

» Chag Shavuot Sameach!

# Jewish Observer

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

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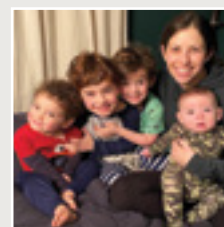
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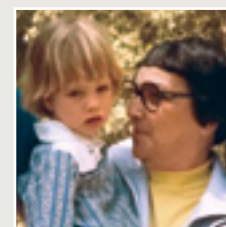
### CELEBRATING MOTHERS



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# May 2021

## From the Editor



Barbara Davis

The coincidence of *Shavuot* and Mothers Day during the month of May made the selection of a theme for this month's issue of the *Jewish Observer* an easy choice. We read the *Book of Ruth* at *Shavuot*, and there are few daughters more

devoted to their mothers than Ruth was to her mother-in-law Naomi, to whom she declared, "whither you go, I will go, wherever you lodge, I will lodge, your people will be my people, and your God will be my God." Ruth's acceptance of the Jewish faith is the reason that *Shavuot* is also the holiday at which we celebrate conversion and those who choose to be Jewish. Finally, Ruth's coming to Israel took place around the time of *Shavuot*, and her acceptance of the Jewish faith is seen as analogous to the acceptance by the Jewish people of God's Torah.

This issue of the *JO* is filled with articles particularly pertinent to these two holidays. A recent ruling on conversion in Israel heads our Jewish News from Around the World, with comments from our local rabbis about the Israeli court decision. We are proud to present Sarah Cumbie Reckess' story, "Sitting Shiva for Ruth," which appeared in the recently published book *Choosing Judaism*. Juxtaposed with it, in our People of the Book section, is a review by Jackie Miron of *Send for Me*, another recently published work that deals with mother/daughter relationships. Our cover and our pages are filled with lovely pictures of mothers and children, generously shared by community members. Our cover story, about mothers and children in special configurations, is complemented by a lovely article by the children of the Temple Concord Religious School about what makes their mothers special.

And while we all know that home cooking and baking in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not the sole province of mothers, mothers are traditionally the ones who prepare challah in a Jewish home for Shabbat. That is why a group of wonderful Jewish women have put together a fantastic communal challah bake – 'Cuse Challah Club – to which everyone – men, women and teens – are invited. Scheduled for May 27<sup>th</sup>, it will focus on braiding techniques. This is a first, and we are sure it won't be the last program of its type, as we learn that there are definite advantages to being able to meet on Zoom. We continue our short series about Jews and Coffee on our *B'tay Avon* page, along with our regular Jewish Cook of the Month column, and Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas features another local Jewish cook.

Finally, *Shavuot* is a holiday we are encouraged to experience by embracing *mitzvot* in our own lives. The *JO* is pleased to report on the many incidences of good deeds being done in our community by individuals, groups and the Federation itself. As we all enjoy the flowers and first fruits with which *Shavuot* is associated, and as we pray for the cessation of the coronavirus pandemic, we are also thankful for those good people who let Jewish values, as given to us at Mt. Sinai on *Shavuot*, be a guide to living a life of caring and compassion for others.

*Chag Shavuot Sameach* to all *JO* readers!

## D'var Torah Our Sinai Moment

by Rabbi Daniel Fellman

*Shavuot* remains among the least understood of all Jewish holidays. Coming at the end of the school year and the beginning of summer, *Shavuot* suffers from a case of challenging timing: too many of us have shifted our focus to summer and other subjects by the time *Shavuot* arrives each year.

The events celebrated on *Shavuot* deserve more from all of us. *Shavuot* marks the moment when we united as a people. Our ancestors emerged from Egypt battered and beaten, but bound for something better. By the time they reached Mount Sinai, the Israelites found themselves ready for a new world, ready for a new sense of self, ready to commit to each other and to the Almighty.

Moses, the great leader, our rabbi, ascended the mountain alone, filled with the hopes and dreams of every Jew, whether they were physically at Sinai or not. Moses knew not what to expect, knew not what was coming. Our ancestors, waiting together at the base of the mountain, knew only that their world would be fundamentally different, that they would emerge changed, that if all worked well, they would leave from Sinai more connected, more committed, more capable of being in covenant with God and with each other.

Moses returned to the people, sharing the gift of Torah with the Israelites. Beginning a trend that continues to this day, our ancestors began studying, questioning, wrestling and learning with each other. They recognized that while differences were important, a sense of unity, a sense of *achdut*, provided the best possible path forward.

As we emerge from the COVID pandemic, we find ourselves in a similar situation. Like the Israelites, we have traveled through a difficult and painful experience, seeing too much suffering by too many people.

Like our ancestors, we recognize that at this moment of the beginning of a new life, while we have been separated physically, we have grown in connection, grown in relationship with each other, grown in our care and concern for each other.

We will disagree on paths forward, we will disagree on the particulars of how we come together, and we will disagree on the lessons learned from the pandemic. But if, like our ancestors of old, we emerge with a stronger sense of unity and connection, then our Sinai moment will be indescribably beautiful, important and holy.

*Shavuot* offers a new gift of freedom and understanding this year. As we prepare to enter a new world, having survived the challenges of COVID and all that it entailed, *Shavuot* offers a powerful path: join together, recognize our covenants and connections, listen to each other as we all seek understanding and nurture the bonds which unite us as a people.



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## From the Federation Campaign 2021 Chair

Debbie Rosenbaum

# Shavuot Reflections



**The Jewish people are used to being disconnected. Those of us who live outside of Israel are considered to be living in a diaspora, defined as a large group of people with a similar heritage or homeland who have since moved out to places all over the world.**

But we never expected to be as disconnected as we are with COVID-19. Even within our own community, our synagogues are mostly virtual, our meetings cancelled, our celebrations postponed and our holidays and milestone events celebrated through livestreaming.

And yet, we have remained in touch. Our traditions continue to be a source of strength and inspiration, even as we celebrate brisces and *b'nai mitzvah*, seders and study sessions on screens. We held Super Sunday virtually this year, and it allowed us to be innovative and creative and interactive and to have lots of fun. Our campaign is moving inexorably toward a successful conclusion.

While we may be apart, we are never disconnected from one another. Federation and its membership have pivoted to programming which can be enjoyed from the comforts of our homes but which is nonetheless relevant, important and meaningful. Whether it is

cooking lessons with chefs Solomonov or Hananel, the upcoming Community Challah Baking extravaganza or serious conversations about diversity in the Jewish community and the dangers of antisemitism in 2021, the Federation has given us opportunities to gather together as a Jewish community in a Jewish context.

In addition to the core financial support Federation provides to our communal agencies and organizations, this year it has provided significant additional funding for PPE for Menorah Park, the JCC and SHDS. Our *Matan b'Seter* food pantry at Menorah Park is a tremendous resource for those who need it and is kept filled by community members, the Federation and the Pomeranz, Shankman and Martin Charitable Foundation. Much of what Federation does is behind the scenes, but we have strong and reliable security protocols to keep our community safe, excellent relationships with local law enforcement and political entities as well as with the interfaith community. Our Young Leadership and Lions of Judah and Pomegranate Society members have undertaken *tzedakah* projects this year, which have been very successful even in the absence of in-person gatherings.

*Shavuot* is a unique among Jewish holidays in having no specific *mitzvot* associated with it. There is no *shofar*, *seder*, *sukkah* or *chanukiya*. Rather, it's the giving of the Torah that we celebrate, which provides the opportunity for us to reflect on the importance of community. Three thousand years ago, the Jewish people gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai to hear the Ten Commandments. Today we may have to gather in our homes to hear those same commandments read on a Zoom screen. But the important thing is that we are connected, not only to one another but to that time three thousand years ago when we were given the Torah.

As we hope and pray for the end of the contemporary plague of COVID, so reminiscent of the plague that occurred millennia ago, let us all reaffirm our commitment to the Jewish people and to Jewish community. We need one another.

*Shavuot shalom!!* May your holiday be filled with flowers and fruit, cheesecake and blintzes, happiness and good health.



## ABECEDARIUM of FEDERATION SUPPORT

Each month, the *Observer* will highlight the agencies and organizations that are supported by Federation's donors through their gifts to the annual campaign.

