

# Jewish Observer of Central New York

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

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# April 2024

## From the Editor



Barbara Davis

**Commemoration of the Exodus is central to our Jewish faith. We are reminded each spring that in every generation Jews are duty-bound to regard themselves as if they personally had gone forth from Egypt. The Exodus is considered the event that created the Israelite people and forged their bond with God, who delivered them from bondage into freedom. And yet, there is no historical or archeological evidence that the Exodus ever occurred.**

Does it matter? One of the things I find most intriguing and appealing about Judaism and its texts is that there is so much room for interpretation, for creating meaningful linkages, for invention. In 5784, in the post-October 7<sup>th</sup> world, the ability to connect with our ancient past is perhaps more important than ever, even if that past is metaphorical.

Last December, just before Christmas, I posted the following on my Facebook page: *“Billions of people around globe are about to celebrate the birthday of a Jewish man, born in Bethlehem 2000+ years ago, but don’t think Jews lived there before 1948.”* I don’t usually post stuff, but the continual assertions that Israel “began” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were appalling to me. Ignorance of history is rampant, among all demographics but sadly and especially among young people. So how do we deal with Passover, celebrating an event for which there is no historicity?

Rather than trying to prove it happened, or to prove when it happened, or even to deny that it happened, I believe that we must simply and joyously celebrate its happening, even mythically, even representationally, even as a foundation story for a people who have gone on to do so much good in the world. When we tell and retell the story to our children, and our children’s children, as we are commanded to do, how do we make it meaningful? How do we take the themes and lessons of the Exodus and apply them to the world today? Does it matter that there is no evidence that ten plagues actually occurred or does it matter **more** that we reduce our joy in victory by removing ten drops of wine from our cups so as to not rejoice in the suffering of others?

I used to think that frippery at the seder was inappropriate, that tossing cotton balls or rubber frogs detracted from the seriousness of the occasion. I have modified my views as I have aged. Rabbi Sara Sapadin of Temple Emanu-El in New York City, the mother of four, expressed better than I can why the seder must be age-appropriate: “If our children are to learn it, they must hear it, and in order to hear it, they must want to listen. Thus, we are tasked with being creative and thoughtful and innovative in our approach to the seder, making it speak to our children in a language they can understand.” It is interesting that parents are the chosen tellers of the Exodus story – not rabbis or scholars. This joyful burden makes it incumbent upon us

to personalize and customize the tradition and allows us to insert our own values and our own perspectives into this most basic narrative.

I wrote the preceding paragraphs to explain some of the inclusions in this issue of the *Jewish Observer*. While I take Passover very seriously, I also realize that in the age of TikTok and AI, where influencers have millions of followers, fewer people read books and nobody trusts the media, our approach to Pesach may need to be different. I haven’t yet seen a TikTok Haggadah (and hope I never do), but if a funny t-shirt, tableware, plague apparel or riddles can make the seder more appealing to younger attendees (or even older ones), why not use them? At least we no longer have to celebrate our seders on Zoom.

That’s why we allowed a little whimsy into this month’s issue. The world is moving so fast and in so many different ways that sometimes it’s hard to know which way is up. That thought came to me as I was perusing a recent story in the *Forward* about a dish that is apparently all the rage on TikTok: matzo ball soup dumplings. This intriguing culinary innovation, served in aluminum foil shot glasses, consists of a dumpling floating in an opaque, golden soup topped with dill and fried shallots. Within each dumpling is a dense matzo ball just like Bubbe makes, but flavored by the gingery, slightly sweet, umami-rich chicken stock. Matzo ball dumplings are the creation of Chef Jeremy Dean, who is neither Asian nor Jewish, but rather of Mexican and Salvadoran descent. While we cannot serve them at our seders, it is fascinating to ponder the amalgam of cultures that resulted in this 21<sup>st</sup> century fare.

Another new, albeit tragic, aspect of Passover 2024 is that we have to hold our *sedarim* under the black cloud of the continued imprisonment of the Israeli hostages taken by Hamas on October 7<sup>th</sup>. The freedom we celebrate at Passover is desperately needed for these victims of a monstrous attack. We must remember their suffering, pray for their safe return to Israel and also pray for the safety of the Israeli Defense Forces who are putting their lives at risk to safeguard our Jewish homeland.

In these dark days, we need to heed even more strongly the message of hope that Passover brings. We need to recommit to our values and our principles and hold tightly to our faith. We Jewish people have experienced many miracles over our history, not least the miracle of the Exodus, and we need another one now.

**COVER:** The image on the cover of this issue of the *Jewish Observer* is a copy of the cover illustration by Carol Racklin-Siegel of *Let My People Go!*, published by EKS Publishing as part of the their Bible story series. The book is available at [ekspublishing.com](http://ekspublishing.com). Superimposed on the cover is a copy of a painting by Israeli artist Vered Bertfeld calling for the freeing of the hostages taken on October 7th.

# Jewish Observer

of Central New York

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## From the Jewish Federation of CNY President/CEO

# Pesach Cleaning



Michael Balanoff

Typing the word “*chametz*” in Google does not qualify as searching for *chametz*.

*Chametz* stands for those aspects of ourselves that are negative, the ones we would like to get rid of. That’s why Passover cleaning is so difficult, not only on a physical level, but on a spiritual one. We have to confront our shortcomings, our *chametz*, and figure out how to overcome them, not just superficially, but on a deeper level. The physicality of Passover cleaning – scrubbing every nook and cranny, checking every pocket and drawer,

sweeping and mopping floors and vacuuming carpets, koshering pots and pans – reminds us that “cleaning up our acts” is a job that requires active engagement and serious soul-searching.

Passover cleaning is different from spring cleaning. *Chametz* is not dirt. Rather it is those foods that we are specifically forbidden to eat or even to own. The etymology of the word *chametz* relates it to “acidity” and “sourness” in Hebrew. This clues us in even more that eliminating *chametz* means more than just checking the car for cookie crumbs and covering the counters with tin foil. We need to look for our bitterness, acrimony and resentments and remove them.

Passover represents freedom and gives us the opportunity to have a new beginning, a chance to start over. Spring represents rebirth. The egg and the parsley on the seder plate remind us of renewal and of the joy that we feel in the restoration of life that comes after a

long, cold winter, even as we temper it with saltwater tears.

Passover 5784 is unlike Passovers of recent years. It is overshadowed by the war that is ongoing in the Middle East and by the rise in virulent antisemitism not only in America but around the world. We have lost allies; we have lost alliances that we thought were strong. We find ourselves isolated and subject to attack. Yet, as we gather our families and friends together at our seders in 2024 to retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt, we do so in the knowledge that we survived then, and we will continue to survive.

We need to look deeply within ourselves this Pesach. We need to question our values, our beliefs, our actions, maybe even our hubris. Perhaps after this scrutiny, we will conclude that we need to reaffirm what we believe in and stand for. But the important thing is to remove any *chametz* that we find, any negativity, any ill-will, any thoughts or deeds that are not consonant with the fundamental positive

beliefs of Judaism and Passover.

Passover teaches us about faith – faith in the Jewish people, faith in God and faith in the idea that we can move from bondage (of many different kinds) to freedom and that things can and will get better. However, as our Passover cleaning demonstrates, it’s not that easy. We must believe in a future we cannot see and we may need to exert effort over time and with a new mindset.

On behalf of the Federation, I want to wish all of the members of our community a happy and healthy Passover. As you search for *chametz*, both literally and figuratively, I hope you will remember that the Exodus is contemporary for every generation of Jews. Passover is a very personal and individual holiday (“We must look upon ourselves as if we had come out of Egypt, personally”), and although we enjoy it in the company of others, self-scrutiny and soul-cleansing is integral to the commemoration of Judaism’s foundational event. I hope all of the members of our community, to whose vitality and sustenance Federation is dedicated, will find the holiday significant and meaningful and will find renewal and rebirth in spring 5784. *Chag Pesach Sameach!*



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# Passover – A Holiday for the Ages

by Rabbi Moshe Saks,  
Temple Adath Yeshurun

The holiday of Passover, celebrated by Jews the world over, commemorates the Exodus from Egypt by the Israelites from slavery at the hands of Pharaoh. The special nature of this holiday is exemplified by the ritual of the “*Seder*,” a meal patterned after Greek philosophical meals of ancient times. At the *Seder*, the symbols of the holiday (matzah, bitter herbs, mortar - called “*Harose,t*” hard-boiled eggs, green vegetables, and the like) are eaten as a part of the ritual. In addition, the story of the Exodus is told, along with various



interpretations from the Rabbis, so as to bring the events to life. So important is the symbolism of Passover that Jews are forbidden to eat anything which contains leaven during the holiday. This requires an extensive spring cleaning and changing of kitchen equipment in preparation for the holiday. The imagery of Passover extends to Jewish life and liturgy all year, as it is to be found in

many prayers which are recited during the year. Certainly, then, Passover, with its message of religious freedom and fight against tyranny, has eternal meaning, not only for the Jewish people, but for all the Human Family.

We all know that Passover is the holiday which commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from slavery. Freedom is a recurring theme, not only throughout the liturgy of the holiday, including the *Haggadah*, but of popular Jewish culture, as well.

The question is: what exactly is the freedom of which we speak? Are we still free today? How does the Passover story relate to the modern, educated Jew of our contemporary culture? We tend to

think of freedom *from* persecution, enslavement and the like. But the truth is that freedom can only be enjoyed when we take a positive, proactive stand and live our lives with the freedom *to* use our heritage, our God-given rights, to build a better community, a better society.

