

» REMEMBERING

Jewish Observer of Central New York

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

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SYRACUSE, ISRAEL & THE JEWISH WORLD | WWW.JEWISHFEDERATIONCNY.ORG

MAY 2024 | NISSAN-IYAR 5784



Yom ha Shoah



Yom ha Atzmaut

עם ישראל חי



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2024



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The O'Jays



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YOM HASHOAH 5784



COMMUNITY HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATION

TUESDAY, MAY 7, 2024 - 7:30 PM HYBRID

Presented by the Jewish Federation of Central New York, the Syracuse Rabbinical Council
and the Rabbi Jacob Epstein School of Jewish Studies.

WELCOME - Michael Balanoff, Federation President/CEO

ANI MAAMIN - Cantor Esa Jaffe, Temple Adath Yeshurun

CANDLE LIGHTING - Students from the Rabbi Epstein School of Jewish Studies

READING OF NAMES - Rabbi Shore, Rabbi Steinitz, Rabbi Saks, Rabbi Jezer,
Rabbi Emanuel, Rabbi Beigel, Rabbi Bair and Epstein School Students

“BEING COURAGEOUS IN DANGEROUS TIMES”

Dr. Eileen Angelini, introduced by Anick Sinclair, Chair of Epstein School Board

INTRODUCTION OF HONOREES - Neil Rosenbaum, Federation Board Chair

EL MALEI RACHAMIM - Cantor Kari Eglash, Temple Concord

CONCLUSION - Neil Rosenbaum

To join the program via Zoom, email bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org for the link.

From the Editor



Barbara Davis

“How wonderful that no one need wait a single moment to improve the world.”

These words, written by Anne Frank, were never more meaningful and important than they are today. We are beset by tragedy, distrust, antagonism, fear, anxiety, hostility and enmity. Civil discourse seems to be a thing of the past. Name-calling, bullying, abusive and derogatory language and insults have become commonplace but have lost none of their power to wound. Not even one hundred years have passed since the Holocaust but we again see the specter of global antisemitism and the destruction of thousands of Jewish lives in an unprecedented and unprovoked attack, not against an army but against innocent civilians. We have studied the history but have not learned how to avoid its repetition.

And yet: ***“How wonderful that no one need wait a single moment to improve the world.”*** The positive and optimistic words of Anne Frank need to resound with our Jewish community. We cannot succumb to despair. We still need hope, courage and the belief that we, as Jews, can repair the world in some way. Israel needs to be a beacon, “a light unto the nations.” Each month in the *Jewish Observer*, we publish news of Israel’s achievements, breakthroughs and successes, even in the midst of a war. Each week, we see people in our community reach out to help others both locally and in Israel. Every day, we receive tributes and donations in honor or in memory of people who made a difference, who did not wait to improve the world, but took action to do it in their lifetimes.

The fact that *Yom haZikaron* and *Yom haAtzmaut* follow *Yom haShoah* is a reminder of the price that was paid to secure the State of Israel but also a reminder that Judaism always looks to celebrate rather than mourn. This year, as difficult as it may be, we need to come together on May 14th as a community to celebrate Israel as never before in our lifetimes. We need to put aside our differences, hold our tongues, avoid conflict, strive to uphold our values and work to make the world a better place.

We have several sobering articles in this month’s *Jewish Observer*. While the Holocaust may seem distant to many, there are still people in our community who have lived experience and memories of those terrible times. We hope that by sharing these stories with our readers, we may make them more real and impactful at a time when Holocaust denial is on the rise. Also timely is an interview with the author of a new book about Safe Haven at Fort Ontario, the only place in the United States where refugees from the Shoah were given entry. Then, as now, there was great concern about the issue of immigration. President Roosevelt had made it very clear that immigration laws were not going to be ignored and that the refugees would have no visa status but would



merely be *in* the United States, not citizens of the United States, and that the Army would not permit any refugee to escape.

Two other important books by well-known Jewish authors are also reviewed in this issue. The first is Mitch Albom’s *The Little Liar: A Novel*, a powerful story of hope and forgiveness, set during the Holocaust. The second is Noa Tishby’s *Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth*. This book is being gifted by Federation to all 7th through 12th graders at the Rabbi Jacob Epstein School of Jewish Studies at this year’s closing *siyyum*. Both are vital reads for today.

Then, turning from darkness to light, we feature information about our community’s celebration of *Yom haAtzmaut*, Israel’s Independence Day. The State of Israel is only 76 years young and is probably confronting the most significant crisis in its short existence. But the focus of our local celebration will be on Israel’s achievements and its diversity, and our emphasis will be on *tzedakah*. The extremely hard-working committee that has been planning the celebration for months is hoping that everyone will come to the event to show support for and solidarity with our Israeli family. We will have Israeli food, prepared by local women, activities for children, *tzedakah* projects, Israeli wines, a photo booth, a link to the Kotel, a caricaturist and a *shuk* with lots of cool merch from Israel. Adding to the fun will be the TLV band, which will bring joyous Israeli music and lots of *ruach* (spirit) to Central New York. For security reasons, everyone must be sure to register ahead of time; there is no charge for admission.

Finally, whether we are remembering or celebrating, mourning or rejoicing, let us think of the words of a young girl who, facing a fate none of us can ever forget, nonetheless called to us across the years: ***“How wonderful that no one need wait a single moment to improve the world.”***

ERRATA: The recipe for Asian Mushroom Matzo Balls in last month’s JO left out a key ingredient: 1 cup of matzo meal.

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

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



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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

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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@buffalospreep.com.

To Subscribe:

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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.

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From the Jewish Federation of CNY Board Chair

Who are “They”?



Neil Rosenbaum

It’s a word you hear frequently. “They” say that you should drink 2 liters of water a day. “They” say that you should get 8 hours of sleep to live a healthy life. It’s easy, it seems to be accepted and it’s a habit....and it misses the point. In communal groups, leadership often hears that “they” should be doing this or that.

The problem with “they” is that, when describing a group, it’s a generalization. It doesn’t take any ownership or relay any source. The question I ask is “Who are the ‘they’ you are speaking about?” I hear it many more times than I hear “I” or “We” am/are going to jump in and do something.

Let’s take the water question as an example. The real answer, when brought down to the individual, has a wide range based on size, gender, physical activity, climate, food intake (the original research, done in the 1940s, included the liquid you take in from your food). “They” does not account for the individual or assign ownership to the results. “They” say, that “you should do X,” but what is the source, what is the research, why should I make this a new habit?

In the business that my business partner and I have been building over the last six years, we use a book called *Yes is the Answer! What is the Question?* as a guide to how we handle everyday interactions with teammates and the people we serve. It works.

Coming to the end of my term as chair of the Federation board, I am so happy that I said “yes” to Steve Volinsky years ago when he called to ask that I join the board. Happy that I said “yes” when Ellen Weinstein asked me to step up to a leadership role. And most happy that I have had the privilege and joy of sitting as the chair of the board for the last four years.

A new “yes” for me has been committing to be more engaged in my congregations. (Temple Adath Yeshurun and Shaarei Torah) Sadly, that came from the horrific events of October 7th and all that has happened since. I have come to appreciate the value of community and gained increased connection to the long history and practices of our people. Thankfully, I have learned so much from Rabbi Saks, Rabbi Shore and the *siddurim* used by each.

Last week, prior to the Torah reading, Rabbi Saks spoke of the genesis and development of the Kaddish and its evolution through time. It was fascinating and meaningful to learn of the choices regarding when and where to place this affirmation of belief and how it evolved. It has great meaning in every instance.

During the Torah reading, I was reminded of G-D’s direction as to the building of the Temple, its adornments and the vestments to be worn.

And the Lord has established His word that He spoke, and I have risen up in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord spoke, and have built a house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. One house for the name of the Lord.

One passage in the commentary struck me in particular, “They built it from the inside out.” Again, like the placement of the Kaddish as part of our daily prayer practice, everything has a place, a purpose and a distinct meaning and a “way.” A house for the name of the Lord and the Israeli people.

The Syracuse Jewish Community is Debbie’s and my place. We have lived in Syracuse for over 40 years, raised four children here and have found a place that we have no plans of ever leaving. Over the past decade, and especially in the last several years, I have witnessed a trend of which we should all be proud. Collaboration, increasing vibrancy and a growing number of young families, many of whom have taken leadership roles in the Jewish community.

