Temple Beth-El Ithaca announced that Rabbi Rachel Safman will be its new spiritual leader. This is not Safman’s first time in Ithaca: she was a graduate student at Cornell University and received her Ph.D. in development sociology in 2002. She also served at the synagogue during that time.

After receiving her degree, Safman conducted field research in Thailand and Myanmar, wrote a dissertation on the impact of the AIDS epidemic on rural Thai communities, was tapped as an expert on avian influenza (bird flu) by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and served on the faculty of the National University of Singapore, where her focus was on the response of families and communities to health crises.

During her years in Singapore, Safman served as the president of the city-state’s progressive Jewish community, the United Hebrew Congregation; was a participant in the ritual life of Singapore’s Baghdadi Orthodox community; and founded and led Gushet, a Jewish community forum that hosted guest speakers, including Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. Seeking to develop the energies of the Jewish community full-time, in 2008 she decided to study at the Conservative Movement’s Ziegler School of Rabbinic Study.

Hillel Academy receives grant for technology

Hillel Academy of Broome County announced that it has received a grant from the Eisenberg Fund, which will provide support for new technology for students and teachers. “We have been able to turn our classrooms into truly multimedia environments, while still emphasizing the intimate learning environment that makes Hillel Academy such a great school,” said a representative of Hillel. “This support will benefit our continuing efforts.”

Registration for the upcoming school year for kindergarten through fifth grade is still open. For more information, visit http://hillelacademybroomecounty.org or contact the school at 304-4544.

JFS seeks donations for We Remember You Project

Jewish Family Service is seeking donations for the We Remember You Project. The project, which is now in its 13th year, supports Jewish families locally who struggle to make ends meet.

Due to the pandemic and participant concerns with the risk of exposure to COVID-19, JFS has decided to do away with basket collections for this year. In an effort to maintain safety while supporting Jewish community members in need, JFS is asking for monetary donations for the purchase of grocery gift cards along with a monetary gift. Tax-deductible donations should be sent to the JFS by Wednesday, September 9, with “We Remember You” written on the memo line. Checks should be mailed to Jewish Family Service, 500 Casshoub Road, Vestal, NY 13850.

“The We Remember You Project is a wonderful way to give tzedakah during this time of self-reflection and gratitude,” noted Rose Shea, JFS director. “The Binghamton community has always been compassionate and generous. This is just another way to show how much they are not forgotten and the community really cares.”

Shea noted, “The WeRememberYouProj ection has been successful all these years because we know the recipients appreciate all that is done for them. Let’s make this another successful year!”

Projects like this are what Jewish Family Ser vice and the Jewish Federation are all about.” Contact Shera at director@jfsgh.org for further information.

Trustee in development sociology at SUNY Broome, Rachel brings to the Binghamton community a wealth of experience in the education sector. She has taught at the Jewish Academy of Singapore, where she hosted guest speakers, including Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. Seeking to develop the energies of the Jewish community full-time, in 2008 she decided to study at the Conservative Movement’s Ziegler School of Rabbinic Study.

The unstoppable Ukelele Steve

See “Film” on page 2

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Spotlight

The unstoppable Ukelele Steve

Live-in-person musical performances have stopped during the pandemic. Some musicians have gotten creative in finding ways to perform and get their music to their fans. One of those musicians is Steven Gilbert, professor emeritus of psychology at SUNY Oneonta, also known as Ukelele Steve.

Gilbert began his performing career in 2014, but he always loved playing music. “Playing the ukulele while singing great old songs has always brought me joy – in a nerdy, embarrassed way,” he said in an e-mail interview. “But for most of my life, I did it furtively and sporadically, with long periods of total neglect. When my uke would break, years might pass before I got another one. Sometime in the early 2000s, my children bought me a really fine baritone uke, and I found myself playing more and more. I was challenged by learning the ukulele – but I also wanted to improve – and I set a goal of writing a book of ukulele songs. I knew. The reaction to his performance was greater than he expected. “They loved it,” he said. “I loved doing it. I started calling the recreation directors at local senior living centers, offering to sing for no supper. Within a year, I was regularly playing at three or four facilities. By the end of 2019, I was regularly playing at 12 facilities. My songbook – the songs I rehearse and perform – has increased to around 150, and my ‘gig book’ is a monster spreadsheet, on which I record every song I perform at every gig (so that I can offer a reasonable variety at each).”

