

THE REPORTER

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Happy 20 Chanukah 25



Opinion

Each one is a small light and together we are a great light

By Rabbi Moshe Shmaryahu

On Hanukkah, the festival of lights, every child learns the beloved phrase: "Each one is a small light, and together we are a great light."

It is a powerful, uplifting idea – yet sometimes, in the joy of music, dancing and celebration, it gets lost. It is worth pausing and helping our children truly understand it.

Hanukkah carries deep meaning not only in its miracle of light, but also in its connection to education and dedication. The word itself comes from the Hebrew root meaning to educate, to dedicate. For eight days, families and friends gather each evening for a few sacred moments in the middle of everyday life. These moments are a precious opportunity for parents and educators to share values, lessons and inspiration – extending the meaning of Hanukkah beyond doughnuts and dreidels.

So, if each night gives us 15 minutes of attention, of presence, perhaps we can dedicate each of the eight lights to a special blessing of character and kindness.

◆ First candle: Be like the light.

Be positive. Be wise. Be supportive. Be open and accepting. Be slow to judge of others and of yourself.

◆ Second candle: Spread the light.

Like ripples in water from a single stone, even a small act shines far. Let your goodness flow outward; don't hold it in.

◆ Third candle: Surround yourself with light.

Light drives away darkness. Surround yourself with positive people, thoughts and actions – and negativity will fade.

◆ Fourth candle: Find light in the darkness.

Even in difficult moments, there is always some spark of good. Seek it. Optimism strengthens us and those around us.

◆ Fifth candle: Speak in the language of light.

Words shape feelings – our own and others. Choose kind, respectful, uplifting words. The world brightens through gentle speech.

◆ Sixth candle: Join with others to build a brighter flame.

Positivity grows stronger when shared. When we speak kindly, act kindly and encourage kindness in others, we create true strength – light that lasts.

◆ Seventh candle: Remember that you Are light.

Tell those around you how precious they are. Never assume love is obvious – say it, show it, illuminate hearts with warmth.

◆ Eighth candle: Tell others they are your light, too.

When we tell others they shine for us, they will shine back. Light grows by being given.

This was written with love and admiration for my students, parents and teachers of Hillel Academy.

One Perspective from Israel

Three funerals and a wedding, part 1

JEREMY M. STAIMAN

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

To say that I don't like roller coasters would be an understatement – along the lines of describing the Grand Canyon as having "a nice view." I probably haven't been on one in 45 years, and the odds are high that my streak will likely continue for the next 45 years.

There's even a word for the fear of roller coasters: veloxrotophobia. Actually, there are two words: it's also called coasterphobia, but the latter is a clumsy, inelegant compound that makes me think some lazy intern was on his phone the day the boss tasked him with inventing a new word. There's no question that while coasterphobia excels for memorability and pronounceability, it totally lacks the hip factor of veloxrotophobia.

There's one roller coaster unavoidable for all of us, and that's the one known as life. I remember a rabbi once describing the storming duel of emotions when officiating at a funeral by day and a wedding that same night. It seemed to me that this realm was mostly relegated to clergy, who, by the nature of their positions, must scurry between

lifecycle events: Joyous. Tragic. Celebratory. Somber. All part of the job.

Once we made *aliyah* to Israel, I quickly learned that this emotional roller coaster was not merely the purview of religious officials – it was an all-too-common, profound bond shared by every Israeli. The catastrophes touch everyone; the celebrations reach us all.

Not long after we arrived, our son was on a hike ambushed by nearby Arabs, who hurled large rocks at the group, the mob pursuing the hikers up and down the wadis of Gush Etzion for nearly an hour. Miraculously, the physical injuries were minor, and a couple of months later, we scheduled a special meal for family and friends. The Sunday dinner doubled as a *seudat hoda'ah* – a meal of thanksgiving for his escape from potential harm – and a *mesibat giyus*, a pre-Army sendoff in anticipation of his entry to the paratroops.

On the Friday night before our planned event, terrorists snuck into the settlement of Itamar, slaughtering five members of the Fogel family in their beds, including three young children. Unbeknownst to me at the time, the Fogels were relatives of our cousins in Jerusalem.

So, in the small world that is Israel, a number of those scheduled to be at our party spent the afternoon attending the heartrending funerals. Those who could join us afterward transitioned from the horrific scene of the afternoon into dancing and singing with us in the evening.

It was a day on the national roller coaster, where the aftereffects are far more painful and long-lasting than the nausea felt after a ride at Six Flags. These treacherous journeys affect everyone here, not just rabbis.

The riders are strapped in, fully aware that the ride will have twists and turns, soaring ascents and precipitous drops. For the moment, as the cars head upward with a signature clackety-clack-clackety-clack along the wooden tracks, the crowd smiles and their upstretched arms almost seem to touch the endless, bright blue sky.

What could have possibly added to the boundless *simcha* at the end of Sukkot, with the euphoric return of the live hostages? Glued to our screens on Hoshanah Rabbah, we watched the unimaginable become reality. So many of our

See "Three" on page 6

In My Own Words

Far too many distressing things happening

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

What is a columnist to do when there are far too many distressing things to write about to do any of them justice? That includes the call for the executions of members of Congress who rightly reminded American soldiers that they are not to obey illegal orders. (Anyone familiar with the claim of Nazi soldiers that they were just following orders when killing Jews should be grateful for the reminder.) Or how both Democrats and Republicans are looking at the orders to attack boats, which are not in American waters – meaning that the attacks could qualify as piracy on the part of the U.S. – and whether survivors of those attacks were deliberately killed in the water, rather than being rescued. Or that the supposed reason behind these attacks – that those boats were bringing drugs to the U.S. – falls flat when our president has pardoned those who were jailed for selling drugs or being part of drug cartels. (In case you missed it, the president recently pardoned Juan Orlando Hernández, who had been sentenced to 45 years in prison for helping to move hundreds of tons of cocaine to the United States.) Or that same president once again using ugly, pejorative words to condemn those who

disagree with him (which, at least, is better than his calls for executing them).

I wonder if many of these actions are partly based on a reaction against political correctness or wokeness. The interesting thing is that I see both of those as Jewish values. For example, Judaism tells us to carefully guard our speech so as not to insult or embarrass anyone. That's all political correctness is. Think of the horrible names Jews have been called over the centuries (and are still being called in some places). Should we not also watch our speech when talking about others? Don't we want people to be careful of our feelings? Are not *chesed* (compassion) and *gemilut chasidim* (loving kindness) fundamental Jewish values? As for calling for the deaths of those who disagree with your politics or not saving the lives of survivors of those boats (who have *not* been tried and found guilty of any crime), Judaism notes that by saving one life, it is as if you have saved the world: that means *every* life.

Wokeness could be considered a form of *tikkun olam* (repair of the world), which is another Jewish value. Are we not required to perform *tzedakah*, which incorrectly

gets translated into English as charity. Charity is money; *tzedakah* makes demands on how we treat people. The word comes from *tzedak*, justice, which we are supposed to pursue according to Deuteronomy 16:20 – meaning actively perform as a requirement of our Jewish practice. The verse before that speaks of appointing those who will follow the laws and enforce the laws of the biblical text, just as our current officials are supposed to obey the laws of our country. In Judaism, *no one* is above the law. Read the Book of Kings if you want to see how Jewish rulers were condemned by God and the prophets for their illegal and immoral actions.

I know that some days the task of being informed and trying to keep our country on the correct path feels endless and useless. It can be so hard to keep fighting for justice and loving kindness in what seems like an unkind and unjust world. But, as the ancient rabbis remind us, it is not our job to complete the task, but neither are we free to abandon it. We can pray that our efforts have results, but no matter what occurs, we need to continue the struggle since it is our hands that do this Godly and necessary work.



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Family Hanukkah party at Discovery Center on Dec. 14

By Reporter staff

A Family Hanukkah Party will be held on Sunday, December 14, at 1 pm, at the Discovery Center, located next to the Ross Park Zoo, 60 Morgan Rd., Binghamton. The event is co-sponsored by Hillel Academy, the Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton and the PJ Library. There will be crafts, singing, storytelling, kosher donuts and time to play in the museum. There is no charge to attend, but registration is required by Friday, December 12.

Registration will be at www.jfgb.org.

"Young families are once again invited to celebrate Hanukkah at the Discovery Center," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Federation. "This event is a great way to explore your Jewish roots, meet other young families and have a great time at the local children's museum."

Hubal added, "I want to thank Tara Kaminsky, Maren Nasar and Rose Shapiro for taking the lead in organizing this year's event. It is sure to be a special afternoon full of friends and festivity."

JCC Community Hanukkah Celebration on Dec. 15

The annual Community Hanukkah Celebration will take place at the Jewish Community Center, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, on Monday, December 15, from 5:15-7 pm. The evening will begin with the Hanukkah torch walk and candle lighting. There will be a brief ceremony with music and recitations. The event will then move into the JCC's auditorium and feature performances by the JCC Early Childhood Center and Hillel Academy, as well as a showing of

the annual community Hanukkah video. Reservations are appreciated and can be made by calling the JCC office at 607-724-2417.

The torch walk will take place from 5:15-5:30 pm, followed by entertainment from 5:30-6 pm indoors, at which time the food buffet will open. From 6-7 pm, there will be activities featuring dreidels, gelt, crafts and games. Food tickets will be sold for \$8 per person, and \$6 for seniors and children, with a family maximum of \$28.

Film Fest to hold virtual showing of "The Matchmaker"

By Reporter staff

The Binghamton Jewish Film Fest will hold a virtual showing of the film "The Matchmaker." Matthew Johnson, professor of psychology and director of clinical training at Binghamton University, will moderate a Zoom discussion of the film on Sunday, December 28, at 7 pm. People will be able to register for links to the film and discussion at www.jfgb.org/film-fest-2025-26. Registration is due by Wednesday, December 24. The link will be sent out on Thursday, December 25. The film will be available for viewing from Thursday-Sunday, December 25-28. The film is in Hebrew with English subtitles.



Yankele Bride (Adir Miller), Clara Epstein (Maya Dagan) and Arik Burstein (Tuval Shafir) in "The Matchmaker." (Photo courtesy of Menasha Films)

won in the Best Actor category and Maya Dagan won in the Best Actress category. Other awards include Audience Award for Best Feature Film at the Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival and the Silver Plaque Award at the Chicago International Film Festival.

"The Matchmaker" is a unique story that gives the viewers a look at life in Israel during the 1960s," said Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, which sponsors the Film Fest. "Join us for a film that will both bring a smile to your face

and warm your heart."

About the cover

This year's Chanukah cover was created by Julie Weber, production associate for *The Reporter*.

MERAV YARKONI, PHD

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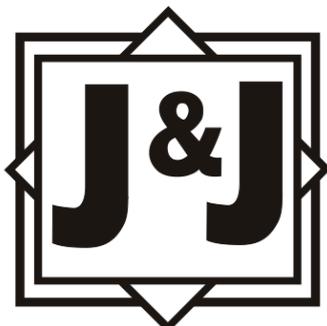
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The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to Alan Gutman on the death of his wife,

Sandra Gutman

The Jewish Community wishes to express its sympathy to Debbie Greenberg Strano on the death of her husband,

Joe Strano

DEADLINES



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

ISSUE	DEADLINE
December 26-January 2026	December 17
February	January 7
March	February 11
April	March 11

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

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Off the Shelf

Fantastical worlds and creatures

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

When I was talking to a non-Jewish friend this summer about a Jewish fantasy novel that I was reading, he expressed surprise that there was such a thing as Jewish fantasy. The elements of these works can be found as far back as talmudic times: the belief in demons, dybbuks, golems, angels and more have been part of Jewish culture for centuries. They were treated as real creatures, something that changed as many Jews focused more on the rational aspects of the religion. However, writers of fantasy now include them in their works – whether or not they believe the creatures are real – and combine tales of them with aspects of Western culture.

