely be an event to remember!"

Scholar

Continued from page 3

at <https://bit.ly/3CVxM14>, meeting ID 882 9808 7579 and passcode 676707.

Kol B'Seder will perform a concert on June 11 at 7 pm. For more information, see the sidebar to this article below.

Freelander will speak about "Progressive Jewish Communities outside of the United States and Israel" on June 12 as part of Temple Concord's joint adult education brunch series with Temple Israel. "Rabbi Freelander is uniquely qualified to talk about these communities as he was the president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism from 2014-2019," organizers said. The brunch will begin at 10 am at Temple Concord with the program starting at 10:30 am. The cost is \$7 per person for the brunch. Reservations are due by Thursday, June 9, and can be made by contacting

the synagogue at TempleConcordbinghamton@gmail.com or 723-7355. Walk-ins are also welcome. The Zoom link for the event is <https://bit.ly/38f6yYW>, meeting ID 850 9986 1626 and passcode 623610.

The Solis-Cohen Scholar-in-Residence Fund was established at Temple Concord by Ann Rosenthal and her sister, Mary Keller, as a memorial to their parents, J. Solis-Cohen, Jr. and Marion Labe Solis-Cohen of Philadelphia. The purpose of the Solis-Cohen Scholar-in-Residence Fund is to bring speakers and programs to Temple Concord every other year. Donations to the Temple Concord's Solis-Cohen Scholar-in-Residence Fund are appreciated to ensure that the synagogue can continue to provide adult educational programs.

Kol B'Seder Community Concert at TC on June 11

Temple Concord will hold a Kol B'Seder in Concert, featuring the musical duo Cantor Jeff Klepper and Rabbi Dan Freelander on Saturday, June 11, at 7 pm. Klepper and Freelander - authors of "Shalom Rav" and "Lo Alecha" - will sing their greatest hits and comic satires, plus the music of Debbie Friedman with whom they performed more than four decades. The concert is free online, for Temple Concord members and children under 13, and \$10 for adults and \$5 for students in person. To watch the concert on Zoom, visit <https://bit.ly/38f6yYW>. The concert is funded through the Temple Concord Solis-Cohen Scholar-In-Residence Fund as part of a weekend of programs. Contact the synagogue office for concert reservations at 723-7355 or templeconcordaa@gmail.com.



L-r: Rabbi Dan Freelander and Cantor Jeff Klepper (Photo by Enid Bloch)

The *Jewish News of Greater Phoenix* called Kol B'Seder, "Perhaps the most famous duo in contemporary Jewish music... often likened to Simon and Garfunkel, the duo is at the forefront of the Jewish rock/folk scene." According to *The Jewish Review*, "Klepper and Freelander compose original melodies for both liturgical and English texts in a bright, rock-n-roll style. All of their albums are terrific."

Klepper and Freelander have sung together as Kol B'Seder for almost 50 years. Klepper has composed hundreds of Jewish songs. He was ordained at HUC-JIR in 1980 and received an honorary doctorate in 2005. He co-edited the song section in the Reform prayerbook, "Mishkan T'filah," and co-founded the annual Hava Nashira song-leader workshop. Klepper is cantor emeritus of Temple Sinai of Sharon, MA, and teaches at the School of Jewish Music at Hebrew

College in Newton, MA. Freelander recently retired as president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism and served for 40 years as a senior officer of the Union for Reform Judaism. His career has focused on the evolution of Progressive synagogues with an emphasis on the central role of Jewish music. He was the founding director of the Commission on Synagogue Music and the annual North American Jewish Choral Festival. He currently serves as board chairman of the Mary McDowell Friends School. A founding member of Kol B'Seder, he and Klepper are celebrating their 50th anniversary of composing and performing new Jewish songs for young people and adults.

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Number lesson

RABBI SUZANNE BRODY, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND YOUTH PROGRAMMING,
TEMPLE BETH-EL, ITHACA

There is something both fun and comforting about numbers. We can be creative about how we move them around to create riddles and games, but, at the same time, there are clear rules that they always follow. Growing up, some children's favorite numbers change to reflect their current age. Other people, like me, seem drawn to certain numbers and have some consistent favorites throughout life (2, 5 and 10, if you're curious).

While I wouldn't personally list it as one of my favorites, there are a lot of people who consider 49 to be an important number. Mathematicians consider 49 to be significant because it's the first square number whose digits are also

squares. In Buddhism, 49 days is one of the lengths of the intermediate state (*bardo*), a transitional, or liminal, state between death and rebirth. It is also the number of days and nights that Siddhartha Gautama, the ascetic and spiritual teacher of ancient India who founded Buddhism, spent meditating as a holy man.