Then the pandemic began and the senior See “Steve” on page 7
By Kerri Weinstein

With the school year just weeks away and local parents struggling with the decision about sending their children to school or keeping them home, Hillel Academy of Broome County is gearing up to offer in-person instruction five days per week to new and returning families, including a quality secular and Jewish education in a safe environment – while following CDC and state social distancing guidelines – has been the greatest concern for parents and teachers. When the shutdown occurred this past March and in-person schooling closed, the teachers of Hillel Academy were quick to switch things online to the virtual classroom within 48 hours of closing. Every student received a Chromebook (the youngest receiving iPads) to log onto from home and interact with their classmates while receiving live virtual instruction from their teachers. No other school in the community was able to provide a curriculum online within the same timeframe as our school.

As an alumna student of Hillel Academy and a parent of a current student, it has been disheartening to see how much was at stake in this fight. I attended Hillel Academy from 1986-94. Back then, it had more than 100 students and ran through eighth grade. I have so many fond memories of a bustling school in the basement below Temple Israel: the dedicated teachers and a truly amazing education set me up for future educational success.

Unfortunately, as Broome County’s Jewish population has become smaller over the past few decades, the area’s only Jewish day school has seen its numbers diminish greatly. To accommodate enrollment, classes were combined and fifth grade became the final grade before graduation from Hillel Academy. My husband Jonathan, who is also Jewish, grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia and never attended a Jewish day school or a Jewish summer camp like I did. Judaism was not a part of my childhood, except for celebrating the holidays and having a bar mitzvah. When we moved back to Binghamton and had a daughter, Sloane, we were not planning on sending her to Hillel Academy. Instead, we were content with sending her to our local public elementary school. I received calls from Hillel’s board members asking me to consider sending Sloane to the school, but I was adamant that it would be easier to send her to public school and continue with my Jewish practice. Admittedly, I was also concerned about financing tuition, even though I was told that there was scholarship assistance available. It was the perfect fit: a school that every Jewish child be offered a Jewish education.

So, we went ahead and enrolled Sloane in public school for kindergarten and kept her there through first grade. I was extremely undeterred with how she was learning and the very large class size of 25 students. There was little time for a teacher to provide extra assistance, which resulted in us having to hire an outside tutor to keep her on track according to Common Core guidelines. I feared that we had made the wrong decision in sending her to public school and also felt we were not providing her with enough opportunities to learn about Judaism. I kept comparing her education to the one I received when I attended Hillel. I knew that when I was at the same age she was currently, I was already reading and writing Hebrew, and knowledgeable about Jewish culture and customs. It was clear that she would never get to this point if she stayed in public school.

As much as I thought I had received a career from a board member, Joy Yarkoni, inviting me to bring Sloane to an open house and learn more about what Hillel Academy currently had to offer. She answered all my questions and encouraged me to attend. Sloane was already enrolled in public school for second grade and had even received her teacher assignment. However, due to the shutdown, Sloane and many other parents, students, and teachers. I distinctly remember after meeting everyone, Jonathan saying to me, “I want her to have this education. We need to explore our options.”

Within two hours, Sloane was registered for Hillel Academy and we never looked back. Stepping into the school that day and seeing Sloane so happy to be there was the deciding factor. She has flourished at Hillel Academy: she truly enjoys going to school. She loves learning about and celebrating the holidays, and she was able to learn Hebrew very quickly. She receives any extra help she needs, and truly enjoys her classes and teachers. It has also brought more Judaism into our home life again.

When Sloane was a toddler, I was a board member and a grateful parent, I feel that it is more important than ever that we do everything possible to keep our school open. Given the recent pandemic, we understand the current challenges for schools; for us, we anticipate a full day of learning five days per week. Students and faculty will follow mandatory mask-wearing and social distancing guidelines. Our teachers and administration have been working very hard to make sure that we have ample indoor and outdoor space for our current and future new families.