Two novels of the five novels in this review take place

in imaginary variations of our world: The first offers a kingdom where Judaism reigns supreme, while the other features more uncomfortable aspects of the Jewish past. The third novel takes place in a world similar to ours, but which offers an alternate view of Jewish history and theology. The fourth uses Jewish magic in the midst of an otherwise ordinary version of our world. The last features a Jewish character as a jumping point for a fantasy with little other Jewish content. Lovers of fantasy are certain to find something of interest in these novels.

“The Lure of Their Graves”

If you read and enjoyed Laura R. Samotin’s “The Sins on Their Bones,” the first book in her “The Cursed Crown

Duology,” you’ve probably already ordered its sequel “The Lure of Their Graves” (Random House Canada). (To read *The Reporter’s* review of the first book, visit www.thereporter.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-fantasy-jewish-style.) I’m happy to report that the conclusion is just as thrilling, exciting and suspenseful as the first book. The world portrayed resembles that of Tzarist Russia, but a variation of Judaism is the country’s religion. The danger doesn’t arise from repression of that religion, but the fight against those who would use its Holy Science for evil.

Once again, the author offers three characters’ points of view: Dimitri Alexeyev, Alexey Balakin and Vasily Sokolov. Dimitri is once again tzar after having defeated Alexey, his former husband, who became tzar after using the Holy Science and allying himself with demons, rather than God. Vasily is not only Dimitri’s aid in battle and politics, but also his lover. However, the kingdom is in danger from outside forces and Dimitri must consider marriage to prevent yet another war. He agrees to hold a summit where the heirs from three different kingdoms arrive to privately vie for his hand, something that breaks both his and Vasily’s hearts. While each of the three offer something that might make Dimitri happy, none of them will be Vasily. However, Dimitri believes that, as tzar, his country matters more than his personal happiness.

Those who have read the first book know something of which Dimitri and Vasily are not aware: Alexey, whom they think is dead, has come back to life with help from a demon. He plans to break the barriers between the worlds of human and demons even though that might destroy the human world. What makes Alexey’s wishes feel so tragic is that he still loves Dimitri, even as he seeks to destroy him, and believes that God approves of his plans.

Jewish ideas can be found throughout the work, including the *kabbalist* idea of the broken shards that occurred during the creation of the world. The novel also contains a beautiful description of the meaning of the phrase “may someone’s life be for a blessing.” One character notes, “When a person dies, it is up to us to keep their memory alive. And even though it hurts to remember, no one is truly gone from our lives if their memory remains – that is the blessing, if we choose to welcome it. We are going to grieve this together... so that the sadness can abate and space for the blessed memory can be carved into your heart.”

The plot is far more complex than can be explained in this short review, but it is extremely well done. Readers should be aware that the novel contains a great deal of male-on-male sex and, at times, features sexual violence and sexual abuse. The sex does not feel gratuitous, though, because it explains the relationships between characters, particularly Alexey and Dimitri, and Dimitri and Vasily. The author makes the characters’ thoughts and desires so vivid that readers will become emotionally involved and feel deeply for them. I highly recommend this duology for lovers of fantasy.

“The Maiden and Her Monster”

Like many fantasy novels, the world of “The Maiden and Her Monster” by Maddie Martinez (Tor Publishing Group) resembles that of Medieval Europe. The main religion of the kingdom is the Ozmini Church, which oppresses the Yahads (Jews) whose separate language and customs are despised. The European origins of the novel See **“Worlds” on page 12**



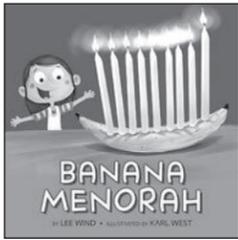
Off the Shelf

Picture and board books

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

“Banana Menorah”

The delightful picture book “Banana Menorah” by Lee Wind and illustrated by Karl West (Apple and Honey Press) portrays the creativity that makes Hanukkah such a fun holiday. The unnamed young narrator is on vacation with her Daddy and Papa, when they realize they forgot to bring a menorah with them. She cleverly turns a banana into a menorah and then the next night, when the banana is spoiled, she creates another menorah out of granola. The narrator is glad to be home on the fourth night of the holiday and sees the three *menorot* her family normally uses to be comfy and cozy. However, by the fifth night, she again wants to include something new. The book does a wonderful job showing how it’s possible to combine both the tried and the true with something creative.



“Banana Menorah” (Used with permission of Apple and Honey Press)

“It’s a Mitzvah”

Looking for a way to introduce your very young child to the concept of a mitzvah? Suzy Ultman’s board book “It’s a Mitzvah! Small Deeds with a Big Heart” (Penguin Workshop) is a great start. She offers 10 concepts from *zedakah* to *simcha* with easy to understand, very short explanations and bright-colored drawings to help illustrate her point. The book is a good starting point: parents should continue the discussion by asking their children to come up with examples of each mitzvah, in addition to talking about the importance of each one.

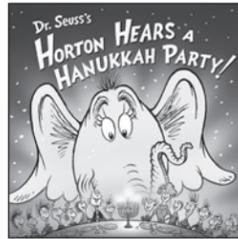


“It’s a Mitzvah!” (Used with the permission of Penguin Workshop)

“Dr. Seuss’s Horton Hears a Hanukkah Party!”

Some picture books need to be read out loud in order to better appreciate the prose. That’s true for “Dr. Seuss’s Horton Hears a Hanukkah Party!” by Leslie Kimmelman

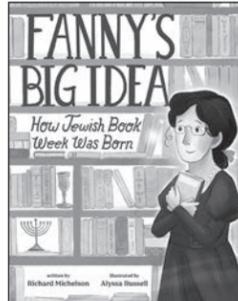
and illustrated by Tom Brannon (Random House) because the rhymes are far clearer and cleverer when vocalized. Poor Horton is ridiculed by his friends when he tells them about the sounds he hears at night. However, the other animals finally see the light of a very small Hanukkah menorah and learn the meaning of the holiday from the rabbi of Who-ville. Dr. Seuss fans will be thrilled to see the Seuss-like drawings of the Hanukkah party. The story also teaches how every creature – large and small – can bring light into the world.



“Dr. Seuss’s Horton Hears a Hanukkah Party!” (Used with the permission of Random House, TM & © Dr. Seuss Enterprises, L.P. 2025)

“Fanny’s Big Idea: How Jewish Book Week Was Born”

I confess to having known nothing about the real-life Fanny Goldstein before reading “Fanny’s Big Idea: How Jewish Book Week Was Born” by Richard Michelson and illustrated by Alyssa Russell (Rocky Pound Books), but I was so glad to have made her acquaintance. How could I not enjoy reading about someone whose love of books matches mine? Plus, even though her family immigrated to the United States, Fanny embraced her Jewish heritage, even though she was encouraged to become more American. Her desire to educate herself and her love of books led her to become a librarian. In 1925, her library in Boston offered the first Jewish Book Week, which later became Jewish Book Month. She also held other weeks for different minority groups to remind them to celebrate their heritage and culture. I hope this work will inspire an adult biography. Until then, book lovers of all ages can enjoy “Fanny’s Big Idea.”



“Fanny’s Big Idea” (Used with the permission of Rocky Pound Books)



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May Our Friendship be a Blessing for All

*May We Give Our Common Voice to
the Ancient Promise of Shalom*

BD luncheon on Dec. 13 on mushroom and Judaism

Beth David Synagogue's December Luncheon will be held on Saturday, December 13, and feature Adam Carlin speaking on "From Blessing to Bias: An Exploration of Mushrooms in Judaism." The community is invited to attend. Morning services will begin at 9:30 am, with the luncheon and program following the conclusion of services. The luncheon is free and open to the public.



Adam Carlin (Photo courtesy of Adam Carlin)

Carlin is the co-founder of the new Jewish Mycological Society. A branch of biology that focuses on the study of fungi, mycology is the subject of his forthcoming book "Dust and Ashes and Spores."

"In my research for the book," Carlin said, "I found a surprising and profound relationship between mushrooms and Jewish culture that spans millennia. I was amazed to discover their revered status in talmudic texts, as well as their complex role in Jewish law and contemporary spiritual practice."

The talk will look at how fungi have served as both symbols of wonder and vehicles for antisemitic persecution, including how Nazi propaganda exploited them. He will also answer the questions about how Jewish communities developed rich traditions of mushroom foraging throughout the world and the scientific mycological research is taking place in Israel today. "These are just some of the fascinating issues that Carlin will address in his talk," organizers said. "We are sure to come away from his talk knowing more about mushrooms than we had ever considered before. Come and join us for a captivating presentation, where you can get answers to all your questions about mushrooms and more!"

Carlin received a B.F.A. from California College of the Arts and an M.F.A. in art and social practice from Portland State. He is an American/Israeli curator, educator, arts administrator and socially engaged artist living in Central New York. He is currently the executive director of Women

of the Shoah, a non-profit that brings together Holocaust education and the arts, and co-director of A Contemporary Jewish Museum, which "establishes innovative and experimental Jewish museums in off-the-beaten-path Jewish communities." Carlin was previously the owner of Talkrot Gourmet Mushroom Farm in Tully, NY.

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 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.

BD Sisterhood and Men's Club to hold Hanukkah Party on Dec. 17

The Beth David's Sisterhood and Men's Club will hold a Hanukkah party on Wednesday, December 17, at 6 pm, in the Beth David social hall. A donation of \$15 will be requested from attendees at the door. The entire community is invited to attend. Reservations should be made by Friday, December 12, by contacting Stacey Silber at 607-727-9738, or silbercreations@gmail.com. Drop-ins will not be turned away.

Steve Gilbert, professor emeritus of psychology at SUNY Oneonta and past president of Temple Israel, will provide musical entertainment during the party. He noted that he learned to play a soprano ukulele (the smallest size) at the age of 4 before graduating to the baritone ukulele, which

he will be playing at the party.

"The community is invited to join the members and friends of Beth David Sisterhood and Men's Club as they celebrate Hanukkah with lots of food, dreidels to play with (bring your own if you like), entertainment and, of course, the lighting of the Hanukkah menorah," said organizers of the event. "We would like to thank the Eisenberg Foundation that will again be covering our major expenses."

Organizers added, "Please let us know if you plan to attend, so we can be certain to have enough food for everyone. Being a Jewish event,



Steve Gilbert (Photo by Denise Gilbert)

there probably will be enough food for you even if you show up and forgot to RSVP, but please do. See you at the party."

Donations for CHOW will be accepted, as will payment for Sisterhood dues or for mitzvah cards.

Anyone on Sisterhood's e-mail list or who receives Rabbi Zev Silber's weekly newsletter should receive a flyer designed by Rabbi David Serkin announcing the party. Anyone who wants to be added to either list should send their request and e-mail address to the Beth David Synagogue office at bethdavid@stny.rr.com.

TI/TC adult ed. program to feature "Great Jewish Stories"

The Temple Israel/Temple Concord Joint Adult Education Group will present a brunch program on Sunday, January 11, at 10 am, at Temple Concord, featuring "Great Jewish Short Stories" read live by Charles Berman, Andy Horowitz, Ben Kasper and Deb Williams, with Steve Gilbert serving as the MC. A voluntary contribution between \$5 and \$20 is welcome, and reservations are appreciated. To RSVP, contact Temple Concord at 607-723-7355 or Temple Israel at 607-723-7461.