There is a regular meeting of the cohort of lay and professional leadership of our Jewish community. The collaboration, teamwork, appreciation and positive energy is absolutely thrilling. The creativity and energy of all local Jewish entities in creating and delivering programs is evidenced when you scroll through the weekly Community

Happenings. Again, it should be a source of great pride. Scroll all the way through! I was so thrilled when I spoke to a young family at Temple Adath’s family Shabbat and dinner a few weeks ago. They were at Adath Friday night, then going to programs at Temple Concord and Shaarei Torah all in the same weekend.

There are some that think we live in a fading (or worse) community. When I think about those statements, a great Mark Twain quote emerges: “The reports of my demise are greatly exaggerated.” To those who hold the “fading” belief, I challenge you to look deeply at what is happening in our community and still maintain your belief. I challenge you to find the last time a group of over 800 Syracuse Jews congregated in one place to celebrate a holiday, as we experienced last Chanukah.

This is not to say that there are not challenges, both internal and external. Over the last four years we have faced a 100-year pandemic and the most devastating event in the history of the Jewish people since the Holocaust. The most urgent of the external threats to Jews of the Diaspora is the rise in antisemitism and the war into which Israel was forced. Thankfully, the Federation is fortunate to have Susan Demari leading a robust security plan with deep and important relationships with all levels of law enforcement. A group of community educators, convened by Barbara Davis, created a handbook for school leaders, teachers and parents to combat antisemitism in schools, and Michael Balanoff, in addition to local experience and comradery with other upstate New York Federation leaders, has

important and well used relationships with Inter-Faith leaders, the mayor, the governor’s office and the University.... and they all answer his calls and keep him informed.

The internal challenge that keeps me up at night is the rhetoric and tactics used by some (thankfully a small number I believe) in our community when addressing those not aligned with their beliefs. I’ve seen, firsthand, insensitive, demeaning and plain mean language used, Jew to Jew. What fascinates me is how well we ALL came together during the pandemic, but how some people with opposing opinions about the war, antisemitism or Israeli actions or decisions have taken a divisive approach. I say sincerely that I respect any beliefs, opinions, passion and efforts, but hope and pray that as we move forward, it can be done without dismissing those that don’t agree. This is a place the “they” doesn’t belong, and communications should be voice to voice and respectful.

Michael Balanoff speaks of the need, and acts to “grow” our tent. It is true that our overall numbers have diminished. As we address the macro and generational realities that so many faith communities and other organized groups face, let’s do so while continuing the great, collaborative, inclusive and communal efforts that have led to our increasing vibrancy. It’s the only way. And it starts and ends with “We.”

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Dvar Torah for Yom haShoah and Yom haAtzmaut

by Rabbi Ethan Bair, Syracuse Hillel

This March, I spent one Shabbat at the Pestalozzi Street Synagogue in Berlin with my long-time *chevrutah*, a rabbi at the Reform Jewish Congregation in Amsterdam. When we walked in, we saw only men sitting in the middle section of the synagogue; women sat on the sides and on the balcony. During the service, only men were allowed on the *bima*. Were it not for the sound of the organ and invisible choir from the rafters, I'd have assumed it was an old German Orthodox synagogue – but it was Reform. There was a plaque above the *bima* that read, laconically: Built: 1913; Destroyed: November 1938; Rededicated: Rosh Hashanah 1947. The cantor and rabbi wore long black robes and the cantor donned a tall *chazzan* cap. Ninety percent of the melodies he sang were by the 19th century German-Jewish composer of synagogue music Louis



Lewandowski, former music director at the Neue Synagogue, also in Berlin.

Though I was ordained Reform, I prefer spirited congregational singing and Carlebach melodies to choirs and organs at shul. However, the sound of the classical Reform *chazzan* facing the *aron hakodesh* (ark) with his back to the *kahal* (congregation), singing with a full choir, made my eyes well up with tears. The service gave voice to Reform Judaism from earliest days in a way I had never encountered before. Here I was in the birth-country of Reform Judaism and the choir simply made sense. The whole experience made me reflect on where my own innate sense of Jewish

authenticity comes from. Tradition and innovation are equally important poles in the productive tension that is our people's story of surviving and thriving through continuity and adaptability.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel when it was still British Mandate Palestine, would frequently bring Orthodox and secular Jewish pioneers together. Famously, when asked about how to build the Jewish future, he taught: "What is old, make new; what is new, make holy." The *Shoah* was the greatest loss to our people in modern times. Our story since the *Shoah* is one of breathtaking innovation, creative institutional building and competing calls for authenticity. Are all of these new 19th and 20th century Jewish pathways authentic in their own right – from Reform and Modern-Orthodox Judaism to Zionism(s) and secular Jewish humanism? Yes. In celebrating the resilience of Jewish civilization on this

Yom haShoah and *Yom haAtzmaut*, my advice is this: "make for yourself a heart with many chambers within chambers and bring into it the words of *Beit Shammai* and the words of *Beit Hillel*, the words of those who declare impure and the words of those who declare pure." (*Talmud Bavli, Tosefta Sotah 7:7*) In other words, practice your Jewish life with the humility and nuanced understanding to accept that authenticity can be multi-valent, and that within shared boundaries, "these" and "these" (*eilu v'eilu*) approaches can bring more holiness into the world. Wishing you and yours a meaningful *Yom haShoah* and *Yom haAtzmaut!*

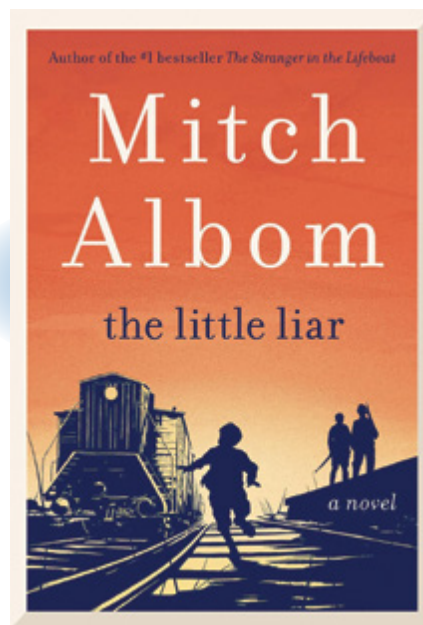
» BOOK REVIEW

The Little Liar by Mitch Albom

Reviewed by Phyllis RD Zames

When Mitch Albom decides to explore in writing something you care about, you have to read it. And then you have to share it. Albom's writing slowly reveals human values, as if through the course of his story the reader's perspective has zoomed in from outer space to pass through countries, cities, communities, individual characters and finally, a heart, from which the reader emerges with a molecule of perfect understanding.

It wasn't until after I read this book that I did a little research on Mitch Albom and learned that he is not only Jewish but a Jewish day school graduate, and that throughout his career he had been searching for a way to write about the Holocaust. His goal was to create a realistic fiction that would honor the murdered and the surviving victims and be a memorable story. In *The Little Liar*, he has done both, and I will recommend this book to everyone I know.



Albom follows three generations of Greek Holocaust victims, detailing their lives—and many deaths—as the Nazis rise and fall. The

ethereal cadence of the prose forces the reader deeper and deeper into the hellscape of the Nazi regime, while constantly reminding the reader what is true and what are lies. The narrator is introduced to us as Truth, and readers are assured that Truth can be trusted. All of the characters in the story are people we recognize. In each of them we can find our grandparents, our neighbors, our children. The title *The Little Liar* refers to the Nazi scheme of forcing individual Jews to lie to their communities to encourage them to peacefully cooperate so that they can be led to their deaths with a minimum of outright revolt. A scene early in the novel describes Jews who are being transported in a cattle car in this way: "The truth was (and I should know) there were enough people in the car to overwhelm the German

officer and put him down." But the Jews cannot see that truth because of what the German officer is saying and doing. Albom teaches us that it isn't only the lies people speak that obstruct truth; actions do so as well.

