

# THE REPORTER

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BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

## Federation 2026 Campaign to continue with Super Sunday calls

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold its annual Super Sunday phonathon on Sunday, September 7. “There will be no program that day because we already held our opening event with Tamir Goodman earlier this week,” said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. “We are grateful for community members who pledge early. It truly reduces the burden for our Campaign volunteers. September 7 will be the beginning of our phone campaign

for community members who have yet to pledge.” (For ways to make a pledge, see the Campaign ad on page 9.)

The theme of this year’s Campaign is “You Belong.” “‘You Belong’ means we welcome you,” said Marilyn Bell, Campaign chairwoman. “‘You Belong’ means we are here for you. ‘You Belong’ means we will face our challenges together, and together make

this community safer, stronger and more compassionate. We couldn’t do this vital work without you. ‘You Belong.’”

Hubal noted, “We want to remind our community members that despite all the challenges we are facing, what is most important is that we each have a place where we belong. Federation is that place. No matter what your Jewish practice, ‘You Belong’ to the Jewish

community. We are there for each other.”

Hubal thanked donors for their generous support during Campaign 2025 and gave her outlook for Campaign 2026. “Due to cuts in federal spending, there is a greater burden on not-for-profit organizations,” she added. “We understand this means our donors are being spread thin. When you support the Federation, you are giving to a multitude of local Jewish organizations and helping our neighbors in need. We thank everyone for their enduring support.”

**you belong**

## Federation to hold “Guardian” and “Stop the Bleed” trainings on Aug. 27

By Reporter staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will hold a security training session on Wednesday, August 27, at 6:30 pm, at the Jewish Community Center, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal. The trainings to be featured are “Guardian: Identify. Protect. Respond.” and “Stop the Bleed.” The program will be led by Mark Henderson, regional security advisor, Rochester, for the Secure Community Network. To RSVP, visit [www.jfgb.org](http://www.jfgb.org) or e-mail [director@jfgb.org](mailto:director@jfgb.org); the deadline to register is Monday, August 25.

“To keep our mindset and skills evolving, we are pleased to bring back our security

professional, Mark Henderson,” said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. “These trainings have been updated and are unfortunately becoming more relevant to our day-to-day lives. I hope you will join us for this important training that could help save a life.”

**“Guardian: Identify. Protect. Respond.”**

“Guardians are active participants in the safety and security of their families and communities. This training will focus on the development of a guardian mindset and concrete skills that include identifying

suspicious people, vehicles and packages,” said organizers of the event. “These are principles critical to protecting oneself, family and community institutions, as well as principles surrounding how to respond during emergencies. A small segment on de-escalation skills is also included.”

“This training is aimed at all members of an organization or congregation because at some time almost everyone will open a door and need to make a decision about whether or not it’s safe to do so,” said Hubal. “It teaches how to identify suspicious

people, vehicles and packages, and learn ways to protect our community. We all should become active bystanders who can respond to incidents and situations.”

**“Stop the Bleed”**

“Stop the Bleed® Training is a nationally recognized, standardized course created and sponsored through [stopthebleed.org](http://stopthebleed.org),” organizers added. “This interactive course stresses the importance of understanding why bleeding is the number one preventable cause of death after an injury, how to save a life through identifying life-threatening bleeding, recognizing See **“Bleed”** on page 4



## BD Luncheon on Sept. 13 to feature Eliyana Adler

Beth David Synagogue’s 2025-26 Second-Saturday-of-the-Month Luncheon Speaker Series will resume on Saturday, September 13. Shabbat services will begin at 9:30 am, followed by the luncheon and program. Professor Eliyana R. Adler will speak on “Private Schools for Jewish Girls in the Tsarist Empire.”

Adler is a scholar of East European Jewish history and will present insights from her award-winning book, “In Her Hands: The Education of Jewish Girls in Tsarist Russia” (Wayne State University Press, 2011, with a new edition in 2024). Her research – conducted in Russian and Lithuanian archives, as well as the YIVO Institute in New York – challenges long-held conjectures about Jewish girls’ education in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian Empire. The work received the 2011 Heldt Prize from the Association for Women in Slavic Studies and was a National Jewish Book Award Finalist in Women’s Studies. It was translated into Russian in 2022.

“Professor Adler’s groundbreaking work upended some previously held erroneous assumptions about Jewish girls’ education under the Russian Empire,” said organizers of the event. “She shares what was considered commonplace, as witnessed in a remark made by a European-born rabbi in a 2000 interview that appeared in *The New York Times*. He is quoted as saying that Jewish girls in Eastern Europe did not need any education; they just needed to

learn how to peel potatoes. ‘In fact,’ Professor Adler has noted, ‘contemporary witnesses often remarked that Jewish women were much more educated than their peers. But how did this come about? My talk will discuss Jewish educational norms in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a special focus on the private schools for Jewish girls that proliferated in the Russian Empire.’”

Adler recently joined the faculty in the Departments of History and Judaic Studies, and the Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention at Binghamton University. She holds a doctorate from Brandeis University, and teaches and studies East European Jewish history at Binghamton. In addition to her work on Jewish girls’ education in Tsarist



Professor Eliyana Adler (Photo courtesy of Eliyana Adler)

Russia, her most recent book, “Survival on the Margins: Polish Jewish Refugees in the Wartime Soviet Union” (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), received both the Yad Vashem International Book Prize for Holocaust Research (2021) and the Rachel Feldhay Brenner Award in Polish Jewish Studies (2021). Adler has published articles in many journals and has held fellowships sponsored by multiple institutions. Her current research focuses on post-Holocaust Polish Jewish memorial books.

“We are thrilled to have Eliyana as part of our community and university,” organizers said. “Her groundbreaking work is sure to be fascinating and enlightening. She looks forward to sharing her findings

and answering the important questions we know her audience will bring!”

Beth David’s luncheon speaker series takes place the second Saturday of the month after Shabbat morning services and is open to the community. There is no charge for the luncheon. Since the monthly series’ continuation depends on the generosity of contributors, Beth David welcomes and appreciates donations to the Luncheon Fund in order to keep the program going. Donations can be made in honor of or in memory of someone, or to mark a special occasion. Those wishing an acknowledgment to be sent to the person being honored, or to the family of someone being remembered, can indicate that, along with the necessary information. Donations can be sent to Beth David Synagogue, 39 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, NY 13905, Attention: Luncheon Fund.

## JFS and Friendship Club to host estate planning program on Sept. 17

Jewish Family Services and the Friendship Club will host the program “Estate Planning Basics: Wills, Trusts, and Advanced Directives” on Wednesday, September 17, at 1 pm, at the Jewish Community Center, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal. Amanda

Giannone, a partner at Levene Gouldin and Thompson law firm, will speak. Giannone specializes in elder law and has been presenting workshops since 2015. To register for the event, visit [www.jfgb.org](http://www.jfgb.org) or call 607-724-2332.

“Join us for this free program,” said organizers of the event. “Those of all ages are welcome to attend. There will be plenty of time for questions, and snacks will be served. Join us for what will be sure to be an information and interesting program.”

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## Opinion

From the Desk of the Federation Executive Director

## With gratitude

SHELLEY HUBAL

What connects us? In this moment, we are so divided it is hard to see where the connections remain. I am guilty of this; the headlines move fast and are difficult to consume. It is easy to be tired and angry and forget about our commonalities.

In her commencement address at Yeshiva University, Rachel Goldberg Polin, mother of slain hostage Hersh Goldberg Polin, said, "We people, we are not what we say, we are not what we think, and we are not even what we believe. In this life, we are what we do."

The way of the Jewish people is paved with resilience, peace and, above all, kindness. "What we do" is care for one another. When someone is grieving, we make a *shiva* call. When someone is hungry, we don't ask questions: we feed them. When one person is suffering, we all feel the pain. Your agony is my agony.

When a single mother working a full-time job comes into the Federation office because she has no way to feed her family and walks out with the means to make ends meet, you, the Jewish community of Greater Binghamton, helped her. You did that with your kindness and your support of the Federation.

"You Belong," the theme of our Annual Campaign, is a reminder to community members that without you none of

the work we do is possible. But its meaning goes deeper: "You Belong" also means the Jewish people are one, under "one tent" where everyone belongs.

We have always had varied opinions on everything from bagels to politics to humor, but ultimately, we are one people. Angry, yes. Divided, yes. Varied in our observance, yes. However, the people I meet every day here in Binghamton are all just searching for fair and compassionate solutions to our contemporary challenges.

## One Perspective from Israel

## When one door closes...

JEREMY M. STAIMAN

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

Will one family's search for roots help another discover theirs?

\*\*\*\*

They had been there before. The quaint, six-story Art Nouveau building sitting on a corner in the residential Letna

We want to live in peace and we want to practice our faith freely and safely, and we want that for our friends, loved ones and neighbors.

It is OK to have discourse, discussion and differences. That is what mature people do. That is what Jewish people do. We recognize that our differences make us stronger: we listen and we sometimes compromise. That is the only way to go forward and to ensure all Jewish people know they "belong." That is what we need to "do" now more than ever.

neighborhood of Prague seemed like a lovely place to live. Built around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its decorative gables and arched windows sported a fresh coat of exterior yellow and gray paint and radiated Old World charm.

The building had borne witness to two world wars, the rise and fall of Communist rule following World War II, See "Door" on page 12

## In My Own Words

## Man plans...

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Man plans and God laughs. That Yiddish expression accurately describes major portions of my life. Sometimes it's a major life event that doesn't work as expected; other times it's a small thing. Fortunately, the latest example from my life falls into the latter category. Earlier this month, I took a day trip to Skaneateles with a friend. We had a lovely afternoon: we walked through the shopping area, ate a nice lunch and went on a boat ride. On the way back to the car, we were discussing whether to stop at a winery on the way home or just get ice cream (or both), when, while we were walking across the street, my ankle turned and I fell hard. Fortunately, I didn't break anything, but, as of this writing, I'm still hobbling a bit.

We changed our plans, making a quick stop at a gas station for ice and heading home. Well, we still did stop for ice cream. The streak of not great luck continued when I began to lick my ice cream cone and all the ice cream fell off. By that time, I was ready to laugh and I did. Plus, they didn't charge me for a new cone, so it worked out fine.

This was a minor change of plans and one to which I

could easily adjust. Doing so is not really in my basic nature. When I was growing up, my mother told me I needed to learn to bob and weave, something I have gotten better at because I've had little choice. After all, it's not really a joke when I say that I am on plan H, I or J in my life. This became even clearer when I met with my new nurse practitioner later that week. Discussing various health issues with her meant explaining how my hearing impairment developed, what happened to my back in 1990 and more that you really don't want to hear about (because I wish I didn't have to think about them, either).

These thoughts do seem appropriate for the issue we call our High Holiday preparation issue. When we had far more papers to get to the printer, I would often be caught unaware when holidays actually arrived. There were years when I had a great deal to think about during that period. Other years, my internal conversation consisted of something like, "I have enough on my plate right now. I'll worry about fixing my faults next year."

This year, for the first time, I'm approaching the holidays

well aware that I have more years behind me than I have in front of me. (Yes, I know I joke about how long I'm planning to live in order to read all the books on my bookcases, but I am well aware that won't happen.) That's partly because I have even more aches and pains when I wake up in the morning than I did a few years ago, long before my recent fall. This year, I also performed the funerals of several friends – younger and older – that couldn't help but make me more aware of my mortality. But falling so quickly – and feeling so out of control while it happened – just makes it clear how quickly something can happen to us, despite our plans.

We plan and God laughs. We have to make plans because otherwise we won't accomplish anything. We can't live without thinking ahead. But, as the holidays approach, perhaps we should acknowledge just how precarious our lives are. Perhaps, we should also make certain that those we love and appreciate know just how much they mean to us. And we should take a moment to feel extremely grateful for all that we do have, even while being aware it could disappear within seconds.

## Letters

## A divided community

To the Editor:

Our Jewish community is divided over the October 7 war. Undoubtedly many Jews have mixed views concerning the waging of this war between Israel and Hamas. This war has cost the lives of about 60,000 Palestinians living in Gaza. The territory has been reduced to rubble for the most part. It serves no purpose to argue who is worse in this battle: the terrorists who initiated the conflict or the Israeli government that pursues the remaining Hamas military wing. Unfortunately, the innocents caring for the civilians are exposed to harm. Further, the young are forced to beg for food while avoiding bullets and bombs. Modern warfare is overwhelmingly destructive, which makes one wonder why it was initiated.