**Because of you,** Federation provides core support for the **EPSTEIN SCHOOL OF JEWISH STUDIES** which is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> year of providing a place where Jewish teens from different backgrounds and Jewish traditions have come together to learn, share and build a community. Classes offered at the Rabbi Epstein School of Jewish Studies this year reflect the school's increased commitment to *tikkun olam* as part of its 50th anniversary year. "How to be a Jewish Antiracist" was taught by Calle Schueler and Mookey Van Orden. A Torah-based core *Tikkun Olam* class for 9th and 11th grade students was a highlight of the fall semester. Taught by Ora Jezer, the class investigated a number of topics through the SPACE (Service, Philanthropy, Advocacy, Community Engagement, Education) approach via a lens of Jewish values. Topics included climate change, US immigration policy and refugees, the Syrian refugee crisis, racial justice, organ donation, among others. Each student was responsible for creating a final project that connected their *tikkun olam* actions to Jewish values. Many students presented projects at Epstein's Justice Fair, which also featured presentations by representatives from RISE, Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, Onondaga Earth Corps, Etgar 36 and Jewish Youth Climate Movement.

**Because of you,** SYRACUSE JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE provides support and counsel to those in need and serves as "your companion on the journey of aging." Current SJFS director Judith Huober is transitioning to work remotely and through in-person residencies to direct the caregiver support project and provide clinical mental health counseling services. "It has been the honor of my life to lead SJFS during ten years of intense turmoil and re-stabilization," Huober said. "What I've learned and helped SJFS to become leaves me personally and professionally fulfilled, as well as confident in SJFS's capacity to grow and adapt to the future needs of our community." To support what she hopes will be her legacy at SJFS, Huober is committing \$25,000 over 5 years to create an annual stipend for one graduate intern "who recognizes the potential for a positive multidimensional view of aging to improve the quality of life for individuals and families across the life-cycle, to create elder-friendly communities and to develop public policy that mitigates the effects of structural ageism on citizens of all ages." When the fund is formally established, Huober will be asking the community to express their support of these goals by adding to the BeWell in Later Life Scholarship Fund.



## 'CUSE CHALLAH CLUB



**May 27, 2021  
8 pm via Zoom**

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# Jewish Cook of the Month



## Megan Mills of Fatcat Baking

Megan Mills is a licensed home-processing pastry chef, specializing in 100% vegan baked goods. Originally from Los Angeles, Megan moved to Syracuse in 2014 to live with her life partner, Alex (all-tech extraordinaire, entrepreneur, best partner, best pet dad ever). Between them, they have two sweet and sassy lion head rabbits (Binx and Thor) and one very cuddly, fuuurrocious cat named Loki, who inspired the name Fatcat Baking.

### Where did you learn to cook?

I don't really remember learning to cook from anyone in particular growing up. My father would let me help him barbecue during the summers, and my mother wouldn't allow me in the kitchen, because I always used every dish (I still do) to make anything we were eating. When I went away to college, I really fell in love with my new-found independence and with cooking and experimenting with food. I didn't fall in love with baking until recently, and I was fortunate enough to be gifted classes to the Culinary Institute of America to get a baking certification.

### Why do you like to cook?

I am very much a people pleaser and I love to see people happy. Have you ever seen a



person sad while eating? I also love the connection you make with a person, a culture or a place through food. As one of my favorite people, Anthony Bourdain, said perfectly, "Food is everything we are. It's an extension of nationalist feeling, ethnic feeling, your personal history, your province, your region, your tribe, your grandma. It's inseparable from those from the get-go." You can learn a lot about a person through food.

### What is your favorite dish to prepare?

To bake - Our signature lemon basil scone or anything I get to be creative with, like decorating cakes and cupcakes. To eat- Tofu Scramble with a million veggies.

### What is your favorite cooking secret/trick/hack/shortcut?

1) Use spices and use fire! Humans didn't sail around the world for centuries to under-spice and boil everything.

2) Freeze tofu in its water before using it to cook mock chicken recipes. It gives it a really cool, pull-apart, spongy feel like chicken nuggies.

3) Mise en place, taste everything as you go, and trust your eyes and touch.

### Could you please share a favorite kosher recipe that isn't terribly complicated?

### Caramel Maple Nut Clusters

1 cup nuts of choice (almonds, walnuts, pecans, cashews), chopped  
3 tablespoons maple syrup  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1/8 teaspoon salt  
Couple pinches of flake salt (optional)

Preheat oven to 350F. Line a muffin tin with silicone muffin liners. (Regular paper muffin liners will stick).

Add the nuts, maple syrup, vanilla extract and 1/8 teaspoon (or a small pinch) of salt in a bowl and mix. Divide mixture evenly into muffin tin, make sure the maple syrup liquid is about the same in each cup. Slightly pat down the mixture.

Bake for 10-12 minutes. The maple syrup will be boiling. While still hot, sprinkle a bit of flake salt (if using) on each one. Then let cool completely before enjoying.

## Jews and Coffee: Part 2

Coffee drinking originated in Yemen after Ethiopians exported the berries of native coffee trees there and Sufi Muslims learned to roast and brew them into a hot beverage. Jewish scholars appreciated the caffeine in the new drink, which allowed them to stay up late at night studying Torah. Early coffee drinkers had to resolve several halachic issues, including whether the new drink was a food or a medicine and what blessing was appropriate to it. (It was ruled that coffee is a drink, not a medicine, and the generic shehakol blessing is the one to recite.) As most coffee was drunk in coffee houses, the question also arose whether Jews should drink coffee at non-Jewish establishments. Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra ruled in 1553 that Jews could drink coffee prepared by a non-Jew, but warned against patronizing coffeehouses, recommending that coffee be consumed at home instead.

Coffee drinking eventually reached Europe, often brought by Jewish merchants. The first European coffee house was opened in 1632 in Livorno,



Italy by a Jewish merchant. England's first coffee house, the Angel Inn in Oxford, was opened by "Jacob the Jew," a Lebanese immigrant. There was some opposition to the Jewish coffee houses. Verona forbade Jews from serving women in their coffeehouses. Frederic the Great, in Germany, declared "my people must drink beer" in restricting Jewish coffeehouses.

Coffee became the preferred drink of American colonists after the Boston Tea Party and many well-known brands of coffee were created by Jews. Joseph Martinson, a Latvian immigrant, first sold beans from a pushcart on the Lower East Side and then opened a factory in lower Manhattan. He built a business supplying hotels and restaurants, making deliveries in Rolls Royce trucks and eventually packaging Martinson's Coffee in cans. Samuel Schonbrunn produced Savarin coffee, the quality brand served at the Waldorf-Astoria. The Jewish owner of a chain of nut stores, William Black, added coffee to his line and became Chock Full o' Nuts coffee shops. The now ubiquitous Starbucks chain was the creation of Howard Schultz, a Brooklyn-born Jew.

Closer to home, the Jewish Observer has shared stories of the purveyors of Hyman Smith Coffee and SkyTop Coffee. This month, we add another local Jewish coffee vendor to the mix, Freedom of Espresso.

When Anna Dobbs started a coffee bar in the 1990s, she named it "Federal Espresso," but shipping company Federal Express heard about it and threatened a lawsuit over copyright infringement. So Anna, having a good sense of humor, changed the name to Ex-Federal Espresso. This was still legally problematic, so Anna changed the name again, this time, with keen irony, to Freedom of Espresso. Freedom of Espresso has four locations in Central New York, one in each of the villages of Fayetteville (where they roast their coffee every other day), Liverpool and Camillus and a fourth in Franklin Square in downtown Syracuse.

Anna grew up in a large extended Jewish family. She attended Temple Concord where her father was the Boy Scout leader. Anna spent a year living in Hawaii before moving to Alaska to start a specialty produce business, originally selling Hawaiian produce.

After 18 years in Alaska, she sold her business and moved back to Syracuse to start a coffee roasting company. She knew of the need for high quality coffee in Central New York, because she and her husband had flown here every fall to arrange transport of 40,000 pounds of apples to Alaska from Lafayette.

They started their coffee company with Anna's brother David Ruston, who now services coffee equipment throughout Central New York. They have enjoyed great success with their shops, owing to their commitment to a coffee culture in Central New York. "Our roasting process makes our coffee reliably consistent," notes Anna. "We put a lot of effort into the little things: all our plant-derived milks are organic; we use local honey and fair trade and organic coffee beans; our decaf is Swiss water-processed. We are very dog-friendly and go through hundreds of pounds of dog treats a year."

Freedom of Espresso is also very involved with the communities they are in, supporting the local high schools and the Girl Scouts. "The part I love most about this business," comments Anna, "is that we build community. That's what we set out to do and I believe we accomplished that."