The book, which came out in the fall of 2023, was completed before the atrocities of October 7 and the current war in Israel. We are blessed in this timing, for all those who do not know the truth of the history of the Jewish people may be moved to learn about it once they have encountered this story. Albom's character, Truth, shares a story that involves many characters, people Albom brought to life based on the facts within our history. Most Jews at this point know that all it takes is one little liar on social media to poison a great many opinions about Israel. Many Jews are feeling pressure to ensure that lies of omission and truths that have been covered up do not stand. Albom has given humanity a novel that is not only a chance to travel back in time and bear witness to the suffering of all Holocaust victims, but also inspiration to learn and believe and share what is true today.

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Our Survivors

Memories of Mischling



Gerd Schneider was born in Berlin in 1930, the son of a Lutheran mother and a Jewish father. According to The Nuremberg Laws of 1936, he was a *Mischling ersten Grades*, a half Jew, but was referred to by many Berliners as a *Mampe Halb und Halb*, a well-known bitter and herbal liqueur. Schneider's cultural experience as a half-Jew informed much of his personal history, particularly during his youth in Germany where, miraculously, he survived the *Shoah*. After the war and the desperate postwar period in Germany, where foraging for food became the simple yet horrific matter of survival at any price, Schneider emigrated to Canada and then to the United States, eventually becoming a renowned and respected Professor of German Studies at Syracuse University.

Following is an excerpt from his book *Things Could've Been a Lot Worse: The Experiences of a German American Bellybutton Jew of Berlin Origins*:

"I remember when I was about nine years old. My mother told me to go to the bakery to get some rolls. When I returned home, I was stopped by a gang of young people. They asked me what I was carrying. When I said 'rolls,' they replied, 'Jews do not eat rolls. They eat maize.' And then they began to hit me. Pretty soon the whole street was full of people who fired on the young men. I fell. I was bleeding all over. The rolls were gone. When I lost consciousness, they stopped. A few people carried me home to my mother. She took me to a hospital, but nothing was broken. From then on people called me Jew Itzig.*

"When I was about the same age, I remember that I was walking home from school. A classmate came up to me and said that I had stolen his watch. I denied this but he began beating me. Pretty soon the street was full of people who chanted 'Kill that Jew! Kill that Jew!'" Then a miracle happened.

An SS colonel came by, saw me, pulled out his revolver and said, 'We are not fighting kids. We are fighting Jews who have established themselves. I will kill anyone who touches this kid.' Just at this moment, the mother of the kid who had accused me came forward, and said, 'He did not seal your watch. You took it off when you took a shower. Apologize to him.' The boy replied, 'I will never apologize to a Jew.' I went home bleeding like a pig.

"After I recovered, I got myself white paint and colored my hair white because people said, 'Look at his nose and his black hair.'" I thought if my hair was white, the beatings would stop. When my mother saw what I had done, she beat me and cleaned my hair with turpentine. When I returned to the street, nothing had changed. People still called me Jew Itzig and they spat on me. I had enough and I wanted to die. We lived on the second floor. One day, the window to the yard was open. I climbed through the window and wanted to jump down, but I was jerked back by a man who would just come up the stairs. When I returned to our flat, my mother locked me in my room.

"I remember Crystal Night, also called the Night of the Broken Glass, which happened on the night of November 9, 1938. This was the night in which the Nazis attacked Jewish stores, breaking their windows and beating the Jews up. The stores were also looted. I saw a watch and wanted to take it, but then I thought of what my mother would say and I did not take it. Then somebody yelled, 'That boy is a Jew too' and I ran as fast as I could. I outran my followers. I remember the month of March 1945 when a big bomb hit the apartment block at our corner, reducing it to rubble, and causing 140 people to die in the basement, including the mother of Siegfried, who was visiting me to do our homework. Heavy machinery came and pulled the corpses out of the rubble, among them Siegfried's mother.

"A few weeks later, five of us were in the field of rubble, searching for something of value. Then we saw a miracle -- a flower that blossomed, a dandelion. Siegfried said, 'This flower is sent by my mother. She is dead now, but she has sent me the flower. The meaning is: when the flower can make it in all this destruction, then you can too.'" We wanted to water the dandelion, but there was no water. So we loosened our belts, lowered our pants, and peed on it. A few weeks later the whole field was covered with dandelions. Our action had been successful."

*archaic, offensive, German ethnic and religious slur meaning Jew, like the N word in English.

From Darkness to Light: The Legacy of Lillian Slutzker



Born on October 7, 1917 in Budapest, Hungary, Lillian Slutzker fled the Nazi-controlled country for England after her parents were killed at Auschwitz. Prior to the invasion of Normandy, Lillian met Emanuel Slutzker at a USO dance. A week later, he proposed. Lillian answered, "Let's see if you get back first."

When the war ended, Manny returned to his hometown of Rome, New York. Lillian followed in 1947, and the two were married. In 1949, they bought what was then a smoke shop on Marshall Street. Lillian fondly remembered those early years. "Manny sold everything in the store back then—clothing, hats, imported cigarettes. He was a pioneer in the paperback business in Syracuse—the first to offer Penguin paperbacks."

Manny's involvement with the textbook business led to a close and long-lasting relationship with the Syracuse University community. Students and professors counted on him to carry the books they needed. Lillian said, "It was a lot of work to keep up with the demands of the textbook business, but Manny always had what they were looking for, and he always had it on time."

When her husband's health began to deteriorate in the early 1980s due to Alzheimer's disease, Lillian took over the business. It was difficult. "I'd work all day, then be up all night with him," she recalled. After Manny's death in 1985, Lillian operated the store with help from their son Craig. "We worked holidays, Sundays, nights. I put in 16-hour days," she said. "It took me

two years to win the respect of the business community, but I succeeded. I didn't know I had such talents!"

Lillian was strongly committed to Judaism. She was an active member and served on the board of Temple Adath Yeshurun and the Temple sisterhood. She was a member of B'nai Brith International and The US Holocaust Museum. She was a staunch supporter of Hillel at SU as well as the Jewish Community Center and the Syracuse Hebrew Day School. Her love of animals led her to take a role in both the local and national Humane Society and the ASPCA.

Lillian was known for her generosity to Syracuse University. She created an endowment for men's lacrosse and established The Slutzker Center which was considered the "home away from home for international students" and helped thousands acclimate to life in the United States. (Later the Slutzker name was removed from the Center.) In making the donation, Lillian explained, "I love this country. With this gift, I can give others the opportunity to know and appreciate it."

Lillian died in 2016 at the age of 98. The Slutzker Family Foundation was established in 2018 to carry on her legacy and fulfill her passion for Judaism, education and enriching the community. Headquartered in Fayetteville, the Foundation makes grants to other organizations with activities that are consistent with its religious, charitable and educational purposes. Following are some examples of the Foundation's grants:

The Lillian Slutzker Honors College at Onondaga provides high-achieving students with an intellectually stimulating and challenging academic experience. Students in the Honors Program have the opportunity to take specially designed Honors classes in a variety of disciplines.

The Foundation partnered with the Al Hirschfeld Foundation to bring its innovative visual and performing arts curriculum to schools throughout the region. Based on Al Hirschfeld's art,

this visionary curriculum engaged students K through 12 in a variety of arts activities. Developed in conjunction with the New York City Board of Education, Syracuse was the first region outside of New York City to utilize the curriculum, serving as a pilot to bring the Arts Education Initiative to underserved communities around the country.

The Slutzker Family Foundation supports the Loretto Memory Care Capital Campaign, focused on the construction of a Memory Care Center of Excellence in Central New York, located at The Nottingham, for individuals suffering from Alzheimer’s and dementia. Since “Manny” Slutzker suffered from Alzheimer’s, Lillian recognized the unique needs of individuals with dementia and the challenges faced by their caregivers. The donation made by the Slutzker Family Foundation will be recognized by the naming of a screened porch at the Memory Care Residence for Lillian.

The Foundation has also been a very generous benefactor of Syracuse Stage and Symphoria, and this year’s community celebration of *Yom HaAtzmaut* will be made especially joyous by the music of the Israeli band TLV, which is being sponsored by the Slutzker Family Foundation. Coming a week after the observance of *Yom HaShoah*, Holocaust Remembrance Day, it is a poignant tribute to a woman who turned tragedy into triumph, sorrow to joy and brought light from darkness.

