

## Federation's pre-Campaign event on Aug. 17 to feature Tamir Goodman

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold a pre-Campaign dessert reception featuring basketball player Tamir Goodman on Sunday, August 17, at 7 pm. Goodman will speak on "Spiritual and Life Lessons from the Game of Basketball." (An interview with Goodman can be found on page 3 of this issue of *The Reporter*.) Reservations must be made by Monday, August 11, by visiting [www.jfgeb.org](http://www.jfgeb.org), contacting the Federation office at 607-724-2332 or e-mailing [director@jfgeb.org](mailto:director@jfgeb.org).



Tamir Goodman  
(Photo by Chabad of Binghamton)

[jfgeb.org](http://jfgeb.org). Those attending will have the opportunity to make their 2026 pledge.

Goodman, who has been called the "Jewish Jordan," was the first Jewish athlete to play Division I college and professional basketball while wearing a yarmulke and observing Shabbat. In addition to being a basketball player, Goodman is the author of the book "Live Your Dream" and a coach who has worked with thousands of athletes worldwide. As an entrepreneur, he has brought three products to market,

**Due to security measures, this is a private event. Those attending must register by Monday, August 11, by visiting [www.jfgeb.org](http://www.jfgeb.org), contacting the Federation office at 607-724-2332 or e-mailing [director@jfgeb.org](mailto:director@jfgeb.org). The locale will be revealed to those who register.**

including the Aviv Antimicrobial and Moisture-Wicking Basketball Net. He currently serves as the director of strategic brand initiatives at Fabric. Goodman, who holds a B.A. in communications, has spoken to audiences across the world.

"We are so lucky to host Tamir as our

speaker for this special Federation event," said Shelley Hubal, Federation executive director.

"Tamir has an inspirational story of faith and commitment," said Marilyn Bell, 2026 Campaign chairwoman. "We are excited to engage him as our Campaign speaker. Join us for what is sure to be a meaningful event."

## Hillel Academy to celebrate community at annual journal dinner on Sept. 11

Hillel Academy will hold its annual Journal Celebration on Thursday, September 11, from 6:30-9 pm, at Temple Israel. "This year's event promises to be a vibrant evening of recognition, gratitude and community spirit featuring a lively Pop Art theme inspired by student artwork from the 2024-25 school year," said organizers of the event. The cost for the dinner is \$100 per person or \$600 for a table. To purchase tickets or place an ad honoring this year's honorees, e-mail [hilleljournalgroup@gmail.com](mailto:hilleljournalgroup@gmail.com) or visit [givebutter.com/generalhabe1](http://givebutter.com/generalhabe1). For information on the cost of journal ads, see

the ad on page 5.

The Theodore Sommer Community Service Award will be presented to the CHOW Food Pantry in honor of its contributions to the local Broome County community. Organizers said, "Our students participate in CHOW food drive competitions throughout the year and have even taken field trips to help deliver their donations and stock the shelves. It's a meaningful way to bring lessons of *tikkun olam*, compassion and community service to life."

The A.M. Pierson Award will be awarded to Howard Warner for his commitment to

Hillel Academy over the years. "Howard has devoted countless hours to supporting our school," organizers noted. "He's a tireless advocate who understands that the strength of a Jewish day school lies in the strength and support of its community. Through every leadership transition, Howard has been a steady and devoted presence."

The Excellence Award will be given to Rabbi Rachel Esserman in recognition of her decades of leadership at *The Reporter*. "Rachel has done so much to uplift and connect our small community through her work," organizers noted. "Her dedication

has made *The Reporter* a vital and respected voice. We couldn't let her retire without showing our deep appreciation."

This year's celebration will also highlight Pop Art-inspired pieces created by Hillel Academy students, who spent the school year studying iconic artists and styles. "Their colorful and imaginative artwork will be featured throughout the event," organizers noted.

"Don't miss this unforgettable evening celebrating the people and partnerships that make Hillel Academy and our community shine," organizers added.

### Spotlight

## Discovering the fascinating life of a Tunisian Jewish female performer

By Arie Ullmann

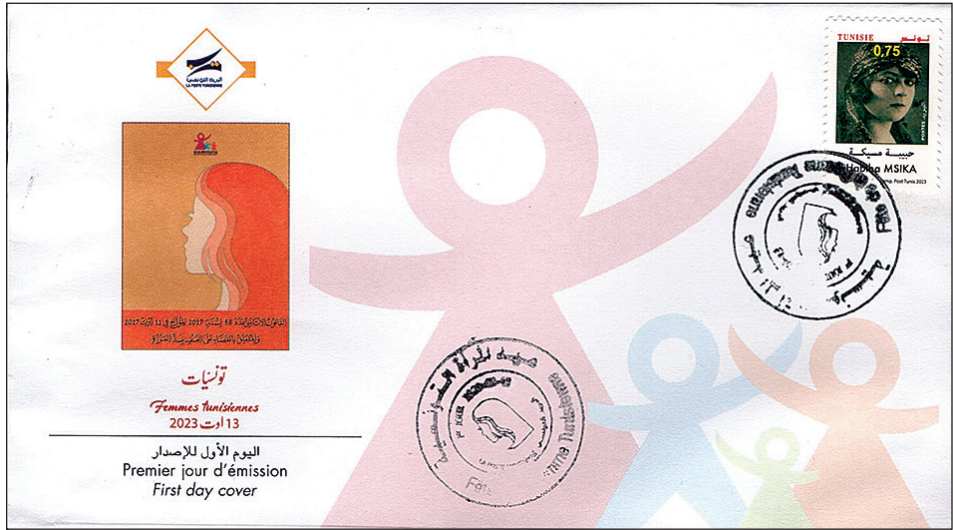
One of the benefits of retirement is that it opens space for the pursuit of other things, be it new fields of inquiry or, as in my case, an old hobby – philately. I used to collect stamps as a boy and inherited my father's collection from the early 20<sup>th</sup>

century when he was a boy. In those days, all the postage stamps ever printed across the world could fit in a two-volume album! Of course collecting stamps from all over the world is no longer possible today. I decided to specialize on stamps with Jewish themes, of which there are plenty. I focused

on so-called first day covers (FDC), stamps canceled on the issue date affixed to ornate envelopes, so-called cachets that are related to the theme of the stamp. Postal authorities like selling FDCs to collectors, because they can profitably sell them without having to provide a service.

I had a good foundation to my Judaica stamp collection because Julius, a relative

on my father's side, was a philatelist who had migrated from Germany to Palestine in the 1930s. He mailed us Israeli FDCs over many years while I was growing up. Digging through my father's collection when I resumed my hobby unearthed wonderful details. One of them is a postcard addressed to my paternal grandmother Alice while See "Tunisian" on page 8



A first day cover honoring Marguerite Habib Msika.

### SILVER SPONSOR

*The Reporter's Editorial Committee and staff thank Rabbi Rachel Esserman and Richard Esserman for sponsoring this issue of THE REPORTER in memory of their brother Larry's 15<sup>th</sup> yahrzeit.*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**Awards for *The Reporter***  
*The Reporter* has received two Rockower Awards for Bill Simons' sports columns.  
.....Page 3

**Book Club schedule**  
The Book Club has announced changes to its 2025-26 reading schedule.  
.....Page 3

**Archeology finds**  
The IAA announced bronze discs found in Israel are evidence of Roman-period burial culture.  
.....Page 5

**Special Sections**  
Book Reviews..... 4  
Congregational Notes ..... 6  
Classifieds ..... 8  
Community Guide..... 1A-20A



Opinion

From the Desk of the Federation Executive Director

With gratitude

SHELLEY HUBAL

Our intention was to have a quiet hike on a beautiful summer afternoon. What happened instead was something much more profound.