At your *Seder* this year, spend some time talking about freedom, and how you can use it to learn more, to grow, to take the lessons of Passover seriously, so that your lives and the lives of your loved ones are forever enriched by this precious commodity we call freedom. Remember – the *Haggadah* is actually for adults – use it well to learn with your children the Jewish value of freedom. In this way, your Passover will be a blessed one.

## » BOOK REVIEWS

# Passover Children’s Book Reviews by Students from Temple Concord Sunday School

## *Everybody’s Book: The Story of the Sarajevo Haggadah*

Reviewed by Ellis Dana, Grade 1



I liked *Everybody’s Book* by Linda Leopold Strauss. My favorite part was when the couple got married and received the Haggadah. It’s really interesting because the Haggadah is now older than 650 years old! It lasted so long because lots of people and other religions took good care of it and protected it really well.

## *Frankenstein’s Matzah: A Passover Parody*

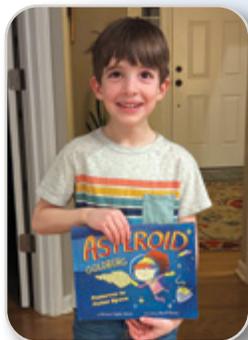
Reviewed by Ariel Ficken, Grade 2



My favorite part was seeing all the scared faces when the matzah jumped out and stood up for the other matzahs. I really liked the part where the little brother asked if the matzah was Elijah. I really liked the pictures in the book, especially the lightning part. I liked seeing how other people did their seders. We don’t do experiments at ours. The “Stop, Go back” part was my favorite part of the book.

## *Asteroid Goldberg*

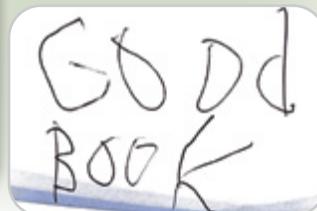
Reviewed by Dominic Haas, Grade 2



The rhyming was great. The story was fun, easy to read and great for younger kids.

## *Afikotective*

Reviewed by Gabriel Karcher, Kindergarten



## *Tyrannosaurus Tsuris*

Reviewed by Elijah Mason, Grade 2



I liked this book. *Tsuris* means trouble. *Tyrannosaurus* had a tiny bit of trouble, but he thought he had tons of trouble. The other dinosaurs had trouble too. They all had a Seder together.

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# Mazal Tov to Our Community's 2023 B'nai Mitzvah



**Sydney Graham**, daughter of Kevin and Cara Graham and sister of Aaron, became a bat mitzvah on May 13. Sydney attends Wellwood Middle School. Her hobbies include lacrosse, field hockey, music, theater and spending time with her friends. For her mitzvah project, Sydney held a bottle drive to support the CNYSPCA. This was a special project as her family's beloved late dogs, Leia and Delilah, both came from the CNYSPCA. Sydney was grateful to celebrate her bat mitzvah with family and friends, and she feels lucky to have their continued support.



**Cara Engel** became a bat mitzvah on June 24 at Temple Concord. She attends the Epstein School and enjoys gymnastics. She plays trumpet and is currently participating in the pit band for the JDMS musical.



**Eytan Steinitz** celebrated his bar mitzvah on *Parashat Re'eh* on August 10 at Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevra Shas. Eytan goes to J-D Middle School. He enjoys playing the saxophone, 3D printing, Minecraft and all things Lego. Eytan donated a portion of his bar mitzvah gifts to Building Blocks of Resilience - a charity dedicated to giving Lego sets to Israeli children who were uprooted from their homes following the 10/7 massacre.



**Olivia Pierce** became bat mitzvah on August 26. Olivia attended religious school at Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevra Shas and the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. Olivia is an 8th grader at Eagle Hill Middle School and is an avid softball player for her school team, as well as playing in the F-M Little League and Academy Softball. Olivia enjoys listening to music, spending time with her family and friends, including her dog Wolfie, as well as searching for her next pair of Air Jordan sneakers.



**Olivia Leigh Sykes**, daughter of Richard and Megan Sykes, became bat mitzvah at Temple Concord on June 10. She is a graduate of the Syracuse Community Hebrew School and attends Eagle Hill Middle School. Olivia enjoys skiing, lacrosse, field hockey, tennis, hanging with her friends, reading and listening to music.



**Anya Reckess** became bat mitzvah on July 8. She received her religious education at Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevra Shas and the Syracuse Community Hebrew School and attended the URJ 6 Points Creative Arts Academy Jewish summer camp. She currently attends Manlius Pebble Hill School and the Epstein School. Anya plays soccer and volleyball competitively and is a dedicated artist.



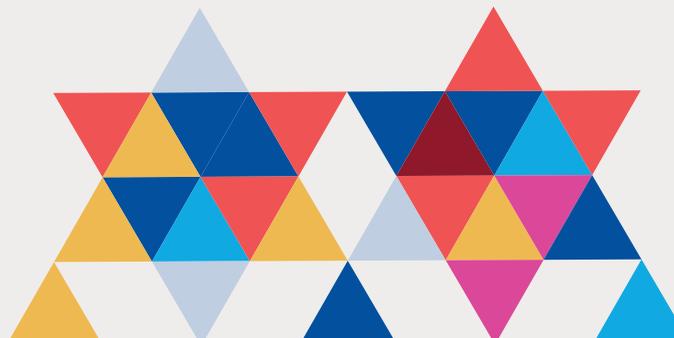
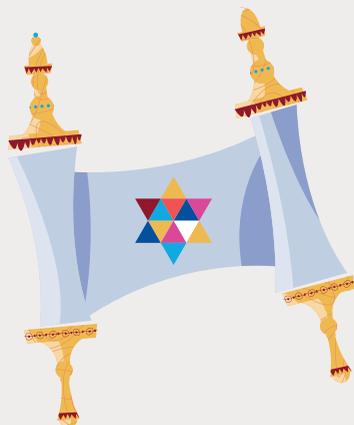
**Sarah Kuss** became Bat Mitzvah on August 12. She received her religious education at Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevra Shas and the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. Sarah is an 8th grader at Eagle Hill Middle School and enjoys playing volleyball for her school team as well as for Syracuse Volleyball Club. Her favorite activities (other than volleyball) are playing cards with her family, working out at the Y and spending time with her dog, Munch.



**Isaac Matan Bloom** celebrated his bar mitzvah on September 2, *Parashat Ki Tavo*, surrounded by proud family and friends at Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse. Isaac enjoys traditional Okinawan karate, video games (especially Mario), movies, cooking, learning languages and spending time with his family and friends. He also loves to travel, especially to the ocean, and making people laugh. Isaac learns Torah weekly with a study partner and volunteered last year with the senior dining program at the JCC.



**Samuel (Sam) Abraham Elman** became bar mitzvah on July 22 at Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse. He is a graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School. Sam is currently working towards his second-degree black belt in karate. He also enjoys computer science and traveling with his family.





**Eli Werde** became bar mitzvah on October 14. He received his religious education at Temple Concord. Eli loves music, animals and video games. He is looking forward to attending Camp Evergreen in Manlius this summer.



**Benjamin Smolen** became a bar mitzvah on November 4. He received his religious school education at Temple Concord and attends Marcellus Drive Middle School. He enjoys soccer and wrestling, spending time outside, playing with his friends and fishing. Someday, he wishes to catch a big lake trout. He is looking forward to volunteering at an animal shelter with his dad where he can provide companionship to dogs.



**Asher Chosed** became bar mitzvah on October 21. He is in 7th grade at Wellwood Middle School and he attends Temple Concord religious school. Asher enjoys playing video games, cooking, and spending time with friends. For his mitzvah project he did a bottle and can drive for Helping Hounds.



**Galil Chai Oren** became a bar mitzvah on December 23 at CBS-CS. Galil is a seventh grader at MPH. Previously he attended SHDS and the Hamilton Central School. The oldest of three brothers, he enjoys spending time with his family, playing travel hockey and being in the woods. He is a fluent Hebrew speaker and adores Israeli food and music. This past summer, Galil spent two weeks with his father's family in Kibbutz Kfar Hanassi in the Upper Galilee—his namesake. His parents are Or and Emily Oren of Dewitt and Hamilton, NY.



**Sydney Kanter** became bat mitzvah on October 28. She received her religious education at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School. Sydney is a budding artist. In her spare time she loves to draw, paint and sketch. Sydney loves spending time with her cousins and family and enjoys her summers on Cazenovia Lake.

*Happy Pesach!*

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# Passover Humor

**The Four Kinds of People Who Use Zoom:** The Wise, The Wicked, The Simple, The One Who Does Not Know How to Mute

- **The Wise Person says:** “I’ll handle the Controls and Chat Rooms and forward the Cloud Recording Transcript after the call.”
- **The Wicked Person says:** “Since I have unlimited duration, I scheduled the meeting for six hours—as it says in the Haggadah, whoever prolongs the telling of the story, harei zeh m’shubach, is praiseworthy.”
- **The Simple Person says:** “Hello? Am I on? I can hear you but I can’t see you.”
- **The One Who Does Not Know How to Mute says:** “How should I know where you put the keys? I’m stuck on this stupid Zoom call with these idiots.”

To the Wise Person you should offer all of the Zoom Pro Optional Add-On Plans.

To the Wicked Person you should say: “Had you been in charge, we would still be in Egypt.”

To the Simple Person you should say: “Try the call-in number instead.”

To the One Who Does Not Know How to Mute you should say: “Why should this night be different from all other nights?”

## PASSOVER RIDDLES

**Why did the matzah quit his job?**

Because he didn’t get a raise.

**What’s your favorite Passover film?**

The Shawshankbone Redemption

**What kind of cheese can you eat on Pesach?**

Matza-rella.