Israel is not a perfect nation and, therefore, makes

mistakes. It is hard to hold Israel to a higher standard than other nations are held. Some American Jews disagree with the Israeli government, but it was duly elected. A nation of nine million, which includes two million non-Jews occupying land about the size of New Jersey, is surrounded by some greater numbers dedicated to its destruction. We pray for peace at every minyan since our people have been subject to hatred and antisemitism for over two-and-one-half millennia. This is not to say that we as a people have not made errors that cost our communities. Jewish principles teach us to be a light unto the world. As humans, we fall short often.

During this war, Israel has had to confront other warring parties, including Iran and its proxies. Additionally, Israel has generally been poor at relating information to the world

and loses the propaganda war. Perhaps, it is impossible to confront the picture of dead people with any rationale.

My concern here is with the effect upon our community that rhetoric has. I expect that the Federation fund-raising will suffer, as well as other community programs. A small Jewish community fighting among itself will not solve problems that our greater Binghamton has. We should encourage free speech, but guilt and recrimination will only further alienate others. About 150 years ago, when a Civil War was fought over succession related to slavery and sectionalism, Abraham Lincoln said that a "nation divided cannot stand." The same is true about our Jewish community. We can have differences, but we should still work together to make our neighborhood a better place.

Howard J. Warner



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of Greater Binghamton

Shelley Hubal, Executive Director

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## OPINIONS

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

## LETTERS

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

## ADS

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

## DEADLINE

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

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www.thereporter.org

# Chabad Center to hold Piaker lecture on Sept. 4

The annual Pauline and Philip M. Piaker Memorial Lecture will be held on Thursday, September 4, at 7 pm, at the Chabad Center, 420 Murray Hill Rd., Vestal. The guest lecturer will be Joel Finkelstein, Ph.D., who will speak about "Algorithmic Hate: Botification, Antisemitism, and the Machinery of Mass Persuasion." There is no charge, but reservations are required and can be made at [www.Jewish.com/Piaker](http://www.Jewish.com/Piaker) or by calling 607-797-0015. There will be an opportunity for a question-and-answer session after Finkelstein's presentation. A dessert buffet will follow the program.



Joel Finkelstein, Ph.D. (Photo courtesy of Joel Finkelstein, Ph.D.)

intelligence, social-cyber threat identification and threat forecasting. His work on hate in social media has appeared in "60 Minutes," *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, NPR and other media outlets.

As a youth growing up in Tyler, TX, Finkelstein put on puppet shows for birthday parties, making \$100 for telling stories about superheroes. Today, Finkelstein, a neuroscientist by training, studies a different form of puppetry: the inner workings of the human brain and how it can be engineered or "botified."

"Our father, Philip M. Piaker, started this series in memory of our mother Pauline, who passed away in 1995. We have continued this event after the death of our father in 2003 to bring noted speakers to Binghamton," explained Alan Piaker. "The world has changed since the horrific massacre on October 7, 2023, when around 1,200 Israelis and others were killed by Hamas terrorists. This has led to the war in Gaza that is still ongoing. This has also led to a significant rise in antisemitism. Please join us for what will be a compelling talk on matters that are taking place today and have a profound effect on people of all ages. It is important for all of us to understand how social media affects our lives and what we can do to protect ourselves."

Finkelstein is the co-founder and chief science officer of the Network Contagion Research Institute, which deploys machine learning tools to expose the growing tide of hate and extremism on social media. He is a graduate of Princeton University, where his award-winning, doctoral work focused on the psychology and neuroscience of addiction and social behavior. He currently directs the Network Contagion Lab at the Miller Center for Community Protection and Resilience at Rutgers University, where he trains the next generation of students in the field of critical

After undergrad at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a stint at Google, Finkelstein worked with a neuroscientist James Doty to start the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University. Their research center focused on understanding the neural origins of compassion and altruism. It was there Finkelstein became interested in the field of optogenetics, which examines how neurons can be genetically engineered with light switching to control the brain. He explored that by using these processes, scientists could "turn on" anxiety and bonding behaviors.

After the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education awarded a grant to Karl Deisseroth, the inventor of the field of optogenetics, Finkelstein took a job in Deisseroth's Stanford lab and found a new mentor in Deisseroth's student, neuroscientist Ilana Witten, who graduated from Princeton in 2002. When Witten joined the faculty of the Princeton Neuroscience Institute, Finkelstein followed her to pursue his Ph.D. in the same field.

At Princeton, Finkelstein's dissertation involved understanding the neural mechanism to "unlearn bad habits" through an experiment to cause the extinction of a "cocaine memory." After mice were given cocaine, they formed a preference for the drug. Then Finkelstein studied the

mechanisms in mice to erase that memory. By flashing light at neurons in the reward center of the brain, the memory could be weakened, and the addictive spell could be lifted.

"As Finkelstein came closer to understanding the secrets of the brain, he stumbled across a startling discovery: just as flashing lights could manipulate the brain, social media could influence it, too," said organizers of the event.

## DEADLINES

*The following are deadlines for all articles and photos for upcoming issues of the bimonthly THE REPORTER.*

ISSUE	DEADLINE
September 12-25.....	September 3
September 26-October 9.....	September 17
October 10-23.....	September 29 (early)
Oct. 24-Nov. 13.....	October 13 (early)

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

# TC to hold Religious School outreach event on Sept. 9

By Sarah Marcus

Temple Concord will hold a Religious School outreach event that is open to the community on Sunday, September 7, from 9:30-11:30 am, at the synagogue at 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. Families will have the chance to meet teachers, tour classrooms and enjoy kid-friendly activities like face painting, Rosh Hashanah crafts, snacks and play. The event is free and open to all. While RSVPs are encouraged at [templeconcordaa@gmail.com](mailto:templeconcordaa@gmail.com), walk-ins are welcome.

"This fun and welcoming morning is designed for families exploring Jewish education options for their children," said members of the Religious School Committee. "It will showcase Temple Concord's robust, progressive and inclusive religious school program, which serves children from birth through 10<sup>th</sup> grade. From monthly Tot Shabbat for our little ones to Shabbat School for elementary-age kids to b' mitzvah preparation and a high school-level Kollel program, there is something for every

stage of your child's Jewish journey."

Organized by Temple Concord Religious School, the outreach event aims to connect with new and unaffiliated families, especially those from dual heritage backgrounds or those who may not have previously considered Jewish education. The school welcomes children of all levels of Jewish affiliation, or none, and embraces families with any Jewish heritage.

To learn more about Temple Concord and its religious school, visit [templeconcord.com](http://templeconcord.com).

## OF NOTE

### Grant



Dr. Matthew Grant (Photo courtesy of the Grant family)

Dr. Matthew Grant – the son of Dr. Ron and Lesley Grant, formerly of Vestal – has been named by Connecticut Magazine to its 2025 "Top Doctors" list. He was selected through a peer review as the best in his field of infectious disease at Yale University School of Medicine. Grant treats patients with vulnerable immune systems who are undergoing treatment for cancer or a transplant.



Temple Concord Religious School students celebrated Purim.

## Bookkeeper wanted

The Reporter is seeking a part-time bookkeeper who has experience with QuickBooks, Excel and Access, plus a willingness to learn other programs and material as necessary. The bookkeeper must also be able to interact with clients in a personable manner.

This is a part-time position with a flexible schedule.

E-mail resume to Shelley Hubal at [director@jfgb.org](mailto:director@jfgb.org) with "bookkeeper" in the subject line.



## WE REMEMBER YOU 2025 A Project of Jewish Family Service

During the High Holidays 5786, JFS will be distributing monetary gifts to community members in need who always say,

**"Thank you for remembering me."**

Please help fund this program with monetary contributions by **Sept. 15** to: Jewish Family Service, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal NY 13850.

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On the silver screen

Superman is Jewish – and so is Wonder Woman

BILL SIMONS

Following Israel's stunning triumph over multiple enemies in the 1967 Six-Day War, the definitive Superman poster appeared. The trademark Superman metamorphosis had him entering a telephone booth to take off his Clark Kent wardrobe and emerge in Superman attire. Riffing on tradition, the 1967 poster depicts a bespectacled Hasid – beard, payot, black coat and hat – removing his religious garments to reveal the Superman outfit with the letter "S" replaced by its Hebrew equivalent, a red crown-shaped shin, centered on the chest of the blue bodysuit. Rather than reinforcing the trope about Jewish physical ineptitude, the popular poster elicited Gentile respect and Jewish pride in Israeli fighting prowess.

By creation, content and casting, Superman is Jewish. In 1931, writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster, both then 17, were Cleveland high school buddies with a mutual interest in science fiction and comics. They contributed to the student newspaper before founding their own little "magazine," Science Fiction. In January 1933, the month that Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany, the Jewish teens presented "The Reign of the Superman," a tale of a mad scientist who dupes a soup-line victim of the Great Depression to ingest a serum giving him the power of thought control and ambition to control the world.

The scientist and that superman both come to a bad end. But Shuster and Siegel returned to the superman concept, taking it in a different direction. By the late 1930s, the young collaborators fashioned comic strips that invested their Superman with his defining attributes: birth on the doomed planet of Krypton, immense strength, formidable leaping ability (the flying came later), caped costume, secret identity as reporter Clark

Kent, and devotion to truth and justice ("the American Way" was a World War II addition). Superman made his national debut in the April 1938 issue of Action Comics No. 1. The popular character soon became an American sensation.

Hard times create a yearning for a hero, a deliverer, a standard bearer, even a messiah. As isolation and appeasement enervated the great Western democracies, Hitler escalated brutally aggressive policies of rearmament, territorial expansion and antisemitism in 1938, subjugating Austria and the Sudetenland while unleashing Kristallnacht physical attacks on Jews accompanied by destruction of their property. In an America fearful, yet clinging to the desperate belief that it could escape the gathering storm beyond its borders, a 1938 radio broadcast of "War of the Worlds" created mass panic of a Martian invasion.

Appearing on the cusp of World War II in an America still in the throes of economic depression, the heroic exploits of Superman offered hope. For Jewish Americans, the 1938 pursuit by baseball slugger Hank Greenberg, a landsman, of Babe Ruth's single season record of 60 home runs provided another form of inspiration in a troubled time. (The Detroit first baseman finished with 58.) Concerned about the dangerous ascent of antisemitism at home and abroad, Shuster and Siegel gifted Superman with qualities that the observant might recognize as Jewish.

Clearly, the summoning of a champion with singular prowess bears resonances of the golem of Jewish folklore. Roy Schwartz's "Is Superman Circumcised?" notes that Superman's Krypton birth name, Kal-El, sounds Hebrew. Like Moses, a prince of Egypt and the son of Hebrew

slaves, Superman confronted a polarizing dualism. Following the destruction of his homeland, the Shuster-Siegel hero lived in the diaspora.

An immigrant Superman negotiated an identity complicated by the otherness of his origins and coupled with dedication to his adopted American home. Competing identities as Superman and Clark Kent signaled unresolved tensions between old and new world expectations. The remnant of a chosen people, Superman labored under the commandment of righteousness. Schwartz likens Clark's hidden cape to the tallit beneath the pants and the large "S" on Superman's chest a counter to the Nazi swastika. In the February 27, 1940, issue of Look magazine, Superman captured a frightened Hitler, hoisted him in the air by the collar and threatened, "I'd like to land a strictly non-Aryan hook on your jaw" before delivering the Nazi dictator – and Soviet tyrant Josef Stalin – to the League of Nations for trial.

A box office blockbuster, the newly released "Superman" (2025) movie has generated widespread debate and discussion amongst fans and critics. This woke and sensitive Superman is more comfortable proclaiming his "love" than is his romantic partner, the redoubtable newspaper colleague Lois Lane (Rachel Brosnahan, best known for playing Jewish comedian Midge Maisel), from whom his Clark Kent identity is no secret. During a 12-minute interview/lover's prattle, Lois calls into question Clark's journalistic ethics for writing a story based on an interview with himself (Superman) and for intervening in the war between Jahranpur and Boravia, a U.S. ally, on behalf of the former. Superman defends himself, explaining that Boravia was the invading aggressor and that his actions caused no deaths and, in fact, saved lives.

Several pundits have claimed commonalities between Jahranpur and Gaza.

The primary storyline in "Superman" (2025) concerns the obsessive attempts of Lex Luthor, a villainous and brilliant Elon Musk-like entrepreneur, technology innovator and arms dealer, to destroy Superman. Luthor's pathological hatred derives from his flawed replacement-theory perception that Superman remains an immigrant alien whose kind will displace humanity.

