

Jewish Observer

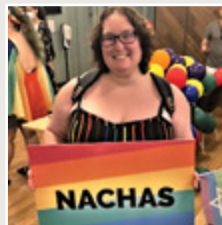
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DON'T MISS:
JEWS
& GENDER
(4-5)



INSIDE:
RED, WHITE & BLUE
JEWS
(8-11)



LOOK:
DAY SCHOOL
LAG B'OMER
(13)

July 2022

From the Editor



Barbara Davis

In 1903, a lengthy and data-filled article in *American Anthropologist* contained the following paragraph: “The type of the Jew is dark. The ancient Hebrews were characterized as having dark hair. The ideal beauty of Semites has been ‘raven black’ hair. Jacobs quotes a Mishnic Rabbi, R. Ishmael, who says: ‘The sons of Israel are like boxwood, neither black nor white but between the two’-- i. e., of olive color. The Talmud appears to use the term black (shachar) as synonymous with both hair and youth. There is no mention in the Bible nor in the Talmud of the color of the eyes of the ancient Hebrews: but it must be mentioned that, according to some authorities on the Hebrew language, there is no equivalent of ‘blue’ in the Bible or the Talmud.”

That was then and this is now, but still the question remains: what color are Jews? And who or what is a Jew of Color? My daughter-in-law’s family came to Israel from Yemen. She has dark hair and dark eyes, as do my grandchildren. I asked her if she thought of herself as a Jew of Color. “No,” she replied, adding, however, that when she applied for her green card and was asked her race, she did not check “White.” She checked “Other.” I posed the same question to a Shabbat guest, an Israeli, also with dark hair and dark eyes. “I am white,” he responded in that fierce manner so typical of Israelis, “White, white, white!” I have to confess: they looked the same to me.

Recently two Jewish students in a master’s degree program in mental health counseling at Brooklyn College filed a federal discrimination complaint that they faced a “hostile environment” toward Jews in their courses. One of the students is Hispanic. They said that they faced consistent pressure from other students and faculty to identify primarily as white, rather than Jewish, during class discussions of their personal identities. “As somebody who has obviously grown up their whole life in a brown body, yes, I know that there is colorism and I’ve experienced it,” said the Hispanic student, “but now that I identify as Jewish, all of a sudden I’m white, and it’s like none of my experiences matter.”

A recent master’s degree thesis by Sabina Ali entitled, “Jewish Racialization, the ‘Jewish Gene,’ and the Perpetuation of Ashkenormativity in Direct-to-Consumer Genetic Ancestry Testing in the United States” made the point that “Jewish identity has been defined and redefined, negotiated and renegotiated, among Jews and non-Jews in various parts of the world. The tensions around the ongoing question of ‘Who is a Jew?’ arise from the fact that Jewish identity encompasses numerous combinations of religion, commitment, nation, kinship, peoplehood, culture, ethnicity, and memory.” Ali’s thesis examined the way “Jewishness has been and continues to be racialized in the United States” by looking “at how direct-to-consumer genetic ancestry testing companies, such as 23andMe and AncestryDNA, present a racialized view of Jewish identity to consumers and perpetuate the social construction of a Jewish race by claiming detectable ‘Jewish genes’ in their ancestry reports. Additionally, since these companies often provide reports on European, or Ashkenazi, Jewish ancestry, excluding non-Ashkenazi Jewish ancestries, they contribute to an

Ashkenormative narrative of Jewish history, heritage, and identity.”

Is what a person looks like a determinant of whether they are a person of color? The Jews of Color Initiative says that “Jews of Color is a pan-ethnic term that is used to identify Jews whose family origins are originally in African, Asian or Latin-American countries. Jews of Color may identify as Black, Latino/a, Asian-American or of mixed heritage such as biracial or multi-racial. Due to several factors, Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews from North African and Arab lands vary in whether or not they self-identify as ‘Jews of Color.’” At Federation’s panel on diversity last year, one of the participants, who came from India, said that he was quite surprised to be called a “Jew of Color” when he came to the United States, because in his home in India, all the Jews looked like him.

Recently, the issue of Jewish color became the subject of heated debate because of remarks Whoopi Goldberg made on “The View.” The *Times of Israel* declared that Jews “regard themselves (and others regard Jews) variously as a people, a nation, a tribe, a family and a faith — sometimes in various combinations, sometimes all at the same time” but skirted the issue of race. Daniella Greenbaum, a former producer at “The View,” wrote in *The Washington Post* that currently there exists “an ideology that tries to turn Jews into White people, that tries to erase Jewish vulnerability and oppression, to squeeze Jews who have light skin into modern American categories of race and ethnicity, and which also myopically categorizes the hatred against them into American considerations of what racism looks like.”

Clearly, the issue is extremely complicated. And if Jews are not a race, then why is genetic testing used in Israel to determine whether they are Jewish? Is what a person looks like a determinant of their religion? What does it mean to “look Jewish”? Is a person’s religion a determinant of their patriotism or their loyalty? The charge of disloyalty has been used to harass, marginalize and persecute Jewish people for centuries.

This month’s *JO* cover contains four depictions of color and is an effort to represent some of the many ways that color relates to Jews. There are many people in our community who see themselves as Americans first and foremost. Judaism is their religion, but their primary identity is American. Then there are those who see themselves on a color spectrum within the Jewish community and the American community. There are also those who identify strongly with Israel, for whom it is a homeland and perhaps even a final resting place. Lastly, there are Jews for whom the rainbow of colors that identify the spectrum of gender identity is predominant in their lives.

Within the pages of this month’s *JO*, we have included articles by people who are knowledgeable and passionate about different aspects of Jewish identity. To say the articles are fascinating is an understatement. It took courage for our writers to put these pieces out there, because we recognize that, in today’s polarized world, they may generate hostile responses. But we hope that readers of the *Jewish Observer* will recognize that just as Judaism takes many forms, Jews take many forms, color being only one aspect of their being. As we face tremendous threats from those who claim that Jews are deliberately importing non-white immigrants to this country as part of a conspiracy against the white race, we hope that this issue will bring us all greater understanding and greater commitment to living, working and praying together under the one God who made us all.

Jewish Observer

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President/CEO's Report to Federation Annual Meeting 2022

2020 was barely three months old when the world as we knew it was turned upside-down by COVID-19. Things are still not as good as they were pre-COVID, and we still don't know what post-COVID looks like but, as we survey the 2022 fiscal year at our annual meeting, we can take pride in the fact that the one constant amid all this turmoil was the commitment of our donors to one another and to our Central New York Jewish community.

So far this year, we raised \$1.2 million dollars to fund our agencies and programs with the help of our devoted and committed solicitors, Campaign Cabinet and leadership of Debbie Rosenbaum. We raised over \$100,000 dollars to purchase an ambulance for Magen David Adom in Israel which we dedicated on June 26 at the Rosamund Gifford Zoo. We sent over \$100,000 to Ukraine to help the agencies that are dealing with the refugees and those hurt and maimed in the carnage. We provided Holstein Program funds to our agencies and synagogues for innovative community programming projects.

- We commemorated the Holocaust.
- We celebrated the 74th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel.
- We sponsored three schools that educate our Jewish children from elementary through high school.
- We published an award-winning community newspaper.
- Working with our partner agencies and with our community's synagogues, we kept our community connected virtually with cooking classes, exercise classes, movie series and book talks.
- We sent kids to Jewish summer camp.
- We sent teens to Israel.
- We kept our community safe, working in partnership with law enforcement at the local, regional and national levels.
- We kept our funds and our data safe through enhanced cybersecurity protections.

We stood up for what's right. The Federation represented the Jewish community's interests and concerns to public officials and agencies, the media, InterFaith Works and the community at large.

We protected and defended our values, whether a violation impacted our local Jewish community or the larger community. Hate has no place in Central New York, in the United States or in the world.

We fought antisemitism, racism and discrimination this year and will continue to do so in the future. We all know that antisemitism is on the rise. Reports disclose that throwing more money at the problem isn't working to stop and reverse the trend. What does work is building relationships. Those who attack Asians and immigrants and Muslims and Blacks and Sikhs—they hate Jews too. Though our primary responsibility is to protect the interests of the Jewish community, it can't be done in a vacuum. We can't ignore other

manifestations of hate. That is why we foster and value our relationships with law enforcement, InterFaith Works, the media and local universities. Together, we help each other overcome prejudices against each other and act to improve the safety and security of our community.

We took up new challenges: we have a committee working on ways to address the climate crisis.

Through the efforts of a grass-roots Women's Philanthropy Initiative, we created packages of bedroom and bathroom supplies to be given to refugees who come to our community from Ukraine and elsewhere.

We developed and continue to develop programs for the young adults who will be our community's future, helping to inspire our NexGen group to develop programs and lasting friendships.

As we have been for 104 years, the Jewish Federation was here for our community this year. When we come together, great things happen. The Federation's Annual Campaign uses the



Michael Balanoff

power of the collective to help Jews in need and to build a vibrant Jewish community in Central New York, Israel and the world. We keep our overhead extremely low. The funds we raise go to the people who need them. We maximize every charitable dollar for impact in our community. Federation funding is especially valuable because it is unrestricted, allowing each organization to use the funds where they are needed most.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge here the tremendous impact the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York has had on the Federation and its work. More than 25% of the funds that we allocate each year come to us from the Foundation – from its own investments and from the Perpetual Annual Campaign Endowments (or PACE) funds that our far-sighted community members have created. From its beginnings only twenty short years ago, when it had less than two million dollars in its coffers, the Foundation today can boast of administering 25 million dollars in assets, which are managed judiciously and scrupulously to assure our community's present and future sustainability.