The event is called “The Many on the Genny.” This 45-mile race around Letchworth State Park is also known in the running world as an “ultra-trail race.” To be clear, we did not run this grueling race. What we did instead was cheer on many of the 150 athletes as they were at the 30-to-34-mile marks.

When we encountered the first racer, we estimated he had been running the trails of the park for more than five hours. We cheered, clapped and stepped aside to let him through. He smiled, said, “Thank you” and kept running

at a brisk pace. This is how it went for the next four hours. We would encounter a runner or a group of runners, clap and cheer, and tell them they were close to the aid station or pepper them with encouragement and watch as they sweated and toiled, committed to putting one foot in front of the other in pursuit of a colossal goal.

One runner was suffering from dehydration. My husband gave him water and we encouraged him to make it to the aid station just over the next ridge.

We met two women that called themselves the “trail fairies.” Dressed in brightly colored costumes they sat on a hefty stump along the trail about a mile before the aid station and cheered on the runners as they made their way

past the 30-mile mark. We sat with them for a while and joined in as they extended their good cheer.

I will never forget how our simple words of encouragement and applause impacted the racers. Each and every one we encountered smiled, thanked us and ran a little lighter and faster.

By the time, we made our way out of the woods four hours later, I found myself glowing as if I had just finished “The Genny.” This first-hand experience in extending simple acts of kindness made my heart feel full and lit up my soul. Not bad for a quiet hike on a beautiful summer afternoon.

I am extending my good cheer to all of you and wishing you a happy and healthy summer filled with blessings.

Antisemitic terrorism in America

By Bill Simons

Their bodies leaning in, arms encircling each other’s back, the attractive young couple in the photo radiates happiness and anticipation. Yaron Lischinsky, 31, and Sarah Milgrim, 26, met at their worksite, the Israeli embassy in Washington, DC. They earned respect for their job performance, idealism and commitment to building bridges. A native of Kansas who identified with the faith of her Jewish parents, Sarah earned a master’s in international affairs from American University before accepting a public diplomacy position at the embassy. The son of a Jewish father and Gentile mother, Yaron was a devout evangelical Christian. However, his family made their home in Israel, and Yaron, a veteran of the Israel Defense Forces, identified as a Zionist. After receiving a master’s degree in government from Israel’s Reichman University, Yaron gravitated to a research assistant position in the embassy’s political department.

Sarah’s parents welcomed the relationship with Yaron. Her father, Robert, found much to like about Yaron: “He

was very much like Sarah: passionate, extremely intelligent, dedicated to what he does, always on the cause of what’s right.” Yaron had purchased an engagement ring and planned to propose to Sarah in Israel where they would soon travel to meet his family. Close friends and family anticipated a wedding and a long, loving future for the couple. Instead, they would soon bury Yaron and Sarah.

Around 9 pm on May 21, Yaron and Sarah stood just outside the Capital Jewish Museum, located in Washington’s civic center, an area noted for government offices, museums and other visitor attractions. The White House, visible from the museum, is little more than a mile away. Inside the museum, an event, sponsored by the American Jewish Committee for the purpose of “turning pain into purpose,” provided networking opportunities for young Jewish professionals, humanitarian aid workers and embassy staff. The gathering, attended by Yaron and Sarah, was coming to an end. A stranger, subsequently identified as Elias Rodriguez, approached Yaron and Sarah. At close range, he allegedly fired repeated pistol shots at them, con-

tinuing to do so even when a wounded Sarah attempted to crawl away. Yaron and Sarah succumbed to their wounds, dying on the sidewalk. Once in custody, Rodriguez repetitively yelled, “I did it, I did it. Free Palestine. I did it for Gaza.” Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt attributed a calculated antisemitic intent to the murders: “This was an attack, not just against the DC Jewish community, but against all Jewish Americans.” As the social fabric continues to fray in the US, the violence of May 21 cannot be viewed as isolated.

Another violent episode soon followed the trajectory of the Washington murders. Under the sponsorship of Run for Their Lives, Boulder, CO, had hosted weekly rallies demanding the release of the remaining hostages still imprisoned by Hamas. On June 1, a group of people in Boulder, CO, once again marched peacefully to bring attention to their plight. Attired as a gardener, Egyptian national Mohamed Sabry Soliman mounted a potentially lethal terror attack against the protesters during the early

See “America” on page 8

In My Own Words

Fifteen years later

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

He was my little brother, my baby and the light of my family’s life. Oh, he was also my fiancé, although my mother was not happy he chose me over her. (When she asked him why, he looked at her and said, “You Daddy.”) I am speaking of Lawrence “Larry” Esserman, who was born with Down Syndrome. His 15<sup>th</sup> *yahrzeit* (anniversary of his death) falls on July 14 (the 18<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz) this year.

When he was a baby, we called him by his full name, Lawrence. That’s because my mother wanted to avoid the nicknames of her youth. (Her brother Buddy’s real name was Edwin and there were people who knew my mom for decades, but didn’t realize her birth name was Elinor, not Honey.) My older brother Richard and I were always referred to by our full names. But when Larry went into what my mom referred to as “the system,” we knew the staff were going to call him Larry, not Lawrence. Later in life, that was the only name to which he answered because it was the only name he knew. (I confess to teasing him that his name was Charlie Frenchfry, but he would indignantly tell me no.)

Anyone who knew my mother knew she was not politically correct. When she talked about Larry’s birth, she would say that, after two difficult children, she asked for one with a good personality. Then she’d add that she forgot to ask for brains. If it sounds like she didn’t love Larry, you couldn’t be more wrong. She adored him with all her heart. I used to joke that if I won the Nobel Prize, it would be hung under the copy of Larry’s graduation certificate from BOCES. That wasn’t meant as a complaint:



The late Ed and Honey Esserman with their son, Larry, in 1993. Larry is shown holding his Athlete of the Year award from the local Special Olympics. (Photo courtesy of the Esserman family)

he was truly the light of my life.

I’ve written before about his Jewish connection. He loved the late Rabbi Jacob Hurwitz who was the rabbi at Broome Developmental Center for years. (That’s how Larry understood what it meant for me to become a rabbi.) He loved his box of matzah, lighting Hanukkah candles and singing “Ayn Kelohanu,” something we had to do at

every holiday celebration. However, he also loved Santa Claus and had a Santa Claus outfit that the staff at his group home bought for him. One year, he wanted Santa Claus on his birthday cake. That was not a problem: we were happy to make him happy because, when Larry was happy, we were happy, too.

Some readers know I am also a chaplain for Broome Developmental Center. For a while, that meant I was Larry’s rabbi, but he was able to understand when I was with him as a rabbi and when I was there as his sister. When the Center ceased being a home to individuals, I began to visit day treatment programs, a job I love. I am the only chaplain on staff so now I am everyone’s chaplain. (That means I’ve learned to sing a mean version of “Jesus Loves Me” because one of the individuals frequently requests that song.) Periodically something else wonderful happens: I meet someone who used to work with Larry. I love hearing their stories and talking about his idiosyncracies, of which he had many. Talking about him and being reminded of how much fun he was fills me with joy.

I would love once again have him hug me and say, “I love my Ahil, I love my Ahil.” (He couldn’t quite pronounce my name.) I would love to celebrate another birthday with him: he would always ask “who’s next” when we finished up a birthday party because he was always ready and eager for the next one. I know that won’t happen, but I cherish the memories I do have. That’s one reason Richard and I dedicated this issue to Larry’s memory. May it always be for a blessing.



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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.

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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.