Nirelle: Memories of escape and survival



Nirelle Galson moved to Syracuse with her husband Allen in 1961 with their three children, Deborah, Daniel and Elizabeth. Nirelle finished her undergraduate studies at Syracuse University and then worked for SU for over thirty years in the Department of International Programs Abroad.

Nirelle was born in 1935 in Zagreb, Yugoslavia to Jewish parents. In 1941, there were about 82,000 Jews living in Zagreb. Only 14,000 of them survived the Holocaust. Of these, 5,000 were saved by Italians. Nirelle was one of them. Her story is told in a book written by her youngest daughter, Elizabeth Silverstein, entitled *Nirelle: Memories of escape and survival*.

Nirelle’s eldest daughter, Deb, wrote an Afterword for the book in which she explained that “growing up as the eldest child of a Holocaust survivor made its mark on me even though mom wouldn’t really talk about her experiences as a Jewish Yugoslav child during WWII. Even her teen years after her arrival in Israel in 1945 were not reported to us in much detail while we were growing up. I knew the barest outline of her story, including that they were arrested

from a train and jailed for some weeks before mysteriously being released, that her father died in WWII after he saved mom and her mother by sending them to Italian-held territory posing as the family of a Turkish man.”

Nirelle is a comprehensive examination of Nirelle’s life, ancestry and journey from the tragedy of the Holocaust in Europe to happiness and fulfillment in America, amply illustrated with excellent photographs.

An excerpt from the book follows: “We are in Korcula. I am already seven years old. We are preparing to leave with the Italian soldiers to go to Italy on fishing boats. My mom is packing our clothing and other things, but only some of them, because we cannot take any more than one suitcase each. Mine is small and mom’s is larger but not very large because we have to be able to carry them ourselves..... We leave Korcula at night – it is dark, wet, cold and scary.

First we are in the belly of the boat, but later the soldiers put us on deck so that so we can be seen. Airplanes close over us and shoot at us and I hide behind my mother and wrap my arms around her legs. There is a coffin on the boat and I am afraid it will get shot open. I have never seen a dead person, so I am also very frightened of this. Now we have to get off the boats and walk in the water to another island and hide from the planes under the trees in a field. The island is called Lasdavo. I am separated from my mother. I am under a tree with the coffin, and some other people and told not to move. Eventually we go back on the fishing boat and back to Korcula. At night we leave again. It was very scary.”

Daniel Galson, Nirelle’s son, wrote the foreword to the book (which is available for purchase a major booksellers.) He explained, “I hope that learning about this childhood lived under circumstances almost unimaginable today holds interest and gives insight.”



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Stumbling Stones

by Rabbi Vicki Lieberman

Leviticus warns, “Do not put a stumbling block before the blind.” This is good advice; you do not want them to injure themselves. Extrapolate from that the teaching that we should strive to remove obstacles that would cause harm – physical, emotional or mental.

I learned on a recent trip to Central Europe with my husband, Cantor Robert Lieberman, and Rabbi Daniel and Dr. Rhea Jezer, that there are stumbling stones in the streets beckoning us to stop. In Budapest, our tour guides alerted us to the Stumbling Stones. These are 4” stones topped with a brass plate, called *stolpersteine*, placed outside a building inscribed with the name and life dates of victims of Nazi extermination or persecution. Their name, date of birth, death and concentration camp or death camp are etched on the plates. As I



marveling at the architecture, enjoying operas and concerts, eating more pastries than I should have, I would come upon a Stumbling Stone and stop, think, reflect.

Traveling to Central Europe had never been a goal. With three grandparents from Poland and one from Hungary – none of them ever wanting to discuss exactly where they were from or why they left - I had little reason to visit the countries that had destroyed their families. They wanted their past to stay in their past – and unfortunately it has. Our tour guides in Budapest

learned that they were Jewish when they were teenagers. Their parents and grandparents had not wanted to saddle them with being Jewish, especially under Communist rule. When they learned the truth, they dived into learning as much as they could about being Jewish. One of them worked for the Lauder Foundation for eight years. The Lauder Foundation sponsors Jewish primary and secondary schools in Eastern Europe.

Having toured the Dohany Synagogue and museum earlier in the week, Robert and I attended Erev Shabbat Services. We were warned to bring our paid admission ticket from the prior day as they try to weed out tourists who try to come to services (which are free) and take pictures. We waited in the queue and then had to deposit our bags, smart phones and smart watches before entering the synagogue. It is Orthodox, so Robert was shown to a seat in the large middle section, and I was relegated to the side section. Interestingly, the service features an organ, despite being an Orthodox congregation with male only clergy and a male only choir. We were told that they consider the organ to be outside the synagogue so it can be played on Shabbat. It is *not* outside the synagogue. What struck me about their reasoning is that it shows that if the rabbinic community wants a particular decision, they make it happen. Generously, they offer everyone at the service a cup of wine or grape juice for Kiddush. There were hundreds of people in attendance, mostly tourists.

A highlight of our trip was attending *Simchat Torah* services at the Leo Frankel synagogue. By then, we had heard the news from Israel. Rabbi Vero spoke in Hungarian to his community and then recited *Avinu Sh'Bashmayin*, Our God/Father in Heaven, followed by a Prayer for Healing for all those injured. Then we all sang *Hatikvah*.

There were hundreds of Jews jam-packed into this shul, too small to hold us all. An older woman beckoned me to sit by her, and I did, leaving Rob, Danny and Rhea on their own. The Torah scrolls were taken from the ark and men gathered around to start the procession while Cantor Norgradi lead Hebrew songs. Dozens and dozens of children excitedly accompanied the procession. They held bags into which the adults deposited candy. Robert and Danny each joined in the procession holding a Torah. Young boys carried plush toy Torahs.

Toward the end of the service, a young father came over to Robert and me and told us how he had learned as a teen

that he was Jewish. He is proud that his daughters attend a Lauder Jewish School and that they love Simchat Torah. He was not Orthodox but felt that this was the place to bring the children, who were positively glowing with joy, the older ones joining in the singing. But I privately lamented that the exclusion of women was normative. I saw the stumbling blocks. The boys are taught that it is normative to exclude females; not even the 6-year-old boy would pass his plush Torah to a girl. The girls know better than to ask for a Torah.

Our last Shabbat service was in Prague at the Jerusalem Synagogue. There were approximately 60,000 Jews in Prague before WWII. Now there are about 1,800. The Masorti rabbi, Ron Hoffberg, estimates that maybe 20% of those are descendants of families who lived there before the war. He enthusiastically told us how, despite it being an Orthodox service, they sometimes let him lead the prayers, and that the Torah scroll is brought into the women’s section. He considers this to be progress, since when he first arrived, decades ago, the Chief Rabbi would not sell him kosher meat because he thought it was a waste to sell kosher meat to a non-Orthodox Jew.

Rhea and I sat in the women’s section, which is a very small room adjacent to the shul. Rabbi Jezer had an aliyah and Cantor Lieberman had the *maftir aliyah* and chanted the haftarah. During Musaf, Rabbi Michael Dushinsky chanted the Priestly Blessing using the melody of HaTikvah. After the service, Robert told him how powerful that was, and he replied, “I have three grandchildren in the Israeli army,” and then gave Robert a hug.

The highlight of the service was when Eitan, an 8-year-old boy, was wrapped in his father’s tallit to lead the last prayer with his first cousin. Eitan lifted his face to the ark and beamed with joy. He and his cousin were the only boys in the service. The women’s section had a female toddler and a preteen who scooted in and out helping prepare the kiddush. I see the stumbling blocks. I see the normalcy of excluding women from services.

I asked Rabbi Hoffberg, “Why is Orthodoxy normative?” He answered, “Judaism had existed here for 1000 years before the war. As it returns, it returns to what it knew. They are slowly moving to the left, but they are traumatized by the Holocaust, and they are still recovering.” Then Rabbi Hoffberg asked me, “Will Judaism survive 1000 years in America?”

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» BOOK REVIEW

Holocaust Refugees in Oswego: From Nazi Europe to Lake Ontario by Ann Callaghan Allen



Holocaust Refugees in Oswego: From Nazi Europe to Lake Ontario is a new book (March 2024) from Arcadia Publishing. In it, author Ann Callaghan Allen reveals individual stories of the impact the refugees and Oswegonians had on one another and throughout the course of their lives.