# Lions and Pomegranates Help the Community

Sometimes it takes a village to do a mitzvah. The Lions of Judah and Pomegranate Society members heard that the 123 residents of Valley Vista Apartments, a subsidized housing complex for seniors and people with disabilities, needed personal care and cleaning products. They decided to take on the project and raise the funds to meet the need. With help from some teens, a little canine assistance, a big truck and some strong arms, each resident was provided a bag filled with the needed supplies and some sugar-free candy, because we all need a little sweetness.

The two women's groups also enjoyed a recent webinar featuring Suzi Weiss-Fischmann, who spoke about her experiences as a businesswoman and philanthropist. Her message was that "Tikun olam and tzedakah are everyday life. It's not once a year, it's not twice a year. You wake and see how you can make a difference in the



world. I always tell everybody, including my kids, if you make a difference in one person's life, you've done good."

The Lions and Pomegranates put her words to action in another context. Hannah Reeves is

the scheduler for the Menorah Park nursing department. She is studying at OCC for her own nursing degree. A lack of funds for tuition had stalled her progress, so the Lions and Pomegranates stepped in to assist. Pomegranate Judith Huober, Director of Jewish Family Service, presented Hannah with the check to pay her tuition, and Hannah is now enrolled in the next course she needs to complete her RN degree.



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# Jewish News from Around the World

## Moms in Israel

The *Jerusalem Post* recently reported that Israel has one of the highest birth rates (3.1 children per woman) in the developed world. The Israeli population has more than doubled over the past 30 years to 9.3 million, due not only to large Haredi families but to increased births among women who self-identify as secular or traditional.

**Giving back to their communities.** Former Vogue cover model Israel's Michaela Bercu helped develop the app Tribu to optimize the world of volunteering. The App matches 800,000+ Israelis with hundreds of local projects all over Israel on days and hours that are convenient for each volunteer. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAVMZPOU05c>

**New head of Israel's IBM Research.** IBM has announced that its new Director of the IBM Haifa Research Lab is Aya Soffer. She also continues in her role as IBM's VP

of AI. Soffer is one of the most influential people in Israeli tech because of her positive impact on the local and global AI ecosystem. <https://www.calcalistech.com/ctech/articles/0,7340,L-3896570,00.html>

**A mini diaper washing machine.** Some 258 billion used diapers are sent to landfills every year. Now Israel's Alon Cohen has invented a cleaning and storing system for reusable diapers. PIKA doubles as a diaper bin and can wash and sanitize 1-10 diapers. No pre-cleaning or soaking necessary. It also provides a nutrition analysis. <https://www.israel21c.org/a-mini-diaper-washing-machine-for-reusable-diapers/>

**Israel Women Museum.** Later this year, curator, art historian and TV producer Yael Nitzan plans to open Israel's first museum dedicated to women in a former Haifa private school building. It will showcase at least 100 women who played - and continue to play - important roles in the history and culture of Israel.

<https://www.israel21c.org/new-museum-to-showcase-the-women-who-helped-build-israel/>

**We are family.** Twins Gili and Nadav Dekel just completed the commander's course in the IDF Artillery Corps. Twins Ben and Tom Sorer also completed the course together. Ben and Tom's parents both served in the Corps. The Corps' Lieutenant Ben Kitsoni awarded his sister Liel her sergeant's rank. <https://www.newsrael.com/post/-MUJWpabDnk2WQe3rZLE>

**Mum, look what I found.** Ancient artifacts can be discovered all over Israel. Eleven-year-old Zvi was hiking with his family when he stumbled upon a pottery figurine at Nahal Havesor in southern Israel. The Israel Antiquities Authority identified it as a 2,500-year-old amulet and awarded Zvi a certificate of appreciation. <https://www.israel21c.org/11-year-old-stumbles-on-ancient-fertility-amulet-while-hiking-with-family/>

## Israeli High Court Decision

Israel's High Court of Justice ruled in May that people who convert to Judaism in Israel through the Reform and Conservative movements must be recognized as Jews for the purpose of the Law of Return and are thus entitled to Israeli citizenship. *The Times of Israel* reported that "the bombshell decision, which shatters the longstanding Orthodox monopoly on officially recognized conversions in Israel, was the culmination of an appeal process that began more than 15 years ago, involving 12 people in the country who converted to Judaism through non-Orthodox denominations. The justices specified that they had previously withheld issuing a ruling to allow the State to handle the matter, but the State had failed to do so." We asked our local congregational rabbis to share their views about the ruling.

### Rabbi Yehoshua Zehavi, Temple Adath Yeshurun

For decades, the Reform and Conservative/*Masorti* movements have struggled for legal recognition in Israel, including for the rights to perform marriages and conversions and for funding. While they are the largest Jewish movements in the US, in Israel they are quite small, though growing. On March 1, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that conversions performed in Israel by the Reform and Conservative/*Masorti* movements must be recognized by the government for the purpose of the *aliyah* (immigrating to Israel as a Jew and gaining automatic citizenship). Reform and Conservative conversions performed abroad had already been accepted for *aliyah*, but now, for the first time, the non-Orthodox movements will have the ability

to perform conversions inside Israel for those wishing to gain citizenship.

This is an important shift in the standing of these movements in Israel and for religious pluralism more broadly. Most significantly, the ruling will provide more options to those wishing to convert and will give Reform or *Masorti* converts the same rights as Orthodox converts. It is also a step away from the perspective that there is only one legitimate way to practice Judaism and toward an embrace of the religious differences that exist within the Jewish people.

### Rabbi Evan Shore, Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse

In my thirty-six years in the rabbinate, I have been very careful never to write a public statement about a decision made by the Israeli government. Though I am

Jewish, I do not have a claim to be a citizen of Israel. Many people who live outside the Land of Israel maintain they have a right to publicly attack the Israeli government. In my opinion, it is easy to criticize from the outside. An Israeli Supreme Court decision affects its citizens. Therefore, the debate over this issue should be directed to those who have Israeli citizenship.

### Rabbi David Kunin, Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevre Shas

The decision of the court is enormously important as a support of both democracy and religious freedom in Israel. It is essential for Israel and the world Jewish community that all streams of Jewish life are welcomed and fully accepted. This is an important step in that direction.

### Rabbi Daniel Fellman, Temple Concord

The recent decision by the Supreme Court to recognize Reform and Conservative conversions in the State of Israel represents a giant leap forward for equality. We Jews have always argued about the meaning of our sacred texts, the commandments and every part of our tradition. But for too long, the political system in Israel allowed one view to override the views of others. With this new opinion, the Supreme Court returns all of us to our heritage as one people with many views and many understandings.



# Bette Siegel Dishes on Mastering the Art of Cooking

by Joanne Villegas

Bette Siegel, former head of Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevre Shas Sisterhood Catering, and her husband Don will host a two-part Cooking & Food series, *Master Dishes from CBS-CS Catering*, on May 13 and June 3 as part of the CBS-CS spring fundraiser, *Master Class: A Time to Reconnect with Our World, Our Community, and Ourselves*.

## How did you get started cooking?

I started cooking as a child. One of the first things I made was a box of Jell-O. I didn't understand the directions on the box and had to go across the street to my neighbor's house for help. Needless to say, I've come a long way since then.

## How did you become involved with Sisterhood Catering?

We joined CBS-CS in 1985 when our girls, Hannah and Esther, were born. My mother-in-law, Vivian Siegel, z"l, told me that if I wanted to make friends in *shul*, I should join Sisterhood and that's exactly what I did. In those days, Sisterhood Catering was a vibrant arm of the synagogue and had morphed from teams of workers into anybody who liked to cook. Carolee Smith was head of catering. We got along splendidly, and I learned a lot. After she stopped heading

the venture, I was asked to take over. I said, "Sure, I would love to. After all, what could be more Jewish than preparing food?"

Sisterhood Catering cooked for congregational dinners and scholars-in-residence weekends, b'nai mitzvah luncheons and Friday night Shabbat dinners, rabbinic installations and departures, *shiva* meals of consolation, conversions, *brit milah*, baby namings, graduations, anniversaries, birthdays, Women's League for Conservative Judaism conferences, Na'amat luncheons, Federation annual meetings and lots of personal celebrations. We baked and became known for our hundreds of cookies for *kiddushim*. My good friend, Steffi Bergman, was at my side for years. Her specialties were kugel and tuna salad. Her kugel won a blue ribbon and Best of Show for Ethnic Favorites at the New York State Fair.