As we look ahead to fiscal year 2023, we are confident that we will report increased dollars raised and increased individual contributions. Additionally, more donors are endowing their gifts to the campaign. Their Perpetual Annual Campaign Endowment (PACE)

accounts continue their support in perpetuity, creating a lasting legacy for our community. This year, 16% of our campaign came from PACE gifts.

Our work in Israel and in 70 other countries around the world became even more critical this year as already-vulnerable populations became increasingly challenged. Our partners, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee provided services on behalf of the Jewish community of Central New York to many overseas communities, with particular emphasis on the Jews of Ethiopia and Ukraine. We sent Cantor Lieberman as an emissary of our community to visit the refugee camps on the Ukraine-Poland border and to bring much needed supplies.

Our goal for the coming years is to continue the build upon the strength of Federation by increasingly involving young people. We are recruiting more and younger people to serve on our boards and our committees. We are involving more young people in our planning and our programming. The involvement of the teens of the Epstein School in this year's Yom HaShoah program is the perfect example of how we can make our traditions relevant and sacred to new generations by letting them participate in a meaningful way. Perhaps today's young people don't want to do things "the way we always did them," but that doesn't mean they don't want to do them.

Changing things up, involving young people, looking at things from a new perspective – these are positive ways we can assure that our community's future will be bright. We are stronger together, and we must continue to grow our local Jewish community. Whatever stage of life you are in, Jewish Federation provides programs and opportunity designed to educate, entertain and bring us together to build and strengthen our community. We need your participation, we need your commitment – and yes, of course, we need your contributions – but most importantly, we need you to know that we are here for you now and always. And we thank you very much for all you do for us and our Jewish community.

Jews and Genes

What Color Are Jews?

- In February of this year, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, reported that the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, the peak religious authority in the country, had been requesting DNA tests to confirm Jewishness before issuing some marriage licenses.
- Israel recently announced that it may begin to use genetic tests to determine whether potential immigrants are Jewish or not. This development would demand a rethinking of Israeli law on the issue of the definition of Jewishness.
- Masha Yakerson, like many of her Jewish, college-age peers, attempted to sign up for a Birthright Israel trip. Birthright told Yakerson, whose family is from Russia, that to prove that she was Jewish, and eligible for the trip, she would need to take a DNA test.

The three incidents cited above raise serious questions about genes and Judaism. Is there such a thing as a “Jewish genotype”? Is Judaism a genetic trait? If not, why is the Jewish homeland using DNA to define Jewishness? If Jewishness is genetic, are Jews a “race” as has been claimed for centuries by antisemites?

In an article entitled “Genetic citizenship: DNA testing and the Israeli Law of Return,” authors Ian V. McGonigle and Lauren W. Herman explain that “The State of Israel defines itself as the homeland of the Jewish people, making it ethno-national in its own self-image and raising perennial concerns over who is a Jew, how this can be determined, by what credible means, and what exactly this says about the ‘legal nature’ of citizenship in Israel.” They explain that “the recent turn to genetics is an attempt to develop an objective, scientific means of defining the boundaries of the Jewish population” but caution that “in light of the ambiguities around the materiality/immateriality of the basis of Jewish ethnicity, its connection to the State’s founding narrative of exilic return, and its impact on rights to citizenship, it is not yet clear how and why biological definitions of Jewishness are becoming an important part of the way Israelis understand their Jewish ethnicity as something rooted in the body, transmitted by genes, and shared



by the national group.”

The Jewish people have a long history of migration, population bottlenecks, expansions and geographical isolation, which has resulted in a unique genetic architecture. McGonigle and Herman write that “There are three key ways in which Jewishness has moved to the molecular realm, with genes being defined as Jewish: population genetics; genetic testing for both disease and Jewish identity; and human ova and sperm donation, as in the field of assisted conception. In these different conceptual arenas, Jewish genes and inheritance are defined in different ways, opening up a wider space of ambiguity around Jewish identity and definition.” Many disease genes and autosomal recessive diseases have been discovered in several Jewish groups. There are, in fact, 19 genetic diseases commonly carried by people of Jewish descent. The Ashkenazi Jewish genetic panel is a test to look for these rare diseases, which occur most often in people of Central and Eastern European (Ashkenazi) Jewish descent. Diseases in this group include Bloom syndrome, Canavan disease, Cystic fibrosis, familial dysautonomia, Fanconi anemia, Gaucher disease, Mucopolidosis, Niemann-Pick disease and Tay-Sachs disease. But diseases do not define Jewish peoplehood or Jewishness.

The genetic marker CMH (Cohanim Modal Haplotype) was first publicized in the journal *Nature* in a study that identified six differences in the DNA sequence of male Jews that identified as Cohens or Cohanim. The CMH marker

could represent the inheritance of over 100 generations from the founder of the patrilineal genetic line over 3000 years ago. But as McGonigle and Herman point out, “the presence of a certain haplotype within an individual is not a guarantee that the individual is Jewish or not.”

In an article in *Frontiers in Genetics* entitled “Genetic markers cannot determine Jewish descent,” Raphael Falk, a professor in the Department of Genetics at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, wrote: “Obviously, what kept Jews’ identity were their language, culture, tradition and religion.... However, the increasing reliance on scientific reductionism in biological thinking of the last two centuries eventually culminated in turning the evidence of DNA sequences into the essence of the characterization of Jewishness rather than its consequence.” He warned that “in spite of repeated efforts, there is no agreed upon criterion to identify Jews, and samples examined for the distribution of biological or molecular markers all depend on the preconceived biases of the investigators.” Falk goes on to assert that “races are not biological-meaningful classification entities,” and that the only reason for attempting to define them by genetics is to provide “socio-cultural justifications for discrimination on the basis of presumed and irrelevant biological properties.”

The danger of assigning a biological basis to ethnicity was laid bare by journalist Adam Serwere, writing for *The Atlantic*: “the Nazi Holocaust in Europe and slavery and Jim Crow in

the United States are outgrowths of the same ideology — the belief that human beings can be delineated into categories that share immutable biological traits distinguishing them from one another and determining their potential and behavior.” He explains, “Nazi antisemitism may not have been based on a ‘color line’ like the one that defined anti-Black racism in the United States, but it was based on a racial conception of humanity all the same.”

It is unclear what role genetics will play in Israel and the Jewish world of the future in defining who is a Jew or what Judaism is. There may even be some unintended consequences. The Lemba people of southern Africa, the Beta Israel of Ethiopia and the Kuki-Chin-Mizo from northeast India could all benefit from genetic verification of their Jewishness. Issues of race, color, religion and ethnicity will continue to be complex. Jews were considered Black as recently as 1910, as evidenced by a publication entitled *The Jew A Negro: Being A Study of the Jewish Ancestry From an Impartial Standpoint* which contended that “the Jew of today as well as his ancestors in other times, is the kinsman and descendant of the Negro.” Jews were transformed, as historian Elaine Tyler May explains in *Homeward Bound*, only when “children of immigrants identified as outsiders before World War II became ‘white’ after the war, gaining access to the privileges and opportunities that whiteness bestowed.”

Jews and Disabilities

Judaism and Inclusion: The Missing Link

by Michael Gordon, Ph.D.

My brother, David, may have intellectual limitations, but he finds unlimited joy and comfort in religious observance. He has belonged to as many as four different congregations at once, participates in multiple daily minyans (nowadays mainly online) and is a fixture at services on Friday evenings and Saturdays as well as every conceivable holiday. He loves that being involved in Jewish life keeps him in the company of others, provides him with scheduled activities during the day and connects him to a tradition he finds soothing.

If you were to join my brother in person at any of the two schuls he now attends where he lives in Florida, you would find that he enjoys a celebrity status. As he hands out the prayerbooks (he's an usher at both), everyone approaches him with a broad smile and a heartfelt greeting. Some will inevitably take me aside to tell me how much they adore David and how they find his intrepid nature and fundamental goodness an inspiration. Many will also let me know that I had better be taking good care of him because he means so much to them and their congregation.

While I know that individual congregants routinely embrace David in ways that often bring tears to my eyes, I'm less sure about the extent to which our Jewish institutions have formally encouraged or adopted that attitude of caring and inclusion. I cannot remember a single sermon over the course of my life that expressly addressed the importance of reaching out to congregants with disabilities, especially mental ones. Sure, we have a long tradition of treating individuals with learning and psychiatric problems. The history of psychiatry is replete with thought leaders who were Jewish, including Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Abraham Maslow, Kurt Lewin, David Wechsler, Bruno Bettelheim and many others.

But treating those with limitations is not the same as actively finding ways to fold them into the life of a community and address their spiritual needs. It's one thing to provide treatment to someone with a disability, but quite another to ensure that they are embraced and respected for the positive impact they can have on the spirit of the congregation, even if they're substantially different in how they think, feel, look and behave. Healing is not tantamount to acceptance.

And so I've gone on a bit of a mission to find out how Judaism regards individuals with disabilities.

I first asked five pulpit rabbis how many times over the years they had addressed the congregation on issues related to disability.

The only rabbi who had delivered a sermon on that topic has two children with special needs, and even he only did so once or twice over the course of decades. While the rabbis all acknowledged the importance of serving the religious needs of everyone in their congregation, they ruefully admitted that disability was never a focus of concern within the congregation. None of their synagogues had an inclusion committee. At a national level, the most formal initiative I could identify was the *Heneinu* Project.