"Superman" (2025) is the first film to feature an actor of Jewish lineage as the protagonist. "Superman" (2025) introduces the muscular and handsome, 6'4", 238-pound David Corenswet, 32, in the title role. He is the son of attorneys, the late John Corenswet, a Jew, and Caroline Packard, a Quaker. When David married actress Julia Best Warner, a Catholic, in 2023, a priest and Rabbi Edward Cohn co-officiated, and Jewish customs, including the chuppah wedding canopy and the breaking of the glass, were observed.

Wonder Woman also has authentic Jewish bona fides. Like Superman, she is a virtuous DC superhero, committed to battling evil and defending justice. Since 2017, Gal Gadot, an Israeli Jew, has portrayed Wonder Woman in four films. Despite donning an exotic costume when in superhero mode, Gadot, an athlete, Miss Israel 2004, model, actress and veteran of the Israel Defense Forces, leavens the physicality of Wonder Woman with a modern feminist sensibility. Of the war in Gaza, Gadot advocates return of the Israeli hostages, support for her nation's citizen soldiers and peace with security.

I am a fan of Jerry Seinfeld, Fran Drescher and their comedic ilk. But cinematic superheroes Corenswet and Gadot present a counter to the still too frequent casting of Jewish actors as pushy, neurotic and self-absorbed characters.

On the Jewish food scene Nostalgia and birthday cake

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN



I hadn't thought about the cake for years, but, at least twice in the last month, it came up in a food-related conversation. Until I began the first of my many medically restricted diets, it served as my yearly birthday cake. We always called it strawberry shortcake, but it was different from most I've eaten. The basic cake was a sponge cake made in a tube pan with a removable bottom. (I had to search online for the name of the pan because the people I was talking to kept saying bundt cake, but I knew it didn't have a traditional bundt cake shape.)

My mother would remove the cake from its pan by the tube and then remove the tube and bottom layer of the pan. You were then left with a doughnut-shaped cake. My mother would then cut off a half-inch layer from the top. (This was done so it remained in one piece.) Then she dug a trench around the inside of the cake and filled that with a strawberry mixture. The top was then replaced and the whole cake covered with whipped cream. The cake tasted even better the second day as the cake began to absorb the juice from the strawberries. Plus, we had the fun of eating the cake taken to make the trench.

Thinking about the cake made me feel a bit nostalgic. I'm betting that's partly because I have a "big birthday" happening this month. (A big birthday is generally defined as one that ends in a zero.) I regularly tell people my age (and, when I turned 50, I had 50 candles

placed on the cake), but experts now warn about scammers who will steal your personal information so I'm not saying what it is here. However, I'll be happy to tell you in person.

Does this cake have anything to do with Judaism since this is a Jewish food column? Why I'm glad you asked. This was also the cake (sans strawberries and whipped cream) that my mom used to make when we went to my Aunt Naomi's house for Passover. My older brother's birthday is in March and sometimes this was his birthday cake, too, since his birthday periodically fell during the holiday. At least, I assume it's a variation on the same cake because my mother used the same pan. It's too late to ask her and I don't know what happened to her personal cookbook. Even if I had the cookbook, I'm not sure it would be something she'd have written down.

When a friend volunteered to sponsor an oneg for my big birthday, she asked what I would like served. My first choice was a fruit tart, but I did mention a cake with strawberries. I don't make any for myself, but if, during the summer, I'm given the chance to eat strawberry shortcake, I will order one. But what usually arrives – some type of biscuit with strawberries and cream – can't compare to my memory of my annual birthday cake. Of course, the fact my mother made the cake and my family gathered to celebrate my birthday is what really made it special.

Bleed . . . . . Continued from page 1 different types of injuries, and learning how to control bleeding when someone is injured through wound packing and tourniquet application. Hands-on exercises are a required component of this course and are designed for every member of the community. "Sometimes people are not able to escape a dangerous situation and may be injured," Hubal noted. "It takes time for the police to secure a scene and the medical personnel can't enter until that happens. If someone is injured, then those who are with them are the only ones who can offer medical care. This program will give people some basic skills to do that."

ROSH HASHANAH 5786 Greetings Deadline: September 4 (September 12 issue) Once again this year, The Reporter is inviting its readers to place personal New Year's greetings to the community. These New Year's greeting ads will appear in our September 12 issue. You may choose from the designs, messages and sizes shown here - more are available. You may also choose your own message, as long as it fits into the space of the greeting you select. (Custom designs available upon request.) The price of the small greeting is \$21 (styles F and J), the medium one is \$40 (style H and I) and the largest one (not shown) is \$78. To ensure that your greeting is published or for more information on additional styles, sizes & designs, please contact Kathy Brown at 724-2360, ext. 244; or e-mail advertising@thereporter.org. Checks can be made payable to The Reporter and sent to: The Reporter, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850. Style H - \$40 Actual Size: 3.22" x 1.975" May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for good health, peace and prosperity. Your Name(s) Style I - \$40 Actual Size: 3.22" x 1.975" ROSH HASHANAH Greetings Deadline: September 4 (September 12 issue) Name Address City State Zip Phone E-mail Greeting Style Message How you would like it signed We accept Visa Mastercard American Express Discover Print Name on Card Card Number Expiration Date Address, City, State, Zip (Registered billing address of card) Style J - \$21 Actual Size: 1.52" x 1.975" May this New Year be a time of peace & joy for you and all those you love. Your Name(s) Style F - \$21 Actual Size: 1.52" x 1.975" Have a sweet, happy & healthy New Year! Your Name(s) Checks can be made payable to The Reporter, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850. THE REPORTER Published by the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton Deadline: Sept. 4



# Celebrating Jewish Literature



## Jews, slavery and the Civil War

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Before the Civil War, what were the varying beliefs held by American Jews concerning slavery? How did the fact that Jews were generally considered white affect those beliefs? Did the American Jewish population support the North or South during the war? As Richard Kreitner notes in his “Fear No Pharaoh: American Jews, the Civil War, and the Fight to End Slavery” (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), the answers to these questions are far more complex than one might expect because there was no one reaction that describes the thoughts, beliefs and actions of all American Jews. Kreitner explores not only these different points of view, but puts American Jewish life before, during and after the war into perspective to explain the reality of Jewish life in a country where, while Jews were not members of the lowest rung of society, their status could still be precarious.

There were three general Jewish reactions to slavery. One said that, since slavery is mentioned in the Bible, God does not condemn the owning of slaves. Therefore, even though Southern slave owners ignored the biblical rules about slavery (for example, not returning runaway slaves to their masters), slaves could still be bought, sold and owned. In fact, there were Jewish slave owners and Jews who fought on the side of the Confederacy during the Civil War. Many of these Jews also appreciated being considered white, which gave them a higher status than the free and slave Black populations. There were those who strongly opposed slavery based on a fundamental principle of Judaism – the Exodus from Egypt – and that therefore they should not oppress others. Many of them became strict abolitionists who were willing to risk their lives for the cause. A third position was taken by those who had escaped oppression in Europe and worried about what could happen in the U.S. if they took the wrong political stance. They wanted Jews to sit out the debate and not publicly take sides. Kreitner notes that one editorial offering this position was called “Silence, Our Policy.” Its author thought that “silence seemed the best way to protect American Jews from both external hostility and internal schism.”

“Fear No Pharaoh” tells its story by looking at the lives of six different Jews:

- ◆ Judah Philip Benjamin, who was a slave owner and a member of the Confederate States Cabinet.
- ◆ August Bondi, who came to the U.S. after taking part in a failed revolution in Austria and who was active in the anti-slavery movement, particularly the Free States movement that sought to prevent slavery being allowed in Kansas.
- ◆ Ernestine Rose, a controversial figure for her outspoken support of abolitionism, feminism and atheism.

◆ Rabbi Morris Raphall, who believed slavery was biblically justified.

◆ Rabbi David Einhorn, who condemned slavery, even when it placed his life and livelihood in danger.

◆ Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, who felt Jews should not take part in the battle over slavery.

While the stories of these individuals are interesting, “Fear No Pharaoh” is at its best when it focuses on the reality of Jewish life in the U.S. during that time period. Kreitner does an excellent job placing Jewish hopes and fears into perspective. For example, he writes that “while Jews did not contribute much to American slavery, American slavery contributed greatly to the success of early American Jews. Slavery and the bigotry that supported it deflected much of the hostility that Jews faced in the Old War.” The author also notes that, while there was prejudice against immigrants during this time, the greatest prejudice was against Irish immigrants. However, Jews were not always completely accepted and, in the South, what acceptance there was was based on Jews not upsetting the status quo – meaning keeping quiet about slavery.

Kreitner sees the Civil War as a pivotal moment for the American Jewish community. The Jewish population – which numbered around 150,000 – were involved in many aspects of the war. Some took part in the fighting, with Kreitner estimating that around 6,000 Jews fought for the Union, while around 3,000 fought for the Confederacy. Jews also served as medics, spies, cotton traders and financiers funding the fighting. Jews helped relief organizations, donating a variety of supplies – everything from food to clothing and bandages. Kreitner notes that “the Civil War has been described as an Americanizing experience for Jews. Those who served in the armies lived for the first time in close quarters with other Americans, and by fighting for their chosen country or even dying for it, demonstrated that it was their country, too.” The fact Jews were willing to fight showed that religion was of little importance when it came to being a citizen of the U.S. or the Confederacy: risking your life for the cause made you equal.

However, Kreitner also shows that the reaction to those Jewish actions was not always as positive as those Jews might have wished: “The Civil War brought an unprecedented explosion of antisemitism on both sides of the conflict. As many had feared, the hostility long targeted against the Irish was now turned, amid the carnage and uncertainties of war, against the Jews.” This is true of both sides of the conflict. Jewish bankers and businessmen were condemned for unfairly benefitting from the war. Jewish merchants were also condemned for providing inadequate clothing for the soldiers. Also, there was a rising Protestant movement

in the U.S. that believed a mistake had been made when allowing Jews to be full citizens of the country. The move to make the U.S. a Christian country scared many Jews, especially those who had recently come to the country from Europe and knew that type of oppression first hand. These problems did not quickly go away: Kreitner notes that “the themes of the 1860s propaganda – that Jews were disloyal scavengers, only interested in devising new ways of plundering and profiteering off the sacrifices of hardworking native-born Americans – reappeared and made life increasingly unpleasant for Jews who had lived through the war and for the many more who would arrive in America in the decades to come.”

Kreitner does show how, although many northern Jews originally supported the war, some came to regret that support. Recently arrived immigrants often had no idea why the conflict was being fought and so were not eager to risk their lives for a battle they felt had nothing to do with them. Others were not overjoyed to fight for a country they felt didn’t treat them as equal citizens. Those who were more settled were reluctant to leave what financial security they had recently achieved to risk their lives. There were abolitionists who fought for Jewish reasons, but many religious and community leaders were just as happy to sit out the fight. To put this into perspective, the author notes that no one knew how the war would end and how either result would affect the Jewish population. He suggests that “if the Union lost, as at moments seemed likelier than not, the prejudice against Jews in the North might have exploded into actual violence, mob-driven terror like that of the Draft Riots of 1863, but directed at Jews instead of (or in addition to) Black Americans. It might have become unsafe for Jews to live in a defeated and demoralized Union tearing itself apart over who was to blame, while their cousins in the South, counted among the more privileged class of whites, could well have enjoyed a more comfortable and prosperous existence as citizens of the Confederate States of America than any other Jews in the world.”

While, if the Confederates won the war, life might have been easier for the Jewish population, Kreitner shows that the reality after the loss was different. Jewish life became more of a challenge because, after the war, the Jews were grouped with the Black population as outsiders. Some even denigrated Jews more than free Blacks. Jews were now clearly on the wrong side of the color line. This was not helped when Jews – for example, store owners – treated the newly freed slaves as equals, allowing them to shop in the same stores as whites. Those who rented out land to Black sharecroppers were also disliked. Both groups were threatened with violence and death. As Kreitner notes, “Within the first few decades after the Civil War, the South went from being the part of the country most friendly to Jews, to the least, a place where Jews, as many had long feared, took their place alongside semifree Black people as hated outsiders in the white Southerners’ midst, as enemy within. For some, they were even worse.” The work ends by looking at how the actions that took place during the aftermath of the war have reverberated through the 21<sup>st</sup> century and still affect American, Jewish and Black relationships.

“Fear No Pharaoh” is a remarkable achievement. The depth of research Kreitner offers is impressive and his prose is easy to read. Anyone interested in American Jewish history should read his book, as should anyone interested in American politics because the political battles of those days still inform the disagreements between northern and southern states.