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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  
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www.thereportergroup.org



# Reporter wins two Rockower awards

By Reporter staff

The Reporter won two 2025 Simon Rockower Awards for Excellence in Jewish Journalism. Bill Simons won second place in the Excellence in Writing about Sports category for his article “The winningest Jewish pitcher of all-time: Kenny Holtzman,” about which the judges said, “Excellent article. Easy to read. Well researched.” (To read the article, visit [www.thereportergroup.org/features/jewish-baseball-players-the-winningest-jewish-pitcher-of-all-time-kenny-holtzman](http://www.thereportergroup.org/features/jewish-baseball-players-the-winningest-jewish-pitcher-of-all-time-kenny-holtzman).) Simons also won honorable mention in that category for his “My dinner with Abel: Jewish Olympian remembered,” about which the judges said, “Well written and very informative.” (To read the article, visit [www.thereportergroup.org/features/my-dinner-with-abel-jewish-olympian-remembered](http://www.thereportergroup.org/features/my-dinner-with-abel-jewish-olympian-remembered).)

“I’m thrilled that Bill won two awards for his excellent sports columns,” said Rabbi Rachel Esserman, executive

editor of The Reporter. “It’s wonderful that we can offer readers articles about sports that they can’t find in other publications. Bill finds interesting people to write about in a way that even non-sports fans can enjoy. His writing is a wonderful addition to The Reporter.”

“I am a big fan of local journalism and Jewish media, so I take pride in being a columnist on the great Reporter team,” Simons said. “As executive editor, Rabbi Esserman has given me encouragement and support to write about diverse aspects of the Diaspora, encompassing sports, politics and culture. And Layout Editor Diana Sochor does an excellent job proofing my text and highlighting it through placement.”

Simons added. “It is an honor to be recognized twice in 2025 by the American Jewish Press Association, one of the most preeminent voices in media. I am very pleased to receive second place for Excellence in Writing about

Sports for my article on ‘The Winningest Jewish Pitcher of All-Time: Kenny Holtzman.’ I interviewed and observed Kenny both in the U.S. and in Israel, and hope that my writing contributes to bringing his baseball accomplishments the wider recognition they merit. It was frosting on the cake to get honorable mention in the same category for my piece on “My Dinner with Abel: Jewish Olympian Remembered.” A medalist in the 1912 Olympics, Abel Kiviat, a middle-distance runner, has largely been forgotten by history, and it gave me satisfaction to relate his story, including my dinner with him, to a new generation.”

Simons noted that he hopes his writing does more than just bring notice to little remembered sports figures. “My sports writing strives for accessibility and significance even to non-sports fans,” he said. “By providing historical and sociological context, I endeavor to use sport as a means of illuminating Jewish American culture.”

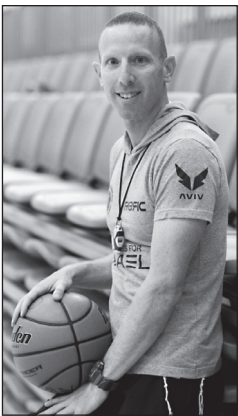
## Goodman to speak on basketball and Judaism

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Tamir Goodman will be the featured speaker at the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton’s pre-Campaign dessert reception on Sunday, August 17, at 7 pm. For more information about the event, see the article on page 1.

Jewish ritual and religious practice rarely mesh with college and professional sports since games are often scheduled on Shabbat and holidays. Yet, Tamir Goodman, who has been called the “Jewish Jordan,” was able to play Division I college and professional basketball while wearing a yarmulke and observing Shabbat. Goodman noted that he sees a connection between his Jewish practice and his basketball career. “I will share stories from my career to highlight spiritual and life lessons, based on the ancient Jewish belief that every physical aspect of the world – even something like basketball – contains deeper meaning,” Goodman said in an e-mail interview. “These lessons can help us live more productive, joyful lives and strengthen our Jewish identity and connection to Israel.”

He noted that this is not always easy to do. “There’s a very small percentage of people in the world who can say they earned a Division I basketball scholarship and a professional basketball contract,” he added. “It’s almost impossible to imagine achieving those goals without playing



Tamir Goodman  
(Photo by Nati Cohen)

on Shabbat and Jewish holidays. I was able to accomplish my dream because of the people around me – my family, coaches, rabbis, friends and community. They supported me, believed in me and taught me how to unify the physical game of basketball with my Jewish faith. That helped me find the right balance between the two as best as I could.”

He sees the different elements of his life as working together to booster each other rather than causing conflicts. “I believe basketball made me a better Jew, and Judaism made me a better basketball player,” Goodman said. “To me, they are one and the same. Judaism teaches values like faith, resilience, hard work, time management, sharing, caring for your body, mind and soul, setting goals and dreaming big to positively impact the world. I see these qualities as deeply interconnected – they balance and strengthen each other, and they have helped shape my life, my relationship with God, and my sense of purpose in this world and my playing on the court.”

Goodman noted that his faith has helped him during difficult times in his life: “I believe the ultimate purpose in life is to strive to reach our full potential – the potential that God sees in us – and to partner with Him in making the See “Goodman” on page 8

### Federation Alert

## News from Israel

For those interested in news from the Israeli media about the current situation in Israel, the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton offers the following list of websites:

- ◆ The Times of Israel – [www.timesofisrael.com](http://www.timesofisrael.com)
- ◆ The Jerusalem Post – [www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com)
- ◆ Haaretz – [www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com) (subscription required to get beyond headlines)
- ◆ Ynetnews – [www.ynetnews.com/category/3083](http://www.ynetnews.com/category/3083)
- ◆ Israel Hayom – [www.israelhayom.com](http://www.israelhayom.com)
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- ◆ World Jewish Daily – [www.worldjewishdigest.com](http://www.worldjewishdigest.com)
- ◆ World Israel News – <https://worldisraelnews.com>

These links can also be found on The Reporter’s website, [www.thereportergroup.org](http://www.thereportergroup.org).

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to **Ilana Segal** on the death of her husband,  
**Bernie Segal**

## Book Club announces changes to 2025-26 schedule

The Book Club announced changes to its schedule. The discussion of “On Her Own: A Novel” by Lihi Lapid, translated from the Hebrew by Sondra Silverston, will take place on Tuesday, November 4. On Tuesday, August 5, the book to be discussed will be “The Ladies Auxiliary: A Novel” by Tova Mirvis. The complete schedule follows.

- ◆ August 5: “The Ladies Auxiliary: A Novel” by Tova Mirvis
- ◆ September 2: “The Love Elixir of Augusta Stern” by Lynda Cohen Loigman
- ◆ October 21: “The Whisper Sister” by Jennifer S. Brown (fiction). The author will join the club in person.
- ◆ November 4: “On Her Own: A Novel” by Lihi Lapid, translated from the Hebrew by Sondra Silverston

- ◆ December 2: “Your Presence is Mandatory” by Sasha Vasilyunk (fiction). Rabbi Rachel Esserman will lead the discussion.
- ◆ January 6: “Marjorie Morningstar” by Herman Wouk (fiction)
- ◆ February 3: “On Division” by Goldie Goldbloom (fiction)
- ◆ March 3: Purim. Meeting will take place later in March. Book TBD.
- ◆ April 7: “The Talented Mrs. Mandelbaum: The Rise and Fall of an American Organized Crime Boss” by Margalit Fox (non-fiction)
- ◆ May 5: “Songs for the Brokenhearted” by Ayelet Tsabari (fiction)
- ◆ June 2: “The Anatomy of Exile” by Zeeva Bukai (fiction)

### DEADLINES

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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
July 25-August 7.....	July 16
August 8-21 .....	July 30
August 22-September 11 .....	August 13
September 12-25 .....	September 3

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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**THE REPORTER**