**What army base is off limits on Passover?**

Fort Leavenworth.

**Why do we have a Haggadah at Passover?**

So we can seder right words.

**What do you call someone who derives pleasure from the bread of affliction?**

A matzochist.

**How does NASA organize a seder in space?**

They planet.

**What kind of shoes did the Egyptians wear during the plague of Frogs?**

Open-toad.

**Who is behind Pharaoh’s Evil Empire?**

Darth Seder.

**What was the name of the Secret Spy for the Jews in Egypt?**

Bondage, James Bondage.

**What’s the difference between cardboard and matza?**

Cardboard doesn’t leave crumbs in the rug.

**Why did the Israelites wander in the desert for so long?**

They lost their Waze.

**What kind of cake do you have after a big Passover meal?**

A stomach cake.

*This is not a Passover riddle, but it’s pretty funny:*

**What do you call a Jew with a pH lower than 7?**

Hasidic.



## EIGHT DAYS OF HALLMARK PASSOVER MOVIES

(reprinted with permission from McSweeney’s)

### “Hearts and Haggadahs”

When a fire in Annabel’s glamorous city highrise destroys her family collection of Maxwell House Haggadahs, she sets out to find a suitable replacement. Her search brings her to the small-town coffee shop Get Thee to a Beannery run by Saul, a grump with a heart of espresso. Despite his initial resistance, things begin to brew between them, and Saul considers pouring his resources into sponsoring a new line of Haggadahs. Will they be the perfect blend of big-city java and small-town roast, or will this budding partnership grind to a halt?

### “Matzo Mayhem”

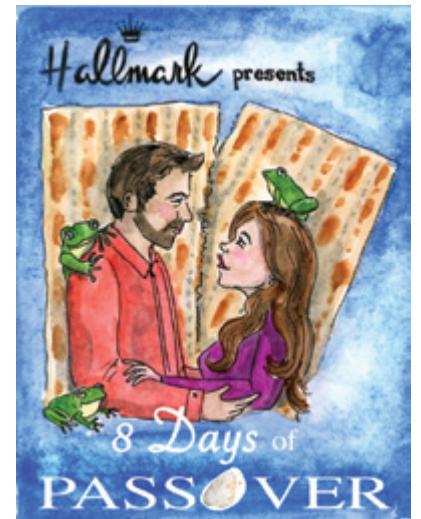
Unable to travel home for Passover, college student Adam decides to throw together a seder for his dormmates. Unsure if anyone will come, he makes colorful posters advertising “free food and four cups of wine” and displays them around the residence halls. Before he knows it, Adam is hosting a rager, complete with Manischewitz shots, intoxicated masses bellowing Dayeinu (even when it was enough) and matzo ball pong destroying the carpet. He frantically texts his crush Elijah to break things up. (Elijah has an authoritatively deep voice, broad shoulders and biceps made for crowd control.) But will Adam survive the kosher kegger while waiting for Elijah?

### “The Substitute Seder Date”

When Leah’s corporate work retreat is canceled, she no longer has an excuse to miss her giant family seder. What was supposed to be a weekend of high thread-count hotel sheets and networking begins to feel like the eleventh plague. Her boyfriend Oren just “quiet quit” their relationship, and she dreads being asked when she’ll finally provide some grandchildren. While at Yussels shopping for a kitschy hostess gift, she panics. She turns to the manager and begs him to pretend to be her doting boyfriend for the night. As they lean into their white lie, Leah learns why this man is different from all other men, and they discover they just might share more than a love for overpriced Judaica.

### “Love & Other Plagues”

Strange things have been happening in the village of Dayenuvia on the day of the annual Pyramid Festival. Party planner Miri tries to rein in the chaos, but frogs keep falling from the sky, the sun refuses to rise, swarms of insects descend on the food and wild beasts emerge out of nowhere and trample the makeshift pyramids in the town square. When Miri enlists the help of local builder Yonatan to help fix the pyramids in time for the party,



his late arrival, smarmy attitude and lack of community spirit make her see red. But Yonatan has a few last-minute tricks up his sleeve to make sure everyone can go to the festival. Will Miri fall for this pyramid-schemer, or will their different work styles part them like the Red Sea?

### “Thou Shalt Love”

Jayme is a recent rabbinical school dropout and reformed party girl who moves to a quiet neighborhood for a fresh start. As part of her reformation, she makes a list of personal commandments to keep herself on the straight and narrow. But when she falls for a hunky bartender at the Golden Calf, she finds being good is a bitter herb to swallow.

### “Pop the Four Questions”

Chef and macaroon baker Tali has been waiting years for her girlfriend, high-powered banker Rebecca, to propose. They’ve spent seven Passovers together, and still... no ring. When a gorgeous stranger with a sweet tooth shows up at her Pesach Patisserie Pop-Up, Tali is forced to reckon with four questions of her own: Is Rebecca the right person for her? Can true love strike not once, but twice? What’s the deal with haroseth? And could there be other gefilte fish in the sea?

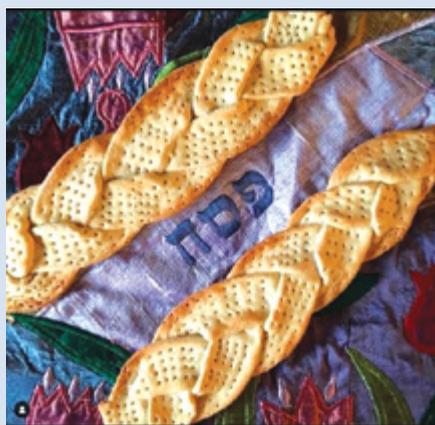
### “Salt Water Tears of Joy”

Abigail’s boyfriend Geoff surprises her with a beach vacation for her birthday, but everything flops. Her family is furious she’s missing Passover, and Geoff won’t stop singing

“Frogs Here, Frogs There,” the one Passover song he knows, in a way that quickly loses its charm. Worst of all, her birthday cake isn’t kosher for Passover. During a tearful dip in the Atlantic, Abigail is stunned to backstroke into her first love, Jacob H. from Camp Shalom. As Abigail spends time reacquainting herself with her camp memories and childhood crush, she is torn between her ribbiting beau and her pareve past.

“Unleavened Love”

Big-city magazine writer Jessie is on the cusp of a promotion when her brother is busted for coveting thy neighbor’s Tesla a bit too much. She relocates to her hometown after years away to care for her two young nieces. Jessie tries to do everything right and even agrees to help plan Temple Sinai’s Hebrew School Seder. But the seder is quickly derailed when nobody can find the other half of the afikomen. As the minutes tick by and the children begin to lose interest, her desperation grows. But when hot single dad Ari steps up to spearhead a search party, Jessie wonders if she’s found the Afiko-Man of her dreams.



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Opened the door for Elijah.  
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The Two-Minute Haggadah

Opening prayers:

Thanks, God, for creating wine. (Drink wine.)

Thanks for creating produce. (Eat parsley.)

Overview: Once we were slaves in Egypt. Now we’re free. That’s why we’re doing this.

Four questions:

1. What’s up with the matzah?
2. What’s the deal with horseradish?
3. What’s with the dipping of the herbs?
4. What’s this whole slouching at the table business?

Answers:

1. When we left Egypt, we were in a hurry. There was no time for making decent bread.
2. Life was bitter, like horseradish.
3. It’s called symbolism.
4. Free people get to slouch.

A funny story: Once, these five rabbis talked all night, then it was morning. (Eat soup now.)

The four kinds of children and how to deal with them:

- Wise child—explain Passover.
- Simple child—explain Passover slowly.
- Silent child—explain Passover loudly.
- Wicked child—browbeat in front of the relatives.

Speaking of children: We hid some matzah. Whoever finds it gets five bucks.

The story of Passover: It’s a long time ago. We’re slaves in Egypt. Pharaoh is a nightmare. We cry out for help. God brings plagues upon the Egyptians. We escape, bake some matzah. God parts the Red Sea. We make it through; the Egyptians aren’t so lucky. We wander 40 years in the desert, eat manna, get the Torah, wind up in Israel, get a new temple, enjoy several years without being persecuted again. (Let brisket cool now.)

The 10 Plagues: Blood, Frogs, Lice—you name it.

The singing of “Dayenu”:

If God had gotten us out of Egypt and not punished our enemies, it would’ve been enough. If he’d punished our enemies and not parted the Red Sea, it would’ve been enough.

If he’d parted the Red Sea—(Remove gefilte fish from refrigerator now.)

Eat matzah. Drink more wine. Slouch.

Thanks again, God, for everything.

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Art Spiegelman & Neil Gaiman



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# Passover Merch

Passover apparel is all the rage in 5784. Whether one does the organizing, is a participant, asks the questions or looks for the afikomen, there's an appropriate t-shirt to wear for the occasion:



Passover character masks are “in” this year to go with plague headbands and a shirt that says “Matza – the original fast food.”



Traditional Passover foods find their way onto earrings, napkins and, for some unfathomable reason, Exodus salami chips. Is that what they ate in the desert? And we thought it was manna! And though the manufacturer of Surprisingly Delicious Matzo Chips made the product kosher, they neglected to make it kosher for Passover, which seems like a really dumb mistake.



The Rohr Jewish Learning Institute created a game called “How Do You Jew Passover?” which consists of a deck of forty-one cards with conversation-starter questions on Jewish themes in three categories including “Think,” “Trivia” and “Personal,” designed to make your seder thought-provoking and interactive. And hard as it is to believe, one of this year's top sellers is a Matzah Ball

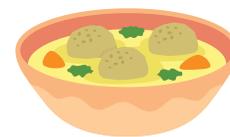


Soup Candle because “nothing beats the smell of matzah ball soup wafting through your home.”