## The Yiddish world of London

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

When most American Jews think of Yiddish immigrants, the Lower East Side of New York City comes to mind. However, that was not the only city to attract Yiddish masses from Eastern Europe and Germany. As shown in “East End Jews: Sketches from the London Yiddish Press” compiled and translated by Vivi Lachs and Barry Smerin (Wayne University Press), London had an active Yiddish community from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The translators’ interest, though, is less in the history of this period than a highlighting a particular form of writing that they believe offers a glimpse into the daily lives of those immigrants: the feullenton, which was normally found on page two or three of a Yiddish newspaper under a “strong black line.”

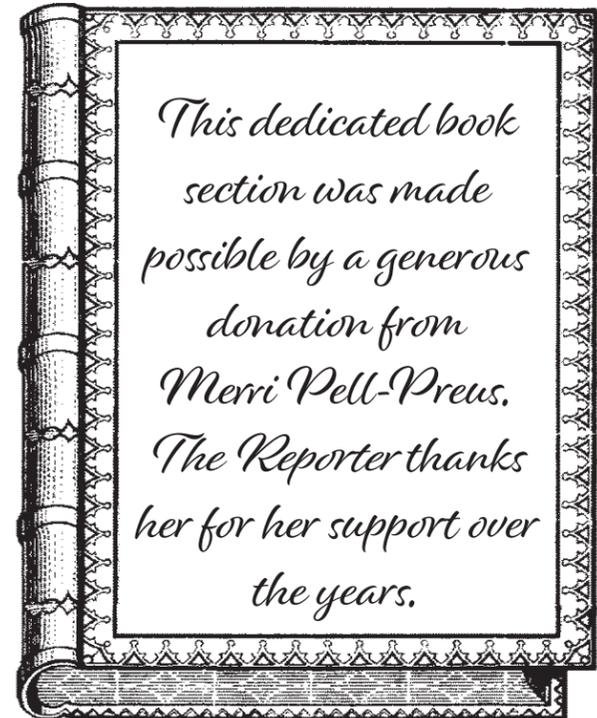
Lach describes feullentons as sketches that “documented and critiqued Jewish London and, in particular, the urban East End that surrounded the reader. The writers found their material on the streets of Whitechapel, Aldgate, and Stepney. The writers talked to locals and noticed small incidents that made them angry at the injustice or made them laugh at the foolishness. They watched the East End immigrant society’s divisions and warmth, vibrancy and despair, and they responded with opinion and humor, story and satire, exaggeration and poignancy.” Lach sees these stories – sometimes fictional, sometimes taken from real life – as giving readers a break from the news, which, at that time, rarely offered positive stories of Jewish life in Europe. Lach offers a history of the feullenton, which was first published in France before becoming popular throughout Europe, although that section may be of less interest to Jewish readers whose focus is on Jewish London.

“East End Jews” is divided into five time periods: “The Golden Years of London Yiddish: 1884-1914,” “Yiddish Through the First World War: 1914-19,” “Interwar Yiddish Culture: 1920-39,” “The Second World War and After: The 1940s” and “Nostalgia and the Decline of the Jewish East End: The 1950s.” Of particular interest to those who know little of the Jewish history of London will be the short es-

says that open each section and put each period of British history into perspective from a Jewish viewpoint. The work includes a short biography of each featured author, at least those for whom that information is available. Many wrote under a pen name and the translators were unable to identify a small number of them. Most did not make their living writing feullentons, but rather used them as a way to either supplement their income, gain a name for themselves or just for the fun of writing about the world surrounding them.

The feullentons are best read a little at a time since the stories are very similar, which makes it hard to remember specific ones. Jewish stereotypes are abundantly on display, particularly the Jew who is always complaining about something. Many of the stories are meant to be humorous, yet reading them from a distance, that’s not always obvious. There seems to be a great sadness underlying many of these lives: the writer or their subjects are often struggling to make a living or to find a place in Britain that feels like home. For example, Yankele’s “An Evil Decree against Flower Sellers” tells of how World War I affected the finances of the poor. The stereotype of the mechanically incompetent Jew is found in “A Jew Takes a Pleasure Trip,” while a whining, pessimistic Jew is the title character in “My Neighbor”; both feullentons are by Asher Berlin. The problems/attractions of assimilation are discussed in “Solomon Mikhoels, the Man.” The most moving piece is “My Address Book,” a mother’s lament by Katie Brown; the woman, who is unable to read, mourns her inability to write to her three sons who are fighting for the British army.

“East End Jews” offers American Jews the opportunity to see how different and how alike life was for Jewish immigrants to England. Many readers will nod their heads as they recognize universal Jewish traits, along with noting the influence of British culture in other selections. What is clear is that Yiddish culture in London and New York declined over the 20<sup>th</sup> century as Yiddish was spoken less, with its culture becoming a curiosity more than a lived experience. This book offers the opportunity to explore that culture during and after its heyday.



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# Celebrating Jewish Literature



## Religious experts: from priests to rabbis

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Jewish historical works often make it sound as if rabbinic Judaism rose like a phoenix from the flames of the Second Temple. They rarely discuss the change in leadership – from the priestly family to the proto-rabbis – that occurred during that period. The priests were the original religious experts, making certain that sacrifices were done correctly and offering advice on other ritual matters. There were also loosely-knit groups of proto-rabbis who were already focusing on prayer and study, and practicing a stricter version of *kashrut*. But the question of how the mantle of religious leadership passed from the priests to the rabbis is usually ignored. That is the issue addressed in Krista N. Dalton's fascinating "How Rabbis Became Experts: Social Circle and Donor Networks in Jewish Late Antiquity" (Princeton University Press). Dalton not only looks at the way rabbinic expertise becomes generally accepted, but how the rabbis sought to limit the influence of those who supported them financially.

Even those familiar with Jewish history after the destruction of the Second Temple might not realize how marginal a group the ancient rabbis were. Dalton notes that "evidence suggests that for some time, few Jews were compelled to arrange their lives according to rabbinic guidance. Rabbinic texts express repeated discontent with persons they describe as *amei haartz*, or ordinary Jews who did not heed their advice... Archeological evidence in addition to critical reading of rabbinic sources reveals that rabbis did not run synagogues, nor did they hold automatic standing as teachers or judges in their local communities. Once thought to be universal, rabbinic influence in this period is now understood to be primarily aspirational."

The author discusses in great detail how someone comes to be considered an expert since being knowledgeable about a particular topic is not enough to make one an expert. There is a social aspect to expertise. By that the author means that other members of society must agree that a person is an expert. Using examples from modern times, she talks about scientists who are normally considered experts until those they are advising refuse to accept their determinations. This social aspect was very important in rabbinic times: the rabbis could cite the reasons for their ritual decisions, but, if the public did not accept their expertise, then their rulings were relevant only in rabbinic circles, rather than the general culture.

Dalton notes that some of the early rabbis came from priestly families. That would have made it easier for them to make ritual decisions because people would have already looked to their families for religious decision making. The question became how those who were not part of priestly families could claim expertise and what exactly constituted that expertise. In her discussion of what makes someone an expert, the author notes that "an expert internalizes the tacit knowledge and intuition that informs *how* they contribute expertise. They learn the jargon, the mannerisms,

etiquette, and bodily demeanor that signified their legibility as experts." In terms of the rabbis, that meant being able to read and interpret biblical verses and having an in-depth knowledge of Jewish rituals, holidays and dietary practices. The author also notes that, during this period, the Romans controlled all civil aspects of the government, which left religious authorities needing to know not only what to do ritually, but how their decisions would affect the populations' relationship with the Roman empire.

According to the author, the rabbinic tasks were aided by the fact that the Roman era was "a period of intense pietistic affiliation." The different groups of pietists created an common culture of piety, which made people receptive to rabbinic culture, especially after the trauma of the destruction of the Second Temple. Although there were many pietists' paths, a group known as the Pharisees wanted to include everyone – not just the priests – in keeping the laws of purity.

When discussing rabbinic expertise, Dalton looks at how that occurred within social settings. First, though, the rabbis had to attain a certain level of not only knowledge of Torah and rabbinic discussions, but be able to generate rulings – laws and ritual behavior – based on that knowledge. It was not enough to know what one thought others should do: if they did not believe you were an expert or that your advice was relevant to their lives, they would ignore your expertise. Dalton notes the general population had to believe that rabbinic experts had "access to a citational repertoire that by definition that non-experts do not. The challenge for the rabbis, like any specialist group, was persuading those without the skills in their domain that their knowledge was valuable."

The rise and acceptance of rabbinic culture was not inevitable. The author notes that "ancient Jews were not rabbinic. By prioritizing rabbinic sources, other ancient Jewish practices, beliefs, and experiences have been marginalized." How were the rabbis able to convince others? Much of this occurred during meals. The rabbis would speak words of Torah and offer explanations of how Jews should follow the laws of Judaism. Whether or not those listening accepted those laws enough to follow them, many did respect the rabbis' learning. Those rabbis were also able to convince some present that rabbinic knowledge and discussions were worthy of their financial support. One example is the rabbinic explanations about why one should pray before and after a meal. Even if those dining with them only did this when a rabbinic figure was present, that action helped legitimize the need for prayer during meals. The rabbis would also talk about appropriate food preparation, including how food should be cooked. Those wanting to host rabbis at their table would follow their advice. Others attending might note what occurred and perhaps mention it when they dined with others. Even if they didn't follow those ruling, this was a way of acknowledging rabbinic expertise.

As rabbinic expertise began to be accepted, another difficulty arose: how was their study to be funded? While many rabbis of this period are said to have worked for a living, it's clear in the sources from which Dalton quotes that the rabbis felt their work deserved community support. However, a problem arose: some patrons might believe that rabbis would rule in their favor if they had a question. As religious experts, the rabbis were expected to rule impartially since not doing so would undermine their claim to expertise. Dalton notes that "the fact that rabbinic judges lacked imperial institutional power made the matter of their credibility more significant while at the same time highlighting their very need for funding. They were not imperially salaried judges who could count on institutional support for their labor. The only authority rabbis wielded came from the trust of other Jews who sought their advice and offered gifts and payment in return. Accusations that rabbinic judgments could be influenced by gifts threatened this trust, particularly as there was no institutional enforcement of fairness." However, the author also offers stories from the Talmud that portray particular rabbis bending rules so that their patron should not be negatively affected.

However, rabbinic expertise was not only funded by patrons. Since there was no Temple to support, the rabbis suggested that the tithe should go to supporting the priesthood and the sacrifices should come to them since they were now performing the religious work needed to fulfil the laws of the Torah. The author writes, "If those who labor in Torah have always been supported, and the priests, like the poor, warranted communal support, why shouldn't a rabbi also benefit? By funding rabbinic expertise, donors were fulfilling the divine commands of the Torah, and therefore partnering in the work of elevating its status to that of immeasurable value."

As the end of her work, Dalton summarizes her ideas, noting while the priesthood lost its mooring after the destruction of the Second Temple, the general culture contained "a flourishing of Jewish holiness projects," which included an interest in Torah that allowed the rabbis to become one type of expert. The rabbis were challenged by those who did not accept rabbinic methods of interpretation and the resulting rulings. That left the rabbis continually needing to prove their expertise. The author notes that these claims were a sort of "bluff," a way of convincing others that they should be considered experts. However, rabbinic expertise was often tested, something that continues through to contemporary times.

"How Rabbis Became Experts" is a scholarly work that demands a great deal of close attention. However, Dalton does an excellent job explaining the changes that occurred during this time period and how the ancient rabbis were able to successfully attain the position of expert, even when their rulings were not universally accepted by Jews. Anyone interested in the development of rabbinic Judaism will want to read this work.

## The personal and the political

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Many novels that combine social action and personal stories feel preachy, as if the characters exist solely for the politics. Fortunately, that is not true for two recent novels. While political action is close to the surface in "Love, Coffee and Revolution" by Stefanie Leder (Black Stone Publishing), the author has created a believable and flawed character whose life choices are open for debate. Social action is further from the surface in Meg Waite Clayton's "Typewriter Beach" (Harper Collins Publishers), but the politics of the time period inform the course of several characters' lives.

Readers won't blame Dee Blum, the narrator of "Love, Coffee and Revolution," for wanting to escape her life. Her incredibly critical family is pushing her to become a lawyer after she graduates from college, while her obnoxious, but politically active, boyfriend views her as an appendage to his life, rather than a full partner. Dee is looking for meaning and purpose, but on her own terms. This leads her to apply for a job organizing eco-tours in Costa Rica, employment for which she has no real skills or knowledge besides a rudimentary ability to speak Spanish.