Hillel Academy is proud that, during such an uncertain and difficult time, we are growing and bringing new families on board. In the past, we have seen a steady decrease in student enrollment. This year, the tides have turned. We have been actively recruiting new families and have seen a lot of interest from parents and grandparents. We expect to have about a 40 percent increase in enrollment and still be able to adhere to our safety guidelines. Obviously, no one knows what will happen in the fall and should COVID-19 cases spike again, Hillel Academy is prepared to go to virtual learning immediately. Teachers are able to offer Google virtual classrooms and keep our students socially and emotionally engaged. Our students and their well-being remain our highest priority, and we are prepared to go to virtual learning immediately. Teachers are able to offer Google virtual classrooms and keep our students socially and emotionally engaged. Our students and their well-being remain our highest priority, and we are prepared to go to virtual learning immediately.

Hillel Academy is still open for enrollment for the upcoming 2020-21 school year. We have been arranging in-person appointments for prospective families to meet some faculty and tour the school. Also, a socially-distanced event “Popcorns and Tricycles,” will be held outdoors on Thursday, August 27, for current and prospective families to meet. Call 304-4554 or e-mail frontoffice@ hillelacademyb.org for information or to set up an appointment. If any prospective parents would like to reach out to me personally, I can be reached by e-mail at kerrik@gmail.com.

Kerri Weinstein is an alumna of Hillel Academy and a parent of a current student.

By Rabi Rachel Eisserman, Executive Editor

The Reporter welcomes letters on subjects of interest to the Jewish community. The Reporter reserves the right to publish or reject any letters when, in its opinion, names may be withheld upon request.

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TC to hold hands-on art program on August 9

TC Sisterhood accepts rummage donations

Jewish resources to occupy your family during Social Distancing - part 18

Quick Reference Guide to Planned Giving

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The majority of these works focus on bad parenting and/or the inability to accept a child's differences. Both orirs. The majority of these works focus on bad parenting and/or the inability to accept a child's differences. Both

When Maggie speaks to the people who are to receive the letters, she says that there is something different in time so readers see events from Iris' point of view. This adds great depth of character and feeling to "All My Mother's Lovers." Also revealed is the story of Iris' parents and how their history affected her life. By the end of the novel, Maggie finally sees her parents as people, who have also lived messy, complicated and loving lives.

While Masud writes in her dedication in "All My Mother's Lovers" that her mother is nothing like Iris, Adjmi makes it clear in "Lot Six" that his parents' dysfunctional lives greatly affected the trajectory of his own. His family is part of the extended Jewish-Asian American community, although the less successful part. Adjmi finds his parents' way of viewing the world is not the only one. Unfortunately, by that point, he is so alienated from himself that he can't see the good in others and discerns identities like they are fashionable clothes that can easily be tossed aside. What Adjmi does cling to is the theater: the one place able to transform his nightmares into dreams. He becomes a successful playwright, although the road to success is not easy.

While Adjmi does talk a bit about his parents' lives, he never truly explores why they came to be so hurtful and harmful. His lack of interest in doing so is understandable: the mess his parents left in their wake made his life difficult and stunted him emotionally, and that's without considering the fact that he is gay. Even his siblings acknowledged that after they married, the atmosphere of the house was terrible for him, although there wasn't much they could do since their own lives were adversely affected by their parents' behavior and unreasonable demands. But the messes their lives became also separated them from Adjmi and left him feeling unable to relate to almost any member of his family. Adjmi helps us see that the Lot Six problem is, in fact, not just about being Jewish, but about identity and how to use it.

Kristys Photography

For more information, call 607-221-1225 or e-mail kristyphotography@gmail.com. You can also see a portfolio and more information at www.kristyphotoc.com.
At the risk of seeming opinionated, I have an important decision to make: what sauces, dressings and condiments we put on them. Now, I know some of you won’t agree, but you’re wrong. Take salad: I love salads with all kinds of veggies – from lettuce to carrots to roasted Brussels sprouts – but the real star of the dish is the salad dressing. I don’t get the dressing on the side and dip the vegetables. Mopping up the leftover dressing on the plate with a slice of good bread is half the fun.

