

» HAPPY 2024!

# Jewish Observer

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

## of Central New York

PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID, SYRACUSE, NY & ADDITIONAL OFFICES

SYRACUSE, ISRAEL & THE JEWISH WORLD | [WWW.JEWISHFEDERATIONCNY.ORG](http://WWW.JEWISHFEDERATIONCNY.ORG)

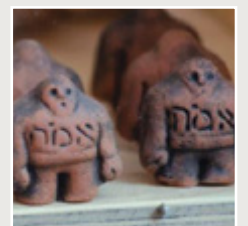
FEBRUARY 2024 | SHEVAT-ADAR 5784



**DON'T MISS:**  
WHAT HAS  
FEDERATION DONE  
FOR ME LATELY?  
(3)



**INSIDE:**  
EPIC COMMUNITY  
CHANUKAH DINNER  
(4-5)



**LOOK:**  
GOLEMS  
THEN AND NOW  
(11)

# February 2024

## From the Editor



Barbara Davis

Why an issue about Jewish superstitions? Well, it's an interesting topic for one thing and for another, research has shown that superstitious behaviors provide a sense of control, reduce anxiety and increase during stressful times, such as wars and economic crises. We know that we are currently living in an age of great anxiety, so we thought it would be interesting to look more closely at Jewish superstitions.

Rabbi Marc D. Angel, founder and director of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, and editor of its journal, *Conversations*, described the difference between religion and superstition thusly: "Judaism seeks to bring us closer to God through proper thought and deed. Superstition seeks to circumvent God's power through the use of magical formulae or rituals. While Judaism demands intellectual and moral excellence and a direct relationship with God, superstition provides purported means of bypassing or manipulating God in order to ward off evil or to achieve some other desired goal."

So are Jewish superstitions sacrilegious? Is there a reason for superstitions in an age of science? Are people more superstitious now than in the past? Are Jews? Is it okay to just "sort of" believe in a superstition? To kiss a mezuzah? To bring jam to a new home? To tie a red string to a crib? To do it even if you don't believe it really works? To half-believe it?

Three psychologists (A. Caspi, E. Shmuel and E. Chajut) recently examined the phenomenon of belief in superstitions by asking two samples of Israeli participants to report how much they practiced positive and negative superstitions and how much they believed in these superstitions. Their results suggested that very few people show a complete lack of belief in superstitions and practice none. Some participants are "calibrated believers," that is, people who practice and believe to the same extent. All others are either "half-believers," who practice more than they believe or "passive believers" who practice less than they believe. Anxiety and uncertainty were associated with practicing and correlations were stronger in stressful situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. Another article by Stuart Vyse, entitled "The Psychology of Superstition," adds that "research shows that belief in luck is correlated with belief in superstition and that they correlate with a number of personality dimensions and traits that are, in most cases, not particularly desirable, such as stress, anxiety, seeking control, pessimism, and depression."

Another article in this issue discusses the concept of



the *golem*. For many younger people today, Golem is a virtual-reality strategy game, but for older people the most well-known *golem* is the one in a story which took place in Prague and revolved around the studious Rabbi Loew. The rabbi performed the great miracle of bringing a clay *golem* to life – by placing a magic word, the *shem*, in its mouth. Once brought to life, the *golem* was strong and protected the Jewish ghetto. There are many versions of the *golem* story and the *golem* is sometimes good and sometimes destructive, but it also represents any human creation that serves a positive purpose but has the potential to escape our control. The *golem* has not disappeared from contemporary life as we see in very contemporary newspaper headlines like "Israel's Golem and the Crisis of Democracy" and " Hamas is Israel's Golem" and "The Golem Turns on its Creator."

Still, the majority of superstitions, legends and *bubbe-meises* are relatively harmless and if they help reduce anxiety and provide an illusion of control, they may have some benefit. So if it makes you feel better to say "*pu, pu, pu*" when someone tells you your child is beautiful, go for it.

We said "*pu, pu, pu*" a lot when planning our Community Chanukah Dinner last December. "Maybe we'll get 400 people, *pu, pu, pu*," we said. Then, "Maybe we'll even get 500, *pu, pu, pu*." "Looks like there will be more than 600, *kenahora*." When the final guests registered, we had a record-breaking 780 community members coming to dispel darkness and celebrate the Festival of Lights on the last night of Chanukah. The pictures in this issue provide ample proof that a great time was had by all. Further celebrations and accomplishments are in evidence in the photos of the Luminary Society event which followed on the heels of the Chanukah dinner and Souper Sunday, which began 2024 off right. We hope, *kenahora*, that these wonderful events are just the beginning of a tremendous resurgence of unity and communal goodwill in the Jewish community of Central New York.

**ERRATA:** The article about The Eggplant that appeared in the January issue of the *JO* was part of the **RAV Properties** series highlighting businesses owned by members of our community. We regret that the article was not properly attributed.

# Jewish Observer of Central New York

Published by  
Jewish Federation of Central New York  
5655 Thompson Road  
DeWitt, NY 13214

phone: 315-445-0161  
fax: 315-445-1599  
jewishfederationcny.org



President/CEO ..... Michael Balanoff  
Board Chair..... Neil Rosenbaum  
Editor ..... Barbara Davis



The Jewish Federation of Central New York is a proud member of the Jewish Federations of North America.

PRODUCED BY



### BUFFALO SPREE PUBLISHING, INC.

President ..... Sharon C. Levite  
Vice President/Chief Revenue Officer ..... Barbara E. Macks

Publisher..... Barbara E. Macks

### ART, EDITORIAL & PRODUCTION

Executive Editor ..... Sabrina Kahwaty  
Creative Director ..... Jean-Pierre Thimot  
Lead Designer ..... Kimberly Miers  
Senior Graphic Designers ..... Josh Flanigan, Nicholas Vitello  
Graphic Designers ..... Rachel Kaznica, Tamararie Mitravich

### ADVERTISING & SALES

Director of Advertising..... Barbara E. Macks

National Ad Director ..... Terri Downey  
Senior Account Executives ..... Mary Beth Holly, Caroline Kunze,  
Robin Lenhard

Account Executives ..... Keren Green, Rachel Wasserman  
Sales Coordinator ..... Robin Lenhard

### FINANCE

Finance Manager ..... Elizabeth Harvey

### Submissions:

Submit stories and photos no later than the 1st of the preceding month prior to publication to jo@jewishfederationcny.org.

### To Advertise:

Ad space & materials are due by the 16th of each month prior to publication. For a rate card and any additional information, please email Barbara Macks at bmacks@buffalospreepublishing.com.

### To Subscribe:

To subscribe, email bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org. Free for Central New York area residents and donors to the Federation's annual campaign. Non-resident subscription is \$36 for 12 issues, payable to the *Jewish Observer*.

THE JEWISH OBSERVER OF CENTRAL NEW YORK (USPS 000939) (ISSN 1079-9842) Publications Periodical postage paid at Syracuse, NY and other offices. Published 12 times per year by the Jewish Federation of Central New York Inc., a non-profit corporation, 5655 Thompson Road, DeWitt, NY 13214. Subscriptions \$36/year; student \$10/year. POSTMASTER: Send address change to JEWISH OBSERVER OF CENTRAL NEW YORK, 5655 Thompson Road, DeWitt, NY 13214.

The *Jewish Observer of Central New York* reserves the right to cancel any advertisement at any time. The Jewish Federation of Central New York and Buffalo Spree Publishing, Inc. are not liable for the content or errors appearing in the advertisements beyond the cost of the space occupied. The *Jewish Observer* does not assume responsibility for the kashrut of any product or service advertised in this paper. Editorials, columns, advertisements, agency reports and other outside articles do not necessarily represent the views of the newspaper or the Jewish Federation of Central New York, but rather express the view of the writer.