Berman has been involved in local theater for many years and regularly performs with Southern Tier Actors Read. Most recently, he was seen as Tybalt and Friar Laurence in "Romeo and Juliet" at the Phelps Museum and Sir Harcourt Courtly in "London Assurance" with the Summer Savoyards. He regularly writes and performs in comedy murder mysteries for the local musical act Peaches and Crime. He has performed short stories on numerous occasions for the Hungry Ear program at the Broome County Library and

said that he is pleased to be participating in this event.

Horowitz is a graduate of Binghamton University and holds an M.B.A. from Syracuse University. He is the artistic director of Galumph Dance Company, lectures on entrepreneurship and offers choreographic workshops at schools and conservatories on a global stage. Horowitz is the co-winner of the Edinburgh Festival's Critics Choice Award and the Moers International Comedy Arts prize. He was the 2007 recipient of the Broome County Heart of the Arts award. He is also an artist-in-residence of Binghamton University's Department of Theatre.

Kasper taught at SUNY Broome for more than 30 years. He was on the board of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton and is a trustee at Temple Israel. He is on the committee that selects films for the annual Jewish film fest. Kasper also serves on the board of *The Reporter*.

Williams and her husband, Gil, have been selling used books online for more than 25 years. She is an amateur

actor and enjoys directing Temple Concord's Purim spiel each year, as well as organizing the synagogue's November Artisan Marketplace. She is a member of Binghamton's Shakespeare Dramatic Club.

"Looking forward to seeing you on January 11!" said organizers of the event.

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BU professor focuses on practices of healing and repair

By Rabbi Rachel Esserman

In her biography on the Binghamton University website, Talia Katz lists her areas of interest as “trauma, violence, language, subjectivity, history of medicine, gender.” An assistant professor of Israeli studies who trained as an anthropologist, Katz combines a wide variety of topics in her research, including medical humanities, childhood studies, performance studies, and gender and sexuality studies to gain a better understanding of what occurs when a person or group lives through traumatic times.

Her interest in trauma is a personal one, which comes from the traumatic history of her own family. “I grew up in a household shaped by chronic illness, migration and war,” Katz said in an e-mail interview. “My maternal grandmother grew up in Guatemala City, the daughter of an Austrian Jewish emigre who saved his mother and niece from the Holocaust. My grandmother had a formative role in raising me. This meant that questions such as – How do people go on after atrocity? What does it mean to belong to a society? What kinds of challenges do women face in the workplace? – felt intimate and alive to me. Cultural anthropology provided a vocabulary through which to make sense of my own experiences. It offered an intellectual home in which I could explore these questions across different scales and world regions.”

Katz was always interested in the study of violence, but it wasn’t until her Ph.D. studies that she began to combine that interest with Israeli studies. “As an undergraduate student at Yale, my senior thesis was an ethnography of how Rwandan women experienced pregnancy and social support in the shadows of the 1994 genocide,” she said. “I anticipated that my Ph.D. dissertation would focus on

the experiences of sexual violence of Congolese refugees in East Africa. However, a series of unexpected events during my first year in the Ph.D. program guided me back to my own heritage. I chose to study psychodrama (a theater-based form of psychotherapy) and explore the plurality of theories of trauma that circulate in Israel/Palestine. Since Israel is often seen as the ‘global exporter’ of knowledge on trauma, I think it’s particularly fruitful to go back through the historical archives and speak with people in peripheral spaces to try to understand what dominant theories and frameworks often leave out.”

She is currently working on a book on the topic. “My first book project (currently in-progress) is a history and ethnography of Israeli psychodrama,” Katz said. “I tracked how Holocaust survivors brought the therapy to Israel in the first years of statehood and how it is being used today in a community theater center in the mixed Jewish-Palestinian city of Lod. I was interested in how, after the catastrophic violence of the Holocaust, therapists had to re-imagine what healing could look like. Psychodrama was founded by psychiatrists who turned to theater as a response to the forms of crisis they saw in the world. I found that the psychodramatists’ turn to theater resulted in very interesting new formulations of what healing and repair can look like in the face of both past and ongoing violence.”

Next semester, she will be teaching a course that speaks to her interests: “Law and Life: Israel/Palestine.” Katz noted that the course will introduce “students to concepts in legal anthropology, a discipline that investigates how law reflects, shapes and shifts social norms. We’ll cover topics ranging from the foundational role of the Eichmann trial in crafting Israeli collective memory of the Holocaust

to how international legal institutions shape local political discourses in the present moment. It’s important for me to offer students a calm and rigorous environment in which they can explore the longer histories of the issues that we see on today’s newspaper headlines. It’s less important to me if students remember a particular detail or course reading. Rather, I hope they leave with a new antenna – so to speak – through which they can notice the world differently, specifically concepts and categories they may have previously taken for granted.”

Katz also is interested in how difference and disability are viewed in contemporary Israeli worlds and recently took part in a discussion of a film on the topic. “As part of Binghamton University’s Harpur Week, my colleague Lior Libman and I recently organized a film screening of Neta Loevy’s documentary film, ‘The Woman from the Bubble,’” she said. “The film follows the life of Lee Dan, an Israeli Sign Language interpreter. The film showcases the diverse lives of Israel’s deaf community, panning from factories and hospitals to after-school theater programs and music events. It was wonderful to see the event so well attended; the room was packed with around 50 students and community members. As an anthropologist, I strive to showcase the perspective of everyday life in my work and so screening the film fit well. Afterward, in the discussion, students expressed that it meant a lot to them to showcase the ordinary life of the deaf communities in Israel. In the discussion, we spoke about the social model of disability and how many (including some featured in the film) do not consider deafness a disability at all. We hope to continue offering programming on these themes as we saw how much demand there is to speak about different facets of Israeli social life today.”

Three.....

people came home, delivered from their prisons, freed from their sadistic captors.

Who could ever have imagined the redemption we felt as we danced on Simchat Torah in the very halls where we first heard the news of the massacres exactly two years earlier?

As the cars pass the crest, the blue sky vanishes in an instant, and the riders suddenly plummet – down, down, down. The clackety-clack-clackety-clack is subsumed by the thunderous sound of rushing air smacking them straight in the faces. Their cheers from a moment ago are forgotten in their screams at the seemingly bottomless descent.

Funeral one: The close of Simchat Torah in the USA brought the unthinkable news of the death of Rabbi Moshe Hauer, *zichono l’vurcha*. For those of us from Baltimore,

the shock took on another dimension.

I don’t claim to have been very close to him, though we were certainly friendly. Many of our friends were themselves dear friends of his. We lived just two blocks apart. Our son Avi’s bar mitzvah took place in his *shul*. We served on a board together.

Rabbi Hauer was a soft-spoken man of quiet wisdom, modesty and intense care for others. There is little I can add to the oceans of ink which have and will be written in tribute to him, other than one small facet.

Many have spoken about the fact that he was an incredible listener, always hearing people out before gently weighing in. He not only welcomed opinions with an open ear, he did so with an open heart. He taught others to do so, as well.

As a mentor of younger rabbis, one of these protégés approached Rabbi Hauer for advice before assuming his

..... Continued from page 2
first pulpit, in Binghamton, NY, where I grew up.

To introduce his response, I’ll give a little background. On some of my father’s visits to Baltimore in the ‘90s, he spoke to Rabbi Hauer (then a fairly new rabbi) after *shul*. My father would share feedback on the rabbi’s *drasha* or anything else he noticed could be improved. These were not complaints, but constructive suggestions.

Rabbi Hauer listened, of course, but he also took my father’s suggestions to heart, implementing them as he saw appropriate. It was clear to him that my father’s only interest was in helping him improve his skills and better tend to his flock.

So when – years later – the young Binghamton-bound rabbi asked Rabbi Hauer for his guidance in his first rabbinic position, Rabbi Hauer instructed him to find a confidant in the *shul* whom he could trust to give him the straight scoop on what he was doing right and what could be improved. (Full disclosure: he told him that Mr. Staiman was the man he could trust.)

Chana and I attended the funeral of the great listener, Rabbi Moshe Hauer. Because the flight from America bearing the casket only arrived in time for a Friday afternoon burial in Jerusalem, the eulogies were short and few. For many attendees, words were almost unnecessary, given the pervasive devastation at his loss and the reverence already on display.

What seemed to be a safe and secure journey a moment ago is now riddled with confusion and chaos. Will the passengers find comfort as they level off from the first drop? What awaits around the next bend? Both literally and figuratively, everything is up in the air.

Funeral two: As if Baltimore had not already been left reeling, several days later, a young student at the Mir Yeshiva in Jerusalem was found lifeless in his room. It was Shlomo Aryeh Ribakow, the son of someone I have known since our Israel-yeshiva days some 45 years ago.

He was named after his grandfather, Rabbi Shlomo Aryeh (Ervin) Preis, who had been the rabbi of our *shul* in Baltimore and the head of the local rabbinical council. The new child’s naming at his *bris* two decades ago took place in that same *shul* on Yom Kippur. There was not a dry eye in the crowd back then as the infant assumed a name laden with a tradition of humble dedication.

Nor was there a dry eye in the crowd today, as his family, heaving with pain, fearlessly accepted God’s judgment as they bade him farewell. Since this funeral took place on the first day of Rosh Chodesh, the eulogies were, again, short and few.

As a family of *kohanim*, they stood on the road above the open grave, watching as loved ones and yeshiva mates filled the earth and helped return Shlomo Aryeh’s body to the dust from whence it came.

His resting place is but a few a few steps from his namesake and grandfather.

It’s too late to get off, but many wonder what they are doing here. What were they thinking to get on this insane ride in the first place? When will this end?

Part two will appear in a future issue of The Reporter.

CHANUKAH GREETINGS

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The Reporter matches matching grant

By Reporter staff

The Reporter announced that it matched its \$5,000 matching grant from the David and Virginia Eisenberg Fund. The Reporter raised \$9,481.58.

"We were thrilled to receive a matching grant again this year," said Rabbi Rachel Esserman, executive editor of The Reporter. "We owe a special thank you to the David and Virginia Eisenberg Fund, which was gracious enough to offer the grant. We are also grateful to

readers of the paper who generously donated money."

Esserman noted that this support is even more important now than it was in the past. "In the past, one of our main sources of income was advertising," she said. "But all print newspapers have had difficulty getting ads because of the internet and social media websites. That makes readers' and foundations' donations even more important."

She also noted the difference between

The Reporter and the local secular newspaper. "We offer a service to the Jewish community by giving them a one-stop place filled with news and features they won't find anywhere else," she said. "Those include Bill Simons' columns, and our award-winning book reviews and editorials."

Esserman offered thanks to Shelley Hubal, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, for helping to arrange the grant, and The

Reporter's production associate, Julie Weber, for creating the ad that appeared in the paper and on The Reporter's website.

Although the matching grant is over, Esserman noted that the paper is still accepting donations. "Every penny is appreciated to help keep our paper going," she said. Donations can still be made online through The Reporter Group's website, www.thereportergroup.org, or by mailing donations to The Reporter, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

TC Sisterhood to hold annual book talk on Jan. 25

By Babs Putzel

The annual Temple Concord Sisterhood sponsored book talk will feature Rabbi Rachel Esserman on Sunday, January 25, in the social hall at Temple Concord, 9 Riverside Dr., Binghamton. An 11 am brunch will be served, followed by the book talk. A suggested donation of \$5 will cover the brunch. The program is open to the community. Reservation should be made by contacting Phyllis Kellenberger at phylkellen@gmail.com or 607-727-8305 by Wednesday, January 21.