I next read through the entire list of the 613 *mitzvot* we Jews hear about from early on in our education. It's a compendium of commandments, derived from biblical passages, a blueprint for a leading a holy life. They cover a wide range of topics, from dietary laws, judicial proceedings, warfare, property rights, idolatry, taxes, sacrifices, ritual purity and business practices to animal husbandry, proper dress and the best approach to dealing with lepers.

Some of the *mitzvot* speak directly to the overall importance of caring for others. You're supposed to love all human beings, relieve a neighbor (even an enemy) of his burdens and make sure not to insult the deaf or "place a stumbling block before the blind." It's also considered virtuous to give charity according to your means, not to stand by idly when a human life is in danger or speak in such a way as to bring shame to another Jew.

What you won't find is anything in the entire list that speaks directly to the importance of engaging those amongst us who have special needs, not only because they have those needs, but because they can enhance the community's spiritual life. Put another way, our forefathers were not into inclusion. They seemed more about self-protection, the maintenance of order and the prohibition of sexual kinkiness.

As for the Torah, well, it generally considers a disability as something that happens if you displease the Almighty. If anything, the ancient scribes were more worried about keeping someone out of the inner sanctum if they were at all imperfect

(like having so much as a blemish). For the most part, the bible considers disability as the consequence of divine retribution. If you fail to heed the Lord's commandments, watch out for paralysis, blindness, leprosy and all manner of other afflictions.

Hubert Humphrey famously said that the moral test of a government is how it treats the weakest members of society. Can the same be said of a religion? Should we be concerned that our faith, with all its emphasis on virtue, seems to have fallen short on how it approaches disability?

It does disappoint me that our Jewish tradition has so little good or specific to say about embracing the Davids of the world (we might give a pass to the father of the seder's Simple Son because he at least tried to make the Passover story meaningful for him). Given our history, you would

think we would be especially sensitive to what happens to people who are cast to the periphery because they are somehow atypical.

I believe that our rabbis may have also lost a prime opportunity to explore how being a Jew is more than just an intellectual exercise in the pursuit of an idealized existence. They could make the point that a good life can come to a person who orbits outside the Good Life; that maximizing personal joy and well-being stands as a loftier goal than eking out every last drop of academic or occupational attainment; that we should admire people for their goodness, not their greatness; that our tradition's clarion call to first respect life applies to all lives; that what matters for a person is their experience in the moment, not what may have been or might be; that religious practice helps us fashion an infrastructure for our lives, whether or not we follow or understand the theology; that limitations should never predestine a person to a life of limited dignity and meaning; that accepting limitations in others can help us accept them in ourselves; that holiness can flow from all who care.

Here's to a time when our rabbis and our synagogues might more fully embrace the importance of inclusion in community life.

Michael Gordon, a clinical psychologist, is professor emeritus of psychiatry at Upstate Medical University.

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Jews and Gender

A B'Mitzvah Story

Jewish law, *halacha*, has always recognized gender ambiguity. Unlike the modern concept of gender identity, however, this ambiguity is primarily confined to physical manifestations of gender. From earliest times, *halacha* has included commentary on the *tumtum*, a person of indeterminate gender, as well as the *androgynos*, a person with both male and female characteristics. There are 181 references in the *Mishna* and *Talmud* to the *tumtum* and 335 in classical *midrash* and Jewish law codes, and there are 149 references in *Mishna* and *Talmud*, and 350 in classical *midrash* and Jewish law codes to the *androgynos*. Rabbi Meir in the *Mishna* says the *tumtum* is “sometimes a man and sometimes a woman” and the *androgynos* is “a unique creature, neither male nor female.” According to a *midrash*, the first human being, Adam, was originally an *androgynos*.

In contemporary American society, gender identity and gender fluidity have become subjects of increased interest, even of political interest. In American Jewish society, as Sylvia



Barack Fishman points out in an article entitled “Gender in American Jewish Life,” “Evolving—and sometimes reversed—assumptions about maleness and femaleness have transformed many aspects

of American—and American Jewish—religious life and culture in an American environment characterized by increasingly porous boundaries in general.”

Closer to home, one local family had to confront the issue when their 13-year-old

began preparing for the traditional Jewish rite of passage celebrating the transition from childhood to adulthood at Temple Concord. Leah Kaufman is an OB-GYN, her husband Tom Hendricks is a stay-at-home father who works in IT. They have a daughter and a son; their oldest child, Ian, identifies as non-binary. When he read the PJ Library’s *Fish Out of Water*, he felt it was time not only to define himself but to take action to help others.

Ian’s *b’mitzvah* project involved “promoting education around how non-binary members and specifically Temple youth self-identify.” Their goal was threefold: ensuring safe spaces for discussions, support and knowledge about pronouns.” As they explored the topic, they learned about an organization called Keshetonline, which works for the full equality of all LGBTQI+ Jews and their families in Jewish life. On its website, Keshet has an Equality Directory, which lists LGBTQI+ inclusive Jewish institutions and clergy. They realized that Temple Concord was not listed. Ian worked with the Concord board and social action committee to change that.

While issues of safe spaces and support are critical for those who are non-binary or gender fluid, the matter of pronouns is arguably the most challenging issue for the general community. Whether English or Hebrew is being used, both languages are gendered. The use of the plural (they, them, their) instead of the singular (s/he, her/him, her/his) feels awkward to most people, and in Hebrew is further complicated by the fact that verbs must agree with the gender of their subjects. Rabbi Katz noted that the Reform movement has spent decades working on non-gendered language in its prayer books, and he doesn’t know which current language reforms will “stick,” but he emphasized that what matters is “who we are as human beings,” regardless of our gender identification. Dr. Kaufman added that she and Ian recognize that not everyone in the greater community “will be as accepting and supportive as Temple Concord” which is one of biggest challenges faced by non-binary and gender fluid teens.

When Ian addressed the congregation at their *b’mitzvah*, they delivered the following message: “I think that too many people believe that everyone is either one thing, or the other and that’s just not true. Everyone is different.”



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Gay, Jewish and Shepping Naches

by Sarah Young

No matter what anyone tells you, Judaism is an inclusive religion. Judaism believes that all of us are made *betzelem elohim*, in G-d's image. We are made as we are, and who we are is a reflection of G-d. Judaism is accepting and loving. Sometimes, though, people get in the way.

Some Jews, even well-intentioned ones, can give in to the bigotry in the world around them. As the outside world has long been at odds with gay and trans people, some Jews have not only accepted that but have also used their interpretation of a few verses of Torah to back it up. To them I say, remember that the world stands on three things: Torah, *avodah*, and *gimilut chasadim* (*Pirkei Avot* 1:2). Not on Torah alone, but on Torah combined with our work (which is to make the world a better place) and our loving kindness. In accepting and loving your LGBTQ+ family, friends and community members, you are both working to make the world a better place and showing loving kindness.

Pirkei Avot also commands us: "your house should be wide open" (1:5), "meet others with graciousness" (1:15), and "judge every person favorably," (1:6). How can we follow this and still be hateful? The simple answer is that we cannot.

I have been fortunate that my community — both my family and my larger synagogue family at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas — have shown me nothing but support and respect. I would expect nothing less from my fellow Jews.

Rabbi Andrew Pepperstone, who was my rabbi during my teenage years, helped me get involved in Keshet, an organization working toward the total inclusion of LGBTQ+ Jews in the Jewish world. I, and other young people from our synagogue, became involved in educating others, helping plan the yearly Keshet *Shabbaton* for high schoolers and even being changemakers when necessary.

We worked with USY (United Synagogue Youth), Camp Ramah and even our schools to become more inclusive, safer. Hadar Pepperstone and I successfully lobbied for gender neutral bathrooms in our high school using the tools I learned from USY's "Advocacy Boot Camp" at the international convention in 2015. My hunger for change and the beginning of my career as an activist were inspired by Judaism's drive to do *tikkun olam*, to make the world a better place, and USY



helped me find the tools I needed. USY, like Judaism itself, is a welcoming and loving place.

It wasn't always, though. When I went to my first regional convention as an eighth grader in 2012, I experienced being bullied for being gay for the first time. I had just shaved my head (for the childhood cancer research fundraiser St. Baldrick's), and an older boy looked me up and down as I got off the bus and called me a dyke. I didn't even know what the word meant at the time, but when I found out, I avoided regional USY events for almost two years. Especially because he served on the regional board.

When I later told the story to a group of fellow USYers at a Keshet *shabbaton*, they all shook their heads and said that their first experiences getting bullied for their identity were also at USY. Two regional advisors were there for that conversation, and they helped us get involved in brainstorming how to make USY safer for LGBTQ+ teens. Our conclusion was that it was incumbent not only on USYers, but also USY leadership from high school board members to staff to the director, to model acceptance, *tikkun olam* and *gimilut chasadim*.

We helped change the culture in USY because we all knew that Judaism is an

inherently inclusive and loving religion, and our institutions needed to reflect that. USYers from all over America and Canada had SA/TO (Social Action/Tikkun Olam) programming to learn about acceptance and stamping out homophobia, especially in Jewish spaces. Then they went back to their communities and helped teach them about the same things.

I personally have faced only small-scale discrimination and intolerance from the Jewish community. A kid here or there at camp or USY, the odd older person who is a strict biblical textualist and sometimes even non-Jews asking how I can be both gay and Jewish. By and large, I've been extremely lucky. In my work with Keshet, though, I knew many young people who weren't as lucky.