Now think of noodles – whether Italian or Asian. It’s the sauce. And then there is Middle Eastern cuisine. And therein lies the truism that hot dogs and burgers (whether meat or meatless): they need ketchup and mustard, if not a load of other things. It’s only really very, very good french fry that does not need ketchup.

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Name: Michelle (Bank) McIlroy
Phone: 607-765-2408
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Hours: Variable

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Whether you are planning an intimate dinner for two in your home, a corporate luncheon, or a special occasion for 200, it will tailor the menu to meet your culinary tastes and your budget,” says Chef Michelle. “Fresh, local, farm-to-table, seasonal food is our specialty.”

Southern Tier Women’s Health Services, LLC

Specialty: Well woman care and abortion
Location: 149 Vestal Parkway W.
Names: Amy R. Cousins, M.D. and Peg Johnson
Phone: 607-785-4171 or 1-800-676-9011
Website: www.southerntierwomenshealth.com
Hours: Mon.-Fri. 9 am-5 pm, Sat. by appointment only

New York state has designated Southern Tier Women’s Health Services, the former office of Dr. Amy Cousins, as a licensed clinic. “This culminates a two-year process of negotiations, adoption of stringent standards and reporting requirements to qualify as a diagnostic and treatment center. Our philosophy of compassionate abortion and well woman care is unique in the state,” says Dr. Peg Johnson. The office opened in 1981 as Southern Tier Women’s Services, operated as Dr. Cousins’ office starting in 1989 and was purchased in 2009 by an employee-owned company. Both Johnson and Dr. Cousins own the new entity. “We have created a more sustainable practice that will continue to offer services well into the future,” states Johnston.

Visit Phantom Chef Catering online at www.phantomchefcatering.com or call the party professionals at 773-1462.

Jerry Johnston 607-221-1225

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Good and evil. Positive and negative. Blessing and curse. Everything in life seems to belong in – or fall somewhere on the spectrum bracketed by – one of these two categories.

In the opening verse of this week’s parasha, one of the most famous mistakes in Jewish scholarship is made. It is a mistake with the dramatic words: That I have before placed you today the blessing and the curse.

In the subsequent verses, it becomes clear that these words are an exhortation to man to choose good, to hearken unto His instruction and to choose “life.” Axiomatic to Jewish theology is the notion of man’s autonomy and the necessity for freedom of choice. It is imperative to the Jewish faith that each human being choose to adhere to God’s instruction and to choose “life,” as a means of partnering with God in shaping the world’s destiny. To choose virtue, there must be the possibility of giving in – or spurning God makes each human action meaningful and creates the possibility for man to partner with God in creating the world that he wishes to see.

Good and Evil – Positive and Negative – Blessing and Curse
Exploring Literature

Bigotry in marbled text: responding to antisemitism

BILL SIMONS

As Americans and Jews, we confront polarizing discussions concerning the presentations of the past in the form of statuary, film and literature. The classic television police drama “Naked City” featured a 1963 episode, “Strike a Statuette,” relevant to the contemporary debate over the relative priorities of art, history and politics. Guest star George C. Scott — already a powerful on-screen presence seven years prior to his celebrated performance as General George S. Patton — played Kemal Garrison, an international espionage agent plying his trade in a Lower Manhattan studio. His pinnacle work, nearly complete, casts the leader of a European liberation movement as a heroic, larger than life figure. A fellow veteran of the resistance army assists Garrison in the studio, asserting that their former ideological leader evolved into a murderous tyrant once in power. Arguing that completion of the statue would strengthen the grip of the dictator on an oppressed people, Garrison’s former comrade beseeches him not to complete the statue. Garrison roars back that art transcends politics and that the monument truthfully depicts the figure on the day he emancipated a captive city. Despite moral suasion, an offer of $20,000 to desist, picketing, assault, threats and a botched assassination attempt that takes the life of his pregnant wife and unborn child, Garrison’s determination to complete the statue is implacable. The preceding is germane to considering a response to antisemitism in art and literature. Antisemitism has a long history in the art and literature of Western civilization as four examples from the classic canon attest. “The Canterbury Tales,” picarsque medieval fiction by Geoffrey Chaucer, is presented as a series of masterfully told tales by Christian pilgrims traveling to see “The Bigotry” on page 8