The *Jewish Observer* interviewed Allen to learn more about her book:

What made you decide to write about Safe Haven at Fort Ontario?

It started about a year ago with a Facebook post. My husband was on the board of the Safe Haven Holocaust Refugee Shelter Museum at the time. He was hoping to get more people from Oswego and Central New York to learn about the museum and to visit. While much had been written about the refugees who lived at the Fort, not as much was known about the people who lived in the area at that time who interacted with the refugees. A few weeks later, I saw a Facebook post from a man named Ron Spereno whose father, Joe, apprenticed with one of the refugees, Jake Sylber. Ron's father learned the tailoring business from him and eventually bought Sylber's tailor shop, which he operated for more than 20 years in downtown Oswego.

I said to my husband, "There are probably more stories like this still to be told," and I took it one step further. I found a story in the local *Palladium-Times* from the mid-1950s telling Jake Sylber's story. Jake was a tailor in Paris when war broke out; joined the French army; ended up at the battle of Dunkirk; was captured by the Germans and put on a train to certain death in a Nazi concentration camp. He jumped from a window of that train; made his way back to Paris; joined the resistance fighters; finally made his way with his family to Italy where they were selected to come to the emergency refugee shelter at Fort Ontario.

I wondered what Joe Spereno was doing during that time, so I reached out to his son Ron to find out. The story of how these two young men, separated by geography, religion, language, culture and experience, would ultimately cross paths in a most unlikely place because

of the war, launched me on the path to write the book.

What was special about Oswego?

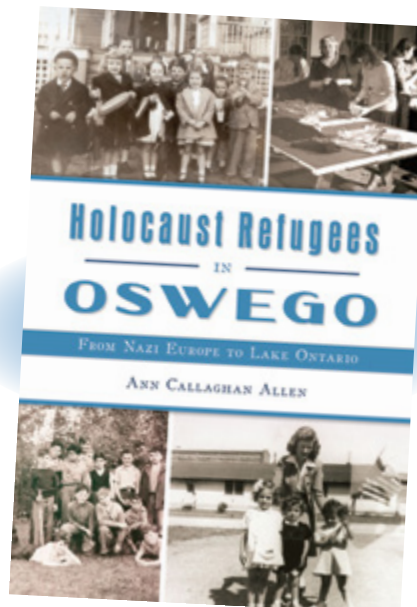
Oswego was not a perfect community. There is no perfect community. But what I learned was that the Oswego community by and large really stepped up to support these people during their 18-month stay at the Fort. There were many interactions between the people of Oswego and the refugees. I quote one author, Miriam Bat-Ami, who wrote a children's book based on the shelter. She wrote that Oswego represented "all that is possible in a community, all that is open-hearted in ourselves, as long as we keep the door to our souls open." Oswego kept the door to its soul open and the lives of both the Oswegonians and the refugees were enriched as a result. This project made me very proud of my hometown.



Do you see parallels between what happened then and the current refugee/immigrant crisis in the US and elsewhere in the world today?

Parallels certainly. I began this project while the refugee crisis was raging along our southern border, but I delivered the manuscript before war broke out between Hamas and Israel. The disturbing rise in antisemitism since then continues to shock me.

I taught at Le Moyne College, and one of my students, Gabriel Bol Deng,



was a refugee from Sudan. He is a remarkable person who took advantage of the opportunity to come to America in the early 2000s. While at Le Moyne, he started to raise money to establish a school in his native village of Ariang in what is now South Sudan. I served on the inaugural Foundation board that was formed to build that school, which is now a network of schools

reaching more than 2500 students, in a place where just a decade ago there was no prospect for education at all.

Personal experience is a powerful informant of attitude and my personal experience with Gabriel and as part of that Foundation shaped my attitude toward refugees. I see parallels with my experience and with the experience of war era Oswegonians who decided to bridge barriers of distrust or fear and get to know these refugees through personal experience. The story of the two tailors is one of many the book relates about personal experiences that were mutually

beneficial because people were open to interact.

Why do you think it is important for people to know what happened at Fort Ontario?

When I read or listen to the news today about the refugee crisis and the situation between Israel and Hamas, they seem like such complex and insurmountable problems. How can I, one person, make a difference in such events?

The late Walter Greenberg, who was a school-age boy when he arrived at the shelter, reflected on the importance of the Fort Ontario story. He said, "I think it's important to study what happened, not because of us 982 refugees, but more important, historically, what happened to a country and more specifically to a world which I [believe engaged in] 'world amnesia.' I think so much was overlooked conveniently by good people. The bad guys are easy to identify. The question is, what could the good guys



have done to make it a little bit easier... for more people to survive?"

What was the most important lesson/message/theme you learned from writing about the refuge?

The lesson I take from this book is that if I think first about the humanity that binds us all, I can make a difference in the life of another person. And that person can make a difference in my life. And that's not just a lesson for me or for Oswego or for Central New York. It's a lesson for the world.

» BOOK REVIEWS

Under The Rockets' Glow: Shira's Journey To Courage by Roman Sandler

Reviewed by Ariella Goldberg

Like many parents, Roman Sandler found himself trying to explain October 7th to his young daughter. With no resources to find, he felt inspired to write his first book ever. *Under The Rockets' Glow: Shira's Journey To Courage* reminds children and adults alike to have faith, strength, courage and belief in God even during times of turmoil.

Sandler never writes of the actual atrocities that took place on October 7th but instead uses Jewish history to remind his daughter of how the Jewish people have been challenged throughout time and how we prevail. Beautiful illustrations paint the pages. One can almost dive into the pictures with their watercolor-like texture. Unlike other children's books, it was comforting to see the Israeli flag illustrated above the



little girl's bed and her father wearing a kippah. In no WAY is the book trying to sell religion, but instead normalize it.

I highly recommend this book. The world can feel rather scary right now to the Jewish community. Sandler is able to bring comfort with his words. It is one more way that we can educate our children about our past and present while instilling hope, faith and the resilience of our people.

Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth by Noa Tishby

Reviewed by Angela Locke

Israel: the only Jewish country in the world, a sliver of land slightly larger than the state of New Jersey, home to a surprising variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, all of whom, as citizens of the country, share in the rights and responsibilities of a democracy. And yet, throughout the world *before* and, like a pack of rabid dogs, *after* October 7th, the attacks are relentless with accusations of colonialist power, apartheid society, perpetrators of genocide, oppressors of the Palestinian people. "Hold on," says Noa Tishby, author of *Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth*. "Let me tell you why those terms are absurdly inappropriate for my country."

Noa Tishby was born in 1975 in Tel-Aviv, a city founded on a stretch of sand at the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, by a bunch of pioneers, *kibbutzim* and assorted Zionists, some of whom are on Tishby's family tree. Noa is now a beautiful member of the Los Angeles celebrity tribe as an actress, producer and entrepreneur. Her credentials in the entertainment world are many. But what are her qualifications for writing a book on Israel?

For starters, she's a *sabra* who comes by her activism honestly. Her great-grandfather Nachum Tisch was born in Belarus, educated in Germany, worked in Switzerland, was arrested in Russia, served time in Siberia, escaped to Belgium, finished his schooling in London and turned down a cushy job offer as a British diplomat to accept a position in a Zionist organization working to build the Jewish economy. Her grandfather was Israel's first ambassador to many West African countries. Her grandmother Fania was one of the original idealistic hard-working Zionists, new to Eretz Yisrael before it was a state, escaping pogroms in Odessa and arriving in Jaffa in 1925.

Tishby has also done her research, poring over archival materials from a huge variety of sources, all of which are listed in the NOTES for those who want to do further reading. She served, of course, in the IDF, and was made Special Envoy for Combating Antisemitism and the Delegitimization of Israel. She has spoken to the General Assembly of the United Nations, as well as testifying on campus antisemitism to the House Committee on Ways and Means. She has founded more than one organization and collaboration on fighting misinformation and hate against the Jewish people and Israel.