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by John Guare

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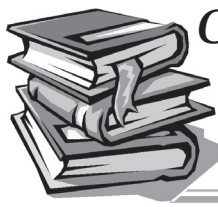
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# Different paths to happily ever after

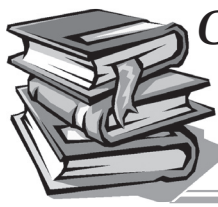
RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

“Never Planned on You” opens with what is known in the genre as a cute meet during its prologue, which takes place years before the main action. Ali Rubin has less than a day left as an college exchange student in Britain. Taking on a drunken bet with Graham, someone she doesn’t know well, the two end

To her surprise, British Graham turns up in Baltimore and that unexpected meeting is so charged Ali wonders if she has finally met her true mate. To make life seem even more on track, she is asked to help plan what is sure to be the most high-profile event of the year: a wedding between the grandson of the owner of a Baltimore landmark hotel and a Canadian comedian. Unfortunately, Graham turns out to be the groom. That is just the beginning of a great many roadblocks to true love. What's amazing is that Rosen manages to create complex, difficult situations and find amusing and interesting ways to work around them. In addition to Ali and Graham, there are interesting secondary characters, particularly Ali's sister and grandmother. The work does contain a great deal of explicit

But, at least, Nora has something good to look forward to: she has been invited to London for a party to meet a new member of the website that publishes the weekly relationship column she writes. The column, which gives relationship advice anonymously, has paired her with an editor she only knows as

One note for Jewish readers: while Ali and Nora are Jewish and belong to families that celebrate Shabbat (even if only as a secular dinner with family), neither of their love interests is Jewish, something that is never addressed. Fortunately for readers, that doesn't affect the happily-ever-after endings.



# The Jewish problem in tzarist Russia

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

The Russian government believed that Jewish culture was incompatible with Russian society, at least Jewish culture that had not yet been influenced by the Enlightenment. One question that was raised was whether it was necessary for Jews to convert to Christianity in order for them to become productive

One of the most interesting sections is called “The Cantonists Speak for Themselves,” which offers real life testimony from those who experienced being taken from their homes and forced into army life. The surprise is how few of the cantonists converted considering the pressure applied to them. These stories also portray another difficulty that occurred when the leaders of the Jewish community picked who would be drafted. These leaders generally preferred to pick young children, rather than married men, since that would leave their wives and

The author opened his book with a comment made by someone who attended one of his lectures on the cantonists. The gist of that comment was that the topic could be summarized in a few simple sentences. “The Cantonists” proves there is far more to say about these children and the Jewish community at the time. Readers interested in Jewish Russian history will appreciate the author’s excellent discussions. Anyone interested in the history of the Jews of Europe will also find a great deal of interesting and provocative material.

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*Mazel Tov to Amy and Ben Cohen on their  
40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary*

**Style B • \$40**

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A black and white photograph of an elderly couple. The man, on the left, has white hair and is smiling. The woman, on the right, has blonde hair and is also smiling, leaning her head against his. They are both wearing dark clothing. The background is a plain, light color.

*From Nancy, Joe, Millie and Al*

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# Federation held security meeting



The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton held a security meeting on June 25 for local Jewish organizations. Mark Henderson, regional security advisor, Rochester, for the Secure Community Network, led the discussion.

# TC held game night



Temple Concord held a game night on June 28. L-r (center, facing camera): Rabbi Leiah Moser and Ross Mattio consulted about their next move. (Photos by Eve Berman)



L-r: Neisen Luks watched his wife, Marsha Luks, make a move, while Rabbi Rachel Esserman and Jim Marcello looked on during Temple Concord's game night on June 28.

## One Perspective from Israel

### Room on the Kaddish plate – part 2

JEREMY M. STAIMAN

This article originally appeared in the *Times of Israel* and is being reprinted with permission.

During a visit today to Prague's Pinkas Synagogue, Chana and Liz scanned the walls, which are painted with 78,000 names of Czech citizens who were killed in the Holocaust. She knew what names to search for from a previous trip we took eight years ago with her brother, Moshe. It was on that excursion that we found out that Chana had an uncle she had never before heard of. Leopold Raber married her aunt Greta. Perhaps they married after Harry had been taken away, and so he never knew about Leopold, and thus never spoke of him. The couple were taken to Terezin and eventually were murdered in Treblinka.

Imagine not knowing that you even *had* an uncle.

But today's visit yielded an even greater shock.

Alongside other Busch inscriptions on the synagogue wall was another name: Gustav Busch, whose wife's name, Elzbeta, was very similar to Harry's mother's name, Eliska. Was it possible that Gustav and George were one and the same? That Elzbeta was another name for Eliska? If there was a record of what happened to them, might we finally unravel a piece of the enigma of the mysterious George Busch?

Would we find out what became of him? Would there be a day to say *Kaddish* for the grandfather Chana never knew? Surely we could salvage a position of honor on the *Kaddish* plate for his *yarhzeit* – the anniversary of his death!

Like the brilliant burst of a Roman Candle, the excitement of their discovery was wondrous – but fleeting. Further investigation showed that Gustav was not George, and Elzbeta was not Eliska.

For our family, as for millions, there

are no tidy endings to their Shoah stories. No way to know what happened. When to mourn. Where to go to find the resting place of their bones or ashes. To whiff the air and perhaps inhale a molecule, which – once upon a time – flowed through their bodies.

Chana and her family are among the countless who are left with puzzles in place of answers.

But all this confusion leads to greater clarity – a clarity borne of yielding to the uncertainty; surrendering to the unknown. We will never know what happened to George Busch, but we know he is in God's hands.

And we know that while there may seem to be nothing we can do, we can indeed memorialize George Busch, along with those of his children who were swept up in those horrible, horrible days.

We will swap out our old *Kaddish* plate, and get a bigger one. We will choose a date for their *yarhzeit*, and we will recite the Aramaic formula attesting to God's greatness, even while remembering the darkest of times.

*Especially* while remembering the darkest times.

*Yitgadal v'yitkadash shemei rabbah...*

As I recite those words on Yom Hashoah, I realize that, over eight decades later, this may be the very first time that anyone has said *Kaddish* specifically for George Busch of Prague. Of Europe. Of places unknowable. I expand my *Kaddish* plate further and further, until it is so large that it can fit *anyone* who has *no one* to remember them.

As the plate swells to contain all those additional souls, it morphs from its roundness into the shape of a heart. In the expansion process, the plate cracks. A large crevice runs down its middle.

We are left with long-overdue tribute. And a gaping, broken heart.

## Bronze discs highlight Roman burial culture in Holy Land

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – Four rare, 1,900-year-old rare bronze discs decorated with lion heads that were uncovered in southern Israel in the last decade offer evidence of Roman-period burial culture and belief in the afterlife, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced recently.

The ornate discs, which were found in a grave during a 2018 excavation at Khirbat Ibreika in the Sharon region, were probably intended to be used to help carry a coffin, the state-run archaeological body said.

"Tracing the lion as a symbol in the ancient world reveals that in many cultures it represented strength, protection and nobility," said excavation directors Elie Haddad and Elisheva Zwiebel.

The archaeologists added that while they do not have enough evidence to associate the lions to a particular religion, the reasonable assumption is that the finds were from a pagan burial, with the fancy, elaborate discs clearly reflecting the individual's high status.

See "Discs" on page 8



## 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.

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# Fight or flight response

RABBI SUZANNE BRODY, ITHACA BEIT MIDRASH

For the past few months, I’ve had the pleasure of working with a couple of sixth-grade boys on critical thinking skills. After discussing how even valid premises can be used to arrive at an unexpected (or even unwanted) conclusion, and analyzing a few examples, I invited them to come up with their own. At the end of our session, they were practically in hysterics and couldn’t wait to share with their parents how they had “proven” that bullying is good.