Esserman, who will discuss three

books, said, "I once again am looking forward to one of my favorite events of the year. It is always a pleasure to do this for Sisterhood."

She will be discussing three books:

◆ "Children of the Book: Memoir of Reading Together" by Iland Kurshan. The author writes about reading to her children and the way that can connect generations.

◆ "One of Them" by Kitty



Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Zeldis. The novel deals with antisemitism on a college campus the years after World War II.

◆ "Fagin the Thief," is by Allison Epstein. The novel looks at the Jewish villain from Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist" and offers a different view of his life.

Esserman, who is the executive editor of The Reporter Group, will retire after 24 years on December 25. She will continue to write book reviews and food columns for the paper.

Esserman has won numerous American Jewish Press Club Rockower Awards and Syracuse Press Club Awards for her opinion columns and book reviews.

In addition to her work at The Reporter, she serves as a chaplain for the Broome Developmental Disabilities Service Office. Her writing has been published in "The Women's Torah Commentary" and "The Women's Haftarah Commentary,"

both by Jewish Lights Publishing. Also she has had a book of poetry, "I Stand by The River," published by Keshet Press of Temple Concord.

A Reconstructionist rabbi who says her first love is teaching, Esserman sees her position at The Reporter as an opportunity to educate the public about Judaism. She also serves as a freelance rabbi for lifecycle events, hospital visits and chaplaincy, and has been a rabbi-on-call when needed by local Reform and Conservative synagogues.

Her education includes a bachelor of arts degree in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania, and rabbinic ordination and a master of arts in Hebrew letters from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Wyncote, PA. In 2023, she was awarded an honorary doctor of divinity degree from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College for 25 years of service.

Sisterhood's co-chairwomen for the program are Kellenberger, Deb Daniels and Roz Antoun.

TC Religious School service



Temple Concord Religious School students led Shabbat morning services. The service was followed by a lunch.

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On the Jewish food scene Yum or barf?

RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

When I was visiting a friend this summer, we got to talking about food. It was a funny conversation because she kept saying whatever food I mentioned (for example, sushi) was disgusting. It turned into such a joke that I was thrilled when I was able to say that something she liked (I can't remember what it was) was disgusting. We were laughing during the conversations and it was interesting to see what we thought was gross.

I had a similar reaction when looking at recipes for the upcoming holiday. (Please note, I have no plans to make any of them, but I enjoy looking at the photos and descriptions.) I love latkes and generally eat them plain. (I believe I've written how disgusted a different friend was with me when, rather than being team sour cream or team applesauce, I was team plain.) For the past few years, I have added a touch of sour cream to a few of those latkes, but I eat the majority without any toppings. Why would you need a topping when you have a beautiful, warm fried potato? Yum! They are perfect just as they are.

However, since there are numerous Jewish food websites and those websites need to create new material each year (or no one is going to read them), I've seen some new

variations on the traditional latke. One stood out this year. My first reaction to "General Tso's Latkes" (<https://whatjewwannaeat.com/general-tsos-latkes>) was barf! Now, I really like General Tso's chicken, but General Tso's latkes? Give me a break! The inspiration for the dish was the fact that last year, Hanukkah started on Christmas Eve and many Jews go out for Chinese that evening or on Christmas day. Amy Becker, whose website is called "What Jews Wanna Eat," was inspired to combine the two traditions. Again, I love that spicy sauce, but can't imagine it on latkes. I would be willing to try a taste if someone made it for me, but I'm still not sure I want to waste a precious latke by adding any kind of sauce.

While we are on foods that make me want to barf, a recent e-mail included a link to more than 20 different kinds of challah. I'm not sure why we need more than two kinds of challah (plain and raisin - yum to the raisin!), but, again, these websites have to feature new recipes. Well, I learned that the one that made me want to barf is actually relatively old. The recipe for "Dill Pickle Challah" (www.myjewishlearning.com/the-nosher/dill-pickle-challah-recipe) originally appeared in 2016. Fortunately, I See "Yum" on page 12

Visit us on the web at www.thereportergroup.org

Latkes and doughnuts for Chanukah? Think oil, but think again

By Ethel G. Hofman

(JNS) – Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, begins this year on the evening of Sunday, December 14, and ends on the evening of Monday, December 22. While the date varies on the solar Gregorian calendar, it always starts on the same day on the Jewish calendar: the 25th of Kislev.

Potato latkes are the most popular dish for Chanukah, right? Not so. In other countries, wherever Jews settled or passed through, they learned the regional dishes, and their cuisine was influenced by their non-Jewish environment. In American markets, mainstream items such as hummus, lox, baklava and bagels were all brought to our shores by immigrants.

Throughout history, Jews exiled from their homelands have wandered the globe. In the Middle Ages, Jews traveled to escape oppression, wherever it reared its head. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, hundreds of thousands fled Europe – Eastern and Western – and movements associated with czarist tyranny, fascism, Nazism and communism. Moving on, they took their favorite recipes, adapting them for the kosher kitchen and thus enriching Jewish cuisine everywhere they went, including America.

But in every place, oil and dairy products are recognized as symbolic, traditional Chanukah foods related to Jewish history and redemption. Oil emphasizes the miracle of the cruse found in the Holy Temple, which burned for eight days when there was only enough for a single day. Dairy food products commemorate the heroism of Judith. She fed the enemy general Holofernes large quantities of salty cheese, washed down with wine, perhaps the specialties of the area. He fell into a drunken stupor, Judith killed him, the enemy

army fled and the Jews were saved. It's a version of "They tried to kill us, we survived, let's eat!"

Latkes and *sufganiyot* – basically, a holiday doughnut classically filled with jelly, but these days run the gamut from salted caramel to cookies-and-cream – are most common; however, other items remain deeply connected to individual countries using ingredients of origin. In Italy, for example, eggplant is sliced, dipped in egg and matzah meal, and fried in olive oil. Today, Caribbean Jews fry eggplant in coconut oil. They create a salsa of pineapple, peppers and lime juice, rather than the original Mexican spicy version of tomatoes and chili peppers. The recipe for gefilte fish croquettes, which uses cooked flaked fish, was inspired by the football-shaped croquettes I devoured at a kosher-style restaurant in London. Always requested this time of the year, my quick and simpler version of *sufganiyot* is made with baking powder instead of yeast. And along with favorite preserves, delight the kids with a filling of Nutella. If you don't have a deep frying thermometer, to reach 350°F, a piece of white bread should brown nicely in 60 seconds.

A small silvery fish about six inches long, smelts are found in the North Atlantic as well as in Canada. Tossed in egg and seasoned breadcrumbs, and then cooked either in the oven, a pan or an air fryer, they're eaten whole – crunchy, and a good source of protein and omega-3s. In Israel, *sufganiyot* are often fried in olive oil pressed from local olives. The milk chocolate cookies resemble gelt, or "coins." Press a square of chocolate-mint candy on top for the last two minutes of baking time and you have instant frosting. (I use Andes Crème de Menthe thins cut in half.)

Unless you're on a restricted diet for medical reasons or have food allergies, forget about trying to alter your grandmother's or family's recipes. To do so will take away from the rich symbolism of Chanukah. Instead, eat moderate portions, keep exercising – despite temperatures having plummeted in many parts of the world this time of the year – and celebrate the light of the holiday, which is needed now more than ever.

Fried Eggplant with Pineapple Salsa (*pareve*)

Makes 4 servings

Cook's tip: Coconut oil is a saturated fat but gives flavor as well as crispness. Any vegetable oil may be substituted. 2 eggs, beaten

1½ cups seasoned breadcrumbs
1 medium eggplant, trimmed and sliced ½-inch thick
Coconut oil
Place the beaten eggs and breadcrumbs in separate shallow dishes.

Dip the eggplant slices in the egg, then coat with breadcrumbs. Pat lightly. Place on a paper towel-lined platter and set aside for 15 minutes.

In a large skillet, heat ¼ cup oil over medium-high heat. Arrange the eggplant in one layer in the skillet, about ¼-inch apart.

Cook for 2-3 minutes on each side, or until tender when pierced with a pointed knife and nicely browned. If browning too quickly, reduce heat.

Drain on paper towels.

Serve hot or at room temperature.

Pineapple Salsa (*pareve*)

Makes 1½ cups

Cook's tips:

◆ Always use fresh pineapple. Canned is too liquid. Cubed fresh pineapple is available in markets. It's more expensive but saves time.

◆ For a milder punch, remove the seeds and white pith from jalapeño peppers.

◆ Chop the onion, bell pepper and jalapeño pepper separately in a food processor.

- 1 cup pineapple cut into ½-inch dice
- ¼ cup finely chopped red onion
- ¼ cup red bell pepper, chopped
- ½ jalapeño pepper, finely chopped
- 2 Tbsp. snipped cilantro
- 2 Tbsp. freshly squeezed lime juice
- ½ tsp. salt

Place all ingredients in a serving bowl. Mix gently. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Oven-Fried Smelts (*pareve*)

Make 4-6 servings

Cook's tips:

◆ Frozen smelts should be thawed, rinsed in cold water and patted dry before cooking.

See "Oil" on page 16



Pineapple salsa (Photo by Ethel G. Hofman)

Chanukah Greetings
from
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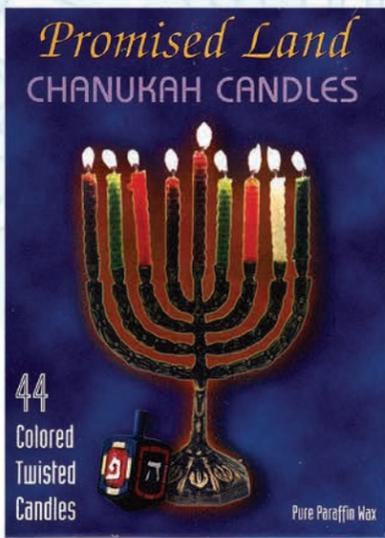
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Jewish Baseball Players

Sandy at 90: "That's how to be a good Jew"

BILL SIMONS

During the winter of 1960-61, 11-year-old me discovered a passion for reading about baseball. I played Little League, sandlot and backyard baseball; followed the Boston Red Sox on radio and TV and occasionally at Fenway Park; and traded baseball cards. Reading about the game added another layer. I scoured baseball publications looking for a current Jewish baseball star to rival the epic hero of my father's youth, Detroit Tiger slugger Hank Greenberg. I chose Sandy Koufax as my standard bearer, discounting naysayers who designated him more squandered potential than realized performance.

After six seasons (1955-60) pitching for the Dodgers, first in his native Brooklyn and then in Los Angeles, the 25-year-old Koufax had mediocre career statistics. His 40 defeats outnumbered a meager 36 victories, testament to a dismal .474 winning percentage and disturbing 4.10 ERA. Things were not getting any better on the diamond. In 1960, Koufax won only eight games against 13 losses.

Based on scattered flashes of brilliance, I told my father and anyone else who would listen that greatness on the mound lay just ahead for Koufax. I pointed to his 2-hit, 14-strikeout, shutout of the mighty Cincinnati Reds in 1955 at age 19; tying Bob Feller's MLB record 18 strikeouts against Willie Mays' San Francisco Giants in 1959; and his 1960 NL second place in KOs (197). Despite the retort that the Koufax fastball couldn't trump wildness and inconsistency, I wanted to believe that he was about to become my generation's Greenberg.

And I was right. In 1961, Koufax won 18 games and recorded 269 strikeouts, breaking Christy Mathewson's 1903 NL record. And, thanks to my Uncle Ben, I was there when Koufax made his only appearance at Fenway Park, holding the AL scoreless in the fifth and sixth innings of a 1961 All-Star Game. Late at night, I listened to Koufax pitch West Coast ball games on my shortwave radio. Defanging jibs as to why I wanted to be the Jewish team during our

gang's improvised ethnic whiffleball tournaments, I retorted so Koufax could pitch for us.