All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which makes it illegal to advertise "based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, or an intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination." This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate that is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis.

# What has Federation done for me lately?

**DID WE** provide you with an interest-free loan?

**DID WE** send you the award-winning Jewish community newspaper, the *Jewish Observer*?

**DID WE** subsidize your synagogue's executive director's professional development?

**DID YOU** enjoy Israeli movies and a monthly discussion with our Sunday Cinema Series?

**DID YOU** relax and make new friends on a family Shabbaton at Camp Zeke?

**DID WE** help cover the costs of your children's Jewish summer camp?

**DID WE** present the original rock musical "Rise" for your enjoyment and edification?

**DID WE** support the community agency you rely on for childcare and fitness, the JCC?

**DID WE** help cover the costs of Kosher Meals on Wheels for you or a loved one?

**DID WE** organize a trip to Washington and programs and rallies locally in support of Israel?

**DID WE** provide a significant portion of the costs of Jewish education for your children at the Day School, the Epstein School and the Syracuse Community Hebrew School?

**DID WE** [and do we] provide a robust security program that keeps you safe at community events and is on duty 24/7?

**DID WE** invite you to a record-breaking Community Chanukah Dinner with almost 800 people?

**DID WE** meet with the heads of your local school districts and local colleges and universities to help them understand and combat the threat of antisemitism?

**DID WE** put on a celebration of Israel's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday that attracted hundreds of people?

**DID WE** present a meaningful program in commemoration of the Holocaust at Yom haShoah?

**DID YOU** or your parents enjoy a delicious kosher lunch or dinner at the JCC senior lunch program?

**DID WE** provide funding for your child to study in Israel?

**DID WE** support innovative and collaborative programs in our community through our Holstein grants?

**DID WE** create partnerships and allies with InterFaith Works, Symphoria, the Everson Museum, the Ronald McDonald House, the Onondaga Historical Association and the Rosamond Gifford Zoo?

**DID WE** develop a manual of materials for school districts, teachers, parents and students to use to fight antisemitism?

**DID WE** send \$1.5 million dollars raised from our community to Israel when it was attacked?

**DID WE** provide household goods and other support to refugees and immigrants who have come to our community?

**DID WE** provide you with weekly updates about the programs and events in our community through Community Happenings?

**DID WE** help with community conservation projects to make our community cleaner and greener?

**DID WE** send your teens to Israel with the Epstein School?

**DID WE** subsidize the cost of high holiday security for your synagogue?

**DID WE** provide a bi-monthly forum for all of our community's presidents, executives and rabbis to convene to discuss issues of common concern and areas of cooperation and collaboration?

**DID WE** raise and distribute \$120,000 in funding to entities in our community that rely on that support, such as the mikvah, Beit Tikvah group home, the JCC senior lunch program and KlezFest?

**DID WE** send over \$2 million to Israel and other overseas Jewish entities from our community to help assure their vitality?

**DID WE** provide an intergenerational program for a friend or family member at Menorah Park for Cinco de Mayo or the Fait at the Park?

**DID WE** entertain you at KlezFest?

**DID YOUR CHILDREN** or grandchildren love the books and programs that PJ Library provided?

**DID WE** sponsor summer Shabbat programs for young families as well as winter Havdalah programs?

**DID WE** provide funding for people with special needs through Beit Tikvah and the Yachad program?

**DID WE** recognize and celebrate the achievements of young adults through the 6 Under 36 program?

The answer to all "YES!"  
these questions is

*This is what Federation does and will continue to do, with your support.* So when a volunteer solicitor from the 2024 Campaign for Jewish Life in Central New York contacts you to make a pledge, we hope that you too will say resoundingly, "YES!"



# IT WAS



# EPIC!!!



# The Miracle of a Blade of Grass

by Rabbi Daniel Jezer, Rabbi Emeritus, Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas

**How does a blade of grass grow? Those of us who are not scientists know that you sprinkle seed in soil, water it, perhaps fertilize it and seemingly almost miraculously, with a “little luck,” soon enough shoots of grass appear, sticking their green blades up above the soil. Botanists will run experiments and describe in great detail the chemical and physical actions and reactions that are needed for the grass to grow.**

We are all more or less familiar with the physical necessities for this growth to occur. There is, though, another domain.

Rabbi Nahman of Breslov, the great Hasidic teacher, suggests that through God’s “speech” an “angel” is assigned to each blade of grass as it is to every



item in the world. Each assignment is unique. The angel assigned to that particular blade of grass stands over it and encourages it to grow. Without this encouragement, it would not grow.

In our physical, not spiritual, language, the physical chemical actions and reactions needed for the growth would be corrupted and fail. The potential blade of grass would wither before sprouting. In Rabbi Nachman’s language, all of these processes are, in a sense, a miracle in that they occur.

These days we are exceedingly concerned with climate change and its effects on these necessary processes. The intricacies of all the physical coordinates that must combine in a

prescribed manner to effectuate growth is in itself a “miracle,” or in the imagery of Rabbi Nachman, a result of God’s will.

We recognize and celebrate these processes, this new growth on *Tu b'Shevat*, literally the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat (January 25). From Toraitic times, this day was officially the birthday of trees, arbor day. These days, we are most concerned with the effects on growth and survivability due to climate change. On *Tu b'Shevat* our focus is on the future of trees.

We know that the world is warming. Locally already, in temperature agricultural charts, Syracuse has moved into a warmer category, changing what can grow here. The predictions show catastrophic consequences for Syracuse and the entire planet if the earth warms more than 5 or 6 degrees. Many, or even most, of our trees could not withstand this radical change.

In terms of the universe, how radical a change is 5 degrees? The coldest possible

temperature is absolute zero; when there is not motion, -460 degrees Fahrenheit. The heat at the core of the sun is 27 million degrees. Five degree is minuscule in comparison to this range, and yet our trees grow, our grasses grow, only within this very narrow range. A rare mineral, iridium, needed for plant growth, is miniscule, 2 parts per billion. A bit more or less would prohibit plant life.

As we celebrate *Tu b'Shevat* we celebrate the miracle of life, the intricacies of the world, God’s creation. A blade of grass, a tree, all the more so the entire world, is a masterful intricate web of an almost infinite number of forces that are needed to permit growth, needed to harmoniously interact with each other. It is wondrous, a “miracle looked over by an ‘angel,’” that they mesh affording us a rich verdant life. The ability to keep it is in our hands. I hope that on *Tu b'Shevat* we will sensitize ourselves to the miracles of the world about us and give thanks for the trees and world in which we live and work to keep it.

## » BOOK REVIEW

# *The Shabbat Elevator and other Sabbath Subterfuges: An Unorthodox Essay on Circumventing Custom and Jewish Character* by Alan Dundes

Reviewed by Robin Young



[Disclaimer – I am not *shomer Shabbat* (sabbath observant). I observe *Shabbat* in my own way. I have been in *shomer Shabbat*

spaces before and have heard about and experienced many of the “Sabbath Subterfuges” the author talks about in his book. It is my intention to be respectful to all while reviewing this book.]

The author is Professor Alan Dundes. He was raised as a secular Jew and was not at all *shomer Shabbat*. He was a folklorist and professor of anthropology and folklore at UC Berkeley for most of his career. Dundes was a prolific writer of twelve books and over 250 articles. He was known as the “jokes professor” at Berkeley, making his courses extremely popular. Dundes includes many jokes in this book as well. The book was published in 2002 and the author passed away in 2005.

The first few chapters are a bit dry, talking about what *Shabbat* is, where

*Shabbat* is mentioned in the *Torah* and the New Testament, and the 39 *Melachot* (prohibitions) of work on *Shabbat*. It reads like an anthropology textbook.