The book is especially appealing to the younger crowd of high school and college students. Her moving personal story is told against the backdrop of Israel's difficult existence. Her hip conversational style increases the book's appeal, but the historical facts, summarized in chapter ends and in an appendix, arm the reader with the ability to understand what happened before Israel's founding, what has happened since Israel's founding and what ugly antisemitism is sweeping the world since October 7th. These are some questions I personally have heard young adults ask: How long have the Jews lived in the land of Israel? Is anti-Zionism antisemitism? Am I a Zionist? What is the *nakba*? Where did the name Palestine come from? What is the BDS movement *actually* about? For help at-a-glance, there is a summary appendix, a glossary and maps showing the evolution of the land of Israel. If you want to see the neighborhood Israel lives in, look at the map called *Israel and Its Neighbors*.

The irony is that *Israel: A Simple Guide* was published before October 7, 2023. Its surge in popularity now is due to the hunger for information which is driving people, young and older, to speak up in defense of Israel's right to exist with facts and not just emotions. Though this is not a book with answers to deeper and more complicated questions about Israel, it is an effective basic primer for anyone who needs to know Israel's history, its valid *raison d'être* and why the current mainstream narrative is wrong.

NOTE: The Federation will be giving copies of Tishby's book to all the teens enrolled at the Epstein School at their closing siyyum. Other teens or college students who would like a copy should email bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org.

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Local Artist Enters the World of High Fashion

Katya Krenina is renowned in the Jewish world for her beautiful illustrations of children's books such as *The Magic Dreidels*, *The Mysterious Guests: A Sukkot Story*, *The Cloak for the Moon* and others. Now her artistic career has taken a new turn into the world of fashion. Her Silk & Soul Studio debuted at New York Fashion Week in February. The luxurious silk accessories and clothing took the runway by storm.



Katya's distinctive styles are informed by her personal philosophy. "Fashion is not confined to the garments we wear," she notes, "but rather the artful and imaginative ways in which we choose to adorn ourselves." She elaborates: "In a world where fashion often dictates the importance of clothing, it's time to challenge the status quo and celebrate the incredible versatility of accessories. While clothing certainly plays a significant role in personal style, accessories offer a unique opportunity for self-expression and creativity that shouldn't be overlooked. One such accessory that embodies this versatility is the scarf. Often underrated and underutilized, scarves have the potential to transform not only an outfit but also the way we perceive fashion itself. Imagine a world where two large scarves take center stage, not as neck or head adornments, but as the very fabric of a unique and stylish dress. With their flowing fabric and endless potential for creativity, scarves offer a fresh perspective on fashion that is both innovative and sustainable. The result is a one-of-a-kind garment that defies traditional fashion norms and celebrates

the art of self-styling. The versatility of the scarves allows for endless experimentation with draping, tying, and layering, empowering individuals to express their unique style in a way that is both sustainable and trend-setting. This innovative approach to fashion not only challenges the overrated emphasis on clothing but also encourages a more conscious and creative relationship with our wardrobes."

Each of Katya's garments is conceived, sketched, illustrated, digitized, printed



onto finest 100% silk and hand finished with love. Her show, at the Sony Hall, included decorative suitcases. "The beautifully adorned suitcases served as a metaphor for our journey through life – each one unique, carrying its own stories, memories, and adventures. They symbolize the idea that we are all on a constant journey, filled with endless possibilities and opportunities for self-expression," she explained. "As we painted retro suitcases for the show, we were reminded of the transformative power of fashion. Just like these

suitcases, we're layering our brand with history, elegance, and a touch of whimsy. Just like a suitcase, fashion allows us to carry our dreams, aspirations and creativity with us wherever we go."

Krenina's creativity and exquisite fashion sense will take her next to Paris, where she will show her Silk & Soul creations at the celebrity-studded, invitation-only catwalk during Paris Fashion Week in September.



Fortunate members of the Central New York Jewish community can experience her wondrous fashions at Katya's online boutique, <https://www.etsy.com/shop/SilkandSoulStudio> and follow her on Instagram for styling tips, inspiration and news @ksilksoul.

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The Power of Coming Together for Purim

by Michael Ferman

In a heartwarming display of community spirit and holiday cheer, students from the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and Syracuse University Hillel came together to spread joy and celebrate Purim with seniors in the community. They arrived at Menorah Park with special Purim treat bags that they had lovingly prepared for the residents. With smiles on their faces and dressed in colorful costumes, the students brought a sense of excitement and happiness as they distributed *mishloach manot*. Each food package was thoughtfully put together by Hillel students and accompanied by a hand-written card from an SHDS student, adding a personal touch to the gifts.

The atmosphere was lively as students and residents embraced the spirit of Purim, joining in the



festivities by donning fun costumes. It was a heartening sight to see generations coming together to celebrate and share in the holiday. Previously, SHDS students had had the opportunity to bond with residents while making delicious hamantaschen together. This intergenerational activity not only brought joy to the seniors but fostered meaningful connections between students and residents.

The collaborative efforts of SHDS, Syracuse Hillel and Menorah Park exemplify the true spirit of community and the essence of Purim – a time of celebration, giving and togetherness. Through their kindness and generosity, they created a sense of belonging and warmth within the community and a reminder of the power of coming together.

“Prayground” at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas

by Yolanda Febles

Laughter and chatter of children blend harmoniously with the sacred melodies of prayer at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas. CBS-CS is a home for families and a sanctuary that embraces the joyful chaos of parenting and the lively spirit of youth.

As May approaches, bringing with it the celebration of Mother’s Day, CBS-CS shines a spotlight on its dedication to creating a warm, inclusive environment for all moms, dads and guardians to participate in synagogue life. Adults can engage in services while their kids play at the “prayground,” a special area within the sanctuary designed for children to play and explore with toys and books under the watchful eyes of their families. The proximity of the “prayground” to the *bimah* allows the youngest members to participate in services through listening and observing as they play, while also creating a space where parents and guardians feel comfortable.

CBS-CS also offers babysitting services for those who wish to engage in prayer

without their children. This flexibility affirms the synagogue’s commitment to supporting all parents and guardians, providing them with the opportunity to connect with their faith and community in a way that best suits their family’s needs.

The welcoming atmosphere at CBS-CS is fostered by a collective understanding that children, with their high energy and curiosity, are not just tolerated but celebrated. This ethos is reflected in the family-friendly approach to most events, where children are fully included through both immersive and parallel programming, allowing the younger members of the community to be active participants, not just spectators.

The philosophy is clear: children are to be seen, heard and included. CBS-CS is lauded for its child-friendly environment, where parents need not worry about the stirrings and sounds of childhood disrupting the peace. Instead, these natural expressions of life are welcomed, creating a community where “kids can be kids.”

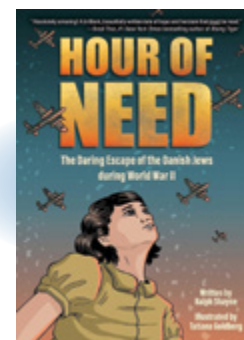
Author of *Hour of Need* at Temple Concord’s Goldenberg Cultural Series

by Chana Meir

Ralph Shayne, author of *Hour of Need: The Daring Escape of the Danish Jews During World War II*, will be giving a virtual talk on May 2 at 7:30 pm as part of Temple Concord’s Regina F. Goldenberg Cultural Series.

Hour of Need is a graphic novel, based on true events. It follows Mette, a grandmother who returns to Denmark to visit the country where the people of an occupied nation bravely risked their lives to evacuate their Jewish countrymen to safety. After years of letting Denmark rule its people, the Nazis led a surprise raid to round up Danish Jews in 1943. In response, Danish citizens, from the king to fishermen, risked their lives to bring Jews to Sweden in small fishing boats. Mette, a young child at the time, reflects on her and her family’s escape.

Shayne is an entrepreneur and finance professional and the son of a Danish citizen who married an American and immigrated to the United States in the 1960s. Born and raised in Chicago, he describes himself as



someone whose “mere existence is predicated on being the offspring of a mother who was part of the one in ten European Jewish children to survive the war because of the rare bravery, compassion and exploits of her fellow Danish citizens.” The novel’s illustrations are by Tatiana Goldberg.

This event is free and open to the community. To receive the Zoom link, register by clicking the link on the Events Calendar at templeconcord.org.