Some of them were still in the closet and never planned to come out. One young gay man told me he hoped to find a lesbian he could marry so they could have a traditional Jewish family without the expectation of loving each other. One person was kicked out of their home when they came out as trans, and had their life threatened over it by members of a local gang who went to the same school. One of the people quietly told us that her parents had not only kicked her out when she came out as trans but had sat *shiva* for her.

These stories are heartbreaking, but far from unique. They exist inside and outside of the Jewish community and don't just come from those who are more religious or traditional. I'm sure that some families and communities act the way they do because they think Judaism mandates it, but others have simply let the homophobia and transphobia from the outside world seep in. They ignore the fact that Judaism commands us to do better.

Chapter 2 verse 16 of *Pirkei Avot* reminds us that "The evil eye, the evil inclination, and hatred of [God's] creatures drive a person out of the world." When we hate others — others who are *all* creatures of G-d — we drive them not just from our family and community, not just from Judaism and G-d, but from our very world. That is an awesome responsibility that we have to love and support one another, regardless of our differences.

Hate is not a Jewish value. Performing acts of loving kindness is. Discrimination is not a Jewish value. Pursuing justice is. Driving people out of the community is not a Jewish value. Loving your neighbor is. Burning bridges is not a Jewish value. Repairing the world is. As they like to say in the LGBTQ+ Jewish world: *veahavta*

lereacha (*gam im hoo lo*) *kamocho*. Love your neighbor (even who is not) like yourself.

Sarah Young was born and raised in Syracuse where she remains an active member of the Jewish community. She is an activist and the author of *Nice Jewish Boys* (2017), *Plus One* (2018), and *Parsha Poetry* (2022). She will be pursuing her Master of Fine Arts degree in children's literature and writing for children this fall at Simmons University.

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Jews of Color

Interview With Arel Moodie

An article by Michele Chabin in the Birthright Israel blog described Arel Moodie as follows: "Arel Moodie, the son of a white Jewish mother and a Black father, experienced a core identity struggle through most of his teenage years. 'It was one of the biggest pieces of turmoil in my adolescence,' said Moodie, who was raised in a predominantly African-American neighborhood in Brooklyn and attended Jewish camps every summer. 'I asked myself, "Who am I? Where do I fit in?" I felt like I had to make a choice between the Jewish side, the white side, the Black side.'

Moodie, now 37, began to find some answers during a Birthright Israel trip several years ago, where a chance encounter changed the way he thought about himself. Excited at seeing a Black Israeli soldier wearing a kippah, Moodie decided to approach him. 'I went up to him expecting that this incredible, long-lost brother would hug me,' he said. "It was like, "Omigosh there's more of us!" I sort of pantomimed, "You're a Brown Jew, I'm a Brown Jew. That's amazing!" But he told me, "No, we're just Jewish." Moodie said the encounter led him to 'own' his Jewishness, whereas previously he would elude the issue by telling himself and others that he was simply raised Jewish or that his mother was Jewish. 'I had always put a qualifier to my Jewish identity,' Moodie said. 'I realized I can just be Jewish while honoring my African-American identity. I don't have to choose between my identities.' Today he goes to synagogue regularly and his children attend Jewish day school."

We asked Arel to tell us more about his experiences as a Jew of Color in Central New York. This is his story:

As a professional speaker, I get to travel a lot (at least, before the pandemic, I did). And with travel came visiting new places, and I would sometimes travel over a Jewish holiday or Shabbat. During those times, I would typically call the local synagogue and let them know I was visiting and how I would like to attend services. I would always



get welcomed with open arms over the phone.

When I would show up to the synagogue... there was always a fun moment where I would let the rabbi or whomever I spoke to know that I was the person who called, and I would see the look on their face. I always assumed it was for two reasons. 1) Because I'm young(ish). 2) Mostly because I'm brown.

I can typically see all the questions rushing through their minds, colliding into one moment in time as they look at me. "Are you Jewish? How are you Jewish? Did you convert? If so, why?" And so on and so on.

I typically get similar questions from people who are trying their best to figure me out. The question-and-answer sequence typically would go like this:

Q: Where are you from?

A: New York

Q: No I mean, where were you born?

A: Brooklyn

Q: But where were your parents born?

A: Brooklyn and Queen

Q: How long have you been interested in Judaism?

A: My whole life

And then they are stumped, not knowing how to ask the real question they want to ask: "HOW THE HECK ARE YOU JEWISH?!?!?"

So, I've actually learned to skip that whole uncomfortable exchange by, as soon as I possibly can, interweaving in how my dad is a dark-skinned Jamaican man and my mom is a white Ashkenazi Jew. I refer to myself as a Jew-maicani (that usually gets a chuckle), and with that out of the way, we can then connect human to human.

Which brings me to my experience in the Syracuse area. What I fell in love about the community here is it seems no one really cared that I was brown and Jewish. I think the way people saw me was this way: If you say you are Jewish and you want to be involved, that's good enough for us.

When I was synagogue shopping, I remember my first visit to CBS-CS on a Friday night for Shabbat. On my first visit, I was invited to someone's house that night for a Shabbat meal...and in that moment, I knew this was my synagogue, and it has been for the last 13 years.

I by no means speak for the entire JOC (Jews of Color) community, but I will say that every Jew of Color is used to the stares, the questions and the confused faces. What is truly refreshing is when people look past your skin and see your soul. The best advice I could give to create a more welcoming environment for anyone that doesn't fit your "typical viewpoint" of what one might think a Jew looks like is simply this: If they say they are Jewish and they want to be involved, that's good enough.

I promise that, at some point, their background story will come up, but don't force it to be within the first conversation. Let them bring it up when they feel comfortable, and trust me, it will eventually come up. But to be seen simply for you who you are, and your intent to be involved is a beautiful thing. It's how I've always felt in the Syracuse Jewish community and why I choose to live here when I could live anywhere there is an internet connection and an airport.

We have a special community here, and I'm truly grateful to be a part of it. And honestly, if someone says they are a Jew, no matter what they look like, and they want to be involved, that truly should be good enough.



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American Pie

The following article is excerpted from a statement Thelie Trotty-Selzer presented at the Federation's *Shema Room* in 2021:

The Civil Rights movement occurred over half a century ago. In its beginnings, Jews and blacks were not considered separate communities. Rabbis Herschel and Eisenshat of Temple Emanuel aligned with Dr. Martin Luther King and joined future Senator John Lewis in Selma, Alabama in the march across Edmund Pettus Bridge. Since then, little has changed the nature of the systemic institutionalized racism that permeates American life regardless of class or ethnic group. Ibram X. Kendi, in *How to Be an Antiracist*, maintains that saying "I am not a racist" is not enough. It is passive, requiring no action and changing nothing. To be an anti-racist is to be an activist.

As a Native American [Oglala-Lakota], I am a Jew by choice. A family trip to Israel affected me profoundly. Upon my return I formally converted to Judaism. I chose to marry a Jew; my daughter was raised as a Jew. No one has the power to make me feel non-Jewish without my consent, and it is my responsibility to continue, with my husband, to develop a set of Jewish

values and a lifestyle that are meaningful for our family. My daughter has two young children. They were named in synagogue. and are learning the rituals for Shabbat and other holidays.

If our commandments have meaning, we must be seriously committed to *Tikun Olam*. We must confront our own racism and emerge dedicated to improving the world. Jews of Color and Jews of Many Hues have advanced this conversation. As Jews have suffered the plight of being a minority community, so have most communities of color. We must return to the alliance that once existed to collaboratively become agents of change. Then, as a future of great diversity evolves, we can demonstrate leadership in seeking a pathway toward social justice, righteousness and being a single community sharing this land. We must change the paradigm of our own socialization. Let us embrace the wisdom from this quote: "Equal rights for others does not mean fewer rights for you. It is not pie."



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Red, White and Blue Jews

American Jews and Israel

by Richard Wilkins

Jewish history begins with God's call to Abram: "Go ... to the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). Unbreakable connection to the Land of Israel has ever been central to Jewish consciousness and critical towards preservation of national cohesion. Such sentiments suffuse the liturgy. We pray for rain in fall, dew in spring, not for ourselves, but for the Land. Seders and Yom Kippur conclude with "Next Year in Jerusalem." That was the sustaining hope of a people, scattered, over two millennia, "among all peoples, from end of earth to end of earth" (Deuteronomy 28:64). A long, bitter exile, marked for centuries by degradation, dispossession and displacement, with few "Golden Ages."

Modernity dawned with expectation of radical change. Following the European Enlightenment, American and French Revolutions promised citizen equality, raising hopes that antisemitism would become a declining force. France's "Dreyfus Affair" punctured such fantasies. Captain Alfred Dreyfus's trial was witnessed by Viennese journalist, Theodore Herzl. Hearing shouts of "Death to the Jews," he realized that the Jews' faith in the future was fatefully futile. The answer was his enormously influential book, *The Jewish State*.

Post-Holocaust, a fully one-third diminished Jewish people lay prostrate, devastated and demoralized. Survivors languished in European Displaced Persons (D.P.) camps, the gates to Palestine, shut by Britain. Powerful American government officials and the U.K. Foreign Office opposed establishment of a Jewish state. Yet another international betrayal, repudiating the Balfour Declaration, San Remo British Mandate conferral, League of Nations confirmation, passed to successor United Nations. International approbation for Jewish statehood, that Herzl's successors had wrought, now seemed lost. Mandate Jews defiantly rebelled. The Haganah, Irgun and others drove the British to relinquish the Mandate. The UN General Assembly voted its partition into Jewish and Arab states. The Jews accepted; the Arabs didn't and immediately invaded Israel when it declared independence. Despite enormous war losses, Israel survived.