Then Dundes gets into the real meat of the book – different ways around different prohibitions, such as a *Shabbos* Elevator, an *eruv* (a symbolic enclosure around a community so it becomes one property), carrying, the light in your refrigerator, electronic card keys at hotels, driving and having non-Jews (a *Shabbos* goy) helping out. He also then delves into Freud, some of his stranger theories and repression, which I didn’t feel he connected at all to *Shabbat* and couldn’t understand why he included. He finishes with a chapter on argument and why Jews love to argue. It seemed like he just had jokes he wanted to use up at that point.

Dundes keeps throwing in the most extreme examples of how to get around different *Shabbat* restrictions. He introduces the term *shinui*, which means change or modification. He defines it as a “deviation from the manner in which

an action is usually done.” For example, if you are in a building that doesn’t have a *Shabbat* elevator (an elevator that is set to open automatically at every floor) and you need to use the elevator, a person who would normally go into an elevator and push the button with their finger, would push it with their elbow or nose (although he admits that most people wait for someone else to push the button, then ride to that floor with them and walk the rest of the way.)

A few things I did not like about this book – it was a bit dry at points, as I said before, like an anthropology textbook. It is not a valuable resource for someone looking to become more *Shabbat* observant. At points, he sounds like he is poking fun at Jews who are *shomer Shabbat*, or at the very least, writing about them disparagingly. Some of his jokes fall flat – they are old and condescending, and in a few cases, even racist and misogynistic. I could not understand why he included some of the topics he did and felt they added nothing to a discussion

of *Shabbat*. He is obviously a scholar and did cite all his information. He has an extensive bibliography included at the end of the book. However, the book was published in 2002, and many of the works cited were from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a few from the late 1800s. I know there are newer books written about *Shabbat* and living within its laws that he could have used.

Personally, I would not recommend this book. Spend your time reading a different book on *Shabbat*. There are hundreds of books published from across the entire spectrum of Judaism. Check with your synagogue library, a rabbi or even Google for suggestions. However, if you really want to read a scholarly discourse on the anthropology and sociology of Orthodox *Shabbat* observance from the lens of an outsider steeped in Freudian analysis, this may be the book for you.

*Robin Young is a school librarian at Edward Smith Pre-K - 8 school, a member of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas and an avid reader.*

# Luminary Society



# Worry-Free Retirement

- Loads of fun activities
- All-Inclusive senior living community
- Full apartments, 650 sq.ft. – 1201 sq.ft
- Safe and secure
- Professional staff for troubleshooting
- Make new friends
- 3 fresh healthy daily meals, 7 days/week
- Live your best life
- Valet parking
- Housekeeping

and so much more...



Resident Ratings - Towne Center Retirement Community ❤️ ❤️ ❤️ ❤️ ❤️



Call today to schedule a private tour!

**315-329-2979**

**RLC**  
RESORT LIFESTYLE  
COMMUNITIES®  
...  
*Towne Center*

# Campaign 2024 Off to a Great Start

Even before the ball dropped in Times Square on the last day of 2023, over sixty community members had started the year off with the mitzvah of philanthropy and made their pledges to the Federation's 2024 campaign. Notably, the list of generous donors includes three first-time donors and twenty donors who increased their gifts, sometimes even doubling or tripling their 2023 donations, bringing in an additional \$15,000.

of each other and to celebrate Jewish life together. By donating to the annual campaign, you have the chance to create a world where we freely and joyously celebrate our Judaism, where Jews and our neighbors live in safety and peace, where everyone's basic needs are met."

Michael Balanoff, Federation

President/CEO added, "Your gift will allow the Federation to address the most pressing needs of Jews in our community. Together, we can ensure that our community stays connected and **engaged**. We must build on every opportunity to grow and become ever stronger."



**THANK YOU  
TO OUR SPONSORS  
for your generosity and support**



To make a pledge to the 2024 campaign, go to  
<https://jewishfederationcny.org/campaign-pledge/>.

## Campaign 2023 for the Record Books

As 2023 came to an end, Federation's Campaign for Jewish Life in Central New York had raised \$1,183,175, from over 700 family or individual donors. There were 243 new donors who contributed \$16,800 new dollars. 2023 Campaign Chair Anick Sinclair said, "While we are saddened by the loss of donors who move or pass away, we are most heartened by the fact that donations from last year increased by almost \$25,000, and new donors contributed \$16,800. These gifts were in addition to the generous contributions made by many of these same benefactors to support Israel after the October 7<sup>th</sup> attack. The strength of our community is evidenced by its financial commitment to our present and our future, to Israel and the American Jewish

community and to our local Jewish schools, agencies and programs. We are exceedingly grateful to the 2023 campaign givers for their wonderful support."

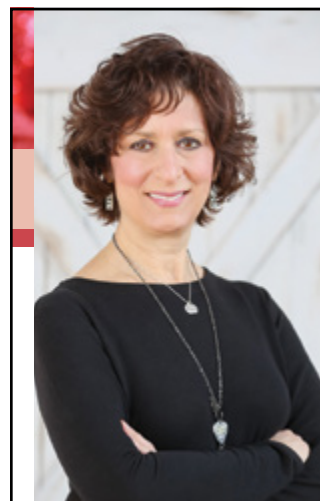
Federation is very appreciative of the following donors to Campaign 2023 whose gifts were received after November 1, 2023: Jeffrey and Joanne Maloff, William Tucker, Mindy Epstein and David Hinshaw, Bruce and Judith Seidberg, Franklin Josef, Leo and Nancy Sawyer, James and Barbara Gifford, David and Robin Drucker, Barbara Haas, Robert Brown, Louis Kriesberg, Vincent and Joely Kuss, Esther Adelson, Anonymous, Thomas Middleton and Rishana Cohen, Wayne and Lillian Bodow and Roger and Anne Saltman.

Souper Sunday was a vibrant kick-off to the campaign. "We look forward to continuing this momentum" said Campaign Chair Nan Fechtner. "Essential programming, education and care is achieved through Federation funding. With the added security necessary within the Jewish community now, donations are not only needed but imperative for our continued safety."

The slogan for this year's campaign is **ENGAGE!** Federation Board Chair Neil Rosenbaum elaborated. "Engagement

means within our own very dedicated community, across agencies, and also engaging with the wider community, to strengthen our own. When you donate, you engage, and your gift allows the Federation to continue maximizing its resources, so our community continues to be robust."

Campaign Associate Anick Sinclair noted, "As a member of the local Jewish community, you are part of an attentive and compassionate group which unites in goodtimes and bad to take care



**Buying or Selling a Home?  
I'm ready to help you with your real estate needs.**

**LAURIE KUSHNER**  
Licensed Real Estate Salesperson

**315-420-2668**  
[realestatebylauriekushner.com](http://realestatebylauriekushner.com)



# Jewish Superstitions



The Torah is emphatic in commanding that we not turn to shamans or wonderworkers, but instead stay focused on our personal relationship with God. “There shall not be found among you anyone... who uses divination, a soothsayer, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or one who consults a ghost or a familiar spirit, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination unto the Lord” (*Devarim* 18:10-12). And yet there *are* Jewish superstitions, quite a few of them in fact.

## Here are some you probably recognize:



- Saying “pu, pu, pu” or spitting three times: whether done literally or figuratively, spitting three times is a classic Jewish response to something exceptionally evil or good.
- Wearing a red string on your left wrist or tying it on the legs of a baby’s crib, to ward off evil spirits.
- Saying “kein ayin hara” (kenahora), which means “no evil eye,” when mentioning something good.