To her surprise, Dee gets the job. Although tempted to bow out at the last minute, she hates the idea of giving into her fears more than she fears traveling to a foreign country and being incompetent at her job. That's how Dee finds herself in Costa Rica, living with a family whose dynamics and religion are very different from her own, and trying to arrange tours of eco-friendly coffee farms. Although she's broken up with her boyfriend and decides to remain single, she finds herself attracted to the sexy Adrian, although his politics and hers are very different. To add to her confusion, she's in e-mail contact with Matias, a revolutionary orga-

nizer whose work she admires and who seems not only to admire her, but who flirts with her via e-mail.

However, problems arise when Dee discovers that a very powerful fair-trade farm may be lying about what its practices, including its exploitation of the environment and its workers. Dee must also deal with her supervisor who seems willing to overlook the problems Dee discovers. Plus, what is Dee to do to about her attraction to the very sexy Adrian: he seems willing to help her, but also continually challenges her assumptions about the world, showing her the reality that her ideals don't always recognize.

"Love, Coffee and Revolution" was a great deal of fun to read. Dee is an engaging character, even though for most of the novel she is a bit of a mess; readers will find themselves rooting for her to succeed. The work also includes some surprisingly moving moments. Its ending is filled with page-turning suspense as Dee puts a daring plan into action. While, when thinking back after finishing the novel, the conclusion is not completely believable, it was so satisfying that most readers won't mind.

While the action in "Love, Coffee and Revolution" takes place during contemporary times, "Typewriter Beach" focuses on two time periods: 1957 and 2018. In 1957, starlet Isabella Giori finds herself exiled to her studio's cottage in Carmel. Her career seems about to take off: a movie she had a part in is set to open and she's been interviewed for a role in an Alfred Hitchcock film. Yet, her one indiscretion could completely derail her career. In the neighboring cottage, Leon Chazan works on screenplays he won't be able to sell – at least, not under his own name – because he's been blacklisted by the House Un-American Activities Committee. An immigrant from Europe, he has other

secrets he prefers not to reveal. Isabella and Leon slowly become friends, but the question remains whether they can save themselves or each other.

In 2018, Gemma Chazan visits her grandfather's cottage after his death. Although she would love to keep Leon's home, she needs the money that can be made by selling the property since, after writing one successful script, she's been blackballed in the industry by a producer for refusing to perform a sex act. Although the Me Too Movement has begun, Gemma feels it's too late to challenge what happened to her. While at the cottage, two things force her to think about her life choices: meeting her neighbor, Isabella, for the first time, and finding a safe filled with her grandfather's writing that makes her question just how much she really knew about him.

While the opening of the novel was moody and a bit off putting, the work quickly became absorbing and intriguing. Readers will find themselves eager to not only learn the solutions to the puzzles the author offers – for example, the real story behind Leon's heartbreaking past in Europe – but also rooting for certain events to happen, events that won't be revealed here because that would ruin the surprises. All the characters are well developed and the prose is beautiful and precise. When two characters are bonding while talking about a movie they love, one character describes what a good film can accomplish: "Gemma understood the memory that binds them. That's what a movie or a book, a good story, can do. Eight fingers on eight keys, and people all over the world laugh or cry, people all over the world look at others a little differently, with more compassion and sympathy, forgiveness." That accurately describes my feeling when finishing "Typewriter Beach."



# Celebrating Jewish Literature



## Mothers, daughters and reverberations from World War II

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Trauma often reverberates through several generations, even if parents attempt to protect their children by never talking about what occurred. Deciding whether or not to share knowledge can be a difficult as is shown in two recent novels that explore mother/daughter relationships that were greatly affected by the events of World War II. In “The Red House” by Mary Morris (Doubleday), Laura’s mother Viola’s refusal to discuss her past left her daughter with far too many unanswered questions, while Lena is haunted by what she does know of her mother’s early life and the perfect older sister who died during the war in “The Baker of Lost Memories” by Shirley Russak Wachtel (Little A).

It’s Viola’s disappearance 30 years ago that is the impetus for Laura’s trip to Italy in “The Red House.” Viola walked out of the house without any possessions and was never seen or heard from again. Although the police suspected Laura’s father, nothing was ever proved. The two met when he was a GI in Italy after World War II. Viola claimed to have no family and refused to speak about her early life. When a detective calls Laura decades later about the case, rather than returning his call, she travels to Italy to learn about her mother’s past. Another impetus for her trip is that she is now the same age that her mother was when she disappeared. Plus, Laura has had an affair and is not sure if her marriage will survive.

Laura has one clue to her mother’s past: the paintings featuring a mysterious red house that Viola painted over and over, although she refused to explain what the building represented. When Laura arrives in Brindisi, where her parents met, she learn little about her mother until she is accosted in the street by someone who calls her by her mother’s name. Tommaso Bassanio knows the answers to most of Laura’s questions and some that she never would have thought to ask: Viola’s mother was Jewish and the red house was the building where she, her parents and younger brother were held imprisoned with other Jewish Italians. Laura is stunned by the revelation: she thought her mother was Catholic because she went to church and took communion.

“The Red House” is a beautifully written and affecting work of fiction. Readers not only learn about Laura’s early life and her trip to find her mother, but are transported back in time to discover how Viola viewed what happened to her during the war. These were the most moving sections of the novel. In fact, they are so well done and absorbing that it can be a shock to suddenly return to the present day and Laura’s story. At the end of the novel, readers, like Laura, finally discover the heartbreaking truth of what happened to her mother the day she disappeared.

Although Viola never spoke about her early life, Lena can’t seem to escape her parents’ past. She knows about their successful bakery in Europe and the perfect younger

sister, Ruby, who was murdered by the Nazis. Lena was born after her parents moved to Brooklyn and somehow it never feels as if anything she does will be enough to replace her lost sibling. Her one consolation is her friend Pearl, who accepts her exactly as she is. Except that one night in the 1960s, Pearl disappears. Lena’s parents tell her that Pearl moved, but since then, Lena has felt that something was missing from her life. That changes when she attends college and meets Luke, a fellow student. However, theirs is a troubled relationship: Luke buys a bakery for Lena to run, even though she’s not sure that’s really what she wants. Is the bakery Luke’s dream, a dream from Lena’s youth or simply the wrong life path for her?

The narration rotates between Lena and her mother, Anya, which gives readers a more in-depth look at their misunderstandings and the difficulties they face. Although Anya acknowledges she was not the mother Lena needed, readers will sympathize with her struggles, especially after learning how she survived the war. What will also strike readers is how differently the two view the same event.

“The Baker of Lost Memories” reads like a series of missed connections and regrets. An unexpected revelation at the end of the novel will change how readers view all the events that took place previously. Unfortunately, that revelation was not completely convincing, although it did shine a great light on the different ways Anya and Lena remember their joint past.

## Exploring the biblical book of Numbers

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

The word *bamidbar*, which means wilderness, is the Hebrew name for the biblical book of Numbers. For some, that title feels accurate since its chapters contain lists of the Israelites’ wanderings in the wilderness, coupled with their complaints about the lack of appropriate food and water, and the wish they could return to Egypt. However, Rabbi David Fohrman believes the book also features a central theme beyond that of portraying the physical movements of the Israelites. In his “Numbers: A Parsha Companion” (Aleph Beta Press/Maggid Books), his latest work on the first books of the Bible\*, he notes

that something else is occurring, something spiritual. He sees the underlying theme of Numbers as parenthood: “how parents let go of children, and children let go of parents.” For him, the book contains many bittersweet partings, including the loss of the Israelite generation that dies in the desert.

Fohrman is a master teacher: he writes as if he is speaking directly to the reader and takes them through his ideas step by step. Even if readers disagree with his interpretations and their theological underpinnings, they will find themselves impressed with his ideas because they are so well thought out and clearly expressed. Fohrman

also manages to tie together different parts of the biblical text in unexpected ways. For example, when writing about the biblical portion Naso in the chapter “Does the Torah Contain a Parenting Manual,” he uses the priestly blessing as a way of discussing the relationship between Jacob and Esau. The author notes that the blessing Isaac was tricked into giving to Jacob contained similar phrases to those found in the priestly blessing. When Jacob returns after his time with Laban, he tries to make peace with Esau by offering him a similar blessing, one that will allow them to heal their relationship. This is a simplification of Fohrman’s discussion, which compares different parts of the Hebrew text and their meaning. However, one does not need to be familiar with Hebrew in order to understand the author’s clear explanations.

In “The Spies” the chapter focusing on *parashat Shelech*, Fohrman discusses what he considers a puzzling action by God: he ponders the reason behind God’s telling Moses to send spies into the land of Israel. It’s clear that God already knows everything about the land. After all, this is a God who created plagues to torment Egypt and who split the Sea of Reeds. That means that the spies’ purpose isn’t directly related to God’s needs, but rather to something else. The author then discusses the story in Genesis of how Joseph spied on his brothers, before returning to what he believes is the reason spies were needed now. He notes, “The mission of the spies was not exclusively military in nature. God, our Heavenly Father, wanted the people to reach out to the land... God wanted us to establish family ties with the land, to see the land as something that would care for them, just as they would be pledged to her.” The spies were to see the whole of the land – the good and bad – but to also understand they were to love and care for it. Unfortunately, they only saw the negative aspects, which showed their lack of faith in God. Their misinterpretation caused them and the other members of their generation – except for Caleb and Joshua – to die in the wilderness rather than enter the promised land.

In discussing the story of the prophet Balaam from *parashat Balak* in “Balaam and the *Akeidah*,” Fohrman negatively compares Balaam to Abraham. Offering side-by-side verses from the Bible, the author shows how the ones featuring Balaam and his donkey echo those found in the *akeidah* (the binding of Isaac). The author also includes a discussion of Jewish ideas of Satan, including *midrash* (rabbinic stories) of how Satan approached Abraham during his trip. However, the main focus of the chapter is the two men. Fohrman notes that “Balaam and Abraham really *are* playing in the same sandbox. Each undertakes a great journey in which they must go, bidden by God, to do something that stands in opposition to their greatest desires. Moreover, each had enough fealty to God that they would not even consider contravening God’s words. But that is not their real struggle. Their real struggle is to admit that God’s words are really what they are in the first place. If you see the truth for what it is, despite your desperate desire for things to be otherwise, then you are an Abraham. If you are unable or unwilling to see that, See “Numbers” on page 8

## Acts of family, blood and love

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

### “Unfinished Acts of Wild Creation”

Sarah Yahn’s novel “Unfinished Acts of Wild Creation” (Dzanc Books) has one of the best opening lines I’ve read in years: “My mother was raised an Orthodox Jew and then became an Orthodox Freudian, so she pathologized me with a religious fervor; Louise told the ordinary-looking young man sitting next to her.” Her explanation of how this affected her cannot be printed in a family-friendly newspaper. However, the conversation intrigues Leon, the name of the young man listening to her. Louise is not on her best behavior that night, although she does have an excuse she doesn’t share with Leon: she came to this Shabbat dinner after running away from the *shiva* being held for her mother, who died of a degenerative disease. Even though she behaves inappropriately and is nasty to him, Leon finds himself attracted to her.

Readers won’t be surprised to learn that Leon and Louise marry and have a child, even though in some ways Louise never completely becomes an adult. Louise is not a natural mother and contemplates several scenarios of what she might do to their child, which will either horrify or resonate with readers. That means it may not come as a surprise that Lydia develops obsessive-compulsive habits as a child. Leon, who is a psychiatrist, and Louise, who believes in magical thinking, have difficulty agreeing on how to best help her.

However, the novel takes a different turn when Louise discovers that she has the same degenerative disease as her mother. After having watched her mother get slowly weaker over a number of years, Louise decides she wants to spare Lydia from having the same experience: she decides to move to Israel to live with and be cared by relatives who have nursed others with the same disease. But does her decision really help Lydia and Leon? That’s a question readers will debate. However, Lydia faces her own dilemma: whether to take to the test to learn if she also has the same disease. Although she refuses the test, the possibility that she might get sick affects many aspects of her life.

The author of “Unfinished Acts of Wild Creation” excels in showing the mixed and conflicting emotions of its characters in everything from their everyday actions to the life-and-death decisions they are forced to make. Their reactions to what occurs struck me as real and moving.

While reading the novel, I lost track of time because I was so anxious to learn what happened. The emotional impact of the story was so strong it left me feeling gutted. “Unfinished Acts of Wild Creation” is an impressive work of literature.