"God will bring back your captivity to the Land that your forefathers possessed, and you shall possess it" (Deuteronomy 30:3,4,5). However providential, Israel is an imperfect, normal nation. Its European style Proportional Representation electoral system is deeply dysfunctional,

its politics, frequently fractious. Deep societal divisions exist. While it could be more sensitive to their concerns, the Diaspora needs be more understanding of the enormous security challenges - external, internal and terrorism - Israel faces against implacable enemies. Despite omnipresent threats, Israel's people rank among the happiest in the world. It is very far from being the fictitious monster maliciously portrayed by its enemies.

Robert Frost once said "home is where, when you have nowhere else to go, they have to take you in." For Jews, that's Israel, its role played, neither reluctantly nor passively. It has absorbed waves of refugees - Holocaust survivors, Arab state expellees, Yemins, Ethiopians, Soviets and now Ukrainians. For Jews in trouble anywhere, Israel is there. It's also among the first to respond to humanitarian crises, worldwide.

Israel now houses the world's largest Jewish community, assuming worldwide leadership. It will generate most of the energy, innovation, creativity and the "new blossoming of the Jewish spirit" that Herzl foresaw. For centuries, Jewish presences benefitted many ungrateful hosts. A Jewish polity can now apply its ingenuity to enrich, empower and ennoble itself, while becoming a full partner in the community of nations.

This "Startup Nation" has introduced a veritable cornucopia of innovative technology, such as drip irrigation and advanced desalinization methodology. It has done groundbreaking work in solar and other alternative energies. The "Healing Nation" has produced seemingly miraculous medical devices, enabling the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the paralyzed to walk.

Such successes should make Jews everywhere exceedingly proud. Israel has



transformed the image of the Jews from a frail and frightened people to a proud and strong people. Israel continues to contribute so much to make the world better. And yet, it is everywhere under attack, accused of the age's worst crimes, boycotted, shunned and turned into an illegitimate pariah nation.

The UN and its many agencies are among the worst offenders. Nongovernmental organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, issue biased condemnatory reports. Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) agitation has infested North American campuses, with Jewish students and faculty being harassed, stigmatized and marginalized, often to administrative indifference. Many campuses host annual Israel Apartheid Weeks. Academic associations, such as the Middle East Studies Association, now pursue academic boycotts against Israeli institutions.

Those pointing fingers at Israel rarely reflect on whom they support. The Palestinian "narrative" is a pastiche of lies. Jewish millennia-long presence in its historic homeland is erased, archaeological evidence ignored. "Pay for Slay" richly rewards, based on attack severity, those heeding such calls. The "martyred" are honored within public spaces, their families lavishly compensated. Pledged under Oslo to "teach for peace," Palestinian leaders instead preach and prepare for war. They are never ready to negotiate an end to this century-old conflict. Though pretending to desperately desire statehood, they refuse to recognize a sovereign Mideast Jewish State.

The mainstream media never mention this. Their reporting is historically illiterate, without context or chronology. They pursue a groupthink "oppressor

vs. oppressed" paradigm. Threatened by the Palestinian Authority or Hamas, they mindlessly or fearfully transmit the most blatant lies. Israeli reactions, but not precipitating Hamas actions, are dutifully reported. Palestinians never have any agency or guile. Only Israel's contentions are ever questioned.

American Jews need to wake up. They have lived through a "Golden Age" that is now ending, its relative numbers diminishing, its political clout crumbling. Jews thrive when equality of opportunity reigns. What does the future hold for talented Jews, who are only two percent of the population? Antisemitism is growing apace in America. America's world standing is deteriorating rapidly, presaging serious security and economic woes. Great nations don't steeply decline peacefully. While the U.S. is the greatest nation ever, and the Jews' securest refuge, it's not immune from history. We may eventually need Israel, more than it now needs us.

"We Are One" was once the American Jewish community's organizing watchword. It was never perfectly descriptive, though far more than now, but appropriately aspirational. Though there's still solid support for Israel, the community is being riven by partisan politics, demoralized by constant anti-Israel slanders, greatly concerned at its youth being captivated by campus canards and beset by renegade fringe groups. The need now is for unity.

Ben Franklin warned fellow revolutionaries to "hang together or hang separately." Israel's 75th anniversary year ought to be one for reinvigorating support for the Jewish state, retelling its remarkable story, refuting the lies levelled against it and resisting all attempts, from within or without, to alienate us from our brethren. The fates of Israel and world Jewry are inextricably intertwined. American Jews cannot ignore the existential threats facing Israel.

Were its enemies to achieve their goal of destroying the Jewish State, the consequences would be catastrophic, a Jewish disaster comparable only to the Holocaust. Millions of Israelis would die or be displaced, this time with nowhere to go. That would likely lead inexorably to the final, tragic disintegration of Jewry.

Not care for Israel? How could you not?

Richard Wilkins' writings appear frequently in Jewish and other media.

The 2020 Pew Report on American Jewry measured levels of connectedness with Israel and found that young U.S. Jews are less emotionally attached to Israel than older ones. Among older Jews, more than half say caring about Israel is essential to what being Jewish means to them, and an additional 37% say it is important but not essential. By contrast, among Jewish adults under 30, only one-third say that caring about Israel is essential and more than one-quarter (27%) say it's not important to what being Jewish means to them.

Why Israel Matters to US

by Brian Raphael, M.D.

While growing up and attending the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, I never thought I would need to write an article about why Israel is so important to American Jews and why we should support her and her existence. After all, less than 85 years ago Nazis tried to exterminate us solely based on our religion. It was less than 75 years ago when Israel's neighbors decided to attack her minutes after the world accepted her creation. So, why now do many American Jews turn their back on the only Jewish nation in the world? A nation that is more progressive than any other in the region and arguably one of the most progressive in the world?

One could argue that these Jews are self-hating or antisemitic. One could explain that they are too young to know what the world was like when gas chambers and mass murders were used. Some see it is a sign of apathy or even self-righteousness as Jews are living comfortably under the blanket of the American flag. Regardless of the reason, I am here to declare that these Jews are wrong.

The threat to Israel is not a theoretical crisis, but a very real one. There are people around the world who call for the destruction of Israel solely because it is the *Jewish* homeland. No one in their right mind has thechutzpah to justify those actions to me. So how do people in our own community come to feel that Israel does not deserve our support?

We need to speak out when people, including politicians, call for the destruction of Israel or support BDS. We need to speak out when politicians attempt to withhold money for the Iron Dome. We cannot be silent, like those in Europe who sat idly by and watched as our ancestors were ushered to concentration camps. We must use every opportunity to stand up to those who spread lies at the cost of Israel.

I am worried that many of the leaders in the Jewish community have become weak and have kowtowed to the vocal minority. It is because of this lack of leadership that our young generation does not understand the importance of Israel and why we need to continue to support her. As the last of the Holocaust survivors dwindle in numbers, it is our duty to pass along the knowledge and importance of the phrase "Never Again."

This is not a simple task. The visual of a number stamped on our relatives' arms was reason enough to remind us of Israel's importance. Now that these visual motivations are no longer present, I call on all who hold leadership positions to carry that torch.

We cannot allow an outspoken minority to attack Israel and its existence. We must stand up to those who are against Israel, or who support BDS or who make antisemitic claims that Israel is an apartheid state. I call on all of you to help educate those who are misinformed about the existence of Israel. This task is not easy because it is clear that most people would rather follow social media posts than read history books. But we need to try.

As you can see, I am very passionate about this topic. I jumped at the opportunity to write this essay for a few reasons. One was because I took time learning about the history of Israel and had an incredible education at our Jewish day school on this topic. Another reason was because I have family who fought for the Israeli Defense Forces. My father-in-law served in an elite paratrooper division as he defended Israel during both the Yom Kippur and Six-Day War and my brother-in-law was a fighter in the IDF. I cannot stand by when the existence of the Jewish state is at risk based on misinformation or distortion of historical facts. For me, this is not some graph or stat that can be manipulated in 280 characters on a Twitter account. This is my opportunity to make sure "it never happens again."

Do Jews Have Dual Loyalties?

by Rabbi Barry R. Baron, Chaplain (Colonel) U.S. Army, Retired

In 70 CE, the general serving as second-in-command of the Roman army that sacked Jerusalem and burned the Temple was a Jew. Tiberius Julius Alexander was the scion of a wealthy Egyptian Jewish family. By the time he was born, Jews had been living in several countries outside the Land of Israel for more than seven hundred years.

Under Roman rule, a few Jews assimilated into the upper reaches of Roman society, often at the cost of neglecting or renouncing their ties to Jews, Judaism and Judea, as the Romans referred to Israel. Tiberius Julius was one of these. His and his soldiers' actions destroyed Jews' spiritual and political homeland.

While the Roman Empire's concept of individual citizenship created possibilities for assimilation into the social elite simply by abandoning, or at least downplaying, other loyalties, the empire's eclipse in the fifth century CE eliminated its category of individual citizenship from societal discourse. Countries in which Jews lived in medieval, renaissance, and early modern times conferred privileges based on group identities. Individual Jews had no rights per se; they were viewed as a subordinate social grouping enjoying whatever protections a ruler might care to grant.

Beginning in mid-17th century England and spreading to England's American colonies and to France over the course of the next century, a new notion of citizenship, based on individual rights and liberties (at least for White males) that derived from God or Nature, supplanted the concept of group privileges conferred by rulers. While most Jews in this period did not live in England or America, those who did came to enjoy unprecedented freedom and to respond with enthusiastic loyalty to their adopted countries.