With number 32 Dodger blue inscribed on the uniform draping his broad back, Koufax' windup featured muscular calf high in the air and long pitching arm descending almost to his ankle. At his 1962-66 peak, Koufax was arguably the best pitcher in baseball history. Despite missing parts of 1962 and 1964 due to injuries, he won five consecutive ERA titles with figures that look like typos (2.54, 1.88, 1.74, 2.04, 1.73); compiled a 111-34 won-loss record; garnered an MVP and three Cy Young Awards (when MLB awarded only one); notched a then unequaled fourth no-hitter, plus a perfect game; set a single season strikeout record (382); struck out 18 batters in a game for a second time; and recorded an astounding 0.95 World Series ERA.

Armed with a lightning fastball, dropping "twelve-to-six curveball," and hard-won control precision thanks to tutelage from Jewish backup catcher Norm Sherry, Koufax made MLB batters look like Little Leaguers. Watching Koufax pitch and reflecting on the lefty's 1963 25-5 record, Yogi Berra confessed, "I don't understand how he lost five." Given to more picaresque language, Mickey Mantle, after striking out against Koufax, exclaimed, "How the \$#! is anybody supposed to hit that \$#!?" When asked to name the best pitcher he ever saw, Casey Stengel, intermittently a managerial genius, once responded "that Jewish kid." To add comparative perspective, Clayton Kershaw, the second-best pitcher in Dodgers history, completed 25 games over 18 seasons; Koufax raked up 54 just in his two final seasons. Kershaw had 15 career shutouts; in 1963 alone, Koufax chalked up 11.

Termed the Left Arm of God, that left arm was paradoxically Koufax's Achilles heel. To unfurl powerful torque from the mound despite a left elbow afflicted by excruciating and worsening arthritis, he underwent blistering heat treatments, freezing water immersion, injections, pills that

carried harmful side effects without fully numbing the hurt nor the advancing deformity of the arm, evidenced by loss of full extension and bone length. Facing crippling disfunction of the arm, Koufax, age 30, retired from MLB in 1966 at the height of his pitching prowess. At 36, he became the youngest Baseball Hall of Fame inductee

For Jews of a certain age, Koufax remains legend. His sheer athletic excellence negated the Woody Allen nebbish stereotype. Koufax evokes a time when America and the world were becoming better places for Jews. Along with holding Eichmann accountable, victory in the Six-Day War and the emergence of Barbra Streisand, Koufax epitomized the coming of age of a confident, post-Holocaust generation of American Jews.

On October 6, 1965, the Koufax saga entered Jewish mythology. He honored Yom Kippur by declining to pitch Game One of the World Series against the Minnesota Twins, resulting in Los Angeles losing. Minnesota native Dr. Rich Cohen remembers "on YK 1965, every synagogue in the Twin Cities reported having seen Sandy at services - an urban myth but a good one" that Koufax, who remained in his hotel room, never disputed. Although fielding errors and a lack of support led to Koufax losing Game 2, the Dodger ace came back to shut out the Twins in Game 5, yielding but 4 hits and 1 walk while striking out 10. Remarkably, in Game 7 on only two days' rest, Koufax repeated his 10 KO shut-out performance, this time surrendering but three hits, sealing the Dodgers World Series championship. Psychology Professor Steve Lisman recalls, "The Koufax decision resonated mightily in our household." My cousin Robert still sees "my mom pointing to the TV to tell me that's how to be a good Jew."

And the 1966 Koufax-Don Drysdale holdout for fair compensation exemplifies our social justice mitzvah. Barney Horowitz, formerly of the National Labor Relations See "Sandy" on page 11

Chanukah Greetings

Warm Chanukah wishes to you and your family!

The Coker Family

HAPPY CHANUKAH!

HOWARD FISHER

HAPPY CHANUKAH!

Bob Tomanek

Warm Chanukah wishes to you and your family!

Terri Bennett

May the lights of Chanukah shine in your hearts forever

Steve Gilbert

Wishing you a Happy Chanukah light • peace • love

Shari Neuberger

Wishing the community a Happy Chanukah!

Rabbi Rachel Esserman

CELEBRATE CHANUKAH

Marilyn Bell & Family

Wishing The Entire Community A Happy Chanukah

Rebecca Kahn & Richard Birchard

Wishing you a Happy Chanukah light • peace • love

Rhona and Richard Esserman

Warm Chanukah wishes to you and your family!

Kathy Brown, Advertising Representative

Wishing you a Happy Chanukah light • peace • love

Steven, Gail, Michael, Emily, Milo, Eli & Ari Feuer of Otego, NY

Maria & Bob Kutz wish all their friends a Happy Chanukah

HAPPY CHANUKAH

Happy Chanukah!

Ann C. Brilliant

AI unlocks Cairo Genizah's hidden world

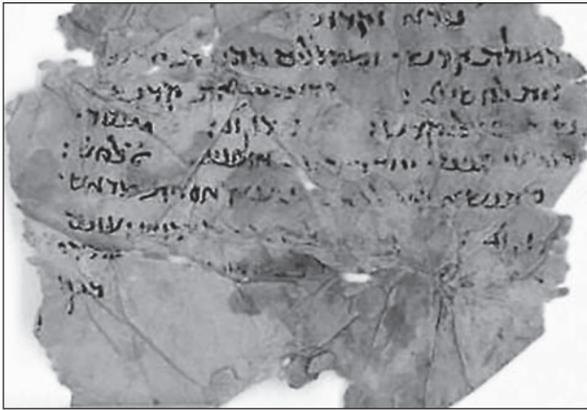
By Sharon Altshul

(JNS) – A groundbreaking Israeli-based initiative is opening an unprecedented window into one of Judaism’s greatest manuscript treasures: the Cairo Genizah. For the first time, researchers and the public can access automatic transcriptions of nearly 400,000 fragments – some 160 million words across Hebrew, Arabic, Judeo-Arabic and additional languages – making the entire collection searchable in seconds.

Housed for centuries in the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat, Old Cairo, the Cairo Genizah contains more than 300,000 handwritten pieces preserved between the ninth and 19th centuries. Jewish law forbids discarding sacred texts that contain God’s name, leading communities to store worn-out manuscripts, prayer books, legal documents, business ledgers, marriage contracts, medical prescriptions and everyday writings in a genizah (repository).

What emerged was an unparalleled time capsule of Jewish life – and its interactions with Muslim and Christian neighbors – stretching across a millennium. But despite decades of digitization through the Friedberg Genizah Project, fewer than 10 percent of the fragments had readable transcriptions. Until now, the lack of searchable text posed one of the greatest barriers to genizah research. That barrier has now collapsed.

The transformation comes from MiDRASH, an interdisciplinary initiative funded by a 10 million euro European Research Council Synergy Grant, the first such ERC grant ever awarded in Jewish studies for computational manuscript research. Working in partnership with KTIV, the National Library of Israel’s digital manuscript database,



A Yom Kippur prayer book fragment from the Cairo Genizah, circa 11th/12th century, National Library of Israel collection (Photo courtesy of the National Library of Israel)

MiDRASH has generated the first machine-readable transcriptions for the full Cairo Geniza corpus.

At the recent launch event at the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem, project leaders presented their results to scholars, students and volunteers participating in a four-day “Transcribe-a-thon.”

“The Genizah is not just a Jewish treasure, it is a treasure for the entire world,” said Prof. Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, one of the project’s principal investigators. Calling MiDRASH “the largest humanities initiative the EU currently finances,” he emphasized that automatic transcription across so many languages and scripts “was once considered impossible.”

With the new system, he added, “You can now run a query and have the entire known Geniza immediately in front of you.”

MiDRASH’s transcription pipeline is powered by eScriptorium, an open-source platform for handwriting recognition. Over two years, the team developed advanced models capable of detecting page layout; deciphering semi-cursive and cursive Hebrew hands; See “Cairo” on page 15

Hanukkah online resources

By Reporter staff

A variety of Jewish groups are offering educational and recreational online resources. Below is a sampling of those.

◆ Melton will hold two virtual Hanukkah related talks: “Light, Hope, and Miracles: Hanukkah’s Challenge for Today” on Tuesday, December 16, from 1-2 pm (<https://events.org/events/calendarcourse?tid=3c0351ef-3d01-42d3-956d-24e3085b9736>); and “Miraculous, Military, or Marketing: What Hanukkah Really Means” on Wednesday, December 17, from 7-8 pm (<https://events.org/events/calendarcourse?tid=d943a676-8d97-4ba6-a5fb-7fe974344acd>). There is a sliding scale cost to attend.

◆ Ritualwell will hold the virtual program “Magnify the Light: Hanukkah 5786/2025” Wednesday, December 17, 1-2 pm. The cost to attend is \$18. Mindfulness teacher Rabbi Daniel Raphael Silverstein will help attendees “to meditate, reflect, and learn together, opening space to nurture awareness and deepen our presence through the light of Hanukkah.” For more information or to register, visit <https://ritualwell.org/event/magnify-the-light-a-hanukkah-practice-for-spirit-and-justice>.

◆ The Blue Dove Foundation offers a variety of guides to help with mental health during Hanukkah. They can be found at https://thebluedovefoundation.org/resource_category/hanukkah.

◆ Kveller is offering a free “Guide to Hanukkah.” The 23-page mini magazine includes a latke recipe, the Hanukkah blessings, eight party ideas and new traditions to explore. For more information or to request the guide, visit www.kveller.com/get-kvellers-guide-to-hanukkah.

Sandy

Board, calls it “a courageous act... a challenge to the notorious reserve clause and the owners’ take it or leave it negotiating stance.” It provided a benchmark on the way to player unionization.

Following a few years as a baseball sportscaster, Koufax has led a private life. His seasons as a Dodger minor league and spring training coach were done, at his bequest, without fanfare. Koufax’s rare appearances on the big stage, as when Dodgers dedicated a statue in his honor or had him throw out a ceremonial first pitch, were special and done with class. When Kou-

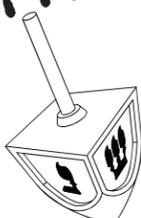
Continued from page 10

fax, trim and fit, appeared at the 2025 Hall of Fame ceremonies, he looked like a contemporary of the decades-younger new inductees. Koufax sat through the 18-inning Game 3 of this year’s World Series. As Los Angeles was running out of pitchers, imagination envisioned the last of The Boys of Summer going out to the bullpen to warm up.

Sandy turns 90 on December 30. From Israel, David Nachenberg speaks for many of us: “May he have a happy birthday, and may he live to (at least) 120 in happiness and health.”

Chanukah Greetings

Happy Chanukah



Arieh Ullmann and Rhonda Levine

Warm Chanukah wishes to you and your family!



Rabbi Barry and Jill Baron

Wishing you a Happy Chanukah
light • peace • love

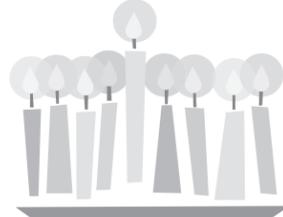


From Jean & Lew Hecht and Family

Happy Chanukah from Linda & Dennis Robi and Family



Warm Chanukah wishes to you and your family!



From Suzanne Holwitt and Family

We wish everyone a happy Chanukah!



Harold & Toby Kohn and Family

Like the Maccabees, we need to light our candle and our world, looking toward the future when this pandemic will be a story we will tell.