The Passover *haggadah* comes in for reinvention each and every year, in seemingly endless iterations. This year is no exception, and one can find the *Unorthodox Haggadah* and the *Passover Haggadah Graphic Novel* to use at your seders. Some might find these offensive but others may consider them much more appealing than the Maxwell House version. There are also *haggadot* for interfaith families, for Messianic Jews and for Christians. There's the *Santa Cruz Haggadah* designed for agnostics, Buddhists, Christians, feminists and humanists, the *Curb Your Haggadah* and *YadaYada Haggadah* for a sitcom seder, the *Meshugah Kanye Haggadah* and *The Atheist Haggadah* and the intriguing *Brick Haggadah*, designed for ages 4-120 featuring photographs of scenes built by Tzachi Rosman using Lego bricks.

If you're in a hurry to complete your seder, there are a lot of choices: *The Express Haggadah*, *The Hasty Haggadah* and the *Joy Haggadah*, which is 14 pages long and promises that you will finish in two hours or less. There's a *Passover Haggadah in Poems* and the *Ina Gada Haggadah* which offers “the hottest prose to come down the pike since the burning bush.” There's even *The Un-Haggadah*, subtitled “How to Keep the Conversation & Wine Flowing at Your Seder.” If none of these seem right for you, you could always try *The Painless Passover Seder Haggadah* or (shudder) *The Martian Haggadah* written by Amos Kang and (wait for it) ChatGPT AI. Maxwell House is looking better and better, and it's free.

# Playful Passover Phenomena



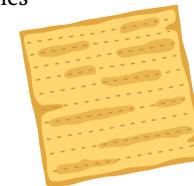
Who would have thought that there'd be so many books with “matzo balls” in the title?! And we're not talking recipe books. Here is a sampling of books that you might enjoy over the eight days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

- The Matzo Ball Heiress* a romance novel by Laurie Gwen Shapiro  
*Ellie's Deli: Wishing on Matzo Ball Soup* for readers age 10+ by Lisa Greenwald  
*More Than Matzah: A Passover Feast of Fun, Facts, And Activities* by Herman, Koffsky and Lane  
*Matzo Balls and Cornbread: A Love Story* by Tyree and Les Wieder  
*Matzah Ball Surprise* – a contemporary romance by Laura Brown  
*Rabbi Rocketpower and the Half-baked Matzah Mystery* by Rabbi Susan Abramson  
*Matzoh in the Metropolis: A Verse Collection* by Barbara Hantman  
*As the Matzo Ball Turns* by Jozef Rothstein  
*The Matzah Ball: A Novel* by Jean Meltzer  
*Matzoh Ball Books* – a series designed to foster love for and pride in Yiddish and *Yiddishkayt* in the next generation of *kinder*.  
*Matzah Means So Many Things* by Faith Goldstein  
*Mrs. Kaplan and the Matzoh Ball of Death* - a geriatric mixture of murder, mystery, and laugh-out-loud humor by Mark Reutlinger  
*Matzo Balls for Breakfast and Other Memories of Growing Up Jewish* by Alan King and Friends  
*The Little Matza Ball Who Wanted to Be A Meatball* by Aaron Pickus  
*Matzo Balls and Christmas Trees Memories of My Jewish Mother* by Randi Wolf Lauterbach  
*Matza Mia! A Jewish Regency Mystery* by Libi Astaire  
*My Mushy Matzah Ball Book* by Arianna Brooks  
*Manishevitz: The Matza Family - The Making Of An American Jewish Icon* by Laura Manishevitz Alpern

If you're looking for a movie about matzo balls, you won't have much luck. Here are a few we've found but we really can't recommend them: “*Spaghetti and Matzo Balls*,” “*Matzo Balls and Black-Eyed Peas*” and “*Onan and the Trojan Matzah Ball*.”

If you're looking for Passover parody songs, however, you'll have a lot more luck. The website <https://www.passoversongparodies.com/lyrics> contains dozens of Barbara Sarshik's funny, original and easy to sing parodies of popular songs from many genres – Broadway, folk, pop, Disney and Gilbert and Sullivan. The songbook follows the order of the seder, and the songs are numbered, making the songbook easy to use as you go along, but the songs can be used individually and in any order. Lyrics are provided as are instrumental accompaniments. Following is just a short list of the kinds of musical parodies available:

- “A Spoon of Charoses” based on “A Spoonful of Sugar” from “Mary Poppins”
- “Afikomen!” based on “Oklahoma!” from “Oklahoma!”
- “Are You Ready for Passover Fare?” based on Simon and Garfunkel's “Are You Going to Scarborough Fair?”
- “Break It Off” based on Taylor Swift's “Shake It Off”
- “Eight Days? A Week?” based on the Beatles' “Eight Days a Week”
- “Fifty Ways to Leave Mitzrayim” based on Simon and Garfunkel's “Fifty Ways to Leave Your Lover”
- “Goodbye, Goodbye, Mitzrayim!” based on “To Life!” from “Fiddler on the Roof”
- “Hey Jews” based on the Beatles' “Hey Jude”
- “I Just Can't Go to the King” based on “I Just Can't Wait to Be King” from “The Lion King”
- “Manishevitz Wine” based on “Music of the Night” from “Phantom of the Opera”
- “Master of the Jews” based on “Master of the House” from “Les Miserables”
- “Ode to Elijah” based on “Be Our Guest” from “Beauty and the Beast”
- “Sweet Kosher Wine” based on Neil Diamond's “Sweet Caroline”
- “That's a Matzah” based on Dean Martin's “That's Amore”
- “It's Our Seder” based on Leonard Cohen's “Hallelujah”
- “Mighty Pharaoh” based on Taylor Swift's “Anti-Hero”



# Out of the Ordinary Matzo Balls

The world's largest matzo ball was prepared in 2010 by Chef Jon Wirtis of Shlomo and Vito's New York City Delicatessen, located in Tucson, Arizona. He created a 426-pound matzo ball for New York's Jewish Food Festival. The ingredients were 125 pounds of matzah meal, 25 pounds of schmaltz, over 1,000 eggs and 20 pounds of potato starch. Since 2009, Joey Chestnut has held the world record for eating matzah balls: 78 of exactly 3.5 ounces in 8 minutes, at the Inaugural World Matzoh Ball Eating Championship, a charity event. But matzo balls don't have to be giant or consumed in haste to be fascinating. While the primary debate about matzo balls is between "floaters" and "sinkers," there are other interesting variations on this quintessential Jewish food.

Matzo balls began as German *knödel*, a breaded dumpling. Jewish cooks in the Middle Ages first adapted the dumplings to add to Sabbath soups, using broken matzo with some kind of fat like chicken or beef marrow, eggs, onions, ginger and nutmeg. As Jews moved eastward to Poland and the Pale of Settlement in Russia, they brought *kneidlach* (Yiddish for *knödel*) with them. In Lithuania, *kneidlach* were filled with cinnamon or meat. The term "matzo ball" was first used in English in 1902 in the section on Jewish food in *Mrs. Rorer's Cookbook*, although, when the Manischewitz Company started selling ground matzo meal, they marketed the dumplings as "feather balls Alsatian style" in their 1933 *Tempting Kosher Dishes* cookbook.

In a recent kid's book entitled *Matilda Makes Matzo Balls*, the main character wants pink matzo balls (which grandma obligingly creates) which led the *Jewish Observer* on a quest to find alternative varieties and colors of matzo balls. We got some great results.

## Vovo's Matzo Balls

In love and appreciation for my mother-in-law,  
Yaffa Sabah

by Jay Sinclair

**In life, I say that there are two types of people – people who live to eat and people who eat to live. Fortunately or unfortunately, I have been a member of both, owing to my type 1 diabetes. But instead of restricting foods, meals or snacks, I choose to live my life and my diabetes fits in and around me.**

I mention this because while chicken soup is a household favorite at most Jewish Friday night dinner tables around the world, including during the holiday of Passover, it's the little things that make a difference and can elevate a dish. The recipe for Vovo's Matzo Balls was taught to me by my mother-in-law, Vovo (Portuguese for grandmother), who is honored in its name.

My mother-in-law is an amazing and talented person. She was a concert pianist, she speaks six languages, she is committed, loving and so much more. She taught me to cook dishes as exotic as Feijoada with Farofa and Peanut Butter Chicken and while some are dishes full of complex flavors, cooking techniques and ingredients, it is the humble matzo ball, deliciously simple, easy to make and yet elevated with Vovo's "*Je Ne Sais Quoi*" that stands out.

Many of you might wonder why I haven't mentioned ingredients, cooking techniques or timing and that's for one simple reason: the back of a Manischewitz Matzo Ball Mix has everything you need and all you have to do is follow the instructions – but with Vovo's one addition – sauteed onions.

The recipe that Vovo taught me called for *shchmaltz* or rendered chicken fat, although if you don't have this, you can always use oil – vegetable ideally but olive oil is an option. Chop a red onion into a fine dice and, in a large



base pan on medium heat, sauté the onions until they take on a rich dark color, approximately 30 minutes.

Before dropping your matzo balls into your cooking liquid (I use chicken soup mix just to keep building up the flavor profile), use the back of a teaspoon to press into your rolled 1-inch balls and carefully fill half a teaspoon of the rich dark sauteed onion mix into the matzo ball. Reform into a ball and when the batch is completed, place into the cooking liquid for the recommended cooking time.

Then sit back and wait to see your guests' faces as they bite into these sauteed onion-stuffed matzo ball surprises – it's the small things done well that make all the difference – enjoy!