For Jews, the number 49 symbolizes the highest level of spiritual attainment possible for humans. We derive this from the story of creation. The world was created in six days. God then rested on the seventh day, blessed it and made it holy. So the number seven is synonymous with spirituality and holiness. Therefore, by logical extension, 49, the product of

two sevens, is the highest that we humans are able to reach. According to the Talmud, 50 gates or levels of understanding were created in the world, and all were given to Moses except one, as it says: "You have made him little less than divine." (Psalms 8:6) In other words, Moses, our greatest leader, reached the highest level that is humanly possible, with level 50 being reserved for God alone.

Given this reasoning, it seems fitting that we are commanded to count seven weeks of seven days as we strive to ascend in holiness to be worthy of receiving the Torah on Shavuot. The commentator Ohr HaChaim explains that **See "Lesson" 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.twcbc.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, May 21, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person (masks are required). The Torah portion is Leviticus 25:1-26:2 and the haftarah is Jeremiah 32:6-27. At 9:15 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom.

Wednesday, May 25, at 7 pm, an Intersisterhood event for all local Sisterhoods will be held at Beth David. Reservations are needed. For more information, see the article on page 3.

On Saturday, May 28, 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 Leviticus 26:3-27:34 and the haftarah is Jeremiah 16:19-17:14. At 9:30 pm, there will be Havdalah services via Zoom.

The temple office will be closed on Monday, May 30, for Memorial Day.

On Wednesday, June 1, there will be Torah study from 4-5 pm on Zoom.

Penn-York Jewish Community

President-Treasurer-Secretary: Harvey Chernosky, 570-265-3869

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.

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 June 3.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Friday, May 20, light candles before 8:05 pm

Saturday, May 21, Shabbat ends 9:06 pm

Friday, May 27, light candles before 8:11 pm

Saturday, May 28, Shabbat ends 9:12 pm

Friday, June 3, light candles before 8:16 pm

Saturday, June 4, light candles after 9:17 pm

Sunday, June 5, light candles after 9:18 pm

Monday, June 6, yom tov ends 9:19 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, May 20: at 7:30 pm, Shabbat Service with Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell. To attend in person, all must show proof of COVID-19 vaccinations. Masks are required. Join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y>, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330; or on the Temple Concord Facebook page.

Saturday, May 21: Torah study at 9:15 am on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3CVxM14>, meeting ID 882 9808 7579 and passcode 676707; and "Havdalah with a Bonus" at 7 pm on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3zd0atv>, meeting ID 897 4179 1260 and passcode 408279, or on the Temple Concord Facebook page.

Sunday, May 22: from noon-4 pm, Kilmer Days – an afternoon of family activities.

Wednesday, May 25: at 7 pm, Intersisterhood program. (See the article on page 3 for more information.)

Thursday, May 26: at 7 pm, Annual Congregational Meeting. Members have been sent invitations to the Zoom event.

Friday, May 27: at 7:30 pm, Shabbat service celebrating Yom Yerushalayim with Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell. To attend in person, all must show proof of COVID-19 vaccinations. Masks are required. Join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3hRmW2Y>, meeting ID 869 9699 8146 and passcode 826330; or on the Temple Concord Facebook page.

Saturday, May 28: No Torah study; "Havdalah with a Bonus" at 7 pm on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3zd0atv>, meeting ID 897 4179 1260 and passcode 408279, or on the Temple Concord Facebook page.

See "Concord" on page 8

Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive

Rabbi: David Regenspan

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

Phone: 334-2691

E-mail: fertigtj@roadrunner.com

Contact: Guilia Greenberg, 373-5087

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

Adult Ed.: Shabbat study sessions are held on designated Saturday mornings at 10 am. Call ahead, text or e-mail to confirm dates.

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.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Israel ambassador returns to Kyiv

Israeli Ambassador to Ukraine Michael Brodsky returned to Kyiv the week of May 16, raising the Jewish state's flag on a pole just outside the embassy building on May 17. "Good to be back," he posted on Twitter along with a photo of himself in the Ukrainian capital. Among his first items of business, Brodsky went to pay his respects to the first president of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, who died on May 10 at the age of 88 after a long illness. He was "a true friend of Israel and the Jewish people," the ambassador wrote on social media. Brodsky also noted that "President Kravchuk was the first Ukrainian leader to visit Israel, as the head of an official delegation, during which many bilateral agreements were signed. I share the grief with his family and with the Ukrainian people."