The French Revolution in the late 18th century, brought these concepts of individual liberty to mass European consciousness but, in the Jewish case, rested uneasily alongside traditions that regarded Jews as an inferior group deserving hostile treatment. Arguments in France and Germany against extending rights to Jews invoked the notion that Jews could not give undivided loyalty to the state given their group loyalties to other Jews. These questions were seldom, if ever, raised in the United States. Even as the Jewish population



grew from 2,500 in 1775 to roughly five million in 1924, Jews were not charged with loyalty to a foreign power. That situation only began to change with Israel's declaring independence in 1948, creating a Jewish state to which Jews might conceivably owe allegiance.

For a small number of American Jews, dual American-Israeli loyalties exist in fact, since they hold citizenship in both countries. A slightly larger number have loyalties that might be described as confused; these are people who, while happily living in the United States, believe that it is proper for Jews to serve in the IDF while articulating their unwillingness to render similar service in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Most of us do not fall into either of these categories. We are happy to live in the United States and enjoy the freedom our citizenship affords. We number, among friends and relatives, those who have answered their country's call to military and other forms of public service. While most of us support the State of Israel, we express that support in the political realm by voting for candidates who believe that America and Israel should continue building upon their close and mutually beneficial relationship.

Life in America has brought countless blessings to generations of Jews. We are happy to be here and will always wish our country well.

Rabbi Baron is the University Chaplain and Campus Rabbi at Colgate University.

Jewish News From Israel And Around The World



Israel signs historic free trade deal with the United Arab Emirates. The agreement, the first with an Arab country, will eliminate customs duties on 96% of food and agricultural products, cosmetics, medical equipment and medicine. A senior Israeli official also visited Saudi Arabia for talks on security, one of several recent signs indicating Riyadh could be the next capital to move toward normalizing relations with the Jewish state.

Neurological discovery. Researchers at Tel Aviv University found that a mutation in genes ADNP and SHANK3 causes conditions such as autism, schizophrenia and neuro-degenerative diseases like Alzheimer's. They also found that an experimental therapy Davunetide can counter the effects of the mutation. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41380-022-01603-w>

Israeli food tech at the UN. On Israel's Independence Day, Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Gilad Erdan presented, to dozens of UN ambassadors, food produced by Israeli sustainable food tech. They included vegan milk, protein from chickpeas and cultivated meat.

<https://www.jns.org/israels-un-ambassador-turns-to-food-tech-to-win-hearts-minds-and-stomachs/>

Israel is buzzing! The Beehome from Israel's Beewise is reversing the decline of one of the most important species on the planet. Each Beehome houses 2 million

bees and some one hundred of these high-tech hives are already functioning in Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/kibbutz-employs-new-smart-hive-tech-to-keep-its-bees-buzzing/>

Re-charging deal for more Israeli buses. Israel's Electreon has signed a \$1.9 million agreement with Israel's fourth-largest bus operator Electra Afikim, to supply its wireless, dynamic charging infrastructure to simultaneously charge 30 buses. Electreon already signed with Israel's Dan Buses. <https://nocamels.com/2022/05/electreon-agreement-israel/>

No baby formula, try something Else. The safe, pure, plant-based baby food products of Israel's Else Nutrition are reshaping the industry. It is filling a market gap caused by the shortage of baby formula and a desperate need for products free of heavy metals. <https://www.ibtimes.com/recent-baby-formula-shortage-else-nutrition-well-positioned-leadership-space-3511011>

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Red, White and Blue Jews

How Teens Feel About Israel

Ninth graders at the Rabbi Epstein School study the Jewish communal institutions of Central New York, including the Federation. After examining the mission and budget of the Federation, they did an exercise in which they “allocated” the million dollars raised each year to various causes. To their teacher’s surprise, they allocated the major portion of the funding to education and security. Support for Israel came in a distant third in the support distribution.

As a follow-up to that session, the students met to discuss why they ranked support for Israel less highly. The consensus was that the needs of the American Jewish community were so much more urgent that they needed to be given priority. Jewish education was definitely at the top of the agenda and security, particularly in the form of guards, came in second.

The class was very sensitive to the rise in antisemitism, although none had experienced it directly or personally. They cited incidents of others being teased or ridiculed for wearing Stars of David, of seeing students make the Nazi salute or of non-Jewish students bringing kippot to school and throwing them around. While these incidents were distasteful, none rose to the level of antisemitism. Still, they were clearly aware of the attacks around the country on Jews, on people of color and, most regrettably, on the very day they were meeting, of a school shooting that took the lives of 18 children and one teacher. While they were not personally afraid, they took the issue seriously. Asked whether they would participate in a march in support of Israel in Syracuse, they were completely in favor of doing so.

What the teens were most aware of and distressed by were the disagreements and disparities within Judaism. They were keenly aware that ultra-Orthodox Jews, both in the U.S. and in Israel, differed in many ways from Jews of other movements particularly with regard to issues of social justice. They felt that the influence of religious Jews in Israel on the government was detrimental to democracy and they saw, in America, political divisions that paralleled religious divisions. While they very much wanted Israel to be a Jewish state, they did not want it to be one at the expense of being a democracy.

Among the six students in the class, one identified as atheist, one as Orthodox, three as Reform and one as unclassified. Asked how important Judaism was in their lives, they gave answers in percentages (as requested) ranging from 5 to 55%. Visiting Israel was also a major priority for one, but much less important for most and for one, not a priority at all. Learning Hebrew was seen as a relatively important and enjoyable activity even though its utility was questioned.

These six teens were all graduates of the Day School; two thirds had visited



Israel; they were enrolled in the Epstein School. They were aware of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Their opinions were carefully thought-out and reasonably well-informed. They were concerned with how Israel is viewed by others and concerned that their commitment to inclusiveness and democracy was not reflected in the Israel they knew. Listening

to their thoughts, their words and their opinions is vital to understanding how the younger generation perceives Israel and responding in such a way as to gain their lasting commitment to and support of the Jewish state.

Thanks to Zach, Jonah, Dory, Shimi, Ari and Leora for sharing their insights and views with JO readers.

Memorial Day 2022

Memorial Day honors the men and women of the United States armed forces who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. For decades, students from the Syracuse Hebrew Day School have placed flags on the graves of local Jewish veterans under the guidance of Rabbi Evan Shore and Steven Sisskind. They go to all of the Jewish cemeteries in Syracuse with the exception of the Temple Concord sections of Woodlawn Cemetery, where Steve Nathan plants the flags.



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Inclusive Cookbooks

For those who grew up with Jennie Grossinger's cookbook, the trilogy *The Italian Kosher Cookbook*, *The French Kosher Cookbook*, *The Italian Kosher Cookbook* was about as adventurous as one could get with Jewish cooking. Between maintaining the laws of *kashrut* and trying to make everything taste as good as *bubbe* did, there wasn't too much variety or innovation in Jewish cookbooks. That changed in the 21st century. A plethora of new Jewish cookbooks has emerged, combining tradition and innovation and proving that Jewish cooking is not limited to brisket and kugel. The *JO* wanted to introduce some of the newer ones, reflective of the growing diversity and inclusiveness of the Jewish community, to our readers:

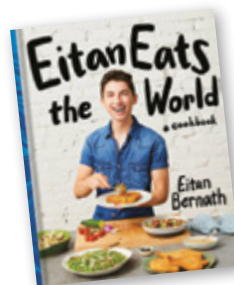
Koshersoul: The Faith and Food Journey of an African American Jew by Michael W. Twitty

Michael Twitty, a James Beard Award winner, explores the cultural crossroads of Jewish and African diaspora cuisine and issues of memory, identity and food. *Koshersoul* considers the marriage of two of the most distinctive culinary cultures in the world today: the foods and traditions of the African Atlantic and the global Jewish diaspora. To Twitty, the creation of African-Jewish cooking is a conversation of migrations and a dialogue of diasporas offering a

background for inventive recipes and the people who create them. What most intrigues him is not just who makes the food, but how the food makes the people. Jews of Color are not outliers, Twitty contends, but significant and meaningful cultural creators in both Black and Jewish civilizations.

Eitan Eats the World by Eitan Bernath

Eitan Bernath is a 20-year-old American celebrity chef, entertainer, author, social media influencer, TV personality and entrepreneur with seven



million followers across his social media accounts. His debut cookbook, *Eitan Eats the World*, is not marketed as a Jewish or a kosher cookbook, but all of the recipes are kosher – even his take on a cheeseburger from California's famous In-N-Out chain. That recipe, for example, calls for 450 grams ground protein (Eitan uses plant-based protein). "One of the things I was most excited about, especially for kosher-eaters," Bernath says, "is that a lot of recipes will push kosher cooks out of their culinary comfort zone." His cookbook includes eighty-five inventive and approachable recipes, paired with mouthwatering photography. They range from new twists on comfort food and classics (PB&J Pancakes, Double Grilled Cheese with Blueberry-Thyme Jam, Bourbon Brown Butter Chocolate Chunk Cookies) to his versions of dishes from around the world (Green Shakshuka, Chicken Kathi Roll, Beef Souvlaki) that he has meticulously studied with friends, neighbors and other chefs.