## Talk about the course that you will be teaching for the Master Class?

I will be making my *challah*, which I made for all the catered functions and for which I won a blue ribbon at the NY State Fair. I made all the *challahs* for every Shabbat at shul, and even made huge *challahs* in the shape of the first initial of the person celebrating a *simcha*. I will also make "shul chicken and potatoes," the mainstay recipe for

Shabbat community dinners. Don will make vegetarian dumplings which he served at the Chinese banquets (a meat version of which he cooked on the Food Network's "Cooks versus Cons"). We will also make Steffi's prize-winning noodle kugel.

**What do you see as the importance of food and faith?** There is nothing more intimate and more community-building than cooking and sharing food with family and friends within any faith tradition. Every family having a Passover seder understands this, and the same is true for synagogues. Don and I felt it an honor to cook for the CBS-CS community and others and welcome the opportunity to bring a few of our favorite offerings to the community again, even if it's only virtually.

The CBS-CS spring fundraiser, *Master Class: A Time to Reconnect with Our World, Our Community, and Ourselves*, is a five-course virtual series covering the topics of art/music, food/cooking, environment/science and social justice. Registration is \$36 per household per program or \$180 for the whole series. **For details and registration, go to [www.cbcs.shulcloud.com/form/master-class21](http://www.cbcs.shulcloud.com/form/master-class21).**



# Shavuot Is the Time for Confirmation at Temple Concord

Temple Concord celebrates the confirmation of six students at Shavuot services this year. Mae Cohen, JoJo Cooper, Sasha Dailey, Gisele Fumarola, Noah Satterlee and Nathan Warren Faircy have spent the past year learning with Rabbi Fellman. The confirmands celebrated becoming *b'nai mitzvah* and made a commitment to further their Jewish education by continuing their studies at both the Epstein and the Temple Concord confirmation class. They explored their growing Jewish identity, discovered Jewish views on issues such as the pandemic, relationships, abortion, immigration and more. Each of the students will also write an essay for the annual Brotherhood essay contest. On the afternoon before *Shavuot*, the group will gather, masked and socially-distanced, on the front steps of the Temple for pictures and blessings and in the evening they will lead the virtual *erev Shavuot* service.

# Epstein School Tackles Tikkun Olam Issues for Its Jubilee Year

by Aaron Spitzer

Classes offered at the Rabbi Epstein School of Jewish Studies this year reflect the school's increased commitment to *tikkun olam* as part of its 50th anniversary year. An elective, "How to be a Jewish Antiracist," was taught by Calle Schueler and Mookey Van Orden. A Torah-based core *Tikkun Olam* class for 9th and 11th grade students was a highlight of the fall semester. Taught by Ora Jezer, the class investigated a number of topics through the SPACE (Service, Philanthropy, Advocacy, Community Engagement, Education) approach via a lens of Jewish values. Topics included climate change, US immigration policy and refugees, the Syrian refugee crisis, racial justice,

organ donation, among others. Each student was responsible for creating a final project that connected their *tikkun olam* actions to Jewish values. Many students presented projects at Epstein's Justice Fair, held on the Tuesday following Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The Justice Fair also featured presentations by representatives from RISE, Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, Onondaga Earth Corps, Etgar 36 and Jewish Youth Climate Movement. These presentations outlined volunteer and summer opportunities for teens within each organization.

# Chabad Matzah Bakery at the Oaks

Rabbi Rapoport showed the residents of the Oaks at Menorah Park the process of making *shmurah matzah*. His demonstration started with hand grinding the wheat, mixing the flour and the water to make the dough, rolling the dough into matzah and baking the matzah for the final product. He also educated the residents on the history and the meaning of Passover, including the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt and the importance



of reliving these events every year. The residents greatly enjoyed learning more about this aspect of Jewish culture and loved their sample at the end. The Matzah Bakery is sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Central New York.

# JCC Pools to Open May 29

After a late start last year and the addition of new health and safety protocols because of the coronavirus pandemic, the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center is looking forward to safely opening its two outdoor heated pools on time this year.

The JCC's pools will open on Saturday, May 29 at 10 am. Learn-to-swim swimming lessons will begin shortly afterward and continue through late August. The group swimming lessons schedule will be in the JCC Pool Guide, slated to be published by early May. The pools will remain open through Labor Day.

The JCC has two outdoor heated pools. The small pool is shallow and ideal for small children who are non-swimmers. The large pool features both shallow and deep ends and a designated diving area and lap swim section.

Like last year, the JCC's top priority will be to safely open the pools with proper protocols in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. Based on current health regulations, the pools will open with

reduced capacity, and reservations will be required. Again, this summer the JCC will take pool reservations in 2-hour time slots to avoid overcrowding. Reservations may be made online or by calling the JCC during business hours. Walk-ins will be accepted if space is available. Should health and safety guidelines be relaxed after the pool opens, the JCC will adjust its protocols accordingly.

Other pool safety protocols in place again this year will include temperature



Certified swimming instructor Alex Felio (right) gives a swim lesson to JCC school-age camper Evelyn Kinder last summer. The JCC offers swim lessons for both children and adults. Discount for JCC members.

checks upon arrival, social distancing, cleaning of chairs/equipment between reservations and wearing a mask/cloth face covering when not in the water.

Once again this year, the JCC will offer group swimming lessons for children and semi-private and private lessons for both children and adults seven days a week. Taught by Red Cross certified instructors, swimmers of all skill levels are welcome. Infants as young as six months old, older children and adults can get started on learning to swim. There are also lessons geared toward advanced swimmers. JCC membership is not required to take swimming lessons, however members receive a discount.

The JCC's Neulander Family Sports & Fitness Center is scheduled to again



JCC's large outdoor heated pool. The JCC also has a small, shallow heated pool (located between the large pool and the building) which is ideal for small children who are non-swimmers. The JCC's pools open Saturday, May 29 at 10 am.

offer its Aqua Fitness class this summer. This fun group exercise class is set to music and designed to improve overall cardiovascular fitness and flexibility. All ages are welcome. The class is free for JCC Fitness members and \$10 per drop-in for non-fitness members. Look for details on class times to be announced shortly.

The JCC of Syracuse pools are a members-only benefit featuring open free-swim and lap-swim times. Please remember to bring your membership card to the pool and check-in at the lifeguard desk upon entering the pool area.

**For more information, and to make a pool reservation, visit [www.jccsy.org](http://www.jccsy.org) or call 315-445-2360.**

## JCC Plans Summer Camp

By Amy Bisnett, Associate Director of Children's Programming.

The past year has been the most trying and difficult year for most young school-age children. They have had to adapt and learn how to attend school virtually, how to stay connected with peers and how to wear masks. The children have had to learn new vocabulary like "quarantine," "isolation" and "social distancing" -- things that shouldn't even come across children's minds at that age.

During all of this, the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center has tried to remain a needed constant in the children's lives. We know the importance of recreational programming for school-age children. The children need it not only so parents can attend work but for their social and emotional wellbeing. Children need to be able to interact, play and engage with others their own age, not only to help



foster and develop social emotional skills but to help with regulating their feelings.

Last year, the JCC's Camp Romano was open for seven wonderful weeks. We worked diligently with the Onondaga Department of Health, the CDC and state licensors to come up with not only a required plan and protocol but what could be the best practice in keeping everyone safe and healthy.

A lot of work went into the planning and training to be able to implement a program during the times of COVID, but once it began to see the children happy and laughing made all the hard work so worthwhile. We had a successful summer camp and pool season, maybe not for the bottom line of our agency but for the wellbeing of children and staff.

Planning for 2021 Camp Romano began almost immediately after the camp season ended last year. There were plans in place to bring even

more specialty camps and activities back. Again, our goal is to remain as safe as possible while offering a top-of-the-line camp experience. This past year we have learned a lot and are excited for summer to begin. Word must have gotten out about how successful Camp Romano was last year as enrollment for this summer is breaking records. We have more specialty camps full or close to filling up with waitlists. Some of this is due to more campers registering, and some is due to the limit on group size that the Onondaga County Department of Health still has in place due to COVID.

Another positive for the JCC is that staff are eligible to be vaccinated. The JCC houses two state-licensed children programs that allows for all staff to get immunizations. "The JCC knows how important it is for our staff to be fully immunized to help protect themselves and the children and members of our facility. We are excited and encouraged as all JCC staff are or will be fully vaccinated," says Marci Erlebacher, JCC Executive Director.