## GRANDMA ARLIENE'S KNAIDLACH SURPRISE (Meat Filled Matzah Balls)

[Thank you,  
Ellen Weinstein]

### Knaidlach Dough:

4 eggs  
1/2 cup cold water  
1 cup matzah meal  
1/3 cup oil or melted shortening  
1 teaspoon salt  
Dash of pepper



Beat eggs in large bowl; add water, oil or cooled melted shortening, salt and pepper and mix well. Add matzah meal and stir thoroughly. Form into balls the size of walnuts. Place in refrigerator while preparing meat filling.

### Meat Filling:

1/2 raw chopped meat  
1 egg  
1 small minced onion  
Dash of salt and pepper  
3 tablespoons oil

Mix chopped meat with beaten egg, minced onion, salt and pepper. Shape into tiny balls (grape size) and sauté in hot oil. Once meatballs are cool enough to handle, stuff one meatball into the center of each knaidlach. Boil in slightly salted water for 20 minutes and add to boiling chicken soup for additional 5 minutes. Can be made in advance and stored in freezer for future use.

## ASIAN MUSHROOM MATZO BALLS

1/2 cup chicken stock  
3 eggs  
1/4 cup green onions, plus more for garnish  
1/4 cup shiitake mushrooms, minced  
1/4 cup cilantro, minced, plus more for garnish  
1 teaspoon garlic powder  
1/4 teaspoon black pepper, plus more to taste  
1/4 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste  
3 tablespoons olive oil

In a medium bowl, stock with eggs. Mix in matzo meal, green onions, shiitake mushrooms, cilantro, garlic powder, olive oil, salt and pepper. Refrigerate for 30 minutes. Form into 1-inch balls. Bring a large stockpot of water to a boil; lower to a simmer. Add matzo balls and cover and cook for 20-30 minutes.



## RED MATZO BALLS

1 batch matzo ball mixture  
4 tablespoons pureed  
cooked beets

Puree beets in a food processor until smooth. Add 4 tablespoons of beet puree to the matzo ball base and mix gently until combined. Refrigerate for 30 minutes. Bring a pot of salted water to a simmer. Form chilled mixture into about 15 matzo balls and add to simmering water, cover and cook for 30-40 minutes.

## GREEN MATZO BALLS

1 batch matzo ball mixture  
2 cups parsley leaves  
2 cups fresh dill

Pulse parsley and dill in a food processor for 30 seconds and add to matzo ball mixture. Refrigerate for 30 minutes. Bring a pot of salted water to a simmer. Form matzo ball mixture into about 15 matzo balls and add to simmering water, cover and cook for 30-40 minutes.

## ORANGE MATZO BALLS

1 batch classic matzo ball  
mixture  
1 cup carrot juice

Add the carrot juice to the matzo ball base and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Once chilled, form matzo balls into about 15 balls and set aside. Bring a pot of salted water to a simmer. Gently add matzo balls to simmering water, cover and cook for 30-40 minutes.

# Passover Messages

***“Moses said to the people, ‘Remember this day, when you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, for with a mighty hand, the Lord took you out of here, and [therefore] no leaven shall be eaten.’”***  
– Exodus 13:3

“Passover has a message for the conscience and the heart of all mankind. For what does it commemorate? It commemorates the deliverance of a people from degrading slavery, from most foul and cruel tyranny. And so, it is Israel’s - nay, God’s protest against unrighteousness, whether individual or national.” – *Rabbi Morris Joseph*

“This is true freedom: Our ability to shape reality. We have the power to initiate, create and change reality rather than only react and survive it. How can we all educate our children to true freedom? Teach them not to look at reality as defining their acts but to look at their acts as defining reality.”  
– *Yaacov Cohen*

“Passover is one of my favorite times of the year. This is when the whole community and family gets together to remember who we are and why we are here.” – *Jennifer Wanger*

*“You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you also were strangers in the land of Egypt.”*  
– Exodus 23:9

“The Exodus from Egypt occurs in every human being, in every era, in every year, and in every day.”  
– *Reb Nachman of Breslov*

*“The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.”* – Leviticus 19:34

“... I say to Him, ‘God is it okay to luff strangers? And God says to me, ‘Yitzak, vat is dis strangers? You make strangers. I don’t make strangers.’”  
– *Kitchen Table Wisdom*

## The Twelve Plagues of Antisemitism

A very “with it” website called **JewBelong** created a new Passover seder ritual which they call *The Twelve Plagues of Antisemitism*, which seemed very appropriate to share in 2024: “This year we have strong, black coffee on our Seder table as a symbol for the Jewish community, and anyone who stands for justice and against hate, to wake up to the vicious rise in antisemitism. Many of our ancestors came here as refugees, worked hard and contributed to society so we could enjoy good lives. But something has shifted and the insidious nature of antisemitism is growing. Antisemitism has become normalized. Even if you have yet to experience it personally, keep reading because it may just be a matter of time. It was the “paranoid” Jews in Europe in the 1930s who survived. The good news is that it’s not too late to wake up and activate. Start now.” They suggest that participants take turns reading the plagues aloud while everyone takes a sip of their coffee.

### Here are JewBelong’s 21<sup>st</sup> century plagues:

**Plague 1: Self-centered:** “I’ve never experienced antisemitism, so how bad could it be?” Well, very. Even if you have not experienced it, your people have, your community has, your family has. Isn’t that enough? Frankly, antisemitism has become so normalized that you may not always notice it. Like when someone says Jews are cheap, or run the media, or that our community doesn’t need allies because we’re all white/privileged. That’s antisemitism.

**Plague 2: Academia:** 43% of Jewish students in American colleges and universities have personally experienced antisemitism or witnessed antisemitic activity on campus. Enough said. We need to listen, learn and support our kids.

**Plague 3: Webinars:** There is a well-funded, professional antisemitism campaign masquerading as social justice. This organized effort working to promote antisemitism is flourishing. Yet too often the Jewish community wants to “educate” the problem away. But education only works when people are open minded. When people hate Jews, it is real and dangerous, and webinars alone can’t fix it.

**Plague 4: Silence:** From tucking your Star of David necklace into your t-shirt, to letting an antisemitic slur slide, to not using your platform for good – if we assimilate out of fear and abandon our Jewishness, the bigots win.

**Plague 5: Inequity:** Name the social cause and Jews are often standing out front supporting it. It’s outrageous that Jews are unwelcome by some progressive groups. While a basic Jewish value is to improve the world, it is important that Jews support the Jewish community, too. Standing up for others more than ourselves isn’t the answer.

**Plague 6: Instagram:** Not everyone needs to be a Middle East expert, but getting information from social media influencers on a complex geopolitical situation is not the way to go. We must elevate experts with the credentials to accurately discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, rather than blindly trusting influencers and celebrities.

**Plague 7: Narrow-mindedness:** It is entirely possible to stand for the humanity of both Palestinians and Israelis. We do not need to be pro anything except pro-peace.

**Plague 8: Politics:** Politicians on the far right and left are using the Jewish community as a political football because it plays well with their radical biases. But, this isn’t a game and we aren’t political pawns. We must depoliticize antisemitism.

**Plague 9: Blame:** When antisemitic crimes take place against Orthodox Jews who are visibly Jewish, the reaction is often, “Well, they asked for it.” Since when is being outwardly Jewish “asking for it?” This perpetuates an atmosphere of fear. Jews are not responsible for the hate that is targeted against us.

**Plague 10: “Who’s the better Jew?”:** This is a game with no winners. Please stop judging other Jews for how they practice. Everyone is on their own Jewish journey, from those with no Jewish education to the most observant at the table. We make each other stronger.

**Plague 11: Horns:** We put out a request for personal experiences of antisemitism and received so many similar responses that we categorized them and created a booklet called *Horns, You Killed Jesus, Pennies: Your Antisemitism Stories*. (It’s on JewBelong.com in the Antisemitism section.)

**Plague 12: Only Playing Defense:** Athletes know that it’s more fun to play offense than defense. Same with being Jewish! Fighting antisemitism is hard, but being a proud Jew? That is a joy! There is a reason that the Jewish people have survived for thousands of years. Stay on the offensive. Be proud, loud and continue to use Jewish values as a touchstone in this very troubled world.

*[With many thanks to JewBelong and their content creators Hen Mazzig and Rabbi Danielle G. Eskow for permission to reprint this piece.]*

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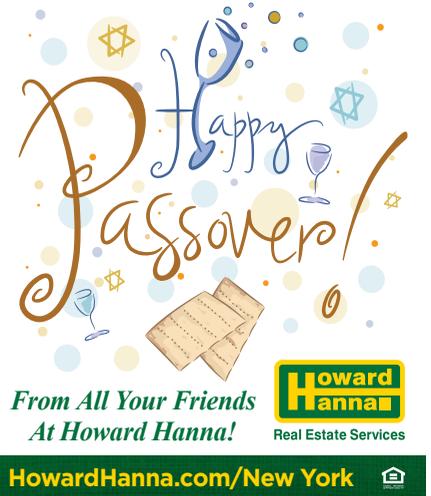
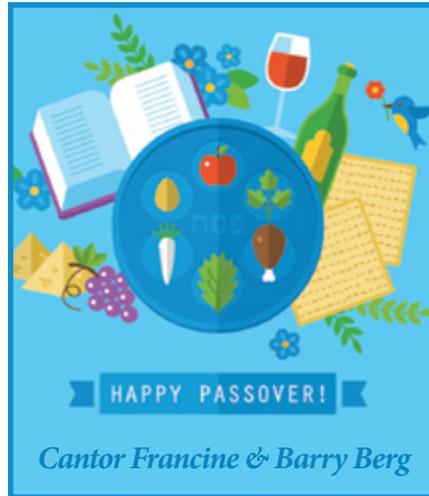
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Let us help you spend less time in the kitchen and more time at the table this Passover!  
**SEDER-TO-GO** Featured Menu for April 22nd

- Matzo Ball Soup
- Cranberry Glazed Brisket OR Pecan Crusted Salmon
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The Board of Directors, Rabbi Moshe Saks & Cantor Esa Jaffe, and the Administrative & Facilities Teams of Temple Adath Yeshurun wish the entire Jewish Community of Central New York a joyous Passover filled with light and memory.