Austria records nearly 1K antisemitic incidents in 2021

The Jewish community of Vienna documented a record 965 antisemitic incidents in Austria in 2021, according to a new report. The statistic represents the highest number of incidents since the local community began compiling such data 20 years ago. It also represents an increase of 65 percent from 2020, when 585 acts of antisemitism were recorded to the Reporting Office for Antisemitism of the Jewish Community of Vienna. Roughly 60 percent of attacks reported last year were categorized as "abusive behavior," which included in-person and online remarks, the report said. Nearly 30 percent of the incidents involved mass mailings and writings that featured antisemitic messages, while 10 percent involved damage and desecration. There were also 22 threats recorded and 12 instances of assaults or attempted assaults. The report also noted that 28 percent of the

Concord Continued from page 6

Wednesday, June 1: at 10:30 am, Book Club will discuss "Exile Music: A Novel" by Jennifer Steil. The author will join the discussion on Zoom and read from her book. For the Zoom link, e-mail Merri Pell-Preus

at merrypell.preus@gmail.com. Masks are required if attending in person.

Wednesday, June 1: at 6:30 pm, Sisterhood schmooze and at 7 pm, Sisterhood board meeting.

Lesson Continued from page 6

the standard period of spiritual purification is seven days. In order to go from being slaves in Egypt to being a free people ready to receive Torah, we needed seven cycles of this process of purification to achieve the national transformation from lowly slaves to a lofty status described by God as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

The same language that is used for counting the 49 days between Passover and Shavuot is also used in this week's Torah reading with regards to counting up to the Jubilee year. Just as we count the days of the week until we reach the seventh day, Shabbat, the members of the Sanhedrin (the great rabbinical court) count the years until we reach the seventh one. On the seventh year, we observe a type of Shabbat for the land. We let the land lie fallow for a *shemittah* year where we don't work the land, but live off the bounty that is already growing. During the *shemittah* year, the produce of the land is considered ownerless and available to all, giving us a taste of what it means to live in a more just society where no one goes hungry.

This is also consonant with the fact that in numerology, the number 49 is believed to be about focus and idealistic solutions for humanity. An idealistic solution for humanity is a great description of the Jubilee (*yovel*) year. Just as reaching Shavuot brings us to an elevated place of holiness, reaching the Jubilee

year brings us to a greater level of redressing issues of inequality among people. We worry not just about the land, but about freeing slaves and prisoners, and releasing people from their debts. One might even say that we reach a peak of mercy and care for others.

Unfortunately, while observation of *shemittah* years continues in the land of Israel, observation of the Jubilee has not been observed for many centuries. According to the post-exile rabbinic interpretation of Torah, observance of Jubilee only applied when all of the Jewish people live in the land of Israel according to their tribes. Therefore, since 600 B.C.E., when the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh went into the Diaspora, the celebration of the Jubilee has not occurred.

Just because we do not observe all of the laws of the Jubilee today as a whole community does not mean that we should abandon the ideals it embodies. Each year, we must find ways to combat the injustices and inequalities we see around us. We must reach inside our own hearts to find mercy toward others, and, every once in a while, it's up to us to find ways of releasing people from their debts to us, whether they be physical or emotional. As we get closer to reaching Mount Sinai this year, may we also each get a step closer toward realizing our idealistic solutions for humanity and bringing the spirit of the Jubilee into our lives today.

Kahane Continued from page 2

nationalism, which reflected racism, violence and political extremism."

Kahane forfeited his U.S. citizenship, but remained free to remain an active presence in America. On November 6, 1990, the front-page, lead article of *The New York Times* reported, "Rabbi Meir Kahane, the founder of the Jewish Defense League and leader of an anti-Arab fringe movement in Israel, was assassinated last night by a gunman during a Zionist conference at a hotel (the Marriott East Side) in a midtown Manhattan." Kahane was 58 years old. The assassin, El Sayyid Nosair, shot and wounded by a U.S. Postal Service officer, was captured. Nosair, a naturalized U.S. citizen who had emigrated from Egypt, murdered Kahane by firing two shots from a .357 caliber pistol at point blank range. The rabbi had just sat down, following a speech exhorting Orthodox attendees to emigrate to Israel. It took two trials, the first complicated and bizarre, before Nosair, also guilty of other terrorist crimes, received a life sentence without possibility of parole.

A decade after Kahane's assassination, his son, Binyamin, and daughter-in-law, Talia, both followers of his, were murdered in

an ambush by Palestinian terrorists outside of Jerusalem.

Although most American Jews publicly distanced themselves from the JDL, Kahane claimed they were privately thankful that he provided a deterrent to their potential assailants. Vigilance is prudent, but Kahane tactics were not in their heyday, nor are they now, an effective bulwark against antisemitic assault.