The pandemic might have disrupted many plans, but the JCC has adapted and enhanced what they can offer. It is now more important than ever that we come together and keep the wellbeing of all at the forefront of the JCC.

## Giving Generously



Dr. Peter and Wendy Blanck made an extremely generous donation to the JCC's Jerome and Phyllis Charney Early Childhood Development Program in honor of the birth of their first granddaughter, Isabella Blanck. JCC Executive Director Marci Erlebacher gave an elbow tap to Dr. Blanck in front of the ECDP donor recognition plaques.





# More Than Just A Choir: Temple Concord's Keneset Shalom Singers

by Cantor Kari Siegel Eglash

The Keneset Shalom Singers (KSS) is Temple Concord's thirty-one-member adult volunteer choir, but it is also a *chavurah* where we study liturgical texts together, a special interest group where we explore and sing Jewish music and a community where we share our joys and sorrows.

Jews have always been a musical people. Our texts show how important music was to us from our very beginnings. We experience the joy of crossing the Sea of Reeds by singing the Song of the Sea with Moses and Miriam. The Psalms are an expression of longing, celebration and reverence for God in song. This connection to music has remained important to us and been an outlet of creativity throughout our history.

Synagogue choirs have a deep, rich history as well. The tradition of using vocal ensemble can be traced back to the 3rd century C.E., when the *shaliach tzibur* or service leader was assisted by other singers. This developed into the *meshorerim* system in Ashkenazi tradition. *Meshorerim* generally consisted of a high soprano, usually a boy, but sometimes a trained falsetto singer, and a bass who would sing with the cantor, supporting him and providing dramatic contrast.

From there choral music expanded, spreading the trends of the Western European Jewish community's more classically-oriented style of choir and organ east to the larger Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. As traditions have been built and trends have come and gone, we have never stopped loving singing together.

Something special happens to us when we sing together. Choral singing provides numerous benefits to the participants, from lowering heart rates to reducing feelings of isolation, improving mood and self-esteem, alleviating feelings of stress and depression, boosting endorphin levels, improving lung capacity and, most of all, providing a sense of belonging.

In normal times the members of KSS meet regularly to rehearse and prepare

monthly choral Shabbat services and special events. We learn about composers, Jewish music history, texts and liturgy. All of these things come together to build a moving Shabbat service experience for the singers and the congregation. Sometimes the choir sings complicated compositions where the congregation is meant to be a participatory listener. Most of the time, the choir facilitates congregational singing, bolstering the worshipers to fill the sanctuary with song.

The isolation of the pandemic has presented KSS with real challenges. We miss being with each other for the fellowship and the music. It is a joy to harmonize and join our voices together. Yet we have managed to find ways to find joy in singing with each other. We have had periodic sing-a-longs where choir members pick the repertoire and gather to schmooze and sing. And this year, for *Shabbat Shirah*, the choir led the music of the Shabbat service by choosing their favorite prayer and leading the Zoom congregation in song. The congregation absolutely loved hearing them and singing with them. It was a joyous Shabbat.

We know that the time of social distancing will eventually be behind us, hopefully soon. We look forward to again making music together in the same sacred space. Until then, we'll keep singing together, even if it is through the screens as we go from strength to strength.



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# All Kinds of Moms



“The Battle Hymn of the Boy Mom” is the title of an article by Hazel Cills, a pop culture reporter. She defines “boy moms” as “an unspoken subculture of women dealing with raising the opposite sex.” At a time when gender is increasingly viewed as fluid and nonbinary, it is surprising to see the mommy blogosphere adopt the “boy mom” terminology, adhering to stereotypical ideas of gender.

We know, however, that stereotypes exist for a reason. The *JO* asked some local Moms of Boys to weigh in on the subject. We found that there was some truth to the categorizations. “I knew the names of all the Star Wars characters,” commented Pamela Wells, mother to two sons. “But ask me a question about ‘Frozen’ or the Disney princesses, and I didn’t know a thing.” Leah Goldberg, the youngest of three girls, now the mother of four boys, says, “I’m learning as I go. It’s fun. Boys can be extremely kind, sensitive and compassionate in a different way.” And, she points out, “I’m the queen of the castle!”

For mothers of girls, the situation is different. If you shop for a greeting card for a daughter or niece, you find that most are



sentimental expressions of unconditional love and lifelong friendship. Researching the term “girl mom” turns up words like “beauty,” “special,” “perfection,” “connection” and “forever.” The stereotypes are alive and well in the mother/daughter relationship also. There may be truth to the statement that “A son is a son ‘til he gets a wife, but a daughter is a daughter all her life.” “My daughters are my world,” says Sondra Goldberg, mother of three grown daughters. “The support system my three daughters and I have built, one based on love, empathy, and strength, proudly carries us through the trials, tribulations and joys of life.” “Being the mother of daughters means experiencing the joy of raising three strong, determined, creative, funny, smart, compassionate women,” says Abby Kasowitz

Scheer, the mother of three girls.

“Being a mom of four girls has made me feel like my role modeling is of the utmost importance,” notes Phyllis Zames. “I am the woman that my children have the most experience with, and I want to show them all of the powers that women have: our voices, our bodies, our minds, our goals. The women I choose as my friends have influenced who my daughters choose as their friends: kind, thoughtful, caring girls and young women. Having all daughters has made me consider my role as a woman in this world so that I provide an example my daughters will want to live up to.” And, she adds, “I love buying matching jammies for all of us to wear together.”



## Why My Mom Is Special

by Students from the Temple Concord Religious School



**Annelise Haas** (Kindergarten):  
My mom helps me do my homework.

**Peytin Williams** (1st Grade):  
Me and my mom are best buddies.

**Lizzie Fellman** (1st Grade):  
I like being a pal to my mom.

**Tanella Haas** (2nd grade):  
My mommy is special because she reads to me at night and takes care of me. She gives me food and does my hair. She helps me with my homework.

**Zippy Lacirignola** (2nd Grade):  
My mom is special because she talks to me when I am sad and reads me books.

**Linnea Blackburn** (2nd Grade):  
My mom is special because she gives me hugs and support. She helps me calm down when I am mad. My mom drives me all over. My mommy takes care of me.

**Kira Hendricks** (3rd Grade):  
My mom is special because she is a doctor and she’s very very very nice she

takes good care of my family she helps us if we get hurt and she is very nice to her pashints she also loves me so much.

**Henry Sykes** (3rd Grade):  
My mom is special because she always helps me when I can’t do stuff on my own. For example, when I need help getting on to Sunday School and the link isn’t working, she will help me get on it with a smile. MY MOM IS AWESOME!

**Asher Choseed** (4th Grade):  
My mom is awesome because she is cool.

**Jacob Lacirignola** (5th Grade):  
My mom is special because she does whatever she can to make us comfortable and gives really, really good hugs.

**Charlotte Waldman** (5th Grade):  
My mom is special because she is able to handle my sister, my dogs, my dad, and me.

**Olivia Sykes** (5th Grade):  
My mom is special because she will always be proud about everything I do. My mom Is also special because she is always nice to me.

**Aaron Hendricks** (5th Grade):  
My mom is really nice and a good mom. Also, my mom is kind to people she works with and to me, Ian and Kira.

**Charlotte** (6th Grade)  
**and Nate** (4th Grade) **Pinsky**:  
Our Mom pumps us up every day, comforts us when we need it, and just makes growing up make sense no matter what is going on in her life, her job, or the world. She fills our house and our lives with love, singing, support, dedication, kindness, generosity and loud screams for Michigan (Go Blue!).

**Makayla Seidman** (6th Grade):  
My mom is special because she always supports everything I do, and I love her for that.

**Ian Hendricks** (6th Grade):  
My mom is special because she is a doctor. She helps other moms and also babies, and helps them be born. She also sings to us every night to help us sleep, and she is funny, and I love her so much.

**Sadye Gitner** (7th Grade):  
My mom is special because she always tries to find fun things to do with me, whether it’s getting food from Panera or just watching movies with me. She always knows how to have fun.

**Emma Waldman** (7th Grade):  
My mom is special because she is very nice and funny. She likes to cook and play games. She likes to watch me play softball and likes to watch basketball and football.