### “Such Good People”

When choosing a novel to review for the paper, I check to make certain it has some Jewish content – either a Jewish character or theme – rather than just a Jewish author. Unfortunately, there was a misunderstanding when I asked about “Such Good People” by Amy Blumenfeld (SparkPress). The book has no Jewish characters, although the author is Jewish. So why am I reviewing it here? Because the novel has a Jewish sensibility: underlying the work, and made explicit in one chapter, is the knowledge that its characters are working to fulfil the biblical commandment of “*tzedeq tzedeq tirdof*” – “justice, justice you shall pursue.”

April and Rudy have been friends since grade school. Their connection is so important that their parents have also bonded, even though April’s are professionals and Rudy’s father works as a superintendent at an apartment building. However, after high school, April heads to college while Rudy takes some classes and helps his father as a handyman. His life changes after April visits New York with members of her school newspaper and invites Rudy to meet her in a restaurant. It’s there that things go wrong, leaving Rudy arrested and April expelled from her school.

However, the novel opens years later when April is a teacher and happily married to Peter, who is running for office in Chicago. When a reporter discovers her connection to Rudy, who is receiving early release from prison, the scandal threatens Peter’s chance of success. The action in the novel moves forward and backward in time so that readers understand the depth of the relationship between April, Rudy and their families of origin, and finally learn the truth of that fateful night.

“Such Good People” offers a great deal of suspense because readers will have numerous questions about what actually happened that night. While the novel’s ending might seem a bit too good to be true, it is also extremely satisfying. Just as satisfying was seeing how strong were the bonds between these families: even when something horrible happens, these characters continued to care for and help each other.



# Celebrating Jewish Literature

## Sweden, antisemitism and family

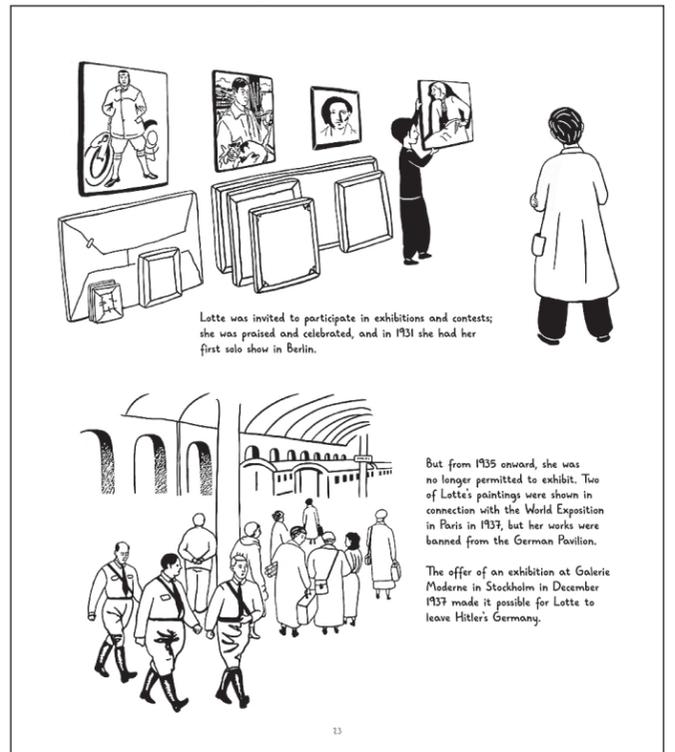
By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

*“The aim of the Nazis was to exterminate every Jew in Europe – simultaneously erasing all memories of them. In many villages and smaller localities, everyone was murdered, and there was nobody to remember the dead. Every person lifted up from the sea of oblivion is a victory against Nazism.” – Joanna Rubin Dranger*

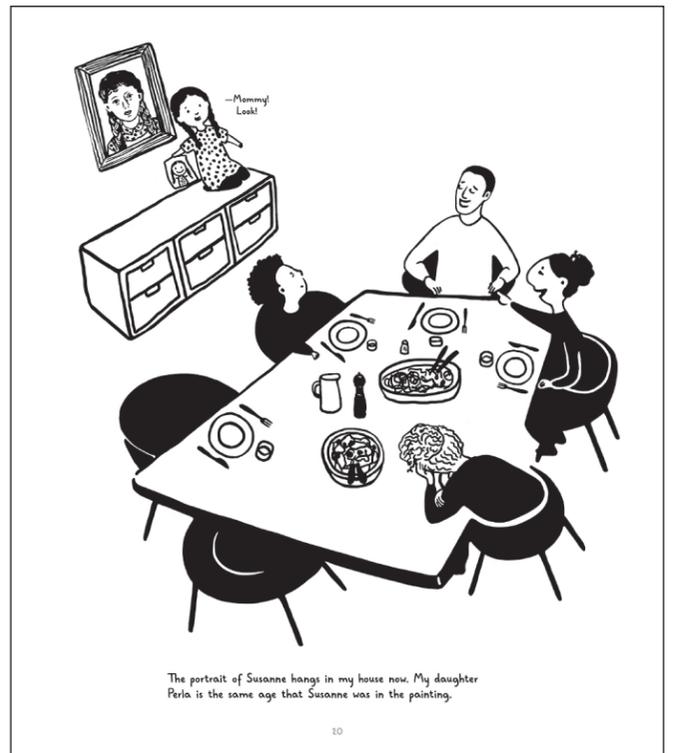
Graphic novels and memoirs can take many different forms. Some use panels and read like comic books, although their topics are usually far more serious. Others combine text and illustrations, with both playing a major role in relating the story. Joanna Rubin Dranger uses this latter format to explore her family’s history before and during World War II. Using text, drawings and reproductions of photographs and newspaper articles, Dranger’s “Remember Us to Life: A Graphic Memoir” (Ten Speed Graphic) offers an in-depth narrative about the author’s family, providing information about those who lived in Poland, Lithuania and Russia, as well as her native Sweden, which readers will learn was not as neutral as it claimed during World War II. Translated from Swedish by Maura Tavares, this memoir, which won the Nordic Council of Literature Prize, is an impressive achievement in both tone and depth.

Each of the book’s sections focuses on different relatives, although there is some overlap due to the nature of Dranger’s research. That’s because as the author/artist follows one thread of her family’s life, she discovers more relatives and incidents of which she had not been aware. For example, a discussion of her Aunt Susanne, who died by suicide in 1993 after experiencing severe depression, led her to explore the life of the artist whose portrait of a young Susanne now hangs on Dranger’s wall. That artist was Lotte Laserstein, a German painter known for her portraits, whose career was derailed by the rise of the Nazis. Lotte not only survived the war, but had her work exhibited in the 1980s when she was in her late 80s. This leads Dranger to tell of when she was a child and took confirmation classes at a church because she didn’t realize she was Jewish. When Dranger does identify as Jewish, she is surprised at the priest’s antisemitic statements. She then explores how Jews are treated as “the other,” noting that “antisemitism is like a rubber face, a flexible construction that can blame ‘Jews’ for just about everything.”

Dranger writes in other sections of her memoir about how she’s never felt completely safe, mostly likely because she has absorbed the tales of her relatives. Her research led her to stories of Russian massacres of Jews in the areas in which her relatives once lived. She includes real-life headlines and photos from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to depict what occurred. That was the reality her grandparents sought to escape by emigrating to Sweden. Readers will learn that closer to the World War I that safety net was closed as



Above and below: Pages from “Remember Us to Life,” by Joanna Rubin Dranger, published by Ten Speed Graphic, 2025. (Used with permission from Ten Speed Graphic)



## Numbers . . . . . Continued from page 7

you are Balaam.” The fact that Balaam continued to try to curse the Israelites, even when God put other words in his mouth, shows that he did not accept God’s decree.

Fohrman offers an interesting interpretation of why Moses was not allowed to enter the promised land in “When Bad Things Happen to Good People,” which focuses on *parashat* Pinchas. The author believes we are supposed to feel as sad as Moses; the purpose of this event is to make us feel uncomfortable. He writes, “This sadness... is a feature [of the story]. It’s intentional. This is how God *wants* you to feel when you’re reading the final episode in the Torah.” The section helps readers understand that sometimes the world will not make sense, and that they need to learn to live with the “unresolved discomfort” that raises. Fohrman adds that we are meant “to imagine: What would it be like to be Moses at that moment? What

would it be like to be a ‘servant of God’ and make that trek up the mountain, knowing that your final, heartfelt, request – which seemed to you so eminently reasonable – was denied by God? What would *that feeling* have been like? Your job is to feel some of *that*.”

Fohrman’s answer focuses on how humans should act/react when God or life hands them a “no” to their hopes and dreams when what they really want to hear is a “yes.”

“Numbers: A Parsha Companion” is an excellent continuation of Fohrman’s commentary on the biblical text. Readers need not be familiar with his previous works in order to enjoy this book. In addition to challenging its readers, it could be serve as a commentary for study groups or classes on the Bible. Those who have enjoyed the other works in the series will be impatiently waiting for the final book.

*\*To read The Reporter’s reviews of Fohrman’s commentaries on Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus, visit [www.thereporter.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-biblical-commentary-by-rabbi-rachel-esserman?entry=368553](http://www.thereporter.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-biblical-commentary-by-rabbi-rachel-esserman?entry=368553), [www.thereporter.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-parasha-and-prophet-by-rabbi-rachel-esserman?entry=377675](http://www.thereporter.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-parasha-and-prophet-by-rabbi-rachel-esserman?entry=377675) and <https://www.thereporter.org/book-reviews/cjl-exploring-leviticus?entry=467131>.*

are distant relatives. It’s so far off.” However, Dranger is determined to rescue anyone connected to her family from oblivion. At times, she finds herself overwhelmed by what she’s learned. That includes everything from antisemitic acts in the areas her family lived in before coming to Sweden, the barbarism of World War II and the current acts of antisemitism she sees in Sweden. What she learns during the trips she makes to European concentration camps and Yad Vashem (Israel’s Holocaust museum, which also keeps records of the war) haunts her so much that at one point she needs to take a break from her research.

Her research makes her incredibly grateful to be living in a world where her children “can be just any children, that they don’t need to know of or harbor the evil that Nazis directed at them, their relatives and friends.” She does wonder if anyone would be interested in her book, a fear that winning the Nordic Council of Literature Prize should have helped expunge. During a conversation with her husband about her book, she tells him, “It won’t be good enough; all the people and names and dates are in the way of making people relate. Nobody will be able to read it. I can hardly read it myself.” Yet, the juxtaposition of the historical events and the personal stories of her family is what make the work so impressive.

“Remember Us to Life” serves as a reminder of the evil of which mankind is capable and the importance of remembering that evil so as to not repeat it. It is also a sweet story about Dranger’s personal life: in the midst of the horrifying facts her research uncovers, there is still the joy of daily life, even when it is sometimes difficult to access. Her work is an example of the power and depth that graphic nonfiction can attain. Anyone interested in 20th century European history or the Holocaust will want to read this. Lovers of graphic works will also be impressed by Dranger’s innovative ways of portraying the history she studied.

Rabbi Rachel Esserman’s previous book reviews can be found on *The Reporter’s* website under “Features” at: [www.thereporter.org/book-reviews](http://www.thereporter.org/book-reviews).



# BD Sisterhood to host "Challah Baking Demonstration" on Sept. 10

The Beth David Sisterhood will hold its opening meeting of the 2025-26 season at Beth David Synagogue on Wednesday, September 10, at 7 pm. The evening's program will feature a hands-on challah baking demonstration. For a donation of \$20, each attendee will receive a challah baked earlier that day, in addition to one they will shape and bake themselves during the meeting.

Since a finite amount of space, dough and previously baked challahs will be available, an RSVP by Wednesday, September 3, is highly recommended for anyone hoping to do more than watch. Reservations should be sent to Stacey Silber by calling or texting

607-727-9738, or e-mailing [silbercreations@gmail.com](mailto:silbercreations@gmail.com).

"As always, the meeting will be open to everyone, members, non-members, women and men, but due to limited space, priority to participate will be given to paid up members of Beth David Sisterhood," said organizers of the event.

At the meeting, Silber will demonstrate how to braid the round challahs that are typically eaten during the holidays and explain how to make a variety of other unusual and artistic shapes. "Especially appropriate for Rosh Hashanah is a challah that can accommodate a bowl of honey in

the middle," said organizers. "The really adventurous might be inspired by a lulav and etrog challah pairing for Sukkot. Recipes and instructions of how to create unusual and artistically shaped challahs for the High Holidays will be provided."

Organizers added, "The Sisterhood meeting on September 10 will start promptly to allow the challahs to be baked during the meeting. The demonstration will precede the actual Sisterhood business meeting. Participants who are unable to stay until their challah has been baked may choose to take them home to be baked later."