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For more information about the Hebrew Interest-free Loan Program, go to <https://jewishfederationcny.org/federations-hebrew-interest-free-loan-program/>.

Temple Adath Yeshurun Welcomes Scholar-in-Residence

by Sonali McIntyre

Temple Adath Yeshurun will welcome Rabbi Michael Strassfeld as scholar-in-residence on Friday, May 17 and Saturday, May 18. TAY will host multiple events for the congregation and greater Syracuse Jewish community.

Rabbi Michael Strassfeld was one of the editors of the *Jewish Catalog*, a guide to do-it-yourself Judaism that sold over 300,000 copies; co-authored *A Night of Questions: A Passover Haggadah* with his wife Rabbi Joy Levitt and authored *A Book of Life: Embracing Judaism as a Spiritual Practice*. Rabbi Strassfeld graduated from Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and served as rabbi of Congregation Anshe Chesed and then of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism in Manhattan until his retirement in 2015.



the twenty-first century. He views Judaism as a historically evolving civilization, which reflects the influence of Mordechai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionism.”

Scholar-in-Residence Weekend is underwritten by the Samuel B. & Jeannette Yellin Fund. The Yellins were active shulgoers and for them, the synagogue was the central institution in their lives which showed through their volunteering and participation. They strongly believed in Temple Adath Yeshurun and Jewish education for both adults and children and in Jewish values such as compassion, *menschlikeit* and responsibility.

Their daughters Joyce Millian and Phyllis Schondorf said, “We believe that our parents, Samuel and Jeannette Yellin, would be proud to sponsor this event as a relevant use of their TAY Fund, sharing insights for a revitalized Judaism within our community.” **For more information and registration, please visit www.adath.org.**



Josh Hanft of the Jewish Book Council wrote about Rabbi Strassfeld’s newest book, *Judaism Disrupted: A Spiritual Manifesto for the 21st Century*: “In this deeply moving new book, Michael Strassfeld—a retired pulpit rabbi—is both worried and cautiously optimistic about the fate of liberal Judaism in

The 5784 Jewish Connection to Cinco de Mayo



Mexico’s presidential election will take place in June. Claudia Sheinbaum, a physicist, is the front-runner candidate who could be Mexico’s first female president.



She could also become Mexico’s first Jewish president. Sheinbaum’s father’s Ashkenazi parents emigrated from Lithuania to Mexico City in the 1920s; her mother’s Sephardic parents emigrated there from Sofia, Bulgaria, in the early 1940s to escape the Holocaust. If elected, Sheinbaum would join the ranks of the few Jews outside Israel who have been elected to their country’s highest office, including Janet Jagan of Guyana, Ricardo Maduro of Honduras, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski of Peru and Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine. Sheinbaum would also likely be the first Jewish person in history to lead

a country of more than 50 million people.

Sheinbaum is an expert on energy issues having studied physics and energy engineering in Mexico and doing doctoral research at California’s Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. She has said most of the country’s future “has to be related to renewable energy.” Sheinbaum’s platform includes fighting Mexico’s deeply rooted corruption, continuing cash transfers to Mexico’s most vulnerable populations and developing Mexico’s energy sovereignty.



The community is invited to celebrate *Cinco de mayo* at Menorah Park on May 3 from 3:30 to 5 pm. Kosher tacos will be available for purchase at \$1 apiece and soft drinks and Mexican ice pops will be available for the same price. Lively music will be provided by the members of the Syracuse Orchestra Youth Brass Ensemble. All proceeds will benefit the food pantry at Menorah Park.







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JCC Annual Meeting and Gala to be held on June 2

by Erin Hart

The Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center of Syracuse is excited as they prepare to hold their 161st Annual Meeting and Gala. With a new venue, this year's celebration promises to bring a fresh look for this annual event. The JCC's largest fundraiser of the year will be held on Sunday, June 2, 2024, at Palladian Hall at the Treasury.

Rich history and sophistication are the undertones for this year's Annual Meeting and Gala. The new venue for this year, Palladian Hall, is located in the historical Onondaga County Savings Bank which is part of the National Register of Historical Places. The space has been renovated to host large events while keeping its historical charm.

"We were concerned this past January when we heard that Owera Vineyards would no longer be holding events," says JCC Executive Director Marci Erlebacher. "We heard about a new venue opening in Downtown Syracuse. Once we saw the inside of Palladian Hall, we fell in love. The beautiful venue will bring an exciting new look to our event as we honor another outstanding group of honorees."

This year's festivities will begin at 11 am with a cocktail hour in the upper mezzanine. At 12 pm, guests will be ushered to the main event floor for a delicious deli brunch served by none other than Essen New York Deli. Upon the conclusion of brunch, the meeting and awards portion of the afternoon will begin. The JCC will once again feature a video presentation for all honorees being recognized this year.

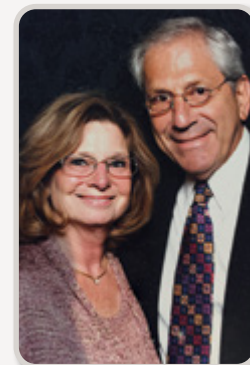
The JCC will present four separate awards at this year's event. Honorees represent a wide range of dedication and support to the JCC and greater Jewish community in Syracuse.



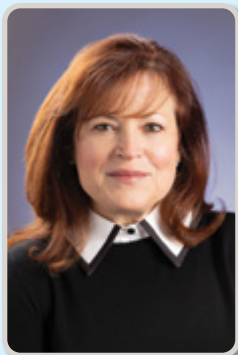
The Kovod Gadol (Great Honor) Award will be presented to Cantor Esa and Chaim Jaffe. This husband-and-wife team have been longtime and active supporters of the greater Jewish community in Syracuse. Chaim and Esa met at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts where they both received their bachelor's degrees. Esa went on to receive her master's degree in Jewish communal service from Brandeis University and voice performance from Syracuse University. She has held many educational roles within the greater Jewish community. She is the current director of education at Temple Adath Yeshurun where she has worked for almost 30 years.

After receiving his bachelor's degree, Chaim went on to earn his master's degree from Buffalo Law School. He spent the last 25 years as a commercial litigator with Sclaro, Fetter, Grizanti & McGough, P.C. This past January, Chaim was appointed law clerk to the Honorable Mitchell J. Katz, Federal Magistrate Judge for the US District Court. Chaim served as president of Temple Adath Yeshurun for 15 years. He has also served as legal counsel for the JCC for over 20 years. Chaim and Esa have been married for 30 years and have raised four beautiful children: Ari, Shai, Ilana and Jonah. They look forward to the marriage of their eldest son, Ari, to Shaina Kaplan in 2025.

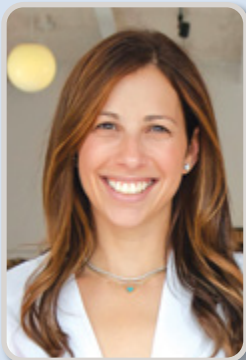
Ellen and Howard Weinstein – two individuals who have made their mark through service to the entire Jewish Community – will be inducted into the JCC Hall of Fame this year. Ellen and Howard have been actively involved with the Jewish community in Syracuse since they moved here in 1978. Howard attended the New York University School of Medicine where he received his medical degree in obstetrics and gynecology. In 2023, he retired from Upstate Medical Center after working for over 40 years. He currently serves on the board of directors for the JCC where he also served as vice president for 11 years. Howard has served as president and co-president of the board of Temple Adath Yeshurun and president of the board for the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. In addition to the local Jewish organizations, Howard also served on numerous committees and councils within the medical community throughout his lifelong career as an OB/GYN.



Prior to moving to Syracuse, Ellen attended the Brooklyn College of the City University of New York where she received her master's degree in early childhood and elementary education with a specialization in reading. She later graduated from the Syracuse University College of Law with her juris doctor in 1990. She was a partner with Pinsky & Skandalis from 1991 to 2009. In 2009, she was appointed chief clerk of the Onondaga County Surrogate's Court, from which she retired in 2019. She has been a dedicated supporter of many different organizations within the Jewish community in Syracuse, including serving as a member of the board of the Jewish Community Center of Syracuse, Temple Adath Yeshurun and the Syracuse Hebrew Day School. She is a past president of the Jewish Federation of CNY and currently serves as a member of the board of trustees of the Jewish Federations of North America.