*Haq kasher v'Sameah*



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# Butterfly Project Update

by Diana Koester



In early February, Syracuse Hebrew Day School fourth grade students gathered with residents of The Oaks for a morning of butterfly painting. Children and seniors painted the first of what will become an art installation of hundreds of ceramic butterflies, honoring children who perished in the Holocaust.

The butterfly garden at Menorah Park, created by the children, was also just named a Butterfly Waystation and the CNY Jewish Community Butterfly Project was awarded a certificate of appreciation from Monarch Watch because “creating and maintaining a Monarch Waystation contributes to monarch conservation and helps to ensure the continuation of the monarch migration in North America.”



There will be opportunities for others to paint butterflies at Kisses & Knishes, the Purim Project, Cinco de mayo, Yom haAtzmaut and other events. Please contact [bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org](mailto:bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org) if you have a group interested in participating.

# The Yellow Candle Project

The Yellow Candle Project is designed to help young people remember Jewish Holocaust victims on *Yom HaShoah* and broaden their understanding of the Holocaust in the safe space of their homes.



Central New York children and teens enrolled in the Day School, Community Hebrew School and Epstein School will be able to join with others around the world this year in participating in the Yellow Candle Project, a project of Maccabi GB. Federation will distribute yellow remembrance candles to the students and teachers in each of the schools it sponsors.

Each Yellow Candle comes with a card with the name, age, date and place of death of someone who perished in the Holocaust. Participants are invited to light their candles on the eve of *Yom HaShoah* on May 5th and to post an image of their lit candle at #YellowCandle, thereby creating a world-wide collective communal memorial.

There will be a limited number of candles available for purchase locally for \$7. To reserve a candle, please email [yellowcandleproject@jewishfederationcny.org](mailto:yellowcandleproject@jewishfederationcny.org).

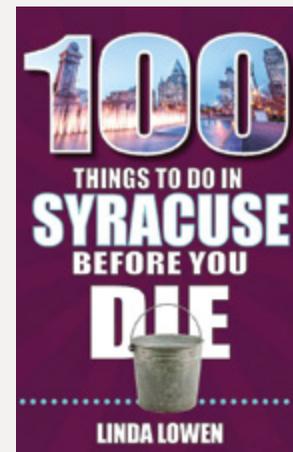
# Is There Anything To Do In Syracuse?

by Sonali McIntyre

Sandwiched between world-famous attractions like New York City and Niagara Falls, Syracuse - at the heart of New York State - is frequently overlooked. HAZAK, the senior group at Temple Adath Yeshurun, is pleased to present author Linda Lowen and her travel guidebook *100 Things to Do in Syracuse Before You Die* on Wednesday, April 3 at 1 pm at TAY.

Lowen’s book has over 200 recommendations, covering the categories of food and drink, music and entertainment, sports and recreation, culture and history and shopping and fashion. The book goes a step further, providing themed itineraries and suggestions for day trips and activities based on the season. Learn how Syracuse earned nicknames like Salt City and Snow City, where to sample local specialties like chicken riggies and the six-pound frittata, and about historic pathways like the Underground Railroad and the Erie Canal. Dive into the amazing arts, cultures and festivals that Syracuse has to offer. Whether you’re new to the area, a transplant, or a life-long resident, this program has something new and unexpected for everyone to discover.

Linda Lowen is a nonfiction book reviewer for *Publishers Weekly* and theater reviewer for the *Syracuse Post-Standard*. She is also known to many after spending many years on-air with the local NPR and PBS stations. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*. For more information about this program, please contact [hazak@adath.org](mailto:hazak@adath.org).



## New Director of Nursing Services at the Jewish Home of CNY



Jacinta Vondell, RN, BSN, has joined Menorah Park as Chief Nursing Officer and Director of Nursing Services at The Jewish Home of CNY. As someone who has cared for senior relatives with Alzheimer's and strokes, her focus on seniors has emphasized safety, respect, dignity and the building of relationships with residents and their families.

Vondell received her RN from SUNY Columbia-Greene Community College and her BSN from Roberts Wesleyan University in Rochester. She also received certifications from the American Association of Post-Acute Care Nursing. She is a Certified Director of Nursing Services (DNS-CT) and has RAC-CT and QAPI (Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement) certifications for continuous growth and sustained performance improvement as well as wound care.

"Jacinta is constantly looking to improve the workplace and put systems in place that align with our philosophy," said Russ D'Amico, Menorah Park CEO. "She makes readily available the range of services and supports that are required to have the residents' personal needs met and preferences honored."

Menorah Park of CNY's mission is to assure maximum independence and dignity offering a broad range of the highest quality of health, residential and community services. They are committed to maintaining Jewish values and traditions. All are welcome, invited and celebrated at Menorah Park.

## Exploring the Cosmos and Faith: A Series with Peter Saulson at CBS-CS

by Yolanda Febles

Peter Saulson will lead a series examining science and religion at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas, drawing from his nearly thirty-year tenure as a physics professor and his studies of Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel. He will explore the universe, free will and the spiritual dimensions of scientific discoveries. Saulson was the Martin A. Pomerantz '37 Professor of Physics at Syracuse University until his retirement in 2019. He devoted his career to the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO), which in 2015 discovered gravitational waves coming from the collision of two black holes. Now living in Providence, RI with his wife Sarah, he continues to engage in the dialogue between science and spirituality.



Saulson's talks offer the community a unique opportunity to explore the intersections of science and faith.

**Determinism and Human Choice.** A discussion about determinism, the idea that past events dictate everything that follows. It's a controversial topic, drawing both supporters and skeptics. The program will explain why and will discuss what one's position says about whether human beings can make genuine choices. April 11 at 7 pm Zoom

**Cosmology and Religion: A Dialogue.** A discussion of cosmology, the physics-based understanding of the universe. Physics can now make meaningful statements about the entirety of everything, but does a physical description leave out essential features of that whole? Human beings and our values suggest there's more to the whole than its physical aspects alone. Heschel pointed out the profound religious implications of this issue. May 9 at 7 pm Zoom

**Abraham Joshua Heschel's Profound Insights.** A Lunch and Learn featuring a text study of a few of Heschel's most profound ideas. Saulson will share how Heschel expanded his own personal worldview beyond a "science-only" picture. June 8 in-person at CBS-CS following Shabbat services

To register for Zoom sessions, visit <https://cbcs.shulcloud.com/event/saulson-series>.

## Temple Concord to Celebrate History of Madison Street Sanctuary

by Sally Cutler

On May 3, Temple Concord will honor and celebrate its 114-year history on Madison Street at what may be one of the last Shabbat services in the sanctuary as it finalizes the Temple-property sale before relocating on an interim basis to Kimber Road.

Prayer and song will reflect the sanctuary's significance, and memories will be shared. A "super-oney" pot-luck supper and slide show will follow, and congregants will be invited to spend personal, meditative time in the sanctuary.

Temple Concord President Jeff Lefkowicz said, "Our historic sanctuary building holds so many memories for our congregation and the Syracuse Jewish community. On May 3 we will have the opportunity to share those memories, recall our history in this wonderful building and say good-bye as we prepare for the next steps in our journey as Central New York's Reform Jewish congregation."

While new housing will be built on the property, the historic sanctuary has been integrated into the design and will be preserved with interpretive displays. **Required pot-luck supper registration is through TC's calendar at [templeconcord.org](http://templeconcord.org).**



## Temple Concord to Install Rabbi Emanuel

by Chana Meir

Temple Concord invites the community to celebrate the installation of Rabbi Ilan Emanuel during Shabbat services on April 5. The services will begin at 6 pm, preceded by a special Pre-Neg at 5 pm.

Temple Concord is the ninth oldest Reform synagogue in the US, and Rabbi Emanuel will be only the sixth settled rabbi in its history. "Becoming the rabbi of Temple Concord is a great honor," Rabbi Emanuel said. "I am humbled that I will be only the sixth settled rabbi in just over 180 years and excited to have the chance to help guide the congregation at such a time of great opportunity."

Rabbis' and cantors' installations typically take place some time after they assume their positions and provide an opportunity for the community to get together and welcome and offer support to the new clergy member. Rabbi Emanuel moved to Syracuse with his family in June 2023 and has been serving at Temple Concord since July 2023. "The first several months in a new rabbinate tend to feel like a whirlwind," he said, as one becomes familiar with a new location and community. Rabbi Emanuel said that "having now spent eight months here, getting to know the community and the people in it," installation will be like "becoming part of the mishpocha, part of the family."

Rabbi Emanuel's parents, Rabbi Charles and Peduth Emanuel, will be attending the service virtually from their home in London, England and will appear on large screens that those in the pews will be able to see. Rabbi Charles Emanuel, an ordaine of Hebrew Union College and now retired, will be installing his son. "I can't think of anyone I'd rather have do it," Rabbi Emanuel said.

Rabbi Emanuel was ordained by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has previously served as an associate rabbi in Toronto, Ontario, as rabbi in Lincoln, Nebraska and most recently as rabbi in Corpus Christi, Texas.