## If you are of a certain age, you might have heard the following as you were growing up:

- “Sit down and count to ten before traveling, because you won’t come back if you don’t.”
- “Don’t sit at the corner of the table or you won’t get married for the next seven years.”
- “Don’t step over someone because they will stop growing.” (You can reverse this curse by stepping back over them.)

## Here are a few more superstitious beliefs:

- If salt was spilled, you had to toss some over your shoulder.
- If you sneezed after saying something, it’s because it was true.
- If your palm itched, you were coming into money.
- If your nose itched, you were going to have a fight.

A few superstitions were wearable. In some communities, a safety or straight pin was attached out of sight under a shirt collar or on a sleeve before taking a journey.

Metal was thought to be a powerful protective substance. The hamsa, a hand shaped charm with an eye in the center, is the most recognized Jewish amulet, although it is not exclusive to Judaism. Putting salt in one’s pocket is also protective against evil spirits.

A few are esoteric: Bringing an odd number of flowers in a gift bouquet. (Bouquets with an even number of flowers are only for funerals.) Never handing a knife directly to another person. (Put the knife down for the other person to pick it up.) Kissing the mezuzah (or just the doorpost) when entering a room.

There are some Jewish customs that are not considered superstitions but which probably are. *Kapparot*, in which a man spins a rooster or a woman spins a hen around their head three times on the eve of Yom Kippur while reciting prayers (after which the bird is slaughtered and given to the poor), is an example of this. *Shinui shem*, changing a person’s name when they’re very sick is another. The idea is that if illness and death were decreed for a particular person, changing that person’s



name can “fool” the evil decree (or “Satan”) into believing that the ill person is actually someone else.

So although the Torah tells us that “There is no sorcery over Jacob and no divination for Israel,” the Jewish people still seem to have come up with a bunch of ways to overcome evil spirits and the evil eye.



**CATANIA  
ORTHODONTICS**  
Trusted by parents, loved by kids.

**A TRADITION OF  
BEAUTIFUL SMILES**

315-446-3360 | BracesandMore.com  
7000 E. Genesee St., Fayetteville

Child and Adult Treatment  
Teen and Adult Invisalign®  
Teeth Whitening  
Certified Orthodontic Assistants  
Reduced-Radiation X-Rays  
Reduced Treatment Times  
Early Morning Appointments  
Major Credit Cards Accepted  
Payment Plans Available

**invisalign**  
PROVIDER

**Jewish Observer**  
of Central New York

The March issue of the *Jewish Observer*  
features a  
**PURIM**  
SPECIAL SECTION!

To advertise contact  
Rachel Wasserman at [rwasserman@buffalospree.com](mailto:rwasserman@buffalospree.com), 716-725-1173  
Or Keren Green at [kgreen@buffalospree.com](mailto:kgreen@buffalospree.com), 347-400-9939

# Golems Then and Now

This word *golem* occurs only once in the Torah, in *Psalms* 139:16 where it means “embryo.” The word evolved to designate everything that is in a state of incompleteness, not fully formed, as a needle without an eye or a woman who has not conceived. Adam was a *golem*, as he was not born of woman, but was created from dust and molded into a shapeless mass. Like Adam, all *golems* are created from mud by those close to divinity, but no *golem* is fully human, nor does it have the power of speech.

In the Middle Ages, the possibility of infusing life into a clay figure of a human being, a *golem*, was conceived. Instructions for creating a *golem* can be found in medieval commentaries on *Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Creation). In these “*golem* recipes,” combinations of letters from the Hebrew alphabet with the letters of God’s name play a central role. When the word *EMET*, truth, was written on a *golem*’s forehead, it had the advantage of being easily changed to *MET*, death, by removal of one letter (*alef*). Sometimes the instructions were accompanied by cosmological diagrams, charts, or wheels of letters indicating the precise configurations of letters or celestial constellations required for the magical act of creation. But when a person performed this act of incarnation, even small errors could have grave consequences, the recipes warned.

The *golem* thus created would grow in size and could carry any message or obey any order of its master. The combination of letters forming a *Shem* (any one of the names of God) was either written on a piece of paper inserted in its mouth or written on the its forehead, thereby bringing it into life. Elijah of Chelm, in the middle of the sixteenth century, was the first person credited with having made a *golem* with a *Shem*, for which reason he was known as a *Ba’al Shem*. His *golem* was said to have grown to be a monster (resembling that of Frankenstein), which the rabbi feared might destroy the world. So he removed the *Shem* from its forehead, and it returned to dust.

According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, the last *golem* was created by Rabbi David Jaffe in Russia about 1800. This *golem* was not supposed to rest on Shabbat but was created for the sole purpose of replacing the *Shabbes* goy in heating the ovens of Jews on winter



Sabbaths. All orders to make fires were given to the *golem* on Friday, which he executed promptly but mechanically the next day. One day an error in an order to the *golem* caused a conflagration that destroyed the whole town. *Golems* can be dangerous.

The Judisches Museum in Berlin, which had a *golem* exhibit entitled “From Mysticism to Minecraft,” wrote that “as a powerful symbol of Jewish self-assertion, the *golem* has been stylized and longed for as a superhero in times of crisis” There are some who wish for a *golem* today. In an online post entitled, “Where Is a *Golem* When You Need One?” a writer makes the point that we need a *golem* “more than ever now, especially in America. Since clay doesn’t bleed, he would be impermeable to machine guns and bombs. Only his creator can defeat him, by removing the word. Since clay is sexless, *Golem* can be male, female, intersex. *Golem*’s only purpose is to save the Jews, not to get some. Clay never hungers. Clay has no desire. Clay just saves the Jews, as was intended by its creator. When antisemitism is destroyed, the magical word can be erased and *Golem* placed back in its case, until the next time.” How’s that for magical thinking?

While the *golem* may seem to be an antiquated notion from the past, it has significant relevance in our own time. A 2022



article by Caleb Horowitz was entitled “As a patrilineal Jew, I see myself in the *Golem*.” Horowitz wrote, “Sometimes I think of *golems* as a kind of secret code. To me, if someone is interested in *golems*, it means they are both Jewish and a writer. Jewish writers are drawn to the *golem* like moths to a flame. David Wisniewski, Helene Wecker, Michael Chabon. But it means more than that too. For me, *golems* represent Jews yearning to understand complex questions about identity. The *golem* is a being of vast symbolic possibilities, a creature suspended between two places, and this suspension has made it a potent and flexible symbol. For some, to be a queer Jew is to see yourself in the *golem*. For me, the *golem* represents what it means to be a patrilineal Jew.”

In her 2016 book, *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters*, Maya Barzilai observed that in modernity, the *golem* became specifically associated with technological anxiety. The *golem* predated other renegade machines, inspired by the technophobia that accompanied the industrial revolution, such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Karel Čapek’s *Rossum’s Universal Robots* (which coined the word ‘robot’). Like the *golem*, these artificial creations became uncontrollable to the point that they threatened to destroy humanity. AI technology and its threat to become superintelligent, smarter and more capable than its human creators, resembles the *golem* in its transformation from servants of humankind to terrifying threats

to humanity’s very existence.

As early as 1965, Gershom Scholem, a renowned Zionist scholar and specialist in Jewish mysticism, had discussed the analogy between the *golem* and artificial intelligence. He gave an Israeli mainframe computer the name “*Golem Aleph*,” and expressed the hope that the machine would remain peaceful. In an article entitled “*The Golem and Artificial Intelligence*,” Scholem described “a certain magical attitude that characterizes our relationship as people of the digital age with technology” and noted that “we all find ourselves under the spell of the magic of storytelling; we all live under the fascination of the magic of technology.” He expressed the hope that “the ambivalence brought by the development of a symbolic figure such as that of the *golem* can be a good starting point, on the one hand, for ethical reflection, and on the other hand for the creation of strategies in which artificial intelligence, cultural intelligence and spiritual intelligence merge in the harmony of a good daily life for all men.” The many contemporary headlines warning of the imminent demise of humanity, civilization and the world as we know it due to AI may make many believe that Scholem’s hopes were not realized. In fact, AI may indeed be the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s *golem*.