To arrive at their conclusion, one of the premises that the boys used was a version of the well-known aphorism that adversity makes us stronger. (Therefore, causing adversity for someone makes that person stronger, which is a good thing....) Clearly, now I need to do a lesson on aphorisms, the references we point to and the fact that just because lots of people say something, doesn’t mean it’s necessarily the full and only truth.

For example, we often retell or refer to the story of David and Goliath as support for the notion that a smaller opponent can be victorious against a larger, stronger one. This is, we know, true. Smaller groups and individuals have prevailed against larger ones. However, it is not universally true. There are also times when the larger, stronger force prevails.

It’s not really the size or numbers of people we face. It’s about our perception, both of them and of ourselves. As Russell Johnston reminds us, attitude and point of view are crucial: “When Goliath came against the Israelites, the soldiers all thought, ‘He is so big. We can never kill him.’; David looked at the same giant and thought, ‘He is so big. I can’t miss.’”

Like the majority of the Israelites when confronted by Goliath and when the Israelites were on the cusp of entering Canaan, it was their own fears of the inhabitants’ strength relative to their own insignificance (Numbers 13:31, 33) that prevented them from moving forward. But we don’t actually know what the inhabitants of Canaan thought of the Israelites. All we know is what the Israelites thought the Canaanites thought of them. Their own fear of “the other” when the spies brought back their report on the Canaanites led them to flee.

In contrast, the Moabite reaction to their fear of the Israelites was to fight. Both Pharaoh and Balak, the leader of the Moabites, were afraid of the Israelites becoming “too great.” Pharaoh chose to fight by weaponizing oppression; Balak’s weapon of choice was a curse. Why were the Moabites so afraid of the Israelites? Chizkuni, a mid-13<sup>th</sup> century French

commentator, posited that the Moabites’ fear came from having witnessed the Israelite conquering of Sichon. They reasoned that, since the Israelites had overcome Sichon, who had previously overcome them, the Israelites would easily conquer Moab, as well. Ramban, a leading medieval Torah scholar from Spain, thought that the Moabites were afraid because the Israelite people outnumbered them. Unlike the other interpretations, the *midrash* in Bamidbar Rabbah posits that the Moabite fear was at least partially in response to the fact that when Israel appeared to the Ammonites, they appeared garbed for peace, but, when they came before the Moabites, they appeared armed for war.

As hard as it is, especially in these days when we are bombarded with news stories of atrocities around the world, we cannot let ourselves give in to our fears. Instead, we need to learn from Balaam’s donkey when to stop, turn aside and examine the premises that have led us to the brink of battle. It is far too often the case that our automatic reaction to respond to a situation by fighting is based on a flawed string of premises.

May we heed the words of the psalmist, and may it come to pass: “Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy.” (Psalms 64:2)

## Congregational Notes

### Temple Concord

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism (this header block updates the current one.)  
Rabbi: Leiah Moser  
Address: 9 Riverside Dr, Binghamton NY 13905  
Office hours: Tues.-Fri., 10 am-2 pm  
Phone: 607-723-7355  
Office e-mail: TempleConcordBinghamton@gmail.com  
Website: www.TempleConcord.com  
Please contact Temple Concord for Zoom links.

Some services and programs are online only.  
Fridays, July 11 and 18: At 7:30 pm, Friday Shabbat services are in person, on Zoom and Facebook.com.  
Saturdays, July 12 and 19: At 9:15 am, Torah study is in person and on Zoom. An in-person only service will take place at 10:30 am.  
Wednesdays, July 16 and 23: At 5:30 pm, evening prayers in person only. At 6 pm, adult education class in person and on Zoom.

### 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: Martha Armstrong and Mitch Grossman, presidents 22@tikkunvor.org  
Education Director/Admin. 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.

### Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism  
Rabbi: Caleb Brommer  
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: president@tbeithaca.org, secretary@tbeithaca.org  
Website: www.tbeithaca.org  
Presidents: Melanie Kalman and Alexis Siemon  
Sisterhood President: Gail Zussman  
Director of Education: Calle Schueler  
Services: Friday 8 pm; Saturday 10 am, unless otherwise announced. Weekday morning minyan 7:30 am (9 am on Sundays and legal holidays).  
Religious School/Education: September-May: Classes meet on Sunday, 9 am-12:30 pm and Wednesday afternoons, 3:45-5:45 pm. The teen No’ar program meets twice per month (every other Sunday from 5-7 pm) and is designed with the flexibility to accommodate busy student schedules.  
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).

**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: 607-722-1793, Rabbi's Office: 607-722-7514  
Fax: 607-722-7121  
Office hours: Tues. 10 am-1 pm; Thurs. 9 am-1 pm  
Beth David e-mail address: bethdavid@stny.rr.com  
Rabbi's e-mail: rabbisilber@stny.rr.com  
Website: www.bethdavid.org  
Facebook: www.facebook.com/bethdavidbinghamton  
Classes: Rabbi Zev Silber will hold his weekly Talmud class every Tuesday evening after services.

### Rohr Chabad Center

Affiliation: Chabad-Lubavitch  
Rabbi Aaron and Rivkah Slonim, Directors  
E-mail: aslonim@binghamton.edu  
rslonim@chabadofbinghamton.com  
Address: 420 Murray Hill Rd., Vestal, NY 13850  
Phone: 607-797-0015, Fax: 607-797-0095  
Website: www.Chabadofbinghamton.com  
Rabbi Zalman and Rochel Chein, Education  
E-mail: zchein@Jewishbu.com, rchein@Jewishbu.com  
Rabbi Levi and Hadasa Slonim, Downtown and Development  
Chabad Downtown Center: 60 Henry St., Binghamton  
E-mail: lslonim@Jewishbu.com, hslonim@Jewishbu.com  
Rabbi Yisroel and Goldie Ohana, Programming  
E-mail: yohana@Jewishbu.com, gohana@Jewishbu.com  
Regular service times: Daily 7:30 am, Friday evening 6 pm, Shabbat morning 9:30 am, Maariv and Havdalah one hour after candle-lighting time, Sundays 9:30 am.  
To join the mailing list, for up-to-date information on adult education offerings or to arrange for a private tutorial, for details concerning the Judaica shop and resource center, or for assistance through the Piaker Free Loan Society or Raff Maasim Tovim Foundation, call Chabad's office at 797-0015.  
Chabad will be holding pre-Shabbat virtual programs. For more information, visit [www.JewishBU.com/S2020Partnership](http://www.JewishBU.com/S2020Partnership).

### Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive  
Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815  
Phone: 334-2691  
E-mail: fertigj@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.: Call ahead, text or e-mail to confirm dates.

### Penn-York Jewish Community

Treasurer: Beth Herbst, 607-857-0976  
B’nai B’rith: William H. Seigel Lodge  
Purpose: To promote Jewish identity through religious, cultural, educational and social activities in the Southern Tier of New York and the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania, including Waverly, NY; Sayre, Athens and Towanda, PA, and surrounding communities.