**Ari Eglash** (8th Grade):  
My mom and I do a lot of different things together.

**Sasha Dailey** (10th Grade):  
My mom is the strongest person I know and gives me the best advice.

**Hali Seidberg** (11th Grade):  
My mom works hard to make sure everyone around her is happy and healthy.



# The Trials and Tribulations of being an MOB

by Anick Sinclair

Sophocles said, "Sons are the anchors of a mother's life." My motto would be "anchors aweigh!" My husband and I have three teen boys. No daughters grace our home. I was lucky that I'd always wanted boys and that's what I got. In fact, I recall coming home with my third child, and a friend, upon hearing I'd scored a hat trick, rearranged her features to convey commiseration. "I'm sorry," she said. I was so shocked that she would pity a healthy baby simply because of gender. She was struck off my friendship list in a nanosecond.

I should underline that being a MOB (mother of boys) is an experience, not merely a description. A boys' mum is welcomed by name at Urgent Care: "Another broken or sprained finger/ankle/wrist/tooth, Mrs. Sinclair?" "Yes, you guessed it!" The blasé attitude in our home to a cast or splint is quite worrying actually, but there is always someone hanging off the roof or a tree or a slide or an older brother. How about stitched foreheads from soccer cleats and lacerated lips from playing baseball in the pool? Duels with hockey sticks while, I'm pretty sure, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony pounds in their heads as the musical backdrop. Why? Who knows? Maybe because they loved super-hero costumes as little kids, they believe they are invincible. They excel at scaring the living daylight out of me quite often. In the debate of nature vs nurture, nature has certainly ensured that my boys have testosterone in spades.

There are pranks being designed and executed in abundance. I remember walking into my kitchen and seeing an upside-down glass filled with water; in other words, to lift the glass would mean spillage. So I left it, even though we all know I could have



slipped a sheath of cardboard under it to rescue the situation. But the twittering behind corners convinced me not to. Three meals were eaten around that glass with no mention by anyone of its purpose. It is an MOB's job to vex the kids every so often, as they vex me. That's part of the fun.

Buckets of water have been balanced atop doors to splash onto a sibling just before he leaves for a social. Watermelon football results in a sticky mess I'd rather not go into. Fear-Pong (a derivative of the college game beer-pong but using apple juice) usually results in syrupy catastrophe in my kitchen and near pneumonia, as one of them is inevitably dared to run around the pool shirtless and barefoot in three feet of snow. Yes, really. They hide the TV remote control from each other to ascertain monopoly of Netflix choices. It is often found by me in the bottom of my handbag half way round Wegmans.

Heads have been stuck in bannisters, causing the fire brigade to remove the entire banister, not only the head. Faces have been drawn on with indelible markers, during peaceful slumber. Police have been called because of a ping-pong quarrel,

without my knowledge. Imagine my shock when the men in blue came knocking at my door with their fingers poised on speed-dial to social services. Windows have been smashed, chairs cracked, carpets stained. The list goes on. Everything, and I mean everything, becomes a contact-sport. Dares have included drinking glasses of vinegar, smashing eggs on heads, using our beloved dog as a rugby ball and cutting hair with garden shears - all to avoid the dreaded feeling of not being the most red-blooded in the house. Competition is rife.

Decibel levels are a constant challenge in my home as high energy and mischievousness are the norm and my MOB patience and good-humor are directly affected by this. Every day I promise myself I'll be more patient. I can tell you that surviving COVID lockdown in this constant hive of machismo has certainly tested my patience daily, nay, hourly.

Having said all of this, a strong charm offensive is also popular with them, and their most endearing quality. A stroke of my hair, a bear hug, a flower from the garden, a "you look like a princess, mum" are all aids in keeping them within my folds of utter

adoration and deep love. They are clever and amusing in their charm. Even when one knows they're being played, one can still enjoy the game. Boys are direct, rarely sulking, and it's always clear how to make them happy.

It occurred to me early on that I would be their only female role-model at home. They would never feel that protectiveness boys often feel towards a sister. And so I took this subject very seriously. It has been my job to explain about and detangle the mystery of girls. I say girls are equal to them but different from them. Words and body language must differ. Certain subjects might cause embarrassment. Respect the individual at all times, and you might like to open her car door or pull out her chair one day. Their impression of WOMAN is based on me, and that's a big responsibility for all MOB's. One day they will search for a partner based on me as their prototype (or maybe the exact opposite!) and their experiences of me; hence my constant work on self-respect, kindness and patience. I want them to be gentle but strong, nurturing but responsible and to become upstanding members of the community in the future. And that's down to me (and their father, of course), the ultimate undertaking of the MOB.

Conversely, they have made me into the person I am today too. A sense of humor is paramount. Take most things with a pinch of salt, be tender, forgiving, be proud of them and love them hard.

I do sometimes wonder if I would have made a good mother to girls. I doubt it. I'm a strong believer that God only sends you what you can handle. I don't think I could have handled girls. I'm not sure that I'm robust enough. It takes a specific brand of mothering to be an MOB. Despite bracing myself daily for craziness, I wouldn't know how to be anything else. I wouldn't want to be anything else.



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## » Book Review

# Send for Me by Lauren Fox

Reviewed by Jackie Miron

Annelise is a dreamer, imagining her future while working at her parents' bakery in Germany, just before World War II. There are rumors that anti-Jewish sentiment is on the rise, but Annelise and her parents can't believe it will affect them. But as Annelise marries and has a daughter, things change. A brick is thrown through her window; a friend cuts ties; customers stop patronizing the bakery. Annelise and her husband are given the opportunity to go to America, but they must do so without her parents. Two generations later, in a small Midwestern city, Annelise's granddaughter, Clare, stumbles upon a packet of her grandmother's letters from Germany and begins to see the history of her family in a new light.

*Send for Me*, Lauren Fox's fourth novel, is an exploration of mother/daughter relationships across multiple generations. The story is told in

flashbacks, letters and the present. Fox's style is sad and poignant, but still funny and witty. The prose is beautiful, describing the challenges of leaving friends and family behind with the war looming in Europe. However, the focus of the book is on the love, devotion, obligation and intricacies developed among the four generations of women.

While some might find the skipping confusing, it allows readers to see the depth and bonds at different times and places with ease. Moving back and forth in time is a common way to tell stories and this one is loosely based on Lauren Fox's own family, so it is a wonderful account based real events.

Many mother/daughter relationships are difficult and rife with emotional outbreaks and quick judgments, but in *Send for Me*, Fox focuses on the love, truths and the cost of freedom to all generations. Everyone gives, everyone sacrifices for the sake of the family, and the multiple perspectives enrich the experience for the reader. Perhaps the hardest thing to experience is the desperation felt by those left behind while the next generations are immersed in a new life. So many well-intentioned reunions never materialized for family members who were separated by wars.

All the characters encounter unexpected difficulties with new lives changed by moving, war and the need to earn a living. You will hear first from Julius and Klara, the oldest of the generations, and be mesmerized by the story of Annelise, Ruthie and Clare, woven in a moving tapestry of richly-written prose. The stories are moving and intimate. It is hard not to find the question, "What would you do?" entering your mind.

The ending may surprise (and perhaps, for a few, disappoint). Some will feel there is not enough closure; others may find it abrupt. But the story in its entirety is deeply affecting and an experience you should not miss.

## You May Want to Marry My Husband Author at Temple Concord's Goldenberg Series

by Chana Meir

"You May Want to Marry My Husband" is the title of an essay published by *The New York Times* in 2017 as part of its Modern Love series. While the title was provocative, the intent was serious: the essay's author, writer and filmmaker, Amy Krouse Rosenthal, was in the last stage of ovarian cancer and wanted to send her beloved husband the message that he should continue to embrace life once she was gone. She died ten days later. The essay, written like a personal ad, was viewed by five million readers.

In Jason Rosenthal's memoir, also titled *You May Want To Marry My Husband*, Amy's husband recounts his experiences before, during and after his wife's illness. Rosenthal will be the next speaker in Temple Concord's Regina F. Goldenberg Cultural Series at 3:30 pm on Sunday, May 30.

Despite the tragedy at its core, Rosenthal's story is one of gratitude to his wife and children, their extended family and friends, and even strangers who showed unexpected kindness. He insists that "people are good," and writes, "I know I've made this marriage and this family sound like a fantasy. Well, guess what – they pretty much were."

Rosenthal published a follow-up essay, "My Wife Said You May Want to Marry Me," in *The Times*. In it he reflected that "Amy continues to open doors for me...to send me off into the world to make the most of it." He has established a non-profit foundation in her name, which provides funding for ovarian cancer research and child literacy, and gave a TED talk about his experiences. He now frequently speaks about dealing with loss and grief.