The American democracy provides political and legal resources, including collaboration with law enforcement. Further Jewish training in the defense of our communities and people is needed. However, appropriating the bigotry of the lawless is not the answer. On March 20, I participated in Civilian Response to Active Shooter Training at Temple Beth El co-directed by Oneonta Police Department Lieutenant Eric Berger, whose grandparents were amongst the founders of the synagogue.

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.

recorded incidents involved antisemitism related to the COVID-19 pandemic. People supporting right-wing, far-right and neo-Nazi movements were responsible for 461 (48 percent) of all incidents, while 15 percent were committed by left-wing supporters and 11 percent by Muslims. The rest were unattributable to a specific grouping.

Israel ups fuel exports to Europe

Israel is increasing its offshore natural-gas output as part of an effort to reach a deal with Europe in order to supply it with alternatives to Russian energy. Jerusalem seeks to double production to 40 billion cubic meters as it expands current projects and starts working in new fields, reported Reuters. "The hope is to create a relatively fast working process, and during the summer, to reach a framework agreement," said Lior Schillat, director-general of Israel's Ministry of Energy. "In the beginning, it will be small amounts, and slowly, as production and delivery capacities rise, (the amounts) will increase," he said, adding that this probably won't make a difference until about 2024. According to the report, a floating, liquefied natural-gas facility that could facilitate shipments to Europe is also being discussed. Since the start of Russia's war with Ukraine on Feb. 24, Europe has sought to terminate the use of energy sources from Russia, which currently sends about 40 percent of its natural gas.

Awards Continued from page 1

way our identities are socially constructed. The book should be of interest to anyone who loves reading about Jewish history in the Americas."

When discussing her writing, Esserman said that it's her favorite part of the the job. "Writing helps me think about ideas and

issues," she added. "It's made me a far better reader since I want to be fair to the authors whose books I review. But I also love playing with words. Rewriting is my favorite part: I love shaping the words and making the piece better. It's extremely gratifying to receive an award for that work."

Jewish Community Center

JCC Friendship Club

The JCC Friendship Club met on May 4. The meeting was called to order at 1:30 pm. We said the Pledge of Allegiance and then sang "Hatikvah." A song sheet was provided for those who did not know the words. For refreshments, the JCC had hot water, tea bags and instant coffee. Cookies were brought in by Sylvia Diamond, Bruce Orden and Moirer Shirvan. Lynne Green and Jack Lindley joined us in the library.

Jack told puns that made us chuckle, Bruce showed us the beginning of the movie "Yentl" with Barbra Streisand. He

will show the rest of it at the next meeting. We discussed having future meetings on the first Wednesday of the month. We also talked about going out to eat at a local restaurant.

There are no annual dues, but we decided to raise the price to \$3 each meeting. No one will be denied entrance to a meeting if he/she does not have the money.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, June 1, at 1:30 pm, at the JCC.

Sylvia Diamond President

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Novel..... Continued from page 1

significant was Guillermo Wiener, who fled Austria for Bolivia when he was 8 years old. He was obsessed with movies and eventually owned three cinemas in La Paz. He learned Spanish from his landlady's children and eventually considered himself Bolivian, changing his name from German Wilhelm to Guillermo.

Guillermo, who died just a few months ago, considered himself fully Bolivian. He never considered returning to Austria, and said he could never forgive them for what the country did to its Jews.

I kept searching for more books about this community of Jewish refugees, and found very little. And everything I found was memoir. I read every memoir I could find, both of Jews in Vienna at the time and of those who had passed through Bolivia at some point.

There didn't seem to be any novel about this significant population, and it felt critical to me that they not be forgotten. I thought about trying to write a nonfiction book instead of a novel. But I wondered if I would be able to find enough verifiable information to create a meaningful and emotionally moving work. I often find that fiction is better able to move me than nonfiction, if it is well crafted and immersive.

I began to imagine writing a novel to fill this gap. There were so many overlooked stories here. I could not retrieve them all, but I tried. What I wanted more than anything was to create a context that would be recognizable to any survivor who lived through this time period in Bolivia.

Many readers have said "Exile Music" did this for them. Two weeks after its initial publication, I received an e-mail from a 90-year-old man in Florida who said, "Your

novel is so close to my own experience that I cannot believe you made it up." Since then I have talked with survivors on the phone and met others who are part of book clubs. I wish I had met them all before I wrote the book! But I am so grateful for their e-mails telling me how much it means to them to see their history brought to light.

Writing about refugees in Bolivia allowed me to explore the particular challenges these refugees faced: living at 12,000 feet of altitude, confrontation with cultures and languages entirely alien to them, adjustment to a much less cosmopolitan place, and also often living alongside the Nazis they thought they had escaped.