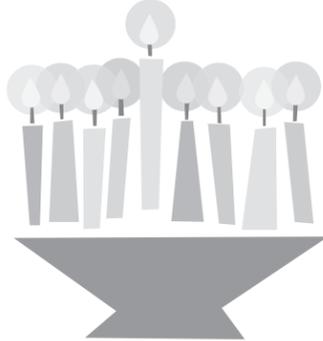
Neil and Sima Auerbach

Wishing you a Happy Chanukah
light • peace • love



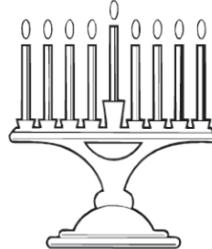
Hon. Hollie S. Levine

Warm Chanukah wishes to you and your family!



Shelley, Mark, Josh & Rae Htbal

איחולים לבניים לחג האורים



Our Best Wishes for a Bright Festival of Lights

Susan & Ben Kasper

Worlds.....Continued from page 4

can also be found in the blood libels against the Yahads, who are thought to kill members of the Ozmini Church for nefarious purposes. This feels ironic because the forest surrounding the Yahad's village is inhabited by a horrific creature who has been killing young Yahad women. The danger is so great that women hide in their homes the minute the sun sets. While the men of the village search for the evil creature doing the killing, they are unable to discover the nature of the creature or stop it.

When members of the government come to the village demanding funds, they refuse to accept the reality that the village is poor now that the forest seems to have turned against the villagers. After one of the government women is found dead, the local Yahad healer is accused of killing her. That healer is the mother of Malka (the maiden of the title), who declares she will deliver the monster who killed the Ozmini woman and save her mother from death. She is given several weeks to search the forest, or her mother's life will be forfeit.

It's difficult to speak of what happens next without giving away too much of the plot, but there is a golem (the monster of the title) in the forest, although the story behind her creation is far more complex than it appears at first. The golem, whose name is Nimrah, agrees to help Malka – which means forfeiting her own life to save Malka's mother – on the condition that they must first save the man who created her: the Maharal, a rabbi who has been illegally jailed in the kingdom's capital. Making their task more difficult is that the two women have very different feelings about Kefesh, Jewish magic. Malka was taught that its use is forbidden because it is dangerous. The Maharal and Nimrah, on the other hand, believe that one can use the magic for good, including healing those who are ill.

The plot of the novel is complex, but satisfying. What was of particular interest is the large role religion plays in the work, including the discussion of the role of magic in the world. The Maharal tells Malka that magic is already a part of her, one included in her "belief in God. You nurture it every time you close your eyes to pray, when you kiss your hand and raise it to the *mezuzah*, when you strike the match and light candles for the Sabbath. We do not do these things to please Yoev [their name for God] as we would a king, or to meet certain expectations as we would a child looking to appease their parents. We do them to strengthen ourselves, to give order in the chaos."

The writing in "The Maiden and Her Monster" is dense and detailed. The novel's pacing is well done and its ending – the last 30 pages or so – were particularly exciting. While not containing as many gruesome sections as "The Lure of Their Graves," it does have its share of gore. While slightly less satisfying than Samotin's work, it does have its charms, particularly for those who enjoy the idea of powerful, female golem.

"Beinoni"

Mari Lowe offers a work for younger readers, "Beinoni"

(Levine Querido), which, like her previous non-fantasy novels,* offers interesting questions for readers of all ages to debate. Lowe has created a world much like our own with one great exception: A Nivchar – a boy or girl who is identified at birth by a sign on their skin – must fight a fiery beast of unknown form (it's different each time) in order to create what is known as Beinoni time. During Beinoni times, there is no crime, war or other forms of violence.

This creates a great deal of pressure on Ezra: not only must he prepare for his upcoming bar mitzvah, but train to fight the beast on the day he turns 13. It's not that he hasn't been preparing for this moment, but he's still nervous. The Sanhedrin, of which his father is a member, is depending on Ezra to win. However, to complicate matters, some strange things are happening: Ezra is suddenly no longer doing well in school. Wars are beginning to break out and other strange events are happening. Even worse, there is a group trying to kidnap him, although he has no idea whom they are or why they might not want him to succeed.

In "Beinoni," Ezra ponders the question of whether people can truly be considered good if they don't have the choice of being evil. He also must decide whether the monster he faces is truly evil and thus someone or something he should destroy. The plot is well done and has some great twists and turns. Judaism plays a major role in the story and the book includes a glossary of Jewish terms for those unfamiliar with them. However, it is the idea of Beinoni time that will intrigue readers and allow for debates at book clubs for teens and adults.

*The Reporter's reviews of Lowe's first two novels can be found www.thereportergroup.org/book-reviews/off-the-shelf-romance-fantasy-or-a-combination-of-the-two-part-two and www.thereportergroup.org/features/off-the-shelf-great-gifts-for-hanukkah-books-for-tweensteens-453229.

"The Magic Maker"

Is being a *kishuf macher* – a Jewish magician – a positive or negative thing since, according to some sources, Judaism forbids the use of magic and sorcery? Fortunately Rabbi Meir Poppers, the hero of Mickey Dubrow's novel, "The Magic Maker" (Brother Mockingbird), who is a professional *kishuf macher*, belongs to a group of Jews who use magic to help those in need. Meir is approached by Esther Luna, who works at the Tenement Museum in New York City, because she saw something impossible: a young woman waved to her from one of the windows in the museum. However, according to the museum's records, that apartment has been empty for a century. Almost no one believes her, but Meir travels to New York City to discover what really occurred.

Readers learn that Esther and Meir are correct: alternate chapters of the novel portray what occurred during a Passover seder in 1917, when Baruch Rosenfeld invited a beggar to share his family's meal. His good deed backfires: the beggar is also a *kishuf macher* who condemns the family to live in a time bubble. Baruch, his wife Rebekah and their children, Nathan, Jacob and Sadie are not only unable to leave their three-room apartment, but don't age. As Meir and Esther discover, the Rosenfeld family seemed to just disappear one night. It's now up to Meir to help them, but other forces, including another Jewish sect of magicians, are working against him.

Dubrow does a good job placing Meir's profession in context (for example, rabbis in the Talmud are said to have performed magic) and creating an interesting plot and characters. The ending of the work is extremely moving: it left me in tears. Meir also has an excellent perspective on his work, noting that a magician "wasn't an athlete or superhero. When he or she performed Jewish magic, his or her goal was not to win or lose. [Their] only goal was to relieve someone's suffering. The same goal of all Jews. The same goal of all humanity."

"The Book of Lost Hours"

Every fantasy novel offers different fantasy elements. Some take place in our world, but also contain a separate dimension for their characters to inhabit. In the case of "The Book of Lost Hours" by Hayley Gelfuso (Atria Books), which opens in 1938 Germany and then moves to the United States in 1965, our normal, everyday world does exist. However, there is also another dimension of which only a few are aware: a dimension known as time space where memories are stored and where, in the wrong hands, they can be destroyed.

The only Jewish element of the book is what sets the action in motion. Readers familiar with 1938 Germany will know something of which 11-year-old Lisavet Levy is unaware: the night the novel opens on is Kristallnacht, a pogrom led by the Nazis that, in many ways, was the beginning of the Holocaust. Lisavet's father gets her to safety by means of a watch that opens the time space dimension, a place where she will be safe, although the rest of her family is unable to join her. Unfortunately, without her own watch, Lisavet is unable to return to what she thinks of as the real world.

The novel moves forward in time and focuses on two characters: 16-year-old Amelia Duquesne, who is mourning her Uncle Ernest, who has been called a Soviet spy. She is approached by a CIA agent who is looking for the watch Amelia's uncle gave her, which can access the time space dimension. The CIA is worried not only about Soviet spies, but those who enter the time space dimension to erase memories, thereby changing history. Of course, nothing is exactly what it seems and Amelia must navigate dangers that threaten her life and the world.

Although this summary makes it sound as if Gelfuso's main emphasis is on plot, this moving work features interesting characters and moral dilemmas over which to puzzle. What stands out is the beautiful writing. Even when the action slows in the middle of the book, the prose and characters will make readers continue to turn its pages. Ultimately, the novel focuses on what these characters will do to protect those they love. What that means will surprise readers. Book club members may also want to discuss how changing one's thoughts about the past can affect the future they create.

Yum.....Continued from page 7

missed it. Unfortunately, it has appeared again. I thought at first it might have just used dill to create the dill pickle taste, but closer examination shows that it includes pickle juice in its dough. Now, I love pickles, although, because I am supposed to watch my sodium, I don't eat them as regularly as I used to. (I like them so much I have been known to ask people if they are going to eat the pickle that came with their sandwich and, if not, would they please give it me.) Perhaps I am prejudiced because I once tried dill-pickle potato chips and rather than enjoying them, I found them... can you guess? Yes, they were disgusting!

I know I eat all kinds of food that others think of as disgusting. My friend was also not impressed with my love of pickled herring (hey, I hear those choruses of "barf" out there!), but I grew up with various kinds of herring and see them as a treat. They are also a very easy way to get protein: instead of cooking, I just open the jar. Even if I didn't already like them, that now adds to their charm.

"Yum or barf" would actually make an interesting game. You could make up food cards and go through them with friends. Hmm, this might also be an interesting topic for a first date. So many of the foods we love say something about our family of origin; knowing something about that food could be a good way to get to know each other.

Happy Chanukah!
Jewish Family Service
A Committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton
Merryl Wallach
She/her, Director

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Cornell graduate union says Palestinians have right to resist “by any means necessary”

By Aaron Bandler

(JNS)—Cornell Graduate Student Workers United, the union affiliate of United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America on the Cornell University campus, said on November 26 that its members voted to endorse a boycott of Israel.

“Standing with the strength of Palestinians resisting a genocide, and their unequivocal human right to resist oppression by any means necessary, workers around the world are building power through the belief that we free Palestine, and Palestine

frees us,” the union stated.

Some 72.2 percent of the union members who cast a vote were in favor of the measure, and 27.8 percent were opposed, according to an e-mail to union members that JNS viewed. The union told its members in an email, obtained by JNS, that 72.22 percent of its members voted for the referendum and 27.77 percent voted against it. (JNS sought comment from the union.)

The measure accuses Cornell of being “implicated in the Israeli genocide of Palestinians through research, recruitment and

financial ties with the weapons industry and endowment investments.”

The resolution “explicitly echoes Hamas’ rhetoric used to justify the atrocities of Oct. 7” and “fosters a hostile environment for Jewish and Israeli students,” David Rubinstein, a doctoral student at Cornell who testified on the subject before the House Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions in September, told JNS.

It is “beyond time” for the university to hold the union “accountable and stop

ignoring its calls for violence,” he told JNS. “If the university abdicates responsibility for its civil rights obligations, it must face consequences.”

A Cornell spokesman told JNS that the resolution from the union, which is a separate entity, doesn’t reflect the views of the private Ithaca, NY, school. “Cornell’s leadership firmly denounces antisemitism and has repeatedly affirmed the university’s dedication to ensuring the safety and well-being of all students,” the spokesman said.

Israel wins at World Kickboxing Championships

By David Wiseman

(JNS) – Israel returned from the 2025 WAKO World Kickboxing Championships in Abu Dhabi at the end of November with

seven medals – one gold, two silver and four bronze – following a standout showing at one of the largest global events in the sport.

The championship, held from November

21-30 at the ADNEC Arena, featured more than 2,000 athletes from more than 85 countries, making Israel’s medal haul particularly significant in an intensely competitive field.

Gold medalist Yulia Sachkov, 26, credited Israel’s success to mental toughness and discipline. “Israeli fighters grow up with a strong fighting spirit, resilience and the ability to stay focused under pressure,” Sachkov told JNS. “We combine discipline, smart training and a lot of heart.