Friday, July 11, light candles before..... 8:21 pm  
Shabbat ends Saturday, July 12..... 9:21 pm  
Friday, July 18, light candles before ..... 8:17 pm  
Shabbat ends Saturday, July 19..... 9:17 pm  
Friday, July 25, light candles before ..... 8:11 pm  
Shabbat ends Saturday, July 26..... 9:10 pm

### Temple Israel

Orientation: Conservative  
Rabbi: Micah Friedman  
Address: 4737 Deerfield Pl., Vestal, NY 13850  
Phone: 607-723-7461 and 607-231-3746  
Office hours: Mon.-Thurs., 8:30 am-3:30 pm; Fri., 8 am-3 pm  
E-mail: office@templeisraelvestal.org  
Website: www.templeisraelvestal.org  
Service schedule: Tues., 5:30 pm; Fri., 5:30 pm; Sat., 9:30 am  
On Fridays and Tuesdays at 5:30 pm, services will be led by Rabbi Micah Friedman via Zoom and in-person.  
On Saturday, July 12, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Numbers 22:2-25:9 and the haftarah is Micah 5:6-6:8. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 9:45 pm.  
On Saturday, July 19, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Numbers 25:10-30:1 and the haftarah is Jeremiah 1:1-2:3. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 9:30 pm.  
Upcoming events:  
“Torah in Our Times” class on Tuesdays, July 15 and 22, at 4:30 pm.  
The temple office will be closed Thursday, July 10; Friday, July 11; and Tuesday, July 15. Limited office hours for Monday, July 14, and Wednesday, July 16, are 2-4 pm.  
There will be a Ritual Committee meeting on Wednesday, July 16, at 10 am.

### Temple Beth El of Oneonta

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism  
Cantor: David Green  
Address: 83 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY 13820  
Mailing address: P.O. Box 383, Oneonta, NY 13820  
Phone: 607-432-5522  
E-mail: TBEOneonta@gmail.com  
Regular service times: Contact the temple for days of services and times.  
Religious School/Education: Religious School, for grades kindergarten through bar/bat mitzvah, meets Sunday mornings.  
For the schedule of services, classes and events, contact the temple.

### Temple Brith Sholom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated  
Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045  
Phone: 607-756-7181  
President: Leo Searfoss  
Cemetery Committee: 315-696-5744  
Website: templebrithsholomcortland.org  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Temple-Brith-Sholom-114006981962930/>  
Service leaders: Lay leadership  
Shabbat services: Services are usually on the third Friday of the month and led by a variety of leaders. Check the Facebook page or weekly e-mail for upcoming services. Contact the president to get on the e-mail list.  
Religious School: Students are educated on an individual basis.  
Temple Brith Sholom is a small equalitarian congregation serving the greater Cortland community. Congregants span the gamut of observance and services are largely dependent on the service leader. The Friday night siddur is “Likrat Shabbat.” The community extends a warm welcome to the Jewish student population of SUNY Cortland, as well as the residents of local adult residences. The Board of Trustees meets on the second Tuesday of the month.  
Services and programs are held by Zoom usually on the third Friday of the month.



# Jewish online resources

By Reporter staff

A variety of Jewish groups are offering educational and recreational online resources. Below is a sampling of those. *The Reporter* will publish additional listings as they become available.

◆ Roundtable will hold the three-part virtual course “How Kabbalah Reimagines God” on Mondays, August 11-25, from 4-5 pm. The cost to attend is \$132. Daniel Matt will explore how Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition, reimagines God. For more information or to register, visit <https://roundtable.org/live-courses/history/how-kabbalah-reimagines-god>.

◆ My Jewish Learning will offer a four-part virtual course “Master Mah Jongg,” a beginners guide to the game, on Wednesdays, July 16-August 6, from 7-8:15 pm. The cost to attend is \$54. The fee includes a month of access to each class recording and extra resources from the teachers. For more information or to register, visit <https://my-jewish-learning.teachable.com/p/intromahjongguly25>.

◆ The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute will hold the hybrid program “Hiding in Holland, An Afternoon of Remembrance with Shulamit Reinharz” on Wednesday, September 10, from 4-5:30 pm. Reinharz will discuss her latest book, “Hiding in Holland: A Resistance Memoir,” which was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award. For more information or to register, visit [www.brandeis.edu/hbi/events/index.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/hbi/events/index.html).

◆ Melton will hold a variety of virtual classes this summer. The cost to attend is based on a sliding scale. The classes include “Ethics Under Fire: Jewish Law in Times of War” on Wednesdays, July 16-30, from 1-2:30 pm (<https://events.org/events/calendarcourse?tid=321f8729-4f61-4c3a-9c31-dc561857aef6>); “Melton Meets the Moment: Intelligence Failures, Military Realities, and Political Consequences”

on Tuesday, July 22, from 1-2 pm (<https://events.org/events/calendarcourse?tid=4730f144-47cd-4663-b4bd-f11fd903bf13>); “The Age of the Influencer: Jewish Ethics on Display” on Tuesday, July 22, from 7-8 pm (<https://events.org/events/calendarcourse?tid=b52af9d5-3482-4201-9333-0386fa705a5e>); “Home-Grown Rabbis: The Birth of American Rabbinic Training” on Tuesday, July 29, from 7-8 pm (<https://events.org/events/calendarcourse?tid=30abadb6-24da-4d72-a4c9-18d15d1339bc>); and “In the Presence of Power: Jewish Law and Political Leadership” on Wednesday, July 30, from 1-2 pm (<https://events.org/events/calendarcourse?tid=74bde4f3-8c58-4617-9cb8-a7b72371c22e>).

◆ Siegal Lifelong Learning will hold the virtual class “Judaism and the Environment: The Ethics of Care and Responsibility” on Monday, September 15, from 7-8:30 pm. The cost to attend is \$10. The class will “explore our obligation in response to the ongoing ecological crisis that threatens the future of human life, with a focus on Judaism’s perspective.” For more information or to register, visit <https://case.edu/lifelonglearning/lectures/judaism-and-environment-ethics-care-and-responsibility-remote>.

◆ The Orange Country California Jewish Community Scholarship Program will offer the three-part virtual class “The Jews of Rome” with Dr. Samuel Gruber on Thursdays July 15-29, from 1-2 pm. The class will trace the evolving identity of Jewish Rome. For more information or to register, visit <https://ocsp.dm.networkforgood.com/emails/the-museum-of-the-land-of-israel-layers-of-history-in-the-heart-of-tel-aviv-nachliel-selavan-1e0bd7c1-9e9e-4b50-9852-7940c13dc438>.

◆ Uri L’Tzedek will hold the virtual program “Torah Ethics of Warfare: Must we Leave a Path for Escape?” on Wednesday, August 13, at 7 pm. The cost to attend is

\$18. Rabbi David Polsky will discuss “the prohibition of enclosing an enemy on all sides.” For more information or to register, visit [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_O9WmXZcoQryAaDZsByzGiw#/registration](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_O9WmXZcoQryAaDZsByzGiw#/registration).

◆ Roundtable will hold the three-part virtual class “Borscht Belt Culture, or Return to the Catskills” on Monday-Wednesday, August 25-27, from 11 am-noon. The cost to attend is \$132. Professor Phil Brown will explore the Jewish experience in the Borscht Belt of the Catskills. For more information or to register, visit <https://roundtable.org/live-courses/history/borscht-belt-culture-or-return-to-the-catskills>.

◆ Literary Modiin will hold its hybrid July 2025 Author Event on Sunday, July 27, at 3:30 pm. The authors featured will be Oren Kessler (“Palestine 1936”), Tehila Hakimi with Joanna Chen (“Hunting in America”) and Yakir Ben Moshe (“Take a Breath, You’re Getting Excited”). For more information or to register, visit <https://www.juliezuckerman.com/event-info/literary-modiin-july-2025-author-event>.

◆ The Qesher Book Club will hold a virtual book talk on “Songs for the Brokenhearted” by Ayelet Tsabari on Tuesday, August 5, at 3 pm. Tsabari’s book won the National Jewish Book Award for Fiction and the Association of Jewish Libraries Fiction Award, and was a Globe and Mail Best Book of 2024. For more information or to register, visit [www.qesher.com/songs-for-the-brokenhearted](http://www.qesher.com/songs-for-the-brokenhearted).