WILLIAM TUCKER, MD



**DRY EYE SPECIALIST**

NEW PATIENTS WELCOME • FREE PARKING

NORTHEAST MEDICAL CENTER  
SUITE 207  
4000 MEDICAL CENTER DRIVE  
FAYETTEVILLE, NY 13066

**315.637.1010**

# Property Restoration Inc.

Fire & Water Damage Restoration  
Emergency 24/7 & Holidays 315.454.0518

**Offering  
Full Restoration  
and  
Construction  
Services**



**315.454.0518**

Art Diamond, owner

# Learn To Tell Your Grandparent's Holocaust Story

by David Reckess

Are you the grandchild of Holocaust survivors? Are you looking to make an impact in our community to counter antisemitism and hatred? Join 3GNY's speakers bureau to educate others by providing a human face to the past and a living link to the present.

WEDU ("We Educate") is 3GNY's flagship educational initiative that empowers grandchildren of Holocaust survivors ("3Gs") to learn and compellingly share their family's Holocaust experiences with students and community groups. Developed in partnership with Facing History and Ourselves, the WEDU speaker training teaches 3Gs to share their family stories and inspire listeners to think critically and act with courage and compassion. After completing the 4-week course, 3GNY places volunteer WEDU speakers in classroom and community settings to share their stories and lessons with others.

## When: MONDAY EVENINGS

Monday, Feb 26 - 7:00 pm-9:00 pm ET

Monday, Mar 4 - 7:00 pm-9:00 pm ET

Monday, Mar 11 - 7:00 pm-9:30 pm ET

Monday, Mar 25 - 7:00 pm-9:00 pm ET

*It is important for you to be able to attend all 4 weeks.*

**Where:** In front of your computer (on Zoom).

**Suggested Donation:** \$72.

**Why:** Learn to confidently share your grandparent's Holocaust experience with others. Join us to understand how we can make the lessons of the Holocaust resonate with the next generation of students. Through this course, you will develop a 15-20 minute presentation about your grandparent, and be invited to join our active speakers bureau.

Holocaust education for the next generation...

**CLASSROOM SPEAKERS AVAILABLE NOW!**

Virtual and In-Person Presentations  
by grandchildren of Holocaust survivors  
**FREE** to schools  
Visit [3gny.org/wedu](http://3gny.org/wedu) to book a speaker

Looking to build empathy, tolerance, and engagement in your students, while bringing ELA and Social Studies lessons to life?

Our free WEDU (We Educate) guest speakers will visit your middle and high school classrooms - in-person or virtually - to compellingly share their family stories of surviving the Holocaust.

As grandchildren of survivors, our speakers make personal connections with students that leave a lasting impact.

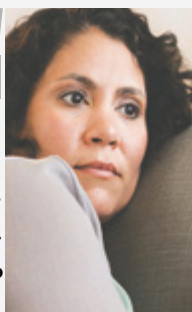
Email [weduscheduling@3gnewyork.org](mailto:weduscheduling@3gnewyork.org) today to book a presentation for your class, school, or community group!

Along the way, you will have the chance to connect with your family history, meet others with similar family stories, and explore how the Holocaust has shaped your life, values,

and perspectives. Don't miss this chance to make a meaningful impact on future generations. Sign up now!

Email **Dave Reckess** at [dreckess@3gnewyork.org](mailto:dreckess@3gnewyork.org) to sign up.

HOW CAN I  
keep calm  
with  
bills  
adding  
up?



**WE'RE WITH YOU**

It's important to identify financial stressors and make a plan. Call 211 for more help.

**COPING-19**



FOR MORE SELF-CARE TIPS:  
**COPING-19.ORG**

## Commemorative T-Shirts for an Historic Event

Dr. David Hootnick is gifting t-shirts commemorating the historic March for Israel and to End Antisemitism to all those who went to Washington, DC on November 14th. All donors to the 2024 campaign who increase their gift by \$100 are also eligible to receive a free t-shirt. **To request this unique gift, please email [bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org](mailto:bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org) and indicate what size shirt you want.**



## Syracuse Hebrew Day School's Multifaceted Chanukah

Students from the Syracuse Hebrew Day School celebrated Chanukah in a variety of ways. They made dreidels and enjoyed sufganiyot with seniors from The Oaks. They participated in a joint Spirit Week with young friends from the Early Childhood Development Program of the JCC, played trivia with students from Gray Academy of Jewish Education in Winnipeg, Canada, lit Chanukah candles with students from Robbins Hebrew Academy in Toronto and enjoyed latkes and crafts with Hillel Academy of Broome County. They wrapped up the week with a Chanukah concert and school-wide Shabbat for SHDS families.

# Fighting Antisemitism in Our Schools

The Southern Poverty Law Center issued a report in 2019 on “Hate at School,” which noted that antisemitism was involved in 11 percent of hate incidents reported by educators and 18 percent of those reported in the media. It is hard to say whether this represents overreporting in the media or underreporting by schools, but there is undeniably a significant increase in antisemitic incidents in America’s public schools and in its colleges and universities and it has only increased in 2023.

Antisemitism in middle and high schools generally took the form of slurs or hate symbols; 68 percent of incidents reported in the news included swastikas. The SPLC survey recorded swastikas scratched into bathroom tiles, carved into desks, painted on parking lots, burned into football fields and inked on skin. Several schools saw photos posted of students aligned in a swastika formation. And educators from two schools—one in Mississippi and one in New Jersey—reported that graduating seniors drew swastikas in the yearbooks of Jewish classmates. Educators also reported they were hearing jokes about the Holocaust and a resurgence of Holocaust denial from students. Antisemitism was explicitly tied to white-power messaging, as well. For example, a high school teacher in California reported that a student stated, “Jews need to die, and Puerto Ricans should go back to their country.”

Locally, students in middle and high schools in Central New York were faced with bullying and teasing behaviors. One Jewish student was approached on a school bus by a non-Jewish student who said, “I smell gas.” Social media posts were frequently the site of antisemitic messaging. Jewish parents and students often felt unsupported by school administrators and teachers. Students at schools of higher education felt threatened and anxious.

The Jewish Federation of Central New York is addressing issues of antisemitism on multiple fronts, with education being in the forefront. Federation wants to work with school districts and schools to provide resources that will enable them to address this specific form of hate within already existing school policies and procedures to ensure that every student is able to learn in a school environment free from discrimination based on religion, race, color, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity or other forms of identity. Federation



president/CEO Michael Balanoff met with school officials at several local school districts as well as officials at Syracuse University and Upstate Medical Center. One of the things that became clear after these meetings was a lack of resources for administrators and teachers in dealing with antisemitic incidents and a lack of information for parents and students about existing avenues for fighting antisemitism in schools.

A group of clergy and educators met at Federation’s behest to remedy this situation. The group included Rabbi Ilan Emanuel of Temple Concord, Rabbi Evan Shore of Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse, Rabbi Moshe Saks of Temple Adath Yeshurun, Rabbi Oren Steinitz of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas, Cantor/Educators Kari Eglash and Esa Jaffe of Temple Concord and Temple Adath Yeshurun respectively, Aaron Spitzer, head of the Rabbi Jacob Epstein High School of Jewish Studies, Laura Lavine, retired school superintendent and former head of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and Dr. Yael Zeira, associate professor at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, whose specialties include Middle Eastern politics, political conflict and violence. Dr. Barbara Davis, Federation’s special projects associate, professor emerita at Onondaga Community College and former principal of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, served as coordinator.