“We have determination, creativity and a deep passion for the sport. Our athletes and coaches are fully committed, and we push each other to the highest level. That’s what makes us stand out,” she said.

Sachkov’s tournament included a brief controversy after her Egyptian opponent did not appear for their scheduled quarterfinal bout. She advanced and went on to defeat Ukraine’s Daryna Ivanova in the semifinals and the Czech Republic’s Klára Strnadová in the final to secure the gold.

Strnadová had been Sachkov’s opponent in the World Games final earlier this year. With that rivalry continuing, Sachkov said her focus is already on the future. “My



Israel’s Yulia Sachkov won the gold at the 2025 World Kickboxing Championships on November 28. (Photo courtesy of the Israel Kickboxing Federation)

main focus now is the 2029 World Games in Germany,” she said. “After winning the gold medal at the 2025 World Games in China, my goal is to repeat that success and bring home another gold in Germany.”

Sachkov earlier added a European championship title in 2025, capping what is widely being seen as one of the strongest individual years by any Israeli athlete.

Silver medals were won by Osid Judah and Yosef Aivazli, while Polina Grossman, Guy Hagag, Rana Matanes and Osid Khatib captured bronze.

The Israeli delegation reflected a broad cross-section of the country’s society, with Jewish and Arab athletes competing together under the national flag.

For Sachkov, the sport’s momentum in Israel is only growing. “Kids see us as inspiration, and that motivates them to join, train and dream bigger,” she said. “That contributes so much to the future of Israeli sports.”

Israel Kickboxing Federation President Hani Sakas praised the athletes and coaching staff for their year-round commitment. “I am happy that we were able to bring so much pride to the state of Israel,” Sakas said.

Jewish online resources

By Reporter staff

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

◆ Roundtable will hold the virtual course “Jews and the Crisis of Modernity” with Trudy Gold on Wednesdays, January 28-February 18, from 10-11:15 am. The cost to attend is \$200. “Gold will explore the major trends that shaped Jewish history in the modern world, from Ghetto to emancipation and the redefining of Jewish identity.” For more information or to register, visit <https://roundtable.org/live-courses/history/jews-and-the-crisis-of-modernity-with-trudy-gold>.

◆ The Qesher Book Club will hold two virtual events: “Dog” by Yishay Ishi Ron on Tuesday, December 23, at 3 pm (www.qesher.com/bookclub-dog/); and “Tasting Faith: Jews of India – Unveiling Stories, Sharing Recipes, and Preserving their Vibrant Legacy” by Paushali Lass on Tuesday, January 20, at 3 pm (www.qesher.com/tasting-faith).

◆ The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute will hold two virtual talks in January: Edith Pick, Ph.D., will speak on “Mothers and Nation: Maternal Politics in Israel and the Jewish Diaspora” on Monday, January 26, at 1pm (<https://brandeis.zoom.us/j/9821212121>); and the Sandra Seltzer Silberman HBI Conversations Series will feature Rabbi Jane Kanarek, Ph.D. speaking on “Beyond Brutality, Reclaiming Female Presence in Bavli Sotah” on Thursday, January 29, at 12:30 pm (<https://brandeis.zoom.us/j/9821212121>).

◆ Roundtable will hold the virtual course “Allen Ginsberg, Poetry, Buddhism and Judaism” on Thursdays, January 15-29,

from 1-2 pm. The cost to attend is \$138. The class will “examine the ways in which these traditions manifested in this very American poet’s extraordinary life and work.” For more information or to register, visit <https://roundtable.org/live-courses/literature/allen-ginsberg-poetry-buddhism-and-judaism>.

◆ Melton will hold the virtual program “New Year’s Resolutions: Sacred Intentions or Broken Vows?” on Monday, December 29, from 7-8 pm. There is a sliding scale cost to attend. Rabbi Neil Fleischmann will lead “a reflective and practical exploration of how resolutions – when rooted in honesty and humility – can help us grow without overreaching.” For more information or to register, visit <https://events.org/events/calendarcourse?tid=48b32d74-d413-4dc5-a449-7891b2d23f26>.

◆ Ritualwell will hold the virtual “The 10 Rules of Writing With Etgar Keret” on Sunday, January 11, from 1-2:30 pm. The cost to attend is \$54. In the talk, “Keret will explore how to nurture creativity, embrace imperfection, and find your truest voice on the page.” For more information or to register, visit <https://ritualwell.org/event/the-10-rules-of-writing-with-etgar-keret/>

◆ My Jewish Learning will hold the virtual event “A Brief but Spectacular History of Jewish Comedy” on Wednesday, December 17, at 7 pm. The cost to attend is \$17.85. David Misch (“Mork and Mindy,” “Saturday Night Live,” “The Muppets Take Manhattan”) will look at the relationship between comedy and Jews. For more information or to register, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-brief-but-spectacular-history-of-jewish-comedy-tickets-1975823357851>.

For additional resources, see previous issues of *The Reporter* on its website, www.thereporter.org/jewish-online-resources.

Happy Chanukah

from

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Suzanne Holwitt, President

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Weekly Parasha

Vayeshev, Genesis 37:1-40:23

The impact of one caring question

RABBI ZALMAN CHEIN, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND RITUAL, CHABAD OF BINGHAMTON

This week's Torah portion, Vayeshev, opens the profound narrative of Joseph: his dreams, the tension they create within his family and his eventual sale into slavery that brings him to Egypt. Though separated from his home and faced with hardship, the Torah emphasizes that Hashem remains with Joseph, granting him success in the house of Potiphar. Joseph's integrity and capability bring blessing to the entire household.

This success, however, leads to a severe test. Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce Joseph and, when he refuses on moral and spiritual grounds, she falsely accuses him. Joseph is imprisoned, seemingly falling yet again from the destiny hinted at in his dreams.

Nevertheless, even in prison, Divine providence continues to accompany him. Joseph earns the trust of

the warden and is granted a position of authority among the prisoners. It is in this setting that the Torah records a moment that appears simple yet proves decisive: Joseph observed the distress of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker and asked them, "Why are your faces downcast today?" (Genesis 40:7)

This brief question becomes the turning point in Joseph's life, the future of Egypt, the surrounding world and of the Jewish people. Joseph was under no obligation to inquire; he could have remained focused on his own struggles. Yet he chose to notice another's pain. This act of empathy led to his interpreting their dreams, which in turn led to his introduction to Pharaoh, his rise to power and the eventual salvation of Egypt from famine.

The Torah highlights this moment to teach a profound lesson: small acts of genuine concern can carry extraordinary consequences. Joseph's simple question did not merely comfort two troubled prisoners; it set in motion events that shaped history.

For us, the message is clear. While we may not face Joseph's challenges, we, too, can choose to notice others, to show concern for family, friends and neighbors. A thoughtful question, a kind gesture or a moment of attention can profoundly impact another person's life.

As we reflect on Joseph's example, may we strive to bring more compassion and positivity into our surroundings. Through these efforts, may we merit to witness a world filled with goodness and peace, with the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days.

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, December 13, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Genesis 37:1-11 and the haftarah is Amos 2:6-3:8. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 5:30 pm.

On Saturday, December 20, Shacharit services will be held at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person. The Torah portion is Genesis 41:1-44:17 and the haftarah is Zechariah 2:14-4:7. A Zoom Havdalah service will take place at 5:30 pm.

Upcoming events:

There will be a Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, December 16, at 7 pm.

The "Torah and Our Times" class will be held on Tuesday, December 16, at 4:30 pm.

The Hebrew School Hanukkah Family Celebration will take place on Wednesday, December 17, from 4-6 pm.

The temple office closed will be closed Wednesday-Friday, December 24-26.

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.

Congregation Tikkun v'Or

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Address: PO Box 3981, Ithaca, NY 14852; 2550 Triphammer Rd. (corner of Triphammer and Burdick Hill), Lansing, NY
Phone: 607-256-1471
Website: www.tikkunvor.org, E-mail: info@tikkunvor.org
Presidents: Martha Armstrong and Mitch Grossman, presidents_22@tikkunvor.org
Education Director/Admin. Coordinator: Naomi Wilensky
Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator: Michael Margolin
Services: All services currently on Zoom. E-mail info@tikkunvor.org for the times and links. Contemplative morning services every Tuesday from 8:30-9:30 am. Saturday mornings, Gan Shabbat and other special services at least once a month. Call for the weekly schedule. Jewish Learning Experiences (JLE) for second through seventh grade classes meet on Sunday mornings. Sixth and seventh grades also meet on Wednesday afternoons. Family programs for kindergarten and first grade held monthly. Adult Education: Offered regularly throughout the year. Check the website for details.

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.

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.

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.

Temple Brith Sholom

Affiliation: Unaffiliated
Address: P.O. Box 572, 117 Madison St., Cortland, NY 13045
Phone: 607-756-7181
President: Mark Suben
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.

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, December 12: At 7:30 pm, Friday Shabbat services are in person, on Zoom and Facebook.

Saturdays, December 13 and 20: 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, December 17 and 24: At 5:30 pm, evening prayers in person only. At 6 pm, adult education class in person and on Zoom.

Friday, December 19: At 6 pm, Hanukkah Shabbat potluck (in person only) with Shabbat candle lighting and a few Shabbat prayers. Those attending are asked to sign up at www.signupgenius.com/go/4090949ABA-92CA0F94-60617289-hanukkah.

Upcoming events:

The Judaica Shop is open from 10 am-2 pm Tuesday through Friday, or by appointment, in the Temple Concord library. The shop is closed on Saturdays. For more information, contact Temple Concord at 607-723-7355.

Bobbie King's largest dollhouse has been restored and is currently featured at the Roberson Museum.

Tuesday, December 16: At 7 pm, there will be a Social Action Committee meeting. For details, contact the temple office or committee Co-Chairwomen Phyllis Weinstein or Debra Saltzman for details.

Temple Beth-El of Ithaca

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rabbi: Caleb Brommer
Address: 402 North Tioga St. (the corner of Court and Tioga streets), Ithaca, NY 14850-4292
Phone: 607-273-5775
Website: www.tbeithaca.org
Presidents: Jerry Dietz and Ariel Avgar
Director of Education and Engagement: Calle Schueler
Services: Friday 6:30 pm; Saturday 9:30 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 Sundays from 9 am-noon and Wednesdays from 4-6 pm. Teen Midrasha meets Tuesdays from 6-8 pm.
Adult Ed.: Numerous weekly courses, several semester-long courses and a variety of lectures are offered throughout the year. Call the temple office or email secretary@tbeithaca.org for more information.

Norwich Jewish Center

Orientation: Inclusive
Address: 72 South Broad St., Norwich, NY 13815
Phone: 334-2691
E-mail: fertigj@roadrunner.com
Contact: Guilia Greenberg, 373-5087
Purpose: To maintain a Jewish identity and meet the needs of the Jewish community in the area.
Adult Ed.: Call ahead, text or e-mail to confirm dates.

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.



Friday, December 12, light candles before..... 4:14 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, December 13 5:14 pm
Friday, December 19, light candles before..... 4:16 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, December 20 5:17 pm
Friday, December 26, light candles before..... 4:20 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, December 27 5:21 pm
Friday, January 2, light candles before..... 4:25 pm
Shabbat ends Saturday, January 3 5:27 pm

Survey: War spurs religious, political shift among young Israelis

By JNS staff

(JNS) – Israel’s war has significantly strengthened religious observance and conservative political views among young Israelis, according to a new survey by the Jewish People Policy Institute.