◆ The Center for Jewish History will hold the virtual program “The People’s Torah: Crowd-Sourcing Jewish Customs from An-ski to the Internet” on Tuesday, July 22, at 2 pm. Nathaniel Deutsch will discuss The Digital Minhag Project, “an interactive website built around a Yiddish-English version of An-ski’s ethnographic questionnaire that seeks to crowd-source contemporary Jewish customs or minhagim.” For more information or to register, visit <https://programs.cjh.org/event/an-ski-2025-07-22>.

◆ The Museum of Jewish Heritage will hold the “Virtual Walking Tour: Tarnów, Poland” on Wednesday, July 30, at 11 am. The cost to attend is \$25. For more information or to register, visit <https://mjhnyc.org/events/virtual-travel-tarnow>.

◆ My Jewish Learning will offer the virtual class “Plant-Based Jewish Cooking” on Mondays, July 21-August 11, from 7-8 pm. The cost to attend is \$60. Chef Micah Siva will offer a variety of plant-based Jewish recipes. For more information or to register, visit <https://my-jewish-learning.teachable.com/p/plant-based-cooking-july25>.

For additional resources, see previous issues of *The Reporter* on its website, [www.thereportergroup.org/jewish-online-resources](http://www.thereportergroup.org/jewish-online-resources).



## On the Jewish food scene

# No way would I eat that!

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

I was going to call this column “Weird foods,” but that title didn’t completely fit. I also thought about using “Bizarre foods,” but that’s already been taken and also didn’t seem accurate. What provoked this column was seeing two articles on a Jewish food website that featured unusual food combinations. I use the word provoked deliberately since the word means something that causes a strong reaction. I consider my initial reaction of “oh, yuck!” to fit that definition. (I would have used more exclamation points, but the person who edits my columns generally limits me to one.)

Many people will probably agree with my reaction to reading about a “Gefilte Fish Club Sandwich.” (You can find the recipe at [www.myjewishlearning.com/the-nosher/gefilte-fish-club-sandwich-recipe](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/the-nosher/gefilte-fish-club-sandwich-recipe).) While I do like gefilte fish, I am very picky about what brands I will buy. (And before you ask, no, I am not making my own.) I remember a few years back getting a jar that was on sale and having difficulty choking down its almost uneatable contents. (It reminded me of the time someone compared gefilte fish to road kill, not that I actually know what road kill tastes like.) Something must be making me pickier as I get older: I loved my Aunt Naomi’s homemade gefilte fish, which I have not had since she died in 1977, but I never complained about the jarred ones I ate until recently.

Anyway, back to the gefilte fish sandwich: It’s a cold sandwich, which sounds far better than a warm version would. It features horseradish mayonnaise, lettuce, tomato and pickled red onions. The recipe calls for challah as the bread, but I suppose you could use a roll or other bread. If that makes it sound like I’m warming to idea, you are correct. Although my first reaction was definitely “oh, yuck,” after reading the recipe, I began to think, “That doesn’t sound that bad.” I’m not sure I’d make that for myself, but I would be willing try it if someone served it to me.

My reaction to the other recipe I read about is simple to

explain: I adore watermelon. It’s one of my favorite foods, with cherries running a close second. My mother and I were both watermelon fanatics. In fact, my mom would claim that there was no mother-daughter relationship when it came to watermelon, meaning she wouldn’t save any for me if I didn’t get to it quickly enough. We would debate whether to let my father know there was watermelon in the refrigerator or hope he wouldn’t notice, which would leave more for us.

I’ve had a friend who sings the praises of a watermelon and feta cheese salad. While I like both foods on their own, the thought of them together turns my stomach. That explains why I was not impressed to read about “Russian-Style Pickled Watermelon.” (The recipe can be found at [www.myjewishlearning.com/the-nosher/russian-style-pickled-watermelon-is-everything-you-need-this-summer](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/the-nosher/russian-style-pickled-watermelon-is-everything-you-need-this-summer).) Now, I love pickles in almost every form and format. (That includes pickled tomatoes and pickled beets.) But pickled fruit? The idea makes me shudder because the spices used – garlic, bay and dill – just don’t go well with fruit. (Then again, I also don’t like chocolate-covered fruit. If you give them to me individually, then I’m happy to eat both, just not together.)

The article did mention that the watermelon pickles were among the foods best eaten with shots of vodka or other alcohol, which led me to wonder if you have to be so drunk you can’t really taste the food in order to enjoy them. OK, that’s probably not fair since every nation has dishes that others consider strange. In fact, I know what it’s like to have people’s faces wrinkle with distaste at food combinations I’ve made. (Just ask me about one I created when I was college. I thought it tasted great, even though it looked like brown mush.) That said, I’m still not eager to eat watermelon any other way than straight from the rind – no salt, sugar, spices or anything else needed!

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Tunisian.....Continued from page 1

she still was unmarried and living in Frankfurt, Germany. The card, dated December 31, 1899, is jokingly written in exaggerated stilted German telling my grandmother that by the time she would read the card it would be a new century.

I investigate the theme of every stamp that I acquire, which is part of the enjoyment and, in this way, I learn a lot. Occasionally, there are surprises. One of them is my most recent purchase, an FDC from Tunisia featuring Marguerite Habiba Msika (1903-1930) issued in 2023 to mark the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her birth.

Who was this Habiba Msika? Thanks to Google it’s easy to find out. She was a Tunisian actress and singer, often called the “first star of Tunis.” I suspect I am not the only one who had no knowledge of the brief, but extraordinary, career of Tunisian Jewish superstar Habiba Msika.

Born in Tunis in 1903, the capital of the French protectorate that lasted from 1881 to 1956, she, like many North African musicians of her era, descended from a musical lineage; her father was an amateur musician. At the outset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, just as the phonograph began to be widely used in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, a Jewish music making ecosystem evolved: Jewish vocalists and instrumentalists, record label concessionaires, record-store owners, proprietors of cabarets and musical impresarios. They played a prominent role in the production of Arab music. It was Leïla Sfez, Msika’s aunt, a well-known figure in the café-concert scene of Tunis, who provided her entry into the music industry. At the time, the Tunisian record catalogues of Pathé, a French record company, label and producer of phonographs founded in 1894, featured many Jewish artists like Sfez.

The 15-year-old Msika, “discovered” in 1918 at the war’s end, soon headlined the largest concert halls across North Africa. Msika performed under the stage name Habiba, “beloved” in Arabic. “More than 1,500 people applauded the return of our talented and incomparable Tunisian star, Mademoiselle Habiba Msika,” the Tunisian newspaper *Le Petit Matin* reported. Msika recorded under the Pathé label some of the era’s most popular and suggestive songs, such as “Harrag Alaya Baba Ma Rouhchi Cinéma” (“My father didn’t let me go to the cinema”) and “Cham el Cocaine” (“Snorting Cocaine”), as well as Tunisian folklore and pieces inspired by Islamic Spain. You can still listen to her today when you google her name. Thanks to her crisp and sensual voice, she became known as the “queen of musical ecstasy.” Msika was among the first North African artists to record for multiple labels simultaneously. When most of her peers were paid only for their initial recording session, Msika demanded – and won – the right to her royalties and in this way paved the way for female artists in subsequent years. Between 1924 and 1930, Msika released close to 100 records.