Beth David Sisterhood membership dues

for 2025-26 are \$25 and will be payable at the door, as will any money owed because of Mitzvah Cards that have been sent. "Remember Mitzvah Cards are only \$3 each and can be requested for any occasion and at any time of the year by contacting Toby Kohn directly, or through the Beth David office at [bethdavid@stny.rr.com](mailto:bethdavid@stny.rr.com)," organizers noted.

"As usual we will also be collecting non-perishable food items, which will be donated to CHOW," organizers continued. "We look forward to seeing all of our members and friends on September 10 so we can wish them an early *l'shanah tovah tikatevu*."

## Federation held a pre-Campaign dessert reception



L-r: Campaign Chairwoman Marilyn Bell; speaker Tamir Goodman; Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton; and Suzanne Holwitt, Federation president, at the pre-Campaign dessert reception on August 17.



Tamir Goodman spoke about his dedication to Judaism and basketball, explaining the connection he sees between the two.



More than 35 people attended the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton's pre-Campaign dessert reception on August 17.



Attendees had a chance to chat and enjoy the desserts before the program began.

Looking for this issue's "Jewish Resources"? Visit [www.thereporter.org/jewish-online-resources](http://www.thereporter.org/jewish-online-resources) to find out what's happening online.

## BU Hillel, Federation pen pal program

By Reporter staff

Hillel at Binghamton and the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton will offer a L'Dor V'Dor Pen Pal Program. The program will match Binghamton University students with seniors in the local Jewish community for the fall semester, September to December. The semester will end with a meet and greet. Seniors who are interested in engaging with a pen pal should visit [www.jfjb.org](http://www.jfjb.org) and click on the L'Dor V'Dor Pen Pal Program slide to sign up for a pen pal. The deadline to submit the form is Tuesday, August 26. Pen pal pairings will be sent out by Tuesday, September 2. For any questions or help filling out the form,

contact Ellie Spivak, incoming president of Hillel at Binghamton, at 585-770-8312 or [espivak1@binghamton.edu](mailto:espivak1@binghamton.edu), or Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation, at 607-222-9026 or [director@jfjb.org](mailto:director@jfjb.org).

"Our program will give you the opportunity to write back and forth to your pen pal to get to know each other, learn from each other and discuss meaningful prompts and questions that will be sent out monthly," said organizers of the program. "You will have the option of e-mailing, texting or handwriting letters to your pen pal, whatever is most comfortable to you. We will try to match pen pal pairs with the same letter format preference. Pen See "BU" on page 11

Annual Campaign 2026

MAKE YOUR PLEDGE EARLY!

you belong

We hope we can count on your generosity again in the year to come.

You can make your pledge 3 ways:

- 1) Visit the Federation website at [www.jfjb.org](http://www.jfjb.org) and click on "make a pledge."
- 2) E-mail Federation Executive Director Shelley Hubal at [director@jfjb.org](mailto:director@jfjb.org) with "pledge" in the subject line.
- 3) Fill out the form in this ad and mail it to the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

Mail this form to:

Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton,  
500 Clubhouse Rd.,  
Vestal, NY 13850

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State/ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Pledge: \_\_\_\_\_

 Jewish Federation  
of Greater Binghamton

Jewish Family Services and the Friendship Club are hosting  
**Estate Planning Basics**  
**Wills, Trusts, and Advanced Directives**

Presenter: Amanda Giannone, Partner in Levene Gouldin and Thompson law firm. Amanda specializes in elder law and has been presenting workshops since 2015. There will be lots of time for questions and snacks will be served.

Where: JCC

When: Wednesday, September 17, at 1:00 pm

Please register at [www.jfjb.org](http://www.jfjb.org) or call 607-724-2332

This event is free and everyone is welcome!



Visit us on the web at [www.thereporter.org](http://www.thereporter.org)



## Weekly Parasha

Re'eh, Deuteronomy 11: 26-16:17

# A blessing and a curse

RABBI LEIAH MOSER, TEMPLE CONCORD

“See!” Moses declares, “This day I set before you a blessing and a curse.” (Deuteronomy 11:26) From the way Moses is speaking here, it seems like the choice could not be clearer: Go this way and we are blessed. Go that way and we are cursed. But if the choice is that clear, then why do we end up arguing so much over what is the right way to go? And why is human life in general so permeated with doubt and uncertainty? If we take these words to heart, we might be tempted to see ourselves as fundamentally flawed in some way given the difficulties we often face in attaining any degree of clarity in this world.

But Rabbi Mordecai Yosef Leiner, the Ishbitzer Rebbe, suggests that things may be otherwise than they appear: “‘See! I give you this day a blessing and a curse.’ – This means that whenever the Holy Blessed One bestows goodness to someone, God dresses it in a garment such that it appears to the eye to be the opposite from that goodness... In this way a person may refine themselves by their actions

and the goodness brought to light from out of the depths. Then it will be called ‘the attainment of your hands.’” (Mei Hashiloach, Parashat Re’eh)

The Ishbitzer Rebbe, never one to shy away from the difficult and the ambiguous in pursuit of the higher truth of Torah, gives us a useful way of looking at the obscurity of moral life in a positive light. There is blessing to be found in choosing the good, but only so long as we understand that choice to be bound up in a search, a process of discovery in which few things appear immediately to the eye in the form they will ultimately take for us. Simply taking everything at face value – that is, judging every new piece of information on the basis of what we already believe and considering only that which seems to confirm our pre-existing bias – will cause us to miss the true depth of the world and what it can become. Often, what seems bad to us at first will turn out, on closer examination, to have its good side. And just as often, what had seemed good to us will turn out, in another

context, to be bad. To acknowledge this is not to abandon the idea of good and bad altogether, but rather to understand that a rich, living conception of the good is something that can only be attained through human effort – an effort in which we continue to engage throughout our lives.

When Moses asks for God to reveal God’s name, God initially replies, “*ehyeh asher ehyeh*,” or “I will be what I will be.” Like God, human existence is a transformative experience defined by a process of constant becoming, of crossing over from one way of seeing and being to another. Being human, we cannot generally see the other side before the crossing is made. This necessitates a certain tolerance for ambiguity, not to mention faith in the possibility of achieving what the Ishbitzer Rebbe refers to as “the attainment of your hands.” This, perhaps, is the highest blessing: the feeling that we have been in some way involved partners with God, in the work of bringing that blessing to light out of the darkness.

## Congregational Notes

### 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, August 23, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Deuteronomy 3:23-7 and the haftarah is Isaiah 40:1-26. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 8:45 pm.

On Saturday, August 30, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9 and the haftarah is Isaiah 51:12-52:2. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 8:30 pm.

On Saturday, September 6, Shacharit services will be held at 9:45 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19 and the haftarah is Isaiah 54:1-10. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 8:15 pm.

#### Upcoming events:

“Torah in Our Times” class on Tuesdays at 4:30 pm.

On Tuesday, September 2, the Executive Board will meet at 7 pm.

### Temple Beth El of Oneonta

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism  
 Cantor: David Green  
 Address: 83 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY 13820  
 Mailing address: P.O. Box 383, Oneonta, NY 13820  
 Phone: 607-432-5522  
 E-mail: TBEOneonta@gmail.com

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

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

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

### Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism  
 Rabbi: Caleb Brommer  
 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).

### 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.

Friday, August 22, light candles before..... 7:35 pm  
 Shabbat ends Saturday, August 23 ..... 8:33 pm  
 Friday, August 29, light candles before..... 7:23 pm  
 Shabbat ends Saturday, August 30 ..... 8:22 pm  
 Friday, September 5, light candles before..... 7:11 pm  
 Shabbat ends Saturday, September 6..... 8:10 pm

### Temple Concord

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

Some services and programs are online only.

Friday, August 22: At 6 pm, vegetarian/dairy potluck Shabbat dinner, including candle lighting, wine blessing and Mourner's Kaddish, will be in the social hall. In person only. RSVP to the temple office at 607-723-7355 or at templeconcordaa@gmail.com.

Friday, August 29 and September 5: At 7:30 pm, Friday Shabbat services are in person, on Zoom and Facebook.com.

Saturdays, August 23 and 30 and September 6: 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, August 27 and September 3 and 10: At 5:30 pm, evening prayers in person only. At 6 pm, adult education class in person and on Zoom.

#### Upcoming events:

Saturday, August 30: At 6 pm, an all ages Community Board Game Night featuring a light dinner. RSVP to the temple office at 607-723-7355 or at templeconcordaa@gmail.com. There is a suggested donation \$5 per person or \$20 per family to cover the cost of refreshments.

Tuesday, September 2: At 10:30 am, the Morning Book Club will discuss “The Love Elixir of Augusta Stern” by Lynda Cohen Loigman. For more information, contact See “TC” on page 11

### Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive  
 Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815  
 Phone: 334-2691  
 E-mail: fertigg@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.

### Congregation Tikun 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.

# High Holiday services at area synagogues

All information was provided by the synagogues listed below. Other area synagogues are still in the process of planning their services to ensure the safety of their congregants – as those plans may change, those interested in attending services are asked to contact synagogues for their most up-to-date service schedule. See the Congregational Notes on page 10 for contact information for all of the area synagogues.

## Congregation Tikkun v'Or

Congregation Tikkun v'Or (Ithaca Reform Temple) welcomes all for the High Holidays. Registration is required for all services; e-mail [highholidays@tikkunvor.org](mailto:highholidays@tikkunvor.org) at least 24 hours prior to the services.

\*Note that locations and leaders vary; the full information is available upon registration and at [www.tikkunvor.org](http://www.tikkunvor.org)

### Sunday, September 21

Rosh Hashanah youth service – 9:30-11:30 am

### Monday, September 22, erev Rosh Hashanah

Evening service – 6:30 pm

### Tuesday, September 23, Rosh Hashanah

Morning service – 9 am-noon

Community (bring-your-own) Picnic – 12:30 pm

Tashlich – 1:15 pm

### Wednesday, October 1, erev Yom Kippur

Kol Nidre – 6:30 pm

Thursday, October 2, Yom Kippur

Morning service – 9 am-noon

Family service – 10:30 am

Youth service – 10:30 am

Break – noon-1:30 pm

Meditation – 1:30-2:15 pm

Isaiah Challenge – 2:30-3:45 pm: Dr Peyi Soyinka-Airewele, chair of the Tompkins County Human Rights Commission, professor of African and Comparative/International Politics at Ithaca College

Avodah service – 4 pm

Yizkor – 5:30 pm

Closing service (Neilah) and Havdalah – 6:15 pm

Break the fast (dish to pass) – 7:30 pm

## Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

All services will be available via Zoom, follow the link on Temple Beth-El's website at [www.tbethica.org](http://www.tbethica.org).

### Saturdays, August 23 and September 6

High Holidays Learning and Singing at lunch – after Shabbat services (approx. noon)

### Saturday, September 13

Leil Selichot service – 8:30 pm

In Anabel Taylor Hall Founders Room, Cornell University, co-led by Rav Caleb Brommer and Rav Talia Laster

### Monday, September 22, erev Rosh Hashanah

Services – 7:30 pm

Rosh Hashanah oneg – after services (approx. 8:30pm)

**Tuesday, September 23, Rosh Hashanah I**  
Morning services – 9 am  
Youth services and programming – 9:30 am  
Tashlich at the bottom of Cascadilla Gorge Trail on Linn St. – 4 pm

Erev Rosh Hashanah II services – 7:30 pm

### Wednesday, September 24, Rosh Hashanah II

Morning services – 9 am

### Friday, September 26

Shabbat Shuva services – 7:30 pm

### Saturday, September 27

Shabbat Shuva services – 9:30 am

### Wednesday, October 1, erev Yom Kippur

Mincha – 6 pm

Candle lighting/fast begins – 6:28 pm

Erev Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre services – 7 pm

### Thursday, October 2, Yom Kippur

Morning services – 9 am

Youth services and programming – 9:30 am

Yizkor – approx. 11:30 am

Yom Kippur Mincha – 5:15 pm

Neilah (concluding service) – 6:15 pm

Final shofar and fast ends – 7:27 pm

Break fast after services – approx. 7:30 pm

## Temple Brith Sholom

### Monday, September 22, erev Rosh Hashanah

Evening service – 7 pm

### Tuesday, September 23, Rosh Hashanah I

Morning service – 10 am

Tashlich at the creek – noon

### Wednesday, September 24, Rosh Hashanah II

Morning service – 10 am

### Wednesday, October 1, erev Yom Kippur

Kol Nidre – 6:45 pm

## TC. . . . . Continued from page 10

Merri Pell-Preus at 607-222-2875 or [merrypell.preus@gmail.com](mailto:merrypell.preus@gmail.com). To join via Zoom, visit <https://bit.ly/3CXVd9b>, meeting ID 881 6469 4206 and passcode 653272.