The study found 33 percent of Jewish Israelis ages 25 and under report observing more religious traditions since the war began, compared to 27 percent of the general Jewish population. Among young Jews who identify as “traditional, somewhat religious,” 51 percent said they’ve increased religious practices.

Prayer has risen most notably, with 38 percent of Jewish youth reporting they pray more frequently. Other increases include Bible reading (26 percent), synagogue attendance (14 percent) and Shabbat candle lighting (14 percent). Faith has also strengthened, with 35 percent of young Jews saying they believe in God more than before the war, compared to 28 percent of Jewish adults overall.

Politically, the war has pushed Israelis rightward. The share of Jews identifying as “hard right” jumped from 11 percent to 19 percent, while those identifying as “right” increased from 24 percent to 28 percent. The shift spans the political spectrum, with even half of self-identified leftists reporting a rightward move.

The JPPI survey found an opposite pattern among secular Jews compared to the general trend in Jewish Israeli society. While many young and traditional Jews reported increased religious observance and belief since the war, secular Jews actually showed a decline in both religious practices and faith.

The survey also included Israel’s Arab population and found notable, though somewhat less pronounced, increases in religious practice since the outbreak of the war. About 23 percent of Arab respondents reported strengthenings in their observance of traditional customs during the conflict. Specific increases were recorded in prayer (32 percent), more modest dress (12 percent) and participation in religious services at churches or mosques (10 percent), while 37 percent of Arabs reported a strengthened faith in God

–higher than the increase seen among Jewish respondents.

JPPI CEO Shuki Friedman noted it remains unclear whether these changes represent a temporary wartime phenomenon or a lasting transformation.

“The data reflects what we sensed on the ground: many in Israel – especially among the young – feel that the war has connected them more deeply to tradition and to Jewish identity. Not necessarily in a halachic way, but in ways that are more salient in their lives and across the public sphere,” said Friedman.

“Israel after the war is more traditional and more right-leaning. At this stage, it is impossible to know whether this is a passing trend, or a deeper and longer-term change,” he added.

IDF launches family support program

By JNS staff

(JNS) – The Israel Defense Forces has launched a new support program for the spouses and families of career combat officers, the military said on November 17.

Led by IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir’s wife, Orna Zamir, and developed with the IDF’s Warrior Family and Permanent Family centers, the initiative aims to strengthen families’ emotional, social and financial resilience. The program offers counseling, childcare assistance, training and employment opportunities, and community-building activities for spouses of officers from major through brigadier general. According to Zamir, the effort recognizes that “the mission is not only for those in uniform” and seeks to support those who bear the burden of maintaining stability at home.

The IDF said the project, run jointly by the Manpower and Technology and Logistics directorates, is designed to reinforce family and national resilience while maintaining operational readiness.



Ultra-Orthodox Jewish soldiers from the Hasmonean Brigade took part in a beret march, after completing seven months of basic and advanced training, at the Western Wall in Jerusalem’s Old city on August 6. (Photo by Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

Jewish Community Center

JCC Friendship Club

The JCC Friendship Club met on November 19. The meeting was a joint program with Merryll Wallach who is the director of Jewish Family Services. She introduced Amanda L. Giannone, who is a lawyer with Levine Gouldin and Thompson, LLP.

Amanda impressed us with the need for planning to keep your assets if you need long-term care. She explained what Medicaid is and who is eligible. She told us what assets are exempt and those that are not. She continued to explain about the meaning of a “Lifetime Estate” and an “Irrevocable Lifetime Trust.” It made me realize how important it is to plan for the end of life, especially if you have assets.

Sylvia Diamond, President

Cairo Continued from page 11

reading Judeo-Arabic; and producing text accurate enough for full corpus search.

The principal investigators include Prof. Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra (École Pratique des Hautes Études; Dr. Avi Shmidman (Bar-Ilan University/ DICTA); Prof. Nachum Dershowitz (Tel Aviv University) and Prof. Judith Olszowy-Schlanger (Oxford University). Partners include the Elijah Lab at the University of Haifa and the Princeton Geniza Project.

During the launch, Shmidman demonstrated how a single liturgical phrase can now be traced across hundreds of fragments. “Suddenly, you can ask: Where else does this occur? When? In what context?” he told JNS. “For the first time, we can track phenomena across centuries and build much stronger cases. This completely changes the scholarship.”

Dr. Tsafra Siew, manager of Research Oriented Projects? at the NLI, called the development “a game-changer for anyone working with medieval Hebrew manuscripts,” noting that automatic transcription will help scholars identify scribes, map textual transmission and uncover patterns previously impossible to detect.

Asked which material posed the greatest challenge, Dershowitz didn’t hesitate: “Cursive.”



Avi Shmidman, Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra and Nachum Dershowitz, principal investigators of the MiDRASH project, at the National Library of Israel on November 24 (Photo by Sharon Altshul)

The launch opened four days of Transcribe-a-thon activity, which ran November 24-27 online and in person. Volunteers reviewed and corrected machine-generated transcriptions, feeding improvements back into the system to strengthen future accuracy. Once finalized, the corrected texts will be integrated into KTIV, providing global access to the Geniza’s “breathtaking historical breadth” – from the mundane to the mystical.

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JNF creates accessible trails across Israel

By JNS staff

(JNS) – The Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) recently invited persons with disabilities to four accessible hiking trails ahead of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The first is the accessible trail at Givat HaMoreh in the Jezreel Valley in northern Israel. The route is circular and runs about 0.8 miles, with open views toward the Jezreel Valley, Mount Gilboa and Mount Tabor.

The second is Jordan Park, located north of the Sea of Galilee. The Park is a “paradise of water, vegetation and charming hideaways, most of which are remarkably accessible,” with the aqueduct, the pool and the watermill its main attractions, the KKL-JNF said.

The Martyrs’ Forest on the western outskirts of Jerusalem was offered as the third choice for an accessible trail, which boasts what has been called one of the most moving monuments in Israel: the Scroll of Fire, a bronze sculpture created by artist and Holocaust survivor Nathan Rapaport, rising around 26 feet high and weighing over 12 tons. Inaugurated in

1971, it commemorates Jewish history from the Holocaust until the independence of the state in 1948.

Adamit Park and Me’arat HaKeshet (the Arch Cave) in the Western Galilee offers another accessible trail of about 0.3 miles. The Arch Cave, situated at the end of the trail, is an impressive natural phenomenon that requires no climbing or significant effort. The trail moreover offers breathtaking views of the Mediterranean Sea and the Eastern Galilee.

“KKL-JNF continuously develops accessibility solutions, including pleasant, shaded walking paths and adapted seating areas and lookouts, and even unique bicycle trails for handcycles and tandem bikes. All of this stems from a deep belief that the right to enjoy nature is essential for every person, without exception,” said in a statement Meirav Davidian, KKL-JNF’s national accessibility coordinator.

The organization’s accessible trails were designed for visitors with disabilities, families with strollers and anyone seeking a comfortable and enjoyable walk through Israel’s landscapes.



At left: A view of the Givat HaMoreh Forest, an isolated mountain ridge that looks down on the Jezreel Valley in northern Israel. (Photo by Noa Tal/KKL-JNF)

OilContinued from page 8

◆ Substitute seasoned breadcrumbs or matzah meal for panko.

- 1 lb. smelts (about 8-10)
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 Tbsp. panko breadcrumbs
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- Preheat oven to 400°F.
- Spray a baking sheet with nonstick baking spray.

Rinse the smelts in cold water and pat dry. Set aside.

In a Ziploc bag, place the remaining ingredients. Add the smelts and shake to dredge the fish, covering all over.

Arrange on the prepared baking sheet. Spray with an olive-oil baking spray.

Bake in preheated oven for 20 minutes or until nicely brown. Turn and bake 10 minutes longer.

Arrange on a platter and serve hot with lemon wedges.



Fried smelts (Photo by Ethel G. Hofman)

Gefilte Fish Croquettes (pareve)

Makes 4-6 servings

Cook's tips:

◆ Perfect for any leftover cooked fish such as salmon, haddock or cod.

◆ Freezes well.

- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil, plus more for frying
- ½ medium onion, finely chopped
- 4 cups cooked flaked fish
- ½ cup mashed potatoes
- 3 Tbsp. ground almonds (optional)
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ½ to ¾ cup matzah meal
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper

In a large skillet, heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium heat. Add the onion. Cook until softened and lightly browned, for 3-4 minutes. Scrape into a mixing bowl.

Add the fish, mashed potatoes, almonds, eggs, half-cup matzah meal, salt and pepper. Mix well. The mixture should be firm enough to shape. If needed, add a little extra matzah meal.

Using an ice-cream scoop, form the mixture into balls and flatten them slightly. Chill in the fridge while heating oil.

In a large deep saucepan or deep fryer, heat about 1½ inches of oil over medium-high heat to 350°F. Gently slide croquettes into hot oil. Fry, turning, until browned all over. If browning too fast, reduce heat to medium. Drain on paper towels. Serve hot or cold.

Sufganiyot (dairy)

Makes 15-18

Cook's tips:

◆ To make pareve, use a nondairy milk such as oat milk.

◆ To sour milk, add 2 teaspoons of white



Sufganiyot (Photo by Ri_Ya/Pixabay)

vinegar to 1 cup of milk. Let stand at room temperature for 10 minutes. Do not stir.

- 3 Tbsp. butter, softened
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1 cup buttermilk or sour milk
- 3 Tbsp. preserves or Nutella
- Favorite oil for frying
- Confectioners' sugar

In a medium bowl or food processor, rub or process the butter into the flour and sugar to resemble coarse breadcrumbs. If in processor, transfer to a bowl.

Stir in the baking powder. Make a well in the center. Mix in enough buttermilk to make a soft dough.

With floured hands, roll a heaping tablespoon dough into a ball about 1½ inches in diameter.

Using the handle of a wooden spoon dipped in flour make an indentation large enough to hold ½ teaspoon preserves. Work dough around to seal preserves completely. Refrigerate while the oil is heating.

In a large deep saucepan or deep fryer, heat about 1½ inches of oil to 350°F. Gently slide dough balls into hot oil in batches, without crowding. Cook over medium heat, turning often until crisp and brown, about 4 minutes.

Drain on paper towels. Toss in confectioners' sugar and serve hot.

Mint Chocolate Coins (dairy)

Makes 18-20

Cook's tip: Turn off the oven for the last 2 minutes of baking time. Cookies will continue to bake with residual heat.

⅓ cup butter at room temperature

½ cup sugar

1 tsp. vanilla extract

1 egg

1 cup all-purpose flour

⅓ cup unsweetened cocoa powder

9-10 chocolate peppermint wafers, each cut in half

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Spray a cookie sheet with nonstick cooking spray.

Beat the butter, sugar and vanilla until fluffy. Add the egg and about ½ cup of the flour and mix.

Add the remaining flour and cocoa. Mix well to make a stiff dough. No white streaks should remain. If the mixture is too soft, add a little more flour. Lightly flour a board.

Roll the dough into a 10-inch log. Cut into half-inch thick slices and place on the prepared cookie sheet.

Bake in preheated 350°F oven for 12 minutes. Remove from oven.

Place a piece of peppermint wafer onto each cookie. Return to the oven and bake for two minutes more.

Gently press the melted mint wafers into the cookies. Cool on a wire rack.

Ethel G. Hofman is a syndicated American Jewish food and travel columnist, author and culinary consultant.



Mint Chocolate Coins (Photo by Ethel G. Hofman)

Annual Campaign 2026

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- 3) Fill out the form in this ad and mail it to the Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton, 500 Clubhouse Rd., Vestal, NY 13850.

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Vestal, NY 13850

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