Throughout her career, Msika never hid her Tunisian and pan-Arabic nationalist feelings. This compelled her to record in Berlin, away from the watchful eye of the French authorities. There she could record marches dedicated to King Fuad in Egypt, King Faysal in Iraq and the Bey of

Tunis, Muhammad VI, as well as anthems extolling Egypt and Syria. At the end of one such recording, “King Fuad’s March,” Msika and her orchestra could even be heard shouting, “Long live the king” and “Long live Egypt,” alongside thunderous applause. Her style and looks also earned her a coterie of mostly male fans known as the “Soldiers of the Night,” an “army” that included Habib Bourguiba, who would become the first president of independent Tunisia in 1957. A French intelligence report described Msika’s recordings as having the potential to “provoke unrest in the Muslim milieu.”

Msika was also among the most sought-after theater actors of her generation in North Africa, often performing in male lead roles. She played Romeo in an Arabic-language production of Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet” in Tunis in 1924. Merely 21 years old, the press compared her to Sarah Bernhardt, the Jewish actress who had conquered the fin-de-siècle French stage in traditionally male roles. The press and her peers began referring to Msika as ‘the second Sarah Bernhardt.’”

Msika was brutally murdered by Eliaou Mimouni, a 77-year-old Jew and jealous lover. At the burial, thousands of people gathered on the Avenue de Londres, the main artery leading to Tunis’ Jewish quarters to accompany her to the Jewish cemetery. The funeral was one of the largest and most significant Tunisian gatherings of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, under French colonial rule, such an enormous “native” gathering was a cause of concern for the authorities. Msika’s death had not only brought Muslims and Jews together, but it had also attracted Tunisian nationalists. Members of the Destour – a political party founded 10 years earlier with the aim of establishing Tunisian sovereignty – had long regarded Msika as one of theirs because of her records, especially her interpretations of pan-Arabist songs.

At the funeral, the celebrated theater director Bechir Methenni delivered an impassioned eulogy addressing the

America.....Continued from page 2

afternoon. Employing a jerry-built flamethrower, fueled by gasoline transported in a weed sprayer, he launched Molotov cocktails. The firebombing inflicted burns on a dozen marchers, amongst them an aged Holocaust survivor, Barbara Steinmetz. Echoing Rodriguez, Soliman, unrepentant after arrest, screamed expletive-laden threats to kill all Zionists. Colorado Governor Jared Polis, himself a Jew, vowed, “People should feel safe in their houses of worship, they should feel safe exercising their free speech.” A few days after the carnage, Rabbi Marc Soloway of Boulder’s Congregation Bonai Shalom confided, “It’s been brutal, agonizing, just shocking, unbelievable.”

The 2018 Tree of Life shooting in Pittsburgh, claiming the life of 11 Sabbath worshippers, marks both the deadliest massacre in Jewish American history and the beginning of an escalating U.S. antisemitism. The attacks on Tree of Life, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro’s residence, the Capital Jewish Museum in Boulder and Minnesota Congressman Max Miller’s moving car generated widespread media attention, but many other antisemitic episodes have taken place in recent years. The onset of the Hamas-Israel War on October 7, 2023, has ratcheted up beatings, harassment and vandalism against American Jews to levels not seen since the 1930s peak of U.S. antisemitism. The polarization and divisiveness endemic in contemporary America provides the kindling for the upsurge of ideologically driven violence, as evidenced by the literal hunting down of politicians in Minnesota. However, the major impetus for ascendant American antisemitism derives from opposition to Israeli military tactics in Gaza. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, a strong supporter of the state of Israel and a critic of the slaughter of Palestinian civilians by the government of Benjamin Netanyahu, observes, “Israel, instead of being seen by Jews as a safe haven from antisemitism, will be seen as a new engine generating it.” According to a June 2025 *Times* editorial concerning the American present, “Jews face far greater risks of being victims of hate crimes than members of any other demographic groups.”

Rancor and demonization blur the distinction between hatred of Jews and opposition to Zionism, as well as

deceased: “Alas dear comrade, your voice may no longer be with us, but rest assured that its memory remains etched in our minds. When our children listen to your records, it will be with tears in our eyes that we will tell them about your life, about your generous spirit, and that we will instill in them the idea that no one was ever the equal of your genius.”

His words proved true. In the aftermath of Msika’s death, her records started circulating rapidly across the Maghreb. In the aftermath of her murder, Habiba Msika’s memory was kept alive by the recording industry that she had helped shape. Her records traveled across Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco in huge numbers, outselling anything else released in the Maghreb since the birth of the recording industry at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite their efforts, the French authorities were unable to contain the flow of records across the colonies. Msika’s death also inspired recorded outpourings of grief by Tunisian and Algerian artists. Those laments, distributed across the Maghreb and beyond, included songs like “Moute Habiba Msika” (“The Death of Habiba Msika”), recorded by Tunisian-Jewish vocalist and dancer Flifla Chamia in December 1930.

A 1994 film called “The Dance of Fire” directed by Selma Baccar, Tunisian filmmaker, producer, politician and fighter for women’s rights, explored Msika’s personal and professional journey, focusing on the last three years of her life, marked by societal change, romantic relationships and a tragic end. It delved into her artistic talent, love life and the tumultuous events that led to her assassination by her lover.

I found it amazing how researching the background of a little square piece of paper could open a window into a slice of socio-cultural and political history that, without my philatelist interest, I would never have discovered. Learning about her career makes me wonder: Today, are there Jewish performers and vice versa Muslim performers that appeal to such a varied audience over such wide a geographical spread? And finally: Who says philately isn’t exciting?

that separating affirmation of Israel’s right to exist from supporting Netanyahu policies. Those guard rails, once clear, are collapsing. In the current zeitgeist, even a kosher butcher shop in Greater Boston becomes a target for smashing a brick, bearing the inscription “Free Palestine,” through a window. On the far left and far right, fanatics yoke antisemitism and anti-Zionism together and employ them as misguided antidotes to the current malaise. “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” and other false and invidious tropes of intolerance have re-emerged, challenging Jewish legitimacy.

Prepare for a tough battle – plan for a marathon, not a sprint. U.S. involvement in Israel’s war against Iran is likely to deepen domestic fissures. We must not hide or retreat. It is imperative that American Jews engage the democratic political process, through voting, advocacy media, rallying, donations, lobbying and running for office. Educate ourselves and our Gentile neighbors. By distributing thousands of the free copies of “The Diary of Anne Frank” to New York City’s youth, the Center for Jewish History provides an example to emulate. Support enhanced security measures for Jewish institutions, events and neighborhoods. New York Senator Chuck Schumer tells it the way it is: “The recent rise of antisemitism is a test case for what kind of country we want to be, a summons to fight for the idea of American at her very best.”

Discs.....Continued from page 5

Similar discs have been discovered in several other places in Israel, such as in Netanya and Tel Dor, mostly in a burial context.

“For thousands of years lions have symbolized bravery and courage,” said IAA director Eli Escusido, noting that “it is not by chance” that Israel had named its operation against Iran, launched on June 13, “Operation Rising Lion.” The Hebrew version, “A nation will arise like a lion” is taken from the Bible (Numbers 23:24).

The results of the find have now been published in the IAA’s archaeological journal.



A graphic reconstruction of a coffin with the “lion rings” attached. (Illustration by Yakov Shmidov, Israel Antiquities Authority)

Goodman...Continued from page 3

world a better place. That’s why I don’t feel like I missed out on anything because of my religious observance. My faith gave me guidance through both good times and hard times. It helped me manage stress, stay grounded and taught me how to prioritize what truly matters in life.”

He added that he was looking forward to his time in Binghamton: “I hope my life journey can inspire others to chase their dreams – even the ones that seem impossible. I’m truly grateful to the JCC, the Federation and everyone who made it possible for me to come to Binghamton. I’m incredibly excited and thankful for this opportunity.”

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