The group created a 125-page manual of resources and information helpful to administrators, teachers, parents/guardians and students in dealing with antisemitism. Materials covered many

topics. **For administrators:** American Jewish community plan for confronting antisemitism in public schools; Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) overview; Dealing With Anti-Semitic Incidents; How To Combat Anti-Semitism In Schools;

Prevent Bullying In Your School; What To Remember When Dealing With Anti-Semitism. **For teachers:** DASA overview; Educator Resources (compiled by Cantor Jaffe); Facing History And Ourselves; Materials to Teach About The Holocaust; Strategies for Dealing with Anti-Semitism in The Classroom; Six Tips for Supporting Jewish Students in Your Classroom. **For parents:** DASA Overview; Know Your Rights; Talking To Kids About Anti-Semitism. **For students:** What Is The Dignity Act (DASA)? Sample DASA Complaint Form; Know Your Rights; What You Can Do to Combat Antisemitism. The manual was printed and distributed to local school districts and is available to anyone in the community who wishes to have a copy at the Federation office.

“Federation stands ready to assist schools in any way possible to eliminate antisemitism and hate from classrooms and to encourage greater understanding and mutual respect among all learners,” said Balanoff.



WE ALL KNOW WHAT  
IT'S LIKE TO FEEL

LEFT  
OUT.

WE CAN CHANGE THAT.

We've all had moments where we've felt we didn't belong. But for people who moved to this country, that feeling lasts more than a moment. Together, we can build a better community.

Learn how at [BelongingBeginsWithUs.org](https://BelongingBeginsWithUs.org)

BELONGING  
BEGINS WITH US

ad  
COUNCIL

COMMUNITY



## The Righteous Among the Nations: Understanding Rescue During the Holocaust

A Reading & Discussion Series in conjunction with Humanities New York sponsored by the Philip L. Holstein Community Program Fund, Le Moyne College and the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center

*Despite the indifference of most Europeans and the collaboration of others in the murder of Jews during the Holocaust, individuals in every European country and from all religious backgrounds risk their lives to help Jews. Rescue efforts range from the isolated action of individuals to organized networks both large and small. The stories of thousands of people of great valor will never be told because the Nazis executed them, but there are others whose stories are known and need to be read, remembered and retold to reaffirm the goodness of humanity.*

**Convener:** Eileen M. Angelini, Ph.D., Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Le Moyne College, Fulbright Scholar and *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques*

**Readings and Discussions at 4 pm. Books will be provided at no cost to all participants.**

**March 5: *Suzanne's Children: A Daring Rescue in Nazi Paris*** by Anne Nelson. Suzanne Spaak risked her life to save Jewish children from deportation in Nazi-occupied Paris. A wealthy Belgian Catholic who lived in Paris with her husband and two children, she found comfort with Polish Jewish friends after her husband moved his mistress into their home. After the Nazi invasion, she joined the Jewish Underground where she set up an extensive rescue network that saved hundreds of children. Her heroic efforts brought imprisonment and death in 1944. [JCC]

**March 19 and 26: *Madame Fourcade's Secret War: The Daring Young Woman Who Led France's Largest Spy Network Against Hitler*** by Lynn Olson. Marie-Madeleine Fourcade was the only woman to serve as a *chef de resistance*, leading the Alliance, the largest and longest-lasting spy network in France. At the start of the Occupation, Fourcade was a young mother of two, known in upper-crust circles of privilege for her beauty and glamour. Recruited by Georges Loustau-Lacau, who founded the Alliance, Fourcade started as his deputy, then took over command and remained in charge until the end of the war. [Burnet Room, Le Moyne College Library]

**April 2: *The Saboteur: The Aristocrat Who Became France's Most Daring Anti-Nazi Commando*** by Paul Kix. At the age of 19, La Rochefoucauld escaped to England and learned tactical warfare from covert British operatives. He returned to France to work with Resistance groups to destroy German war factories and military strongholds. He underwent months of tortuous interrogation at the hands of the Germans, narrowly escaped being put to death on two separate occasions and, to avoid capture, disguised himself as a nun. [JCC]

*Participation is limited to ten. To register, email [bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org](mailto:bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org).*

# Nurturing Community Through Cuisine at CBS-CS

An Interview with Nate Schloss by Yolanda Febles

In the heart of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas, there is a hub of community, culture, and incredible cuisine, thanks to the efforts of Nate Schloss, the new kitchen manager hired by the Sisterhood this past summer. His journey with this congregation, as he shares, is a tale woven with passion, creativity and deep communal bonds.

## A Philosophy of Cooking

When asked about his philosophy behind crafting a menu, Nate's eyes light up. "It's about understanding who you're feeding and balancing the budget with quality," he explains. "And embracing and respecting traditions while adding a creative touch. Whether it's adapting a dish for a Russian family's baby-naming event or reinventing Rosh Hashanah classics, my goal is to create food that connects and celebrates our diverse backgrounds. The rules of kosher cooking add an enjoyable layer of complexity to this task."

## A Day in the Life of a Kitchen Manager

Describing his day-to-day role, Nate compares it to "a Russian nesting doll of tasks." Each day brings new challenges, from early morning banquet preparations to meticulous planning and staff selection. "I'm particular about choosing the best available ingredients," he emphasizes. "It's about creating meals that are experiences, not just sustenance."

## Inspirations

Inquiring about his culinary inspirations, Nate reflects on a journey that started with his

mother's experience as a lunch lady and evolved through diverse experiences. "Living with food-obsessed roommates exposed me to a variety of cuisines," he recalls, adding that his wife's Italian heritage and cooking know-how also influenced his cooking style and helped further develop his skills in the kitchen.

## The Role of Volunteers

"I'm eager to share my knowledge and passion for cooking. I welcome everyone, regardless of their experience in the kitchen, to join and learn. Everything is learnable. If you're interested in volunteering, just email me at: [kitchen@cbscs.org](mailto:kitchen@cbscs.org)."

Nate Schloss' role in the CBS-CS kitchen goes beyond cooking; he's a key figure in fostering a sense of community. His approach to food, deeply ingrained in family and cultural respect, creates more than just meals—it builds connections and lasting memories. Nate's culinary artistry is not just about feeding the body but nourishing the soul of the CBS-CS community.

# Foundation Reaches \$24 Million in 2024

If nothing else, October 7th has forced people to think about their lives in new ways, reevaluating what really matters to them and focusing on their values, the people they love and the things that are most meaningful and long-lasting.

For many, the opportunity to do good has never been more important, and the thought of doing so not only now but into the future has great appeal. That is why the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York is working with members of the community to establish programs of legacy giving or endowments.

"Together, we can transform your commitment to making a difference into a lasting legacy," said Michael Balanoff, Foundation executive director. "The Jewish Community Foundation was established to provide sound investment opportunities for members of our community who wish to ensure the continuity of Jewish life in Central New York and to meet the needs of both the local and worldwide Jewish communities, especially in Israel."

The Foundation has had an outstanding track record of stewarding the funds of its donors. Over the past decade, the Foundation's assets have grown from under \$4 million in 2010 to over \$24 million in 2024. The Foundation fund performance has been consistently above average, thanks to scrupulous and prudent management by the Investment Committee and Board of Directors. In November, the Foundation Board voted to invest half a million dollars in Israeli bonds.