Steve

living centers closed their doors to visitors. That brought an abrupt end to his performances, but performing though, and then one winter day inspiration struck. “One day in March, sequestered at home, I was pining for my performing days and wondering how I could bring a little joy to my seniors fan club,” he said. “Could I make videos of some of my songs and send them to the activities directors at my performance venues? Would they play them for me?” He knew that a local senior citizen center had a fan club at Temple Israel, might they be interested in seeing some of these videos? He decided to record a couple a week and see.

The response was so great that he continues to perform. Gilbert posts his work on his personal Facebook page and sends links to a Google Drive account to several e-mail lists he’s cultivated. “I post each of the songs I record on Facebook, but to my ‘friends’ only,” he noted. “Posting to ‘public’ obviously would reach more people, but some of them may be inclined to respond with abuse — this is social media! — and that downside risk is greater than I wish to accept. Instead, I send the links to my videos to several e-mail distribution lists: a) my family (immediate and extended); b) activities directors at my performance venues; c) Temple Israel; and d) assorted friends and acquaintances whose e-mail addresses have made it into my AOL address book over the years. My best guess is that less than 10% of them view the videos I send.”

Gilbert looks for songs to perform on YouTube, where he finds “the eighth wonder of the world.” He uses several criteria to pick the songs: 1) He has to love them, 2) he has to be able to perform them (Gilbert notes that his vocal range and ukelele skills are limited) and 3) people his age and older have to like the songs. “I do lots of 1950s hits,” he added. “Classics from the 1920s, ’30s and ’40s. Folks songs. Protest songs. Gospel songs. Elvis. Beatles. Songs people keep asking me to sing. And songs that keep popping up in my mind’s ear, and won’t relent until I learn them and officially enter them into my songbook!”

The songs are recorded in Gilbert’s basement and he tries to do them in one take. He’s not always successful and will do a little editing to get rid of mistakes. Even though he practices before he starts recording, Gilbert noted that he usually makes at least one mistake during the actual performance. “When this happens, I don’t stop the video recording,” he said. “Instead, I simply stop singing, go back to a sensible place to resume the performance, and restart my singing and playing at that point. If I make another embarrassing error, I’ll do the same thing again. A third error is nature’s way of telling me that I’m not in the right frame of mind, and I stop, discard the recording and return an hour later to try again.” When finished, he does his editing and then uploads the videos to Google Drive. Next comes posting it on Facebook and sending the link to his e-mail lists.

Gilbert said he is having a grand time performing. “Gertrude Stein reportedly said, ‘I hate writing but I love having written,’” he said. “That’s not true for me. I love every part of this enterprise. The actual process of recording the video, however, is stressful. But in the words of John Lewis, of blessed memory, it is good stress, necessary stress. My two favorite parts of the process are: (a) working up the song — experimenting with different ways of playing and singing — getting things right; and (b) receiving feedback (on Facebook and e-mails). When I know I have brought a little joy to a few people, amid the privations, sadness and anxiety that have enveloped our world, I feel blessed.”

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Mazel Tov Bonnie! Congratulations on your well-deserved retirement!

Love your family,
Suanne & Marty, E & Donnie,
Rachel, Brittany & Arielle

Mazel tov on your retirement, Bonnie! Thank you for your nearly 25 years of service to The Reporter.

Yasher koach!