The celebration will continue on Sunday, April 7th at 4:30 pm, with cocktails and a kosher-catered reception in the Temple's social hall. The reception is free, but an RSVP is required by March 30. **To RSVP, please go to the events calendar at [templeconcord.org](http://templeconcord.org) and click on the date or call the office at 315-475-9952.**



# Personal Training at the JCC

by Carlett Spike

It's always the right time to commit to health and fitness. At the JCC, in addition to a variety of exercise classes offered at the Fitness Center, there are also personal trainers available to help individuals set and reach their goals.



Full-time Trainer **Will Masielat** is the first point of contact for new members as he facilitates orientations for the Fitness Center and sets individuals up with a personal trainer. Masielat, who has been with the JCC since 2017 and was named personal trainer coordinator in 2022, specializes in TRX classes and works with clients in both the weight room and on the Pilates Reformer. Though his current availability for one-on-one training is limited, there are plenty of opportunities to work with him by taking one of his TRX classes. Whether a gym regular or a beginner, the fitness team is excited to work with any clients on their fitness journey. "We really focus on functionality and improving quality of life over purely aesthetic goals," Masielat said.

**Eileen Cole** teaches Pilates and has been working with the JCC for more than seven years. She brings a wealth of experience in physical therapy through her work with Veteran Affairs. Clients report feeling leaner, stronger and taller after a period of taking Pilates, and they notice improved core strength and less pain, Cole said. "It's a great workout," she added. "I really believe in Pilates and I think it does a wealth of good for anybody."



## Freedom from Food Insecurity - SJFS Third Seder Highlights Social Justice

by Judith Huober

Syracuse Jewish Family Service will hold its traditional Third Seder in April, appealing to the community to help the agency fulfill the Passover mandate, "Let all who are hungry, come and eat!" The virtual "non-event" held by the agency, the human services arm of the local Jewish community, connects the holiday's focus on freedom to the ethical and social justice underpinnings of the agency's Kosher Meals on Wheels program, with its goal of establishing freedom from food insecurity and isolation among our elder population, along with honoring our parents and accepting our communal responsibility for their wellbeing. The "invitation" to the Third Seder, which will be mailed and available on the SJFS website at [www.sjfs.org](http://www.sjfs.org), will echo and update Haggadah components to portray and educate on the need for and benefits of KMOV (and other "freedom from" imperatives implicit in the agency mission and programs). A "response card" will invite community members to "attend" the non-event by donating, in the name of solidarity with the social justice message of the Jewish holiday, to support SJFS's KMOV and other programs.

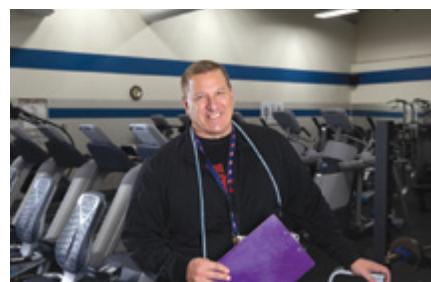
SJFS's Third Seder format continues a trend that began in the United States in the early part of the 20th century. The new observance did not replace but added to the more traditional first and second seders. It was led by culturally identified members of the immigrant Jewish community opting to append secular expressions of *yiddishkeit* and the socialism of the Worker's Movement to the holiday's explicitly historical and religious messages. Third Seders were typically large public and often performance-based events that transcended the smaller contexts of private observances and aimed to produce a sense of community cohesion notwithstanding sometimes stark differences of opinion and practice.

For more information please visit [www.sjfs.org](http://www.sjfs.org), email [info@sjfs.org](mailto:info@sjfs.org) or call 315-446-9111 x234.



Larry Baiz has been a personal trainer for more than 20 years and is open to working with anyone. A competitive natural bodybuilder since 1985 and winner of multiple ANBF Kings Cup Nationals Pro competitions, Baiz encourages clients to lift weights to strengthen their bodies and see results. "I will push you," Baiz said. "My goal is to bring out your highest capabilities and potential." In addition to training, Baiz can offer nutritional advice.

**Sue Lowitz** has been a Pilates instructor since 2012 and she teaches Pilates classes at the JCC Monday-Wednesday. She also offers private and semi-private lessons using the Pilates Reformer which offers a full-body workout and challenges clients to focus on the mind-body connection. "Everybody wants to be flexible and more in tune with their bodies," Lowitz said. "Pilates helps increase flexibility. It teaches you how to heal from an injury, and to listen to your body."



**Joe Yager** has been a personal trainer with the JCC for over 20 years. He's trained a wide variety of clients, from teens to seniors (his oldest client is 104). Yager can fully customize the personal training experience for each client based on his or her needs — including tracking metrics and helping with nutrition. "I hold my clients accountable," Yager said. "Past clients have appreciated my ability to keep them

on track so they achieve their goals," he added.

**Anne Hughes** specializes in corrective exercises, which encompasses a handful of elements including stability, alignment and muscle function. Hughes mostly works with clients who are 55 and older. "I like doing things step by step, seeing people progress and see improvements that make their lives better," Hughes said. "That's a big reward to me." She's been a trainer with the JCC for more than two years.

Personal and small group training options are available. Each trainer's availability is flexible to meet client needs. **For more information and to sign up for personal training at the JCC email [personaltraining@jccsy.org](mailto:personaltraining@jccsy.org).**



## The Oaks at Menorah Park to Host Open House May 5

The Oaks at Menorah Park, the intimate, independent living apartments in Dewitt, is hosting an open house for prospective residents and their families on Sunday, May 5, from 1 to 4 pm. Tours of the facility will be scheduled each half hour. **Please RSVP by Friday, April 26, by calling 315-409-6473.** Refreshments will be served.

## Matthews Check

The JCC of Syracuse received \$1,000 from the Matthews Children's Foundation.



The Foundation awards grants to nonprofit organizations whose purpose is to support children. The JCC's children's programming has received continued support for more than a decade from the Matthews Children's Foundation. Pictured are JCC Executive Director Marci Erlebacher and Immediate Past President Steven Siskind.

# Bearing Witness to a Changed Israel

by Ora Jezer and Aaron Spitzer

On the first of several *Mishlachot Areyvut* (delegations of responsibility) sponsored by The Jewish Education Project, more than 25 Jewish educators from the United States and Canada bore witness to an irrevocably changed Israel. For eight days in February, we confronted the horrors and tragedies Israelis have faced since October 7, 2023, when Hamas terrorists invaded sovereign Israel with the explicit goal of raping, murdering and kidnapping as many civilians in Israel as possible. The things we saw and the stories we heard from Israelis of diverse backgrounds — Muslim Palestinian Bedouins, supporters of *Likud* (Benjamin Netanyahu’s political party), evacuated kibbutzniks from *Kibbutzim Nir Am* and *Magen*, teens from *Ofakim*, families of released and captive hostages, soldiers recently returned from *miluim* (army reserve duty), artists, Muslim Arab Israelis, poets and playwrights — will take months to process and unpack, but one consistent theme we came away with was the hope, resilience and *achdut* (unity) of Israeli civil society in the days and months following “Black Shabbat.”

On the first morning of our journey, we traveled south from Tel Aviv to Otef Aza (the Gaza envelope) near Re’im, the site of the Nova Music Festival massacre, where more than a third of those slain on 10/7 were murdered. As we gathered in the grove of trees where partygoers camped for the last weekend of Sukkot, we heard and felt the ground shake from IDF rocket fire in Gaza. Each rocket boom, so different from the rhythmic bass of the music to which partygoers on Simchat Torah danced, shook us. The Nova festival was, in some ways, quintessentially Israeli: a psytrance rave in the desert on Simchat Torah attended by thousands of young people from around the world. It was a youthful expression of joy, love and unity.

In the groves of trees and open desert fields of Nova, there are two memorials to the victims: one created in the weeks following the massacre by the families of victims and hostages, and the second, a grove of eucalyptus trees planted in orderly rows by the Israeli government on *Tu b'Shevat*. Each of the 364 murdered and more than 40 kidnapped to Gaza is memorialized with an image in the open field where the music stage stood. We walked through row after row of young, hope-filled faces of women and men gone decades too soon. Over 33 of the hostages kidnapped from Nova remain captive in Gaza, including dual American-Israeli citizen, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, whose left arm was partially blown off in the shelter where he and friends attempted to escape the massacre.

Following the recitation of the Mourner’s *Kaddish* and the haunting and moving chanting of *El Malei Rachamim* by Rabbi Heidi Hoover, we continued south to the city of Ofakim, located 25 km from the Gaza border and the furthest point of the Hamas terrorist incursion into Israel on October 7th. There we met the principal, teachers and teens from the local high school and walked the narrow streets of the *Mishor Hagafen* neighborhood where terrorists attempted to infiltrate the city. On October 7th, many of the Ofakim police force had been dispatched to work security at the Nova festival. Our teen guides shared story after story of residents defending their homes and their neighborhood to bar the terrorists further access



to the city. Fifty-two people from Ofakim were murdered on October 7th, but the residents fought back and prevented the terrorists from advancing further into the city. At each location in the neighborhood where a resident was murdered, there is a banner honoring their sacrifice. We concluded our time in Ofakim at the new mural created by Arad Levy in collaboration with Elad Mazmer. The mural, sponsored by Bank *Hapoalim*, depicts a female police officer shaking hands with a kippah-wearing man, and renames Ofakim as the City of *Giborim* (heroes). Together, we sang *Hatikvah*, tears streaming down our faces, and our guides shared with us that it is very difficult now for them to sing the line “to be a free people in our land.” The meaning and the weight of that line has changed since October 7th.