The Foundation's goal is to create a philanthropic environment that makes giving relevant and meaningful to people of all ages, functioning in a manner consistent with the best principles, traditions and teachings of the Jewish people. The Foundation administers over 300 funds from donors of all ages, including many teen philanthropists. Endowment funds provide income for immediate use while the principal remains intact and grows. "An endowment fund is a lasting gift," says Balanoff. "It is a seed we plant for the future." **For more information about the Foundation and its programs, contact Michael Balanoff at [mbalanoff@jewishcommunityfoundationcny.org](mailto:mbalanoff@jewishcommunityfoundationcny.org) or 315-445-0270.**

# L'Dor V'dor for Tu b'Shevat

Through a "Better Together Grant" for intergenerational learning, the Syracuse Community Hebrew School has over the past year successfully integrated residents of Menorah Park and other senior adults with the students of the Hebrew School in programs to celebrate and share Jewish holidays, customs and food.

They have developed an intergenerational understanding and kinship with each other through preparation of food, sharing of experiences and knowledge, and participating in holidays. This is truly *L'dor V'Dor*, a generation-to-generation project.

For the holiday of *Tu b'Shevat*, Ora Jezer, executive director of the school, worked with Menorah Park and the children to create a raised garden so that together with the children, the residents can plant and grow their own vegetables for the summer months.

Although *Tu b'Shevat* is not mentioned in the Torah, the holiday started originally as an agricultural festival celebrating spring. *Tu b'Shevat* has become an environmental holiday, and it gives those living outside of Israel a feeling of kinship with the planting season in Israel. The students and seniors feel this garden will bind them not only to each other but to Israel as well. And also, hopefully, it will provide fresh vegetables as well. The school welcomes anyone who wishes to help with this project, either in building the raised bed, planting in the spring or contributing to the cost to develop a larger area.



# Every Little Bit Counts



[www.verygoodnewsisrael.blogspot.com](http://www.verygoodnewsisrael.blogspot.com)

is a website that each month sends "Good News From Israel - News of Israel's Achievements and Heartwarming Stories from the Jewish State" at no charge to thousands of subscribers across the globe in English, Hebrew, Spanish, French and German. Their translator was called to duty in the

IDF and Michael Ordman, the publisher, was at a loss for translators. He posted the following news in his last 2023 issue: "As 2023 comes to an end, I unashamedly write this introduction with much emotion. There are now definite signs that Israel is winning the war against Hamas in Gaza. It cannot fail, thanks to a winning team of supporters in Israel and across the globe who, like the many thousands of readers of this newsletter, have been donating time, money, skills, accommodation, essential supplies, and more, to help the IDF fight against those wishing to destroy the Jewish State and civilization as a whole. And GREAT NEWS – volunteers from the Jewish Federation of Central New York have very kindly translated my last newsletter into Spanish (TY Barbara Davis), French (TY Mireille Goodisman), and Hebrew (TY Lital Davis. What a way to end the year - with a new winning team of translators from Syracuse, New York."

# SMALL DONATIONS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE



*help where it's needed most.*

**SupportDisasterRelief.org**



# JCC Announces 2024 Annual Meeting and Gala Award Recipients

by Carlett Spike and Erin Hart

The Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center of Syracuse is gearing up for its 161st Annual Meeting and Gala, presented by naming sponsor, the Wladis Family. The community will come together on Sunday, June 2, 2024 to honor invaluable members of our Syracuse Jewish Community.

The Annual Meeting and Gala is the JCC's largest and most important fundraiser of the year. The celebration allows us the opportunity to come together to pay tribute to those who have acted and given so generously. The money raised from this event helps fund the many scholarships awarded each year sending children to the JCC's summer camp, early childhood development program, after school program and helps mainstream children with special needs. It also benefits those in need to receive discounted fitness classes and meals for senior adults.

A total of four awards will be presented this year to recognize selfless giving and outstanding service to the JCC and greater Jewish community in Syracuse.

This year's honorees represent a wide spectrum of dedication and support. The *Kovod* Award, which signifies honor and importance, will be presented to JCC board member Kathleen Davis. Kathleen is a Syracuse native and has been involved with the JCC for a number of years. She actively serves on numerous JCC committees including the Annual Meeting & Gala Committee, Super Bowl Raffle fundraiser and Executive Committee.

The JCC's *Kovod Gadol* Award, which in Hebrew translates to "great honor," will be presented to Cantor Esa Jaffe and Chaim Jaffe. This award is presented each year to honor a single individual or couple who had demonstrated, usually over a period of years, an extraordinary degree of commitment, energy and loyalty to the JCC and greater community. Esa and Chaim are both longtime supporters of the JCC. They are both active in the Syracuse Jewish community and have served on many different organization boards. They have raised their children in the halls of the



JCC and continue to give back to the greater community.

Long-standing supporters of the Syracuse Jewish community, Ellen and Howard Weinstein, will be presented with this year's Hall of Fame Award. Ellen is a past president of the Jewish Federation of Central New York and is currently serving as a board member of the Jewish Federations of North America. Howard is a past vice president of the JCC board of directors and has served as a member of the board for over 10 years. Howard and Ellen are both past *Kovod Gadol* recipients. Their years of

involvement and selfless giving will be recognized at this year's event.

This year's Leslie Award, the sixth to be given since it was launched in 2016, will be presented to Leah Goldberg. The Leslie Award recognizes outstanding commitment and service to the JCC and to the local community - the qualities which the award's namesake, Leslie London Neulander, personified throughout her many selfless volunteer pursuits. Leah has served on numerous committees throughout the Jewish Community. She is a co-chair of the ECDP parent committee and has helped

plan numerous fundraisers and family events for the JCC as well as many other Jewish organizations in Syracuse.

"I am looking forward to another year of honoring members of our community who have dedicated invaluable service to the JCC and the local Jewish community," said Marci Erlebacher, JCC of Syracuse executive director. "They each deserve recognition for their selfless acts and generosity."

**For more information about the JCC's upcoming gala, including event tickets and sponsorship opportunities, visit [www.jccsy.org](http://www.jccsy.org).**

## Advertise in the Jewish Observer



Contact Rachel Wasserman at [rwasserman@buffalopree.com](mailto:rwasserman@buffalopree.com), 716-725-1173  
Or Keren Green at [kgreen@buffalopree.com](mailto:kgreen@buffalopree.com), 347-400-9939



“Early detection allowed us to take control of the situation and make a plan together.”

If you're noticing changes, it could be **Alzheimer's**. Talk about visiting a doctor **together**.

**ALZ.org/TimeToTalk**



## The Frumah Packard Cemetery



One of the first priorities for a new Jewish community is the creation of a cemetery, usually on land purchased and supported with communal funds. The land of a Jewish cemetery is considered holy, and a special ceremony takes place when a cemetery is created. Jewish burial grounds are regarded as sacred sites which must remain undisturbed in perpetuity.

The first Jewish cemetery in Syracuse was established by the Society of Concord in 1841. Soon other synagogues established their own burial places. Today there are fourteen cemeteries in Syracuse, including the Rosenbloom, Beth Israel, Beth El, Poiley Tzedek and Linas Hatzedek cemeteries, the cemeteries of Young Israel-Shaarei Torah, Beth Sholom and Temple Adath Yeshurun, the Frumah Packard, Workman's Circle and Anshe Sfard cemeteries, the Chevra Shas and Ahavath Achim cemeteries, and the Temple Concord cemetery, which is part of Woodlawn Cemetery.

The Frumah Packard Cemetery is unique among these burial places in that it is not now nor was it ever affiliated with any congregation. It dates back to 1854 and was named after Frumah Packard, a Jewish immigrant from Bavaria, who, with her husband Isaac, played a pivotal role in securing the land and funding for the cemetery. The Frumah Packard cemetery was intentionally created to provide a Jewish cemetery for those who did not belong to a congregation. The rates it charged for burial sites were comparable to those charged by synagogues for their members and thus were lower than rates charged by synagogues for non-members.