To access the Zoom link to Rosenthal's talk, visit the calendar at [www.templeconcord.org](http://www.templeconcord.org) and click on the event.



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# Sitting Shivah for Ruth

by Sarah Cumbe Reckess

[This story appears in *Choosing Judaism: 36 Stories* by Bradley Cook and Diana Phillips and is reproduced here with permission of the publisher.]

My grandmother Ruth passed away in 2005. She had been baptized as a Christian after her fourth pregnancy threatened her life and the life of my unborn uncle. She swore if she and the baby survived, she would convert to my grandfather's Protestantism, and when both of them lived, she accepted Jesus Christ as her savior and never looked back. She embraced her new religion: serving food in the Church kitchen, babysitting the children on Sunday mornings and attending vacation Bible camp as a counselor once my grandfather retired. I always loved that her name had foretold her conversion and life story.

My grandmother had suffered a stroke in her sleep and most of us were in shock that she was gone. My grandfather, recently diagnosed with a fast-moving cancer, could hardly believe that he had outlived her. His body shriveled into itself, his eyes hollow and unable to focus on us. I had never seen grief like that. My parents, uncles, aunts and cousins gathered in the church for the funeral, but we weren't part of the funeral preparation. I met the pastor five minutes before the service started. He had known my grandparents for 35 years; I felt confident that the funeral would reflect Ruth's life and her call to ministry and service.

The pastor only mentioned my grandmother's name twice during the entire service. He said less about her actual life, but asked us multiple times if we had accepted Jesus Christ into our hearts. The



pastor didn't make the connection between her life and the biblical Ruth. He shouted at me from the pulpit, asking over and over, if I was called, could I say that I was a Christian? I left the funeral angry that my grandmother had been slighted and the pastor was more focused on increasing the number of believers rather than celebrating her life.

Six months later my grandfather passed and again we gathered in the church to grieve. The sermon was the same. A hollowness developed in my gut where the love for my grandparents had been. This funeral was no way to honor my grandparents, both born into abject poverty in the South, who eloped and lived all over the world, experiencing grand adventures and a grander love story. Instead, we buried them under a moss-covered live oak tree on the side of a highway and returned to our daily lives. My grief stumbled along,

not sure when to show itself, how to show itself, where to show itself. There was no prescription. I felt compelled to move on even though I hadn't moved forward.

Thanksgiving arrived and my Jewish boyfriend, Dave, and I gathered our families together to celebrate. At dinner, to my extreme surprise, Dave proposed. There was much celebration in the room, our mothers hugging and crying together. Dave's mother introduced my parents to the Yiddish word mishpachah—family—as in “now you're mishpachah and we take care of each other.” I practiced the word over and over in my head. A week later tragedy struck. Dave's aunt Miriam, who lived in Israel, passed away suddenly. I boarded a plane to Tel Aviv with Dave, his parents and brother and flew halfway around the world to sit shivah, a word I knew but barely understood. We arrived to an extended family engulfed in grief. My future in-laws leapt into action, arranging the funeral service, shivah details, and borrowing siddurim (prayer books) so that we could lead prayers nightly. Dave coached me on the unfamiliar words in Mourner's Kaddish, the prayer for those in mourning. I watched and listened and learned.

I had met Miriam once, but here I was comforting her children, her beloved husband, her grandchildren. It was overwhelming, the love and grief and history of this family I was joining. I locked myself in the tiny apartment bathroom and cried—for the jetlag that was keeping me awake every night, but also for the unfairness. Dave and I had celebrated our engagement for one week, and now it was over.

Eventually Mourner's Kaddish became familiar even if I tripped on the words. I sat on the couch with Uncle Moshe, holding his hand and listening to stories that made little sense because the details were so jumbled by his sorrow. I flipped

through family photo albums, which prompted my future father-in-law to drive us to his old neighborhood to see his childhood apartment. I met mishpachah upon mishpachah, people who were “fourth cousins, or friends who were like family, or friends from the Israeli Army, or maybe we are related but now we can't remember.” None of the actual connections mattered. I was marrying Dave, and so I was mishpachah. People hugged me and loved me and still found moments to congratulate us on our engagement. There was no test and I wasn't asked to prove myself; my lack of knowledge around Israel, or Judaism, or shivah meant little to them. They were just happy I had made the journey to celebrate Miriam's life and wanted to participate in the shivah. We cried and we laughed and we said her name. Sometimes I slipped and said “Ruth” instead.

On the plane home, I reflected on the contrast between the seven days of mourning for Miriam and my grandmother's funeral—the fullness of mishpachah versus the emptiness of the pastor's words. Sitting shivah had allowed me the space to mourn for my own grandparents. A small idea was forming in my head—I was going to convert. I started my Judaic and Hebrew studies a few months later, and in 2008, seven months pregnant with my first child, I submerged myself in the mikvah (ritual bath.) I converted for myself and also for my grandparents. Although I didn't change my name when I converted, I carry the story of the biblical Ruth with me as my namesake and as representative of my family history. My grandparents would have loved this mishpachah.

*Sarah Cumbe Reckess lives in Central New York with the wonderful Dave, her two awesome kids and various dogs, cats, sheep and chickens. She and Dave are membership vice-presidents of Congregation Beth Shalom-Cheva Shas.*

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**SANFORD V. STERNLICHT**  
**March 20, 2021**

Sanford V. Sternlicht, 89, of Syracuse, died March 20, at the Jewish Home of Central New York. Born in New York City to immigrant parents, Sanford obtained a BS from SUNY Oswego, an MA from Colgate University and a PhD from Syracuse University.

From 1959 to 1985, he taught in the Oswego English Department, becoming Professor of English, and then Chairperson of the Theater Department. After transferring to Syracuse University, he taught in the English Department, retiring as Emeritus Professor of English in 2011.

He was the author of 35 books on literature, drama, naval history and poetry. He directed plays for several upstate regional companies, including the Talent Company, Salt City Playhouse, Glen Loch Dinner Theatre, the Oswego Summer Theater, Classic Theatre Productions and others.

For many years he was a delegated Lecturer in the Humanities for the New York Council for the Humanities, giving lectures on literature around the state.

Among his honors, he undertook three national lecture tours for the English Speaking Union of North America, 1997,



1998, 1999; he was Leverhulme Foundation Visiting Professor of English at the University of York, England, 1965–66, and Senior Fulbright Professor of English at the University of Pecs, Hungary, 2004; he received National Endowment for the Humanities

Grants for lecturing in Sydney, Australia, and in Islamabad, Pakistan; and in 1994 the British Council awarded him a Research and Travel Grant for Northern Ireland.

Sanford also had a U.S. Navy career, including active duty as a naval line officer, 1955–59, then reserve duty at the Naval Reserve Station in Oswego, New York, 1959–79. He had two commands: USNR Recruit Training Division 3–25, Oswego, and USNR Surface Division 3–86, Oswego. Commander Sternlicht was the last divisional commanding officer at the Oswego Naval Station.

He is survived by his life companion, Mary Beth Hinton; son Daniel (Linette); and granddaughters Rachel, Elizabeth, and Jacqueline. His son David predeceased him in 2014.

Private graveside services and burial took place in Oakwood Cemetery. Contributions may be made to the Syracuse Jewish Family Service, 4101 E. Genesee Street, Syracuse, NY 13214.

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**HERBERT**  
**“HECKY” ALPERT**  
**March 25, 2021**

Herbert “Hecky” Alpert, 94, died Thursday evening at his home surrounded by his loving family. Born on April 1, 1926 to Joseph and Ida Alpert he was a life resident of Syracuse.

The Alpert family was one of the original founding families of Congregation Beth Sholom Chevra Shas in 1962. Hecky was honored to serve as the first President of the congregation. His life was dedicated to his family, and the growth and success of the congregation.

A supporter of Jewish life, traditions and organizations throughout his life, Hecky was the well-respected author of *Louis Marshall 1856-1929*. Hecky earned his degree in accounting from Syracuse University and began his accounting career in 1953 when he joined the firm of Levine and Leffert. He was certified as a public accountant in 1971, the same year he became a partner in Levine and Leffert. When he retired, he was the senior partner of Alpert, Stearns, Daley and LaCombe of Fayetteville, NY

He proudly served in the US Army during the Korean War and received a meritorious commendation as an educational specialist.