Bene Appetit: The Cuisine of Indian Jews by Esther David

The Jewish community in India is a tiny but important part of the population. There are some five thousand Jews and five Jewish communities in India, but they are fast diminishing in number. Esther David explores the lifestyle and cuisine of the Jews in every region, from the Bene Israelis of western India to the Bene Menashes of the Northeast, the Bene Ephraims of Andhra Pradesh, the Baghdadi Jews of Kolkata and the Kochi Jews. She discovers that while they all follow the laws of *kashrut*, they have also adapted to the local cuisine. Extensively researched, with heartwarming anecdotes and mouthwatering recipes, *Bene Appetit* offers a holistic portrait of a little-known community.



Sababa: Fresh, Sunny Flavors From My Israeli Kitchen by Adeena Sussman

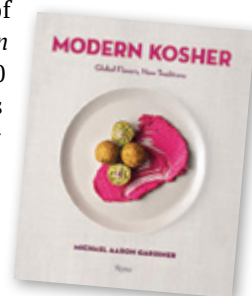
Americans have begun to appreciate the spicy, bright flavors of Israeli cuisine, and in this timely cookbook, Sussman

shows readers how to use border-crossing kitchen staples-- tahini, sumac, silan, harissa and za'atar---to delicious effect, while also introducing more exotic spices and ingredients. Recipes for dishes such as Freekeh and Roasted Grape Salad, Crudo with Cherries and Squeezed Tomatoes, Schug-Marinated Lamb Chops and Tahini Caramel Tart make fresh tastes accessible and easy for the home cook.



Modern Kosher: Global Flavors, New Traditions by Michael Gardiner

With a food-forward, modern approach to the laws of *kashrut*, *Modern Kosher* offers 100 original recipes showing the breadth of flavors, textures, ingredients and techniques available to the kosher cook. Recipes from Ashkenazi, Sephardi and contemporary Israeli traditions, made with fresh ingredients and modern techniques, present a contemporary vision of kosher cooking. *Modern Kosher* includes dishes from Latin America, Asia and other international cuisines and practical pantry recipes, including stocks, sauces, oils and pickles, plus the ultimate recipes for *schmaltz* and *gribenes*. Vegans, vegetarians and gluten-free cooks will also find recipes to try.



I Thought I'd Never Taste This Again: Cuisine of Sephardic Morocco by Mercedes Castiel

This cookbook is a tribute to how food can capture personal stories in what are known as Proustian Moments. Mercedes Castiel has created an easy-to-follow cookbook for the home cook which uses the flavors and aromas of cumin, turmeric and saffron to transport diners to a foreign world. It includes recipes that survived for hundreds of years since the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. Not just a collection of recipes, this cookbook is about connecting to the past, honoring it in the present and preserving it for the future.



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Syracuse Community Hebrew School Year-End Roundup

by Ora Jezer

Did you know Hebrew School can be FUN?

Besides learning to lead *tfillot*, read Hebrew and deep dive into meaning, SCHS had a blast. Upon entering our school, there is always a buzz in the air with excitement. Coming out of two years of remote interactions, this year was filled with exciting interactions with our larger community.

We collaborated with Syracuse Jewish Family Service on regular programming between Jewish students and seniors from different faith backgrounds providing an enriching opportunity for our students to share what they are learning at SCHS. This program strengthened our students' communication skills and reinforced their learning.

Our intercontinental programming with an Israeli school reinforced our core value of *kehillah*, community. We believe that there is no greater opportunity than for our students to learn Hebrew and engage with similar age students in Israel. Whether students are in search of the Marvel characters who emulate virtues in the *tfillah*, finding Hebrew words with a lightsaber, or video chatting with students in Israel, students learn to read Hebrew and engage in the meaning of prayer. The students actively engaged in prayer, leading along with clergy for all services.

SCHS has become a model for other communities in our ability to foster a sense of Jewish community in a creative learning environment. SCHS is one of the only communities where three synagogues work collaboratively, giving guidance in curriculum development and leading *tfillah* together. This, in a time of great division, is certainly something we are very proud to represent.

Our new technology became a leader for many schools. Our hybrid model included new technology which automatically focused on the speaker, increasing active collaboration and increased participation in connecting our online and in-person communities.

Students became so engaged in their activities that they didn't want to leave when school ended. Throughout the year, our students sang together, arm in arm, as they walked the halls to leave. Big smiles adorned their faces,



and their laughter echoed in the halls. If nothing else, they have learned that Hebrew school can be a place where old traditions meet new, modern fun. We hope that these bright young minds will go forth in the world and bring new education for the generations to follow in their footsteps. As it has been for millennia, so too will it continue to be.

Shalom to Two Educators

Moshe Alfasi, our Israeli teacher who is much beloved by both students and faculty, is returning home. He takes with him a piece of our hearts and the best wishes of our community, which has been blessed with his patience and kindness. Andrea Waldman, our fearless administrative director, who ensured the school did not fall to pieces (and whose role, while vital to our success, often went unnoticed behind the scenes), is also retiring from her position. We are forever indebted to her for her experience, courage and willingness to take on an endless amount of work. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to these two wonderful people, both of whom have made SCHS more than just a school these past years. You have helped make it into a home for our students.

Day School Lag B'Omer Alumni Homecoming



On a holiday known for picnics, bonfires and the lifting of a plague, the Syracuse Hebrew Day School's first ever Alumni Homecoming fit the bill. Having identified fifty alumni who either stayed in Central New York or who moved back after completing their education, the Day School, with the support of the Jewish Federation of Central New York, invited them to get together to roast hot dogs and marshmallows and renew friendships or make new connections. The sun shone after a rainy day, highlighted by the school's annual Color Wars, as alumni of many different classes and generations enjoyed each other's company, noshed and reminisced with former teachers and classmates. Current and former students enjoyed the bonfire, looking through scrapbooks and getting acquainted or reacquainted. Never far from anyone's mind was the similarity between the plague that Rabbi Akiva's students endured as the COVID pandemic which has so impacted our own recent past. It was a very meaningful celebration of Lag b'Omer.

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Mitzvah Day at Temple Adath Yeshurun

by Sonali McIntyre

On Sunday, May 15, nearly 65 members of Temple Adath Yeshurun gathered together for "Mitzvah Day" - an afternoon filled with volunteer activities to help Ukrainian children and the Ukrainian Jewish community. Activities included making artwork and cards to send to the children, creating children's activity kits and packing soup kits for distribution to the most vulnerable in the Jewish Ukrainian community.

The program was coordinated by Lauren Thirer, a member of the Board of Directors at TAY and chair of the TAY Programming Committee, with assistance from Dr. Gennady and Katya Bratslavsky, members of TAY. The letters and cards were sent to the Bratslavskys' contacts in the children's hospital in Kyiv. Soup kits and craft kits were distributed to Action for Post-Soviet Jewry (actionpsj.org).

Money was also raised and distributed to Help Free Ukraine, a fund established



by Dr. Bratslavsky and his friend Dr. Alex Golubenko - two best friends who met each other at age 12 and grew up in Kyiv and are now proud US citizens. According to their website (donate.helpfreeukraine.com), "donations will go directly to pediatric hospitals, the National Cancer Institute of Ukraine and other medical facilities to help with medical care, essential needs and purchase of needed supplies and equipment for first responders." Katya

Bratslavsky, a local self-taught artist, helped the cause by selling more than 75 paintings and raising more than \$130,000 to support the cause (katyabratslavsky.com).

"Mitzvah Day turned out to be an amazing event. The projects we did were impactful, families got to participate together, and it felt wonderful to have so many people together in our synagogue after so long," said Lauren Thirer.

CBS-CS Celebrates 18 Years of Service Stars

by Joanne Villegas

Shutfut, or collaboration, is an essential part of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas' vision of who we are as a congregation. One of the ways that we collaborate is by the active participation by many different members in leading services. Members *leyn*, members *daven*, members often deliver a *d'var Torah*, members serve as *gabbaim* and *shammashim*. We honor this active participation in our religious life through our Service Stars program.

Any member who participates three or more times in a year becomes a Service Star. Recognition in the first year includes a kippah, one that is not available in the gift shop, not available online, only available through this special offer of participation. A bookplate in a *siddur* or *mahzor* honors someone in their second year, while third and tenth year participants receive special ritual items. It is especially thrilling when *b'nai mitzvah* continue to read and lead and assume their place as Jewish adults. This year we have reached *chai*: it is 18 years since we began the Service Stars recognition. On *Shavuot*, we recognized all of our Service Stars, including three members who have led different parts of our service many times since we initiated the program in 2004.

Local Legislators Visit Menorah Park



State Assemblywoman Pamela Hunter and State Senators Rachel May and John Mannion visited Menorah Park of CNY Thursday, April 28, to listen to administrators and staff as they were updated on Menorah Park's latest programs as well as its remaining challenges.

"During the pandemic, we weren't able to host larger gatherings here on our campus," said Mary Ellen Bloodgood, Menorah Park's CEO. "Now, with guests being vaccinated and boosted, and with nicer weather and open windows, we're able to showcase all we've accomplished in the last two-plus years."

Items discussed were the strength and caring of the many employees, some of whom have been with Menorah Park over 20 years, and of the innovative ways technology was used - from family visits to tele-chaplaincy. Bloodgood outlined a few initiatives started in the last few years, such as the Menorah Park Elder Shelter and the plans for future capital improvements as Menorah Park is in its 110th year and has begun a \$3.6 million capital campaign.

Also discussed were punitive government regulations for staff shortages and resources needed for training and Medicare reimbursement.

Annual JCC Gala

The annual JCC Gala has been a longstanding tradition that celebrates commitment to community. After a two-year hiatus, the sense of community during the JCC's 159th meeting felt stronger than ever. This year's event was one of the highest grossing Annual Meeting/Gala in the history of the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center.