Wednesday, September 3: At 7 pm, there will be a Sisterhood meeting.

Sunday, September 7: From 9:30-11:30 am, Temple Concord invites families to a Religious School Open House. For more information, see the article on page 3.

Sunday, September 7: From 10 am-2 pm, there will be a Sisterhood Rummage Sale. Shoppers are asked to use the Oak Street entrance.

Tuesday, September 9: At 7:30 pm, a Temple Concord board meeting will be held. The meeting is open to synagogue members. For the link to the meeting, contact the synagogue at 607-723-7355 or [templeconcordaa@gmail.com](mailto:templeconcordaa@gmail.com).

## Thursday, October 2, Yom Kippur

Service with Yizkor – 10 am

Neilah and Havdalah service – 6 pm

Break the fast – 6:45 pm

## Temple Concord

### Monday, September 22, erev Rosh Hashanah

Service – 7:30 pm

### Tuesday, September 23, Rosh Hashanah

Service – 9:30 am

Rosh Hashanah School Program (in person only) – 10:30 am-12:30 pm

Super Kiddush to follow in the Kilmer Mansion (in person only)

Tashlich at Confluence Park (in person only) – 2 pm

A handout with appropriate reading will be available at the temple.

### Sunday, September 28

Holocaust Memorial Event at Temple Israel Cemetery (in See "Services" on page 12)

## BU. . . . . Continued from page 9

pals are expected to write to their match no less than once per month. At the end of the semester, before finals week, there will be a meet and greet event on the Binghamton University campus for you to meet your pen pal."

"When I first came up with the idea for the L'Dor V'Dor pen pal program, I was thinking about the divide that I have felt between our on-campus Jewish community and the wider Binghamton community and, more specifically, the lack of connection between the generations," said Spivak. "In high school, I got the chance to write to a senior pen pal, and I learned so much from the experience. Students have so much to learn from the older generation, but, in college, we are very isolated amongst only people of our age."

Spivak noted that "the goal of this program is to promote connectivity and community amongst the on-campus student Jewish community and the Jewish senior community living in Binghamton. Students and seniors will write back and forth with their matched pen pal throughout the academic semester, and the program will culminate at the end with a meet and greet, where pen pals will have the chance to meet in person! I will send out monthly prompts that pen pal pairs can have the option of addressing in their letters. Please consider signing up to receive a student pen pal and new friend!"

"I was excited when Elie Spivak from Hillel at Binghamton University approached me with this idea," Hubal said. "Having a university student pen pal is a great way to make a new friend and to cross a generational divide. If you are curious about the younger generation, this is a great way to learn something new."



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**Door.....Continued from page 2**

and the countless comings and goings of untold myriads of passersby. Like any structure of a certain age, the stucco-faced walls harbored stories and secrets of lives overlooked or long forgotten.

The paramount interest of two very special visitors – my wife Chana and her sister Liz – was the family that resided there in the 1920s and '30s. Until the family was taken from their home and transported to Tereizenstadt and Treblinka and Auschwitz.

Almost a century ago, their father, Harry Bush, and his siblings would sit out on the second-floor patio, their feet dangling through the balusters of the iron railing, watching the vibrant street life unfold below. They would spend their free time people-watching, joking and basking in the easy laughter of childhood.

Chana and Liz had been there a few days before, on a Wednesday. After completing a tour of a local castle, they had taken a cab to Letna, hoping to gain entry to their father's building, to visit the halls where Harry and his brother Otto once caused mischief, where their sisters Helen and Greta invented magical worlds populated by their simple rag dolls.

The entrance to the complex was secured by a weathered, traditional key lock. No modern buzzers, with buttons to push in the hope of gaining access. So they sat across the street sipping Pilsner beer, their eyes trained on the building, their minds racing with scenarios of what must have transpired there all those decades ago.

No one approached the building. Their hopes faded. Their mission was as fulfilled as it was likely to get, and they returned to their hotel.

That was Wednesday.

\*\*\*\*

Fast forward to Shabbat, and Chana and Liz were enjoying the hospitality of the Chabad House, where the rebbetzin and her faithful crew fed hundreds of Jews from around the globe. At some point, Chana, Liz and the rebbetzin got to schmoozing. They explained their father's roots and history in the city, and mentioned that he had grown up in Letna, which, they assumed, was quite far from Chabad House.

"We live in Letna!" the Rebbetzin exclaimed. "It's only a 20-minute walk from here."

After lunch, the sisters agreed to head to Letna. "Agreed" might be an overstatement. One of them was excited. The other wanted a Shabbat nap. Really, really wanted a Shabbat nap. But the reluctant sibling assented and the inseparable sisters set off once again – this time on foot – to the old neighborhood.

They perched themselves on the bench outside the building and again began to wait. Not two minutes passed, wondering how they could gain entry, when a man approached, key in hand. With adrenaline flowing and eyes wide with anticipation, they approached him.

Liz quickly stated their case. "Do you speak English? Our father grew up here. We were hoping we could come in just to see the building."

"No English. No English," he replied with a confused and irritated look, as he nervously stuck his key in the cylinder and retreated inside.

The door was shut in their faces. The lock tumbled closed.

\*\*\*\*

Without even time for disappointment to set in, a woman's voice came from behind: "I speak English. I live in this building. Would you like to come up for coffee?"

Their reaction was a mix of excitement tinged with a dose of fear. "What if she's the daughter of a Nazi and recognizes us as Jews – or just a garden-variety European antisemite?" But they had come this far and were anxious to see it through.

They ascended the stairs to the top floor, along the way admiring the intricate mosaic tiles which adorned the floors and walls. Their host let them in.

They took a seat in her kitchen. She opened the cabinet

to get some glasses. Inside, there was a box. It was the last box they ever expected to see in the building from which their father was deported almost nine decades prior.

\*\*\*\*

Liz's eyes opened wide. She quickly turned to Chana in disbelief. "She has a box of matzah!" she whispered, trying to contain her excitement.

Ever the gutsy one, Liz posed the obvious question: "Are you Jewish?"

"Yes!" the woman answered. "I am."

Revealing her background, she explained that she had grown up in Germany after the Holocaust. Her parents, badly scarred and ever-fearful of history repeating itself, had made her promise not to divulge her heritage. They faithfully – or perhaps faithlessly – took her to church, so that her government identification would label her as Catholic. They were careful not to affiliate with anything Jewish.

But there sat the box of matzah. Not due to any religious epiphanies, but because she was in possession of her grandmother's recipe box. And she needed matzah to grind up and make her bubbe's delicious knaidlach.

There are people who are Jewish in their hearts. There are those who are Jewish in their minds. She was Jewish in her stomach.

But it didn't end there. They spoke at length of heritage and belonging, and how, despite a successful career, she felt alone, and was longing to connect with her Jewish roots.

She had no idea that the Chabad rabbi and his family were her neighbors – or that she could explore Shabbat, delve into spirituality and build Jewish connection just steps from her door.

She wanted to know more.

\*\*\*\*

The conversation shifted from the spiritual to the historical. The yellow and gray building had been owned by an eccentric, elderly lady, who had recently passed away. The lady had grown up in the building, her parents – the previous owners – having passed it along to her.

The timeline checked out. Those parents would have owned the building when Harry and Otto and Helen and Greta and their parents, George and Elizabetha Bush, lived there. It was the last place that most of them would ever call home, before their lives were snuffed out in the death camps.

Did the owners of that infamous era take that apartment for themselves? Did they sell – and profit from – the furniture and valuables left behind? Did they rent it out to a family that was loyal to the Nazis?

In any case, the most recent owner had an impressive litany of quirks. Living in the building came with inviolable conditions:

- ◆ No couples with children – or even thinking of having children – were allowed to rent.
- ◆ Tenants had to bring the monthly rent payment to her in cash, sit with her in her apartment and share a vodka.
- ◆ The front entrance would remain with a key-lock only.
- ◆ Every tenant was required to play a musical instrument.
- ◆ Cats were allowed, dogs were not.

Certainly, a building with a colorful past. Many of those hues, no doubt, were dark and somber indeed.

\*\*\*\*

Oh, did I mention that Miriam is the name of the woman with the covert box of matzah?

After Shabbat, Chana found Miriam on Facebook and sent her the contact information for Chabad of Prague. She seemed eager to make the connection. We hope she has, and that a fresh new chapter of her story is just beginning. Perhaps one day we will see.

\*\*\*\*

After their first unsuccessful attempt that Wednesday, Chana and Liz returned to Letna on Shabbat with little more than a thread of hope – to brush against their father's past, to stand where he once played, to feel some lingering

warmth from a world lost.

They didn't just find echoes. They found a soul still stirring in the walls.

A stranger with a box of matzah. A neighbor seeking her roots. A connection waiting, just behind a closed door. *Perhaps that door didn't stay shut after all.*

\*\*\*\*

When one door closes, another opens.

And sometimes, if you knock softly enough – and wait long enough – it opens into the past, and into the future, all at once.

**Services.....Continued from page 11**

person only) – 10 am

**Wednesday, October 1, erev Yom Kippur**

Service – 7:30 pm

**Thursday, October 2, Yom Kippur**

Morning service – 9:30 am

Yom Kippur School Program (in person only) – 10:30 am-12:30 pm

Discussion with Rabbi Leiah Moser – 1:15 pm

Meditative Music at the Kilmer Mansion – 3 pm

Yizkor memorial service – 4:30 pm

Healing service – 5:15 pm

Neilah – 6 pm

Havdalah – 6:45 pm

Break fast to follow in the Kilmer Mansion (in person only)

**Saturday, October 4**

Religious School students to decorate the sukkah (in person only)

**Tuesday, October 7, Sukkot**

No Religious School

Sukkot service – 10 am

Potluck dairy/vegetarian lunch to follow service (in person only)

**Friday, October 10**

Wine and cheese in the sukkah (in person only) – 6:30 pm

Shabbat service – 7:30 pm

**Tuesday, October 14, Atzeret-Simchat Torah**

Simchat Torah service with Yizkor – 7:30 pm

**Wednesday, October 15, Simchat Torah**

Simchat Torah service with Yizkor – 10 am

BYO lunch to follow (in person only)

**Temple Israel**

**Saturday, September 13**

TI/TC Selichot at Temple Concord – 8:30 pm

**Monday, September 22, erev Rosh Hashanah**

Service – 6 pm

**Tuesday, September 23, Rosh Hashanah I**

Shacharit/morning services – 8:45 am

Torah and shofar service – 10 am

Children's tefillah/prayer service – 10:30 am

Sermon – 11:15 am

Musaf service – 11:30 am

Tashlich (behind Newman House) – 4:30 pm

Mincha – 5:30 pm

**Wednesday, September 24, Rosh Hashanah II**

Shacharit/morning services – 8:45 am

Torah and shofar service – 10 am

Sermon – 11:20 am

Musaf service – 11:30 am

**Sunday, September 28**

Communitywide Holocaust Memorial Ceremony at TI Cemetery – 10 am

Visit TI Cemetery with rabbi support – 10:30 am

**Wednesday, October 1, erev Yom Kippur**

Kol Nidre services – 6:15 pm

**Thursday, October 2, Yom Kippur**

Shacharit/ morning services – 8:45 am

Torah service – 10 am

Children's tefillah/prayer service – 10:30 am

Yizkor – 10:30 am

Sermon – 11:15 am

Musaf service – 11:30 am

Break

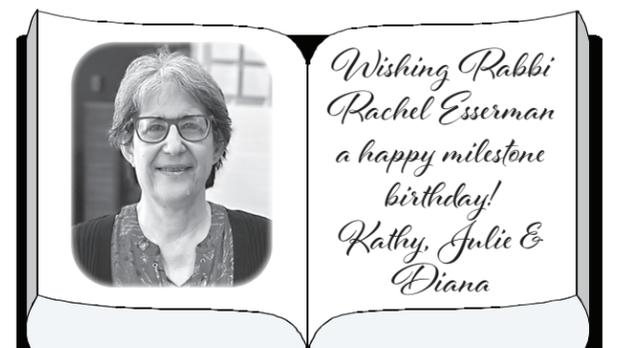
Study session (sanctuary only) – 4 pm

Mincha – 5:15 pm

Neilah (ark open) – 6:30 pm

Ma'ariv – 7:45 pm

Havdalah, break the fast – 7:55 pm



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