The Reporter board and staff
Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz dies at age 83

Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz, considered one of Judaism’s exceptional modern-day commentators, died in Jerusalem after suffering from acute pneumonia. He was 83 years old. Steinsaltz was born in Jerusalem on July 11, 1937. His father, a rabbi, died in his early age. He studied mathematics, chemistry and physics from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and after graduating began his career as an educator and a school principal in Jerusalem. At the beginning of his writing a great many Jewish works. In 1965, in conjunction with the government of Israel, he founded the Israel Institute for Talmudic Publications, later the Steinsaltz Center, which became his life’s work — helping to preserve and enhance the heritage of Israel accessible by translating and explaining the Babylonian Talmud to the world. Steinsaltz is considered one of the most important contemporary Jewish religious commentators and thinkers. His writings and philosophical works have been translated into dozens of languages to the benefit of millions of people all over the world. He authored as many as 60 books on various topics, including guides to and commentaries on the Talmud, the Torah, Jewish mysticism, Chasidism, Jewish philosophy and more. He later took on the name Even-Israel (“Stone of Israel”). One of the rabbi’s most renowned and significant projects was the “Steinsaltz-Talmud,” a translation from the original Aramaic, alongside an annotated explanation to 2,711 pages of the Babylonian Talmud. Four of his commentaries on the Torah (the Pentateuch), as well as on the writings of the Prophets Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel, and on the book of Psalms. He went on to complete the full commentary of the Old Testament, in both English and Hebrew, while his commentary on the six books of the Mishnah are due to be published in the coming months. Steinsaltz is survived by his wife, Sarah; their three children; and many grandchildren.

Egypt opens Gaza border for first time since virus outbreak

Egypt opened its border crossing with Gaza for the first time in months on Monday, when it was closed in order to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Gaza residents with foreign passports and patients seeking treatment abroad were allowed to pass through the Rafah crossing during its three-day opening, the Hamas Interior Ministry said, and Palestinians crossing during its three-day opening, the Hamas Interior Ministry said, and to and commentaries on the Talmud, the Torah, Jewish mysticism, Chasidism, Jewish philosophy and more. He later took on the name Even-Israel (“Stone of Israel”). One of the rabbi’s most renowned and significant projects was the “Steinsaltz-Talmud,” a translation from the original Aramaic, alongside an annotated explanation to 2,711 pages of the Babylonian Talmud. Four of his commentaries on the Torah (the Pentateuch), as well as on the writings of the Prophets Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel, and on the book of Psalms. He went on to complete the full commentary of the Old Testament, in both English and Hebrew, while his commentary on the six books of the Mishnah are due to be published in the coming months. Steinsaltz is survived by his wife, Sarah; their three children; and many grandchildren.

Sauces.

found at www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-sauces-sauce.html. However, according to Jewish dietary laws, most non-Jewish guests would not be allowed to eat this food. The problem is that in which they lived to fit Jewish dietary re- strictions. There would be no mixing of meat and dairy, and foods that could not be used. The same is true of shellfish. This was the case with Jews living in Israel and brought their food and spices with them. While those foods may seem exotic to us, they are everyday meals in the those parts of the world. The point here is that many of those dishes are now making their way into our diets, and while I may not be making me hungry so you’ll excuse me while I make my own Jewish food (AKA whatever I choose to eat for dinner tonight).

Bigotry.

English religious shrine. One of the stories, “The Prince’s Tale,” belongs to the blood libel tradition, relating the tale of a boy martyr, cruelly murdered by a venal Jew, who deposits the corpse in a muck hill. William Shakespeare’s unmatcht gift of character – displayed in tragedies, histories and comedies – mark him as England’s greatest dramatist, and as such, he is often considered to be the then prevailing belief in ghosts and witches, as well as the credibility of Jews. Shakespeare’s 1596 “The Tempest” features a group of Jewish refugees based on the play of the same name, which it was adapted from. “The Tempest” also in particular, includes racism and antisemitism. In 1989, Eugene Levy and Dan Aykroyd released the movie “Ghostbusters.” The movie is about a team of ghostbusters who are hired to get rid of the ghosts that are haunting a building. The team discovers that the ghosts are the remains of an old Jewish family who lived in the building. The family was killed by a gang of Nazis who ransacked the building during World War II. The family is determined to find their revenge and haunt the building until the team can find a way to put them to rest. The movie was a box office success and helped to bring attention to the issue of antisemitism. It also helped to raise awareness about the importance of remembering the history of the Holocaust.

In our age of social media, we are all our own publisher. The 19th century hero, Jay Gatsby. Fitzgerald presents Meyer Wolfsheim, a moneylender, Shylock, who literally de - mandation of mourning of the 20th century, Harvey Michaels taught

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