Esserman: The novel also shows the importance of music in the characters' lives. Does it play a similar role in your life or were you exploring their thoughts to learn more about how people relate to music?

Steil: Most of my work explores how various arts – painting, poetry, music – help us navigate our way in the world. I also tend to write about characters who can do things I wish I could do. My protagonist in my novel "The Ambassador's Wife" is a painter, and I have no talent in the visual arts. And unlike Orly, my protagonist in "Exile Music," I lack musical abilities. But I love thinking about music and musicians, and the ways that all of us use music in some way to get us through difficulty and grief. From the time we are born, our bodies – and souls – respond to music. It can change our moods and direct our thoughts. I wanted to explore how music allowed my characters to connect (or in the mother's case, fail to connect) with their new life and surroundings. My protagonist Orly has grown up surrounded by music and cannot imagine life without

it. Because she is the youngest, she adapts the most easily, picking up a Bolivian instrument. Her father Jacob clings to his viola for emotional safety, and eventually begins to learn about Bolivian music from his students. But Orly's mother, an opera singer, finds that grief has stolen her ability to sing. I spent five years immersed in Austrian and Bolivian music, reading biographies of Mahler while listening to his symphonies, listening to charango music while writing Bolivian chapters. The structure of the book is also borrowed from music; it follows the structure of Mahler's third symphony (I had to find one with six movements!).

I was also appalled at the discovery of how the Vienna Philharmonic treated its Jewish musicians, and I wanted to write about that. At the start of my research, I discovered that even before 1938, 20 percent of its musicians had joined the then illegal Nazi party. By 1939, half were Nazis. The orchestra sent all of its Jewish musicians to the death camps, or forced them into exile. They also continued to employ Nazis until 1967. I wanted to help preserve the names of the Jewish musicians the orchestra expelled. They are mentioned in the book.

Esserman: From what I've read, you frequently travel and live in different parts of the world. How do those experiences help/hinder your writing?

Steil: Living in a state of constant in-betweenness – between cultures, languages, friends, homes, lives – affects my writing in every possible way. When I moved to Yemen in 2006 to take a job as editor in chief of a newspaper, I became aware of how growing up in the U.S. had shaped my assumptions about the world. I began to question many of those assumptions and to see the world in new ways. This is an ongoing process, and each book reflects new ways I am learning to think and observe. My experiences running the newspaper in Yemen inspired my first book, a memoir called "The Woman Who Fell From the Sky." I wouldn't write that book the same way now, but we all evolve and improve with practice, or so I hope! My next book, "The Ambassador's Wife," was inspired by my kidnapping when I was six months pregnant with my daughter. But it is an entirely fictional narrative. I kept asking, "What if I hadn't been released? What if I left a toddler behind? What if my husband

had to abandon his diplomatic post?" And those what-if questions led me along. The book ultimately became an exploration of both artistic expression and white savior complex, with a lot of other issues touched on along the way. And I have explained above how essential living in Bolivia for four years was to "Exile Music." We have the luxury of spending four years or so in each country, which allows us to sink in to the culture more than we could ever do as a tourist.

Esserman: I read that you've said your first drafts are "rubbish" and that the art is in the "rewrite." I can relate to that because I do the same thing. ("Just get something on the page," I tell myself, "and you can always rewrite it.") Is that true for just the prose, or does that mean you often change the direction of the plot when you rewrite?

Steil: Yes! My first drafts are for my eyes only. The first draft, however, is where I am thinking through the entire book, figuring out who my characters are, what they want and what the book is about. I think of my first drafts as clay, and the editing process is similar to what a sculptor does with clay. My successive drafts slowly turn my books into something I hope resembles art. The structure of each book evolves with the writing, sometimes coming at the start and sometimes not until the fifth draft. I don't necessarily change the plot in my successive drafts – I usually sort out most of that in the first draft – but I rewrite every word, reworking the language, I add scenes, and rethink pivotal moments. Endings and beginnings can change in successive drafts, but not always. I'm not exaggerating when I say I write dozens of drafts of each book. Also, I have had the good fortune to work with genius editors.

Esserman: I have not read your first novel, but it seems like you're interested in cultural differences in that work as in "Exile Music." Will your next novel continue that pattern?

Steil: Yes. I have already completed the next novel, which is also set in Bolivia. It has not yet been sent out to publishers. I am also about halfway through the first draft of a novel set in Uzbekistan. And that's all I'll say about that for now! I am very interested in writing between cultures, and exploring the lives of people living somewhere they were not born, either by choice or necessity.

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