His family includes his wife Ettarae of more than 66 years; their children Mark, Susan (Dr. James) Litynski, Carol (Greg) Dyson and Robert (Amanda) and grandchildren Aleksander, Gillian (Harry), Sara, Jacqueline and Hannah.

Graveside services in the Beth Sholom section of Oakwood Cemetery were for the immediate family. Contributions in his memory may be made to Congregation Beth Sholom Chevra Shas.

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**ANNETTE**  
**(ROSILIO)**  
**ROTHMAN**  
**BIRNBAUM**  
**March 16, 2021**

Annette (Rosilio) Rothman Birnbaum, formerly of Syracuse, NY, died March 16 in Baltimore, MD. She was 94. Annette was predeceased by two loving husbands, Norman Rothman in 1965 and Armin Birnbaum in 2003, as well as her brother Morris and sisters Aimee and Hortense.

Annette was born and raised in Marrakech, Morocco. She was the eldest of seven surviving children born to Solika and Yehoshua Rosilio of blessed memory. She met her first husband Norman while he was stationed in Ben Guerir serving in the United States Air Force. Annette subsequently lived on military bases in Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Japan during Norman's service, where the family was very involved in each local Jewish community and active in outreach for Jewish service members. Annette settled in Norman's hometown of Syracuse following his untimely passing. She later married Armin, who helped raise her four children as his own.

Annette first utilized her exquisite sewing skills working as a seamstress, but soon employed her fluency in French as a typist for Onondaga Community College's Foreign Languages Department, a position she held for 22 years. She found joy in retirement caring for her granddaughter and cooking incredible Shabbat and holiday meals for her family. Her final years were spent in Baltimore where her daughter and grandchildren visited regularly and she was blessed to know so many of her great-grandchildren.

Annette is survived by her son Mayer Rothman of Syracuse; three daughters, Rachel Rothman of Cicero, Debra (Allan) Kessler of Baltimore, MD, and Ruth (Jeffrey) Rothman of Thornhill, ON; one sister, Rina Kadoch of Bat Yam, Israel; two brothers, Eli (Tziona) Rosilio and Daniel (Devorah) Rosilio of Bat Yam, Israel; 13 beloved grandchildren; and 37 (yes, 37!) precious great-grandchildren.

Graveside services in Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse's section of Oakwood Cemetery were for the immediate family. Donations may be sent to Sterling Care Assisted Living at 3617 Seven Mile Lane, Baltimore, MD 21208.

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**JILL ANDREA BAILES**  
**March 12, 2021**

Jill Andrea Bailes, born on December 17, 1953, died on March 12 at Van Duyn. Jill grew up in Dewitt, moved to Florida and returned to the Syracuse area in 1989. A 1972 graduate of Jamesville-Dewitt High School, she attended Syracuse University. Jill was predeceased by her parents, Allen and Betty Bailes. Jill was an artistic soul with a beautiful voice and a talent for painting, needlework and poetry. She loved all creatures great and small. Her voice will be missed. Graveside services and burial were in Adath Yeshurun Cemetery.

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**JACK SCHULTZ**  
**March 25, 2021**

Jack Schultz, 93, died on March 25, 2021 at Crouse Hospital. Born on October 26, 1927 in Brooklyn to Samuel and Rose Schultz, he had been a resident of Syracuse since 1958.

Jack attended Erasmus HS in Brooklyn, graduated from Newtown HS in Queens, earned his undergraduate degree from Syracuse University and his law degree from SU as well. He was a proud brother of AEP fraternity. He was a practicing attorney in Syracuse for more than 60 years.

Jack served as a Town of DeWitt judge from 1974 to 2009. He was a well-respected judge known for his honesty, fairness and compassion. The town of DeWitt honored Jack by naming the courtroom after him.

He proudly served in the US Army from 1946-1947. He trained at Ft. Knox and was stationed in Ft. Lewis where he was a Morse code radio operator.

He was a great member of Dewitt Rotary and supported the efforts of Rotary to give back to the community. His “Mickey Mouse” pancakes were legendary. He was also a member of Temple Adath Yeshurun, Onondaga Post 131 of the Jewish War Veterans, a past President of the Onondaga County Magistrates Association and the bar associations of NYS and Onondaga County.

Jack was an ardent fan of SU sports dating back to the days of Archibald and Manley. He also was a fan of the Chiefs.

His family includes his wife Sybil of more than 54 years, their sons David, Seth (Angie) and Eric (Sean) and grandchildren Laiken, Maddie and Sam.

Contributions in Jack’s memory may be made to Temple Adath Yeshurun or DeWitt Rotary.  
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**ELLEN ROTHSCILD**  
**March 9, 2021**

Ellen Rothschild, 94, passed peacefully at home on March 9 with her family by her side. The youngest of Samuel and Fannie (Spevak) Roth’s four children, she was born on February 5, 1927 in Syracuse and lived most of her life in the area.

A graduate of Nottingham High School and Syracuse University, Ellen was a proud life-long member of Amit Women, Temple Adath Yeshurun and the Temple Sisterhood. A role model for her children and grandchildren, Ellen was very down to earth, with a keen sense of humor, and moved with grace throughout her life. Loved by her many nieces, nephews and relatives of all generations, she became the matriarch and family historian.

Ellen was predeceased by Sidney Israel Rothschild, her beloved husband of 61 years, and their oldest son, Joel Seth Rothschild. Her family includes her children Phil (Nancy), Mark (Naomi Lokoff), and Tina (Michelle Miller) and her grandchildren Seth (Hayley), Ethan, Ariana, Aidan, Jeremy and Adam.

The family would like to extend their gratitude to Hospice of CNY for all of their assistance. Graveside services for the immediate family were at Frumah Packard Cemetery. Donations may be made to a charity of your choice.  
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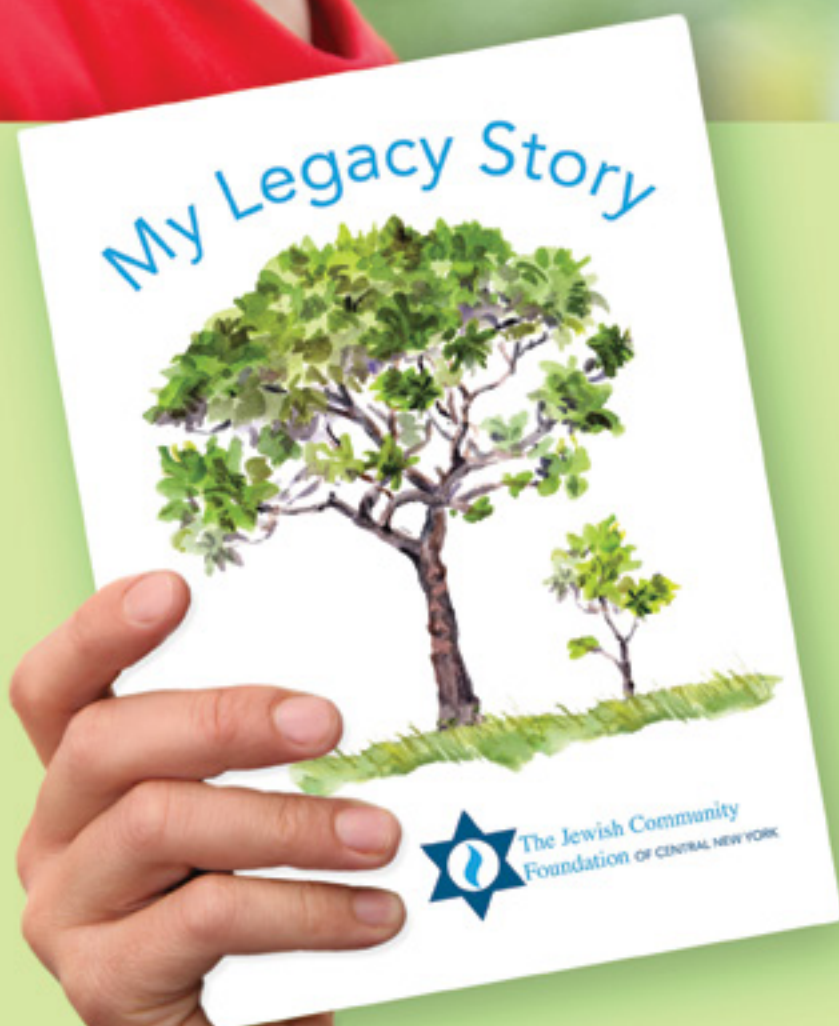
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