The cemetery is governed by a board whose members are Bill Berinstein, Marlene Blumin, Andrew Devorsetz, Sidney Devorsetz, Amy Eliezer, Todd Engel, Jami Fineberg, Harley Finkelstein, Ellie Freeman, Harlan Gingold, Ava Raphael, Brooke Raphael, Abby Scheer and Steven Sisskind. The board members are all volunteers. The cemetery relies on donations to continue to operate because the income from the sale of plots is not sufficient to cover its operating costs. An interesting feature of the cemetery is the Engel Chapel which was built by Louis Golden and Carl Mendelson of Arnold

Homes in 1968 for \$17,000 (\$117,938.97 in today's money) and was gifted to the cemetery by the Engel Family. The Chapel is currently being renovated so that it can serve as a source of revenue and a home for a cemetery caretaker.

The Frumah Packard website, <http://frumahpackardcemetery.com/>, contains an alphabetical list of all the headstones in the cemetery, with years of birth and death of the interred and a notation as to whether they were a veteran or a Holocaust survivor. There are some fifteen hundred extant or reserved burial sites from Aaron to Zwirn. Approximately ten burials occur each year. There are many sites still available for purchase including a section for couples of mixed faith backgrounds.

Frumah Packard has an endowment fund at the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York, but its annual revenue is still not sufficient to cover the annual costs of maintaining the cemetery. The Frumah Packard board has thus begun a fundraising campaign to increase the endowment to the necessary level to ensure that the cemetery will not suffer the fate of two other local cemeteries, Linas Hatzedek and Workman's Circle, which were taken over by New York State when they were no longer fiscally viable. The Frumah Packard board is working very hard to avoid this fate, conscious of the fact that, in Jewish tradition, disturbing the resting body in any way is strictly forbidden, to ensure that the soul and spirit of the deceased find eternal peace and rest.

**Frumah Packard's fundraising goal is a million dollars of which \$150,000 was raised in a campaign fifteen years ago. Anyone wishing to donate to the Frumah Packard fundraising campaign may do so by sending a check to Andy Devorsetz, 1719 Burnet Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13206.**

**HAROLD L. SHAPIRO**  
**December 7, 2023**


Harold L. Shapiro, 93, passed away on December 7 in Ft. Lauderdale. Harold was born on March 21, 1930 to Samuel and Golda Shapiro in Pittsburgh. He was a graduate of The University of Pittsburgh and proudly served his country in the U.S. Army during the Korean War.

After meeting his to-be-wife Billie and having three children, he moved to Syracuse in 1962 to open up a store, Tile Town. His passions were family, playing the mandolin and playing bridge (at which he excelled, at a master level). He was a long-time member of Temple Adath Yeshurun.

Harold was predeceased by his beloved wife Billie on August 4, 2006. His family includes his sons Robert (Patricia), Michael, and Stuart (Laurie), grandchildren Mark (Shirley), Eric (Gabby), Scott (Elyse), Troy, Zachary and Nathan, great-grandson Jaxxon and his sister-in-law Phyllis Brouman.

Contributions in Harold's memory may be made to The American Heart Association:

<https://www.heart.org/en/affiliates/new-york/syracuse>

[www.sisskindfuneralservice.com](http://www.sisskindfuneralservice.com)

**MINDY SOLOMON**  
**December 13, 2023**

Mindy Solomon, 69, passed away on December 13 at Loretto. Mindy was born on August 25, 1954 in Miami, FL to Donald and Eleanor Franklin Klein. She was raised in Syracuse and spent most of her life there.

She was a graduate of J-D High School and the University of Miami. When she was younger, she enjoyed working in her family's furniture stores: Markson Brothers Furniture and Franklin Furniture. Mindy was also a substitute teacher in the Syracuse schools. She was a former member of Temple Adath Yeshurun. She was proud to have been an award-winning representative of Avon products.

Her family includes her sons Peter (Michelle) and Jason, grandsons Emerson, and Owen, her sister Ivy Dominguez, her nephews Alex (Courtney) and Ethan (Kristina), great-nephew Anthony and great-niece Cayley. She was pre-deceased by grandson William.

Contributions in her memory may be made to the Syracuse Jewish Community Center.

[www.sisskindfuneralservice.com](http://www.sisskindfuneralservice.com)

**NORMA ROTHSCHILD GOLDBERG**  
**January 2, 2024**

Norma Rothschild Goldberg, 95, passed away peacefully on January 2 at her home. Born in Watertown, NY on January 31, 1928 to Martin and Rose Rothschild, she was raised in Watertown.

While attending Syracuse University, she met her future husband, the love of her life, Bernard "Bernie" Goldberg. They were married in 1949 and settled in Syracuse where they would raise their four children.

Norma returned to Syracuse University after her children were independent to pursue a master's degree in reading education. After earning her degree, she was a reading teacher in the Syracuse City Schools.

Norma was a former chairperson of the Central New York Girl Scout Council, a member of Temple Adath Yeshurun, the Sisterhood of the Temple as well as being an active volunteer in the community and serving on many boards. She was a master bridge player and especially proud to serve on the national council of Sigma Delta Tau Sorority.

Norma's family includes her children Marti and Harold Rifkin, Neil and Robin Goldberg, Jerry and Sharon Goldberg and Steven and Sondra Goldberg. She was the beloved Bubie to 11 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren. She was pre-deceased by her husband Bernard "Bernie" Goldberg, her sister Emmeline Morris and her brother Harold Rothschild.

Contributions to perpetuate Norma's memory may be made to Temple Adath Yeshurun

[www.sisskindfuneralservice.com](http://www.sisskindfuneralservice.com)



Steven L. Sisskind

# Sisskind

## Funeral Service LLC

*Entrusting a most sensitive time  
into compassionate hands*

- Monument Consultation
- Pre-arrangements

3175 E. Genesee Street

Syracuse, NY 13224

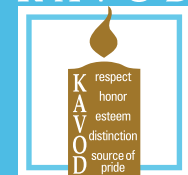
315-663-4200

[sisskindfs@aol.com](mailto:sisskindfs@aol.com)

[www.sisskindfuneralservice.com](http://www.sisskindfuneralservice.com)



KAVOD



INDEPENDENT JEWISH FUNERAL CHAPELS  
MEMBERSHIP BY INVITATION

**Disaster  
could show up at  
YOUR doorstep.**

**Make a  
plan today.**

**Ready.gov/plan**

Ready

FEMA

ad  
COUNCIL



*"Zachor - Remember"*

Our family continues to provide outstanding service in the most trying times.  
**PRE-PLANNING AND MONUMENT CONSULTATIONS**

# birnbaum

## funeral service, inc.

Martin J. Birnbaum, Elaine R. Birnbaum (Ret.) & Joel M. Friedman  
1909 East Fayette Street | Syracuse, New York 13210 | [birnbaumfs@cnymail.com](mailto:birnbaumfs@cnymail.com)

[birnbaumfuneralserviceinc.com](http://birnbaumfuneralserviceinc.com) | 315-472-5291



Charitable foundations embody the best of America.  
They provide a way for people to work together for the common good,  
transforming shared beliefs and hopes into action.

Charitable foundations embody the best of Judaism.  
They enable the Jewish community to fulfill the mitzvah of tzedakah,  
the responsibility of all Jews to help those in need.

The Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York  
gives shape to our boldest dreams, highest ideals and noblest causes.

It has been said that what elevates us in life is not what we receive  
but what we give.

Open an endowment or donor-advised fund at the Foundation  
and see how tzedakah can transform your life.



Call Michael Balanoff, Executive Director, at 315-445-0270 or email [mbalanoff@jewishfoundationcny.org](mailto:mbalanoff@jewishfoundationcny.org)