The week that followed was saturated with moments that will stay with us for the rest of our lives and experiences that will transform us as Jewish educators. Whether we were spending time in an unrecognized Bedouin community volunteering with Yahel to pack 100 boxes of food for Bedouin families; meeting with evacuees from Kibbutz Magen at their Dead Sea hotel/temporary home; visiting the school created for students of four evacuated kibbutzim by *Achim L’Neshek* (Brothers and Sisters in Arms); weeping with Sarit Zussman as she

told the story of her son, Ben, who fell in battle in Gaza, at Har Herzl, Israel’s national military cemetery; witnessing graffiti artists’ anger and confusion through images painted on the buildings of Tel Aviv; listening to hostage families’ stories at *Kikar HaChatufim* (Hostages Square); bearing witness to the atrocities and gender-based violence committed by Hamas terrorists with Ayelet Razin Bet Or; hearing poetry directly from the source with Israeli poet, Adi Keissar; dreaming of post-war peace with Mohammed Darawshe, Director of Planning, Equality & Shared Society at the *Givat Haviva* Center; or sharing stories over breakfast with evacuees from Kibbutz Nir Am at our shared hotel, the Israelis we encountered kept thanking us. They thanked us for coming to Israel in the middle of a war, for supporting them, for helping them to feel less isolated and alone in a world that is increasingly against them. In turn, we thanked them, for sharing their pain and their stories and for their resilience. We promised to share their stories and to emphasize for our communities the heartache that all Israelis are feeling while more than 130 of our people remain held captive in Gaza. We are committed, more than ever, to the centrality of Israel in Jewish education and to the life-changing impact of traveling there for Jewish teens.

**GERALD B. MEYER**

February 4, 2024

Gerald B. Meyer, 92, passed peacefully in the comfort of his home on February 4. Born on April 13, 1931 to Abraham and Etta Meyer in Yonkers, NY, he had been a resident of Syracuse since 1953 when he graduated from Syracuse University that June. He and Lois were married that same month. They were married for 70 wonderful years.

Jerry joined his father-in-law Samuel (Jeanette) Abramson in their family business, Standard Office Supply, and became president in 1967. Jerry was active in the community, and was particularly proud to have served as president of The Syracuse Jewish Federation from 1984 to 1987. The family were long-time members of Temple Adath Yeshurun.

His family includes his wife Lois, sons Jeffrey (Audrey), and David (Sandy); son-in-law Robert Nash; and grandchildren Daniel, Rebecca (Michael), Ariel, CJ, Allison, and Eliana and great-grandson Landon. He was pre-deceased by his beloved daughter Laurie and his sister Naomi Kerwin.

Contributions to perpetuate his memory may be made to Temple Adath Yeshurun, The Foundation of Menorah Park or The Upstate Foundation for Cancer Research.

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**SULTANA (TINA) HABIB**

February 5, 2024

Sultana (Tina) Habib passed away on February 5. Born in Tripoli, Libya, to Camuna and Raphael Azria, she was a figure of elegance, beauty and resilience. She married the love of her life, Moses (Muschino), in 1963 and fled Libya in 1967 as a Jewish refugee. She navigated this transition with grace, while nurturing a family of seven children.

Her home was a hub of generosity and warmth, each of her delicious meals infused with her love and a touch of the spiciness that defined her. A staunch Zionist, her dedication to Israel was fervent and unwavering. She had a deep commitment to the continuation of her Sephardic heritage and customs. Sultana's essence was her perpetual youthfulness, vitality, wit, warmth and radiance, making her not just a mother and best friend to each of her children but also an unparalleled Nonna (grandmother) and Bisnonna (great-grandmother). She is buried in Netanya, Israel, beside her beloved Muschino. She leaves behind a legacy of love, selflessness and indomitable spirit.

She is survived by her children Judy (Nick), Ralph, Kaye (Steve), Tino (Yuliya), Tikva (Ansel), Aviva and Dayana (Berel), twelve grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and her brother Albert Azria.

Donations in her memory may be made to FIDF.org or FIDV.org.

*Birnbaum Funeral Service*

**NANCY WISEMAN LEVINE**

February 5, 2024

Nancy Wiseman Levine passed away on February 5. Born in Syracuse on June 10, 1941, she was the daughter of Gerald and Muriel Wiseman. She attended Nottingham High School and graduated from Brighton High School in Rochester. She was a resident of Branford, CT for 54 years until her death.

She was a graduate of Centenary College of Hackettstown, NJ and Boston University. She graduated magna cum laude from the University of Bridgeport Mental Health Work Program and received a master of social work degree from the University of Connecticut.

Nancy began her career as a speech and hearing therapist at the New Haven Rehabilitation Center. Her work with children and their families led her to study social work. She was a social worker for Catholic Family Services in Ansonia, Meriden and Waterbury, CT for many years prior to her retirement.

She is survived by her husband of 62 years, Richard L. Levine, daughter Laurie Rachel Levine of San Francisco, CA and her partner Shawn Kelley, brother-in-law Vincent Parziale and nephew Jonathan Parziale of Kingston, MA and his fiancée Elizabeth Sherman. She was predeceased by her sister Bonnie Wiseman Parziale.

Nancy had a great love for Temple Concord in Syracuse as her family had been members since the mid-1800s. Memorial contributions may be made to The Gerald and Muriel Wiseman Flower Fund at Temple Concord, 910 Madison Street, Syracuse, New York 13210 or The Smile Train, PO Box 96231, Washington, DC 20090-6231.

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**EDWARD J. ALWEIS**

February 7, 2024

Edward J. Alweis, age 93, passed away peacefully on February 7, 2024. Born in Brooklyn, NY on May 25, 1930, he was the son of Herman and Mary Alweis. Ed and his family were long-time residents of Syracuse before he and his wife, Mary, retired to Lake Worth, FL.

After serving in the Army, Ed had a long career as a court reporter and was a senior court reporter for the New York State court system. He was the co-owner of Machine Shorthand Reporting Service and the co-founder of Machine Shorthand of Syracuse, a court reporting school. Ed was very active in the Central New York Jewish community and was a past president of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and a past member of the Board of the Syracuse Jewish Federation.

Ed is survived by his wife of 67 years, Mary, his sons Aaron (Miriam), Kenneth (Karen), and Adam, grandchildren Daniel (Rivkah), Michael (Malka), Elisa (Melech), Jason and Natalie, and eleven great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his brother Jack and sister Peggy.

Memorial contributions can be made to the Jewish Federation of Central New York.

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**THEODORE "TED" KASSEL**

February 14, 2024

Theodore "Ted" Kassel, 79, passed away on February 14 in Denver. Born on April 3, 1944 to Louis and Eva (Moloff) Kassel in Syracuse. He had been a resident of the Denver area for many years. He was a graduate of Nottingham High School, RIT, and earned his master's degree from RPI. During his professional career, he most recently was the Vice President of International Multi Foods of Denver.

His dedication to his family was paramount. Ted travelled east to visit with his children and grandchildren often. He and his wife Jane enjoyed travelling, especially time spent in Aruba.

His family includes his wife Jane; his daughters Nicole (Patrick) Gorman, and Melissa (Peter Butler) Ananias, Beverly's children Kenny Martin, Sean (Amy) Martin, and Jennifer (Mark) Smith; his brother Neil (Jackie) Kassel; and 12 grandchildren

Contributions to perpetuate his memory may be made to the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research <http://www.michaeljfox.org/>

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**SYBIL NORD**  
February 27, 2024



Sybil Nord (nee Rubenstein), born on February 7, 1938, in Wilmington, DE, to Myer and Reba Feldman Rubenstein, passed away on February 27.

Sybil was educated in Wilmington public schools and attended the University of Delaware and the American University in Washington, DC. She married Samuel G. Nord of Wilmington on March 26, 1957. She lived in Pikesville, MD from 2021 until her death in 2024. She was a member of Har Sinai - Oheb Shalom Congregation.

She lived in Fayetteville, NY from 1971 to 2021 and was a member of Temple Adath Yeshurun, where she was an honorary vice president and served on its board of directors. She also was involved in many activities as a TAY Sisterhood vice president and she founded and chaired the annual Temple Fine Arts Fest. She was active in Syracuse Jewish Family Service and was a member of its board of directors and its executive board. She also was an active volunteer at Menorah Park senior living community, where she designed and helped to develop the Beth El Community Room and the Tikvah House, a group residence for developmentally disabled girls. She also served on its board of directors. She was awarded both the President's Award and the Shining Stars Award for her service. Sybil also was a founding member and a chairperson of the Syracuse Jewish Domestic Violence Coalition.

In 1974, she embarked upon a career in retail, managing Casual Corner in the Fayetteville Mall. Subsequently, she became district manager for Women's

Specialty Retailing, Inc., overseeing its operations in the greater Syracuse, Rochester and Buffalo areas. After her career in retail management, she became executive director of the Rothschild Early Childhood Center, a position that she held until her retirement in 2004.

She is survived by her husband, Samuel G. Nord, Ph.D. of Pikesville, MD, sons Dr. Michael B. Nord (Ann Kresge) of Santa Fe, NM and Danial A. Nord (Fran Siegel) of Los Angeles, CA; daughter, Elizabeth R. Nord of Brooklyn, NY; granddaughter, Chloe K. Nord (Stephen Hamway) of Albuquerque, NM; brother Herbert Rubenstein (Carol Rubenstein) of Pikesville, MD and several nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews. She had survived a brother, Alvin Rubenstein of St. Augustine, FL.

Contributions in Sybil's memory may be made to Syracuse Jewish Family Service, Rothschild Early Childhood Center at Temple Adath Yeshurun or a charity of choice.

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Steven L. Sisskind

# Sisskind

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– Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

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