For years, the event has been an essential part of the JCC's funding for scholarships. These scholarships have gone to children who for decades have flourished both socially and scholastically under the guidance of the Early Childhood Development Program, Camp Romano and after school programs alike. These scholarships have also helped to mainstream children with special needs as part of our Yachad Program.

The funds for the event also benefit senior citizens. The JCC's senior lunch program which is funded by the Onondaga County Adult and Long-Term Care Services, serves kosher meals at an inexpensive cost. This program has assisted in creating friendships and safe spaces for the elderly members of the JCC where bonds are made while bread is broken. The JCC has also funded fitness classes for those in need.

The celebration was held outdoors at Oweria Vineyards in Cazenovia in a well-ventilated tent overlooking the Vineyards. Over 240 attendees enjoyed cocktails and a kosher meal catered by Essen New York Deli of Brooklyn. The attendees' mouths may have been full, but they still managed to rave about the bagels and lox. The JCC granted five long overdue awards to recipients. These recipients were chosen two years ago before the pandemic and patiently waited for their moment of deserved appreciation.

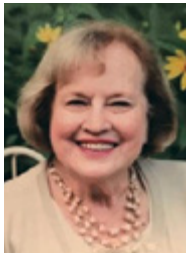
The word Kovod is used to represent honor or importance. The Kovod award was presented posthumously to Judith Stander. The Kovod Gadol Award, the JCC's high honor, was presented to Jeffrey Scheer and Abby Kasowitz Scheer. The Hall of Fame was established to recognize those who show an extraordinary level of commitment not only to the JCC but the community as a whole. The Hall of Fame Awards were presented to Steven and Sondra Goldberg and Barry and Debrah Shulman. The Leslie Award was created in memory of our valued and dear friend and member of the JCC and the greater community, Leslie London Neulander. This year's Leslie award was presented to Davia Moss.

The speeches were graceful, the mood was light and the event was refreshingly familiar. "One of the great tragedies of the pandemic is the disconnect that it created inside of communities," said Marci Erlebacher, executive director of the Jewish Community Center. "I think that the return of the Gala was comforting for everyone. It was nice to be reminded of what makes this place so special. This gala more than any other felt more like a celebration of life and each other."

The Gala restored a feeling of community, and the funds provided will only make that community even stronger.



JUNE CHARLOTTE LUSTIG
May 10, 2022



June Charlotte Lustig sang her way through 94 years of life including taking a request for her signature lullaby, “I love you truly-uly,” the day before she died. Surrounded by her children on Mother’s Day, she passed away unexpectedly shortly after on May 10.

June had an incredible wit and great comedic timing. She also had a tremendous capacity to love.

Born on September 23, 1927 in Newark, NJ to Max and Irene Gardner, June spent 81 years in Syracuse after her family relocated during the Great Depression. June graduated from Highland Manor, an all-girls school in West Long Branch, NJ in 1945, just before the end of WW II. Her yearbook caption describes her as kind and elegant, saying she can be found on the porch playing bridge or going to New York with friends to see a patriotic Broadway play.

After attending her freshman year at

Syracuse University, June married fellow freshman Carl Lustig, a decorated WW II Air Force pilot eight years her senior, partly because she thought he looked like Gary Cooper, her favorite movie star. They were married for 56 years.

June’s brisket was famous, and only now that she’s passed is it okay to share her secret: “Bennett’s Chili Sauce, wink wink!” There wasn’t a visit to June’s home without her special chicken soup (her mother’s recipe still secret) and a box of half-moon cookies waiting for her grandchildren. Apple picking, golf, hikes at Chittenango Falls and drives through the countryside or to Skaneateles were some of her favorite family outings. Playing cards, tennis and golf were her pastimes. Volunteering at the hospital and for various political groups were her ways of giving back.

Once she got a landline, June visited with friends and family on the phone almost every day, saying “hold the wire” if she needed to step away from the call for a brief moment. She never forgot a birthday, graduation or special anniversary. If any of her children or grandchildren were suffering in the love

department, she quickly assured them, “There’s always another cutie around the corner!”

June was a fan of the films and Broadway plays of the Golden Age. Many Saturday afternoons were spent at the movies and, even at 90, June could recall the stars of most Golden Age films and musicals and the name, melody and lyrics of a famous song from those films. She loved playing the piano and singing classic songs from the 1920s to 1950s. “Always,” by Irving Berlin, was a favorite as was “If I Loved You” and most other Rodgers and Hammerstein songs. Toward the end of her life, when she wasn’t singing or reading, she was genuinely curious, caring and very funny. She loved being 94 while believing she was 27!

June was laid to rest next to her beloved mother Irene, father Max and husband Carl on the top of the hill at Temple Adath Yeshurun cemetery. We imagine she sang her way to heaven with another favorite, Frank Sinatra’s timeless ballad, “Softly, As I Leave You.”

June is survived by her children: Michael (Nini) Lustig and Susan (John) Bodley, her grandchildren Jackie (Brad)

Pilon, Renae (Travis) Kochel, Audrey (Matt) Michal, Adam Cauer, Ingrid Lustig and Reid Lustig and great-grandchildren Max Michal, Theo Pilon, Mason Kochel, Auggie Pilon and Molly Michal. June was predeceased by her husband, Carl Lustig, in 2003, her brother, Elmer Gardner in 2007, and her grandson, Max Lustig in 1993.

Tribute donations may be made to the Alzheimer’s Association.

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ROBERT ZARET
May 24, 2022

Robert Zaret, 70, passed away on May 24 at SUNY Upstate Hospital. Born on November 13, 1951 in The Bronx to Simon and Ann Zaret, he had lived most of his life in the New York area until retiring to Florida 10 years ago. He relocated to Syracuse five years ago to be closer to family.

He earned his master’s degree in educational psychology from the University of Connecticut. During his professional career, he was an educational training manager for Con Edison in New York.

Robert proudly served his country from 1972-1976 during the Vietnam War in the US Navy, aboard the USS Detroit.

He was an avid cruise ship cruiser and loved riding his Suzuki Intruder Motorcycle, education, gardening, animals of all kinds, travelling and gambling.

His family includes his daughters Alicia (Jonathan Yost) Zaret, Sara (Matthew) Steele and Michele Zaret, his granddaughter Olivia Steele, his twin sister Ilene (John) Wehler and his brother Allen Zaret. He was pre-deceased by his sister Barbara DeCava.

Contributions to perpetuate his memory may be made to Trees in Israel [jnf.org] or the Wounded Warriors project [www.woundedwarriorproject.org].

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CYRIL FREEMAN
May 24, 2022



Cyril Freeman, 91, of Fayetteville, died peacefully on May 24 at Francis House. He lived a full life filled with family, friends, sports and travel. He was a graduate of Nottingham High School and attended Syracuse University. His late parents, Bertha and Julius, created a loving family of five children. Cyril was the only son among four doting older sisters.

All appreciated music and were talented musicians. Cyril excelled as a cellist and, in his early years, played with the Syracuse Symphony. As a youth and long after, he enjoyed playing tennis and golf and he enthusiastically followed many sports teams. He was thrilled to hit a hole in one at Lafayette Country Club in 1977.

After college, Cyril worked with his father and later became owner of his neighborhood grocery store. In 1968, a

new supermarket was built, Freeman's Midstate, affiliated with P & C.

During the Korean War, Cyril proudly served in the US Air Force and was stationed in Newfoundland.

In 1947, Ellie and Cyril were introduced on a blind date. They were married in 1954. In 1981, Cyril retired from the supermarket and became Ellie's partner in Freeman Interiors. They enjoyed travels to six continents as well as touring every state in the US.

Cyril is survived by his loving wife, Ellie, daughters Beth Freeman Warren and Jamie Freeman Saks, grandchildren Arielle and Brandon Warren, sisters Ethel Black and Macky Goldstein and many close nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his parents and his sisters Ruth Moloff and Phyllis Poushter.

To perpetuate Cyril Freeman's memory, the family has suggested that contributions may be made to Make-A-Wish Foundation of CNY: www.cny.wish.org or Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Research: www.komen.org.

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ROBERT BRONSTEEN
May 25, 2022

Robert Bronsteen, devoted and loving husband to Nanci Marley Bronsteen for over fifty years. Extremely proud father of Elizabeth and John and friend to their partners Steve and Megan. Grandpa Bob to his very special grandchildren Lily and Michael. Supported with love and caring by his late parents, Belle and Edward Bronsteen and brother Earl and his wife Judy and their families, as well as his sister and brother-in-law Sue and Don Newhouse, their children, and Nanci's late parents Lillian and Harry.

Bob was a graduate of Horace Mann School, Oberlin College and Columbia Business School. He served in the U.S. Army with a commendation for outstanding performance as Chief of Fire Direction for the Artillery Battalion and was also Chief of Computer and Chief of Section.

Bob was a former partner in the CPA firm Edward Bronsteen & Co. and later principal of Robert Bronsteen, CPA, LLC. He served as auditor, tax advisor, executor and trustee. Bob was an active Big Brother and coach of Hamilton-Madison Settlement House.

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Steven L. Sisskind

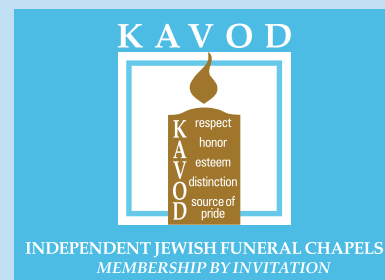
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