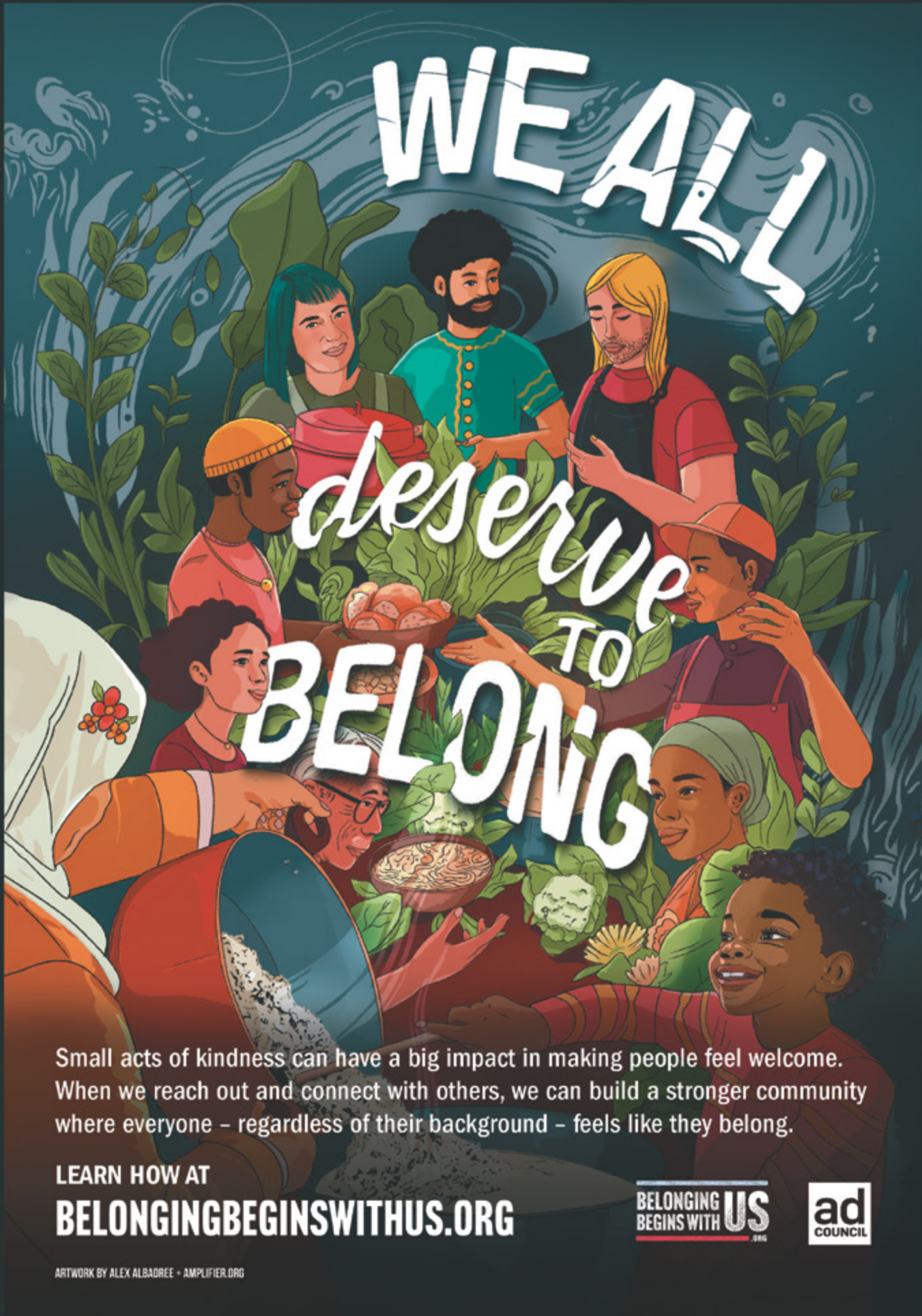
The Kovod Award, which signifies honor and importance, will be presented to JCC board member and Syracuse native, Kathleen Davis. Kathleen attended Nazareth College in Rochester where she received her bachelor of arts degree in sociology with a minor in communications. Kathleen married I. Stephen Davis in 2006. Since then, she has devoted her time to working in the family business, G&L Davis Meat Company. Kathleen has been a member of the JCC board of directors since 2017 and has served on the Annual Meeting and Gala committee since joining the board. She also serves as a trustee for the Vera House Foundation and the Junior League of Syracuse.



This year's Leslie Award, the sixth to be given since being introduced in 2016, will be presented to Leah Goldberg. "The Leslie" recognizes a younger up-and-coming professional within the local Jewish community for their outstanding commitment and service to the JCC and the local community, qualities which the award's namesake, Leslie London Neulander, personified through her many volunteer pursuits.

Leah Goldberg was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska. She grew up in the halls of the Omaha JCC and was active in USY, BBYO and Camp Herzl. She graduated from the University of Kansas with a bachelor's degree in communications and history. She moved to Syracuse in 2013 after marrying her husband, Seth Goldberg. She is actively involved with many Jewish organizations in Syracuse, including serving on two rabbinical search committees, the SHDS Development Committee and as current co-chair of the ECDP parent committee. She also sits on the Jewish Federation of CNY Board and is a member of the National Leadership Cabinet.

For more information about the JCC of Syracuse's 2024 Annual Meeting and Gala, including event tickets and sponsorship opportunities, visit www.jccsy.org/gala or call 315-445-2360.



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JAMES KAPLAN
March 20, 2024



James Kaplan, 79, passed away peacefully on March 20 at Crouse Hospital after a short illness. Born on September 3, 1944 to Arthur and Jane Kaplan in Appleton, WI, he had been a resident of Fayetteville for more than 50 years.

He was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin at Madison with a degree in structural engineering. Jim was the managing partner of John P. Stopen Engineering Partnership of Syracuse and a partner of QPK Design- Architecture, Engineering, Site and Planning.

Jim contributed to the structural and architectural landscape of Central New York. Notably Crouse Hospital, The VA Hospital, St. Joseph's Hospital, MONY Plaza, Destiny Mall, The St. Joseph's Amphitheater and the Mirbeau Properties were just a few of his projects. There are a multitude of bridges, parking garages and

structures all credited to his professional talents.

He cared passionately for the growth and success of the Syracuse community. He was an avid fan of Syracuse University sports, the Green Bay Packers and the New York Yankees.

His family includes his wife Jan of 57 years, their children Kerri (David) Clark, and Marc, grandchildren Alexandra, Caroline, Yasmine and Jordan, his sister Ann Kaplan, his brother Tom (Cathy) Kaplan, his brother-in-law and sister-in-law Eric and Renee Bachrach and a loving extended family. It should be known that part of his extended family includes several Henninger High School students who were welcomed into the Kaplan home for mentoring, nourishment and academic support in their continuing and successful education.

Contributions to perpetuate his memory may be made to the CNYSPCA (cnyspca.org) promoting kindness to animals.

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ERIC I. GOULD
March 20, 2024

Eric I. Gould (Rick) passed away suddenly on March 20. He was born on February 13, 1951 in Syracuse, the son of the late Earle L. and Betty K. Gould. Eric lived in the city before moving with his family to North Syracuse, where he graduated from North Syracuse Central High. He went on to graduate from Brockport and earned his master's degree in counseling from the University of Bridgeport. He worked for many years as an addiction counselor at Syracuse Community Health Center. In his retirement years, he worked for Suburban Transport.

Rick was active in Temple Society of Concord and was the shamash every Sabbath for a long time. He was active in the East Syracuse Kiwanis Club and also volunteered for Meals On Wheels.

Rick was well read and had a wealth of knowledge about history and his religion. He was a kindhearted man who wrote beautiful and expressive poetry. He will be missed.

Rick was predeceased by his parents and his younger brother Clifford. He is survived by his brother Sheldon (Rose) Gould of Cicero, NY, his nephews Jason (Tracy) Gould of Boca Raton, FL, Marc (Sharon) Gould of Madison, WI and five great-nieces and nephews.

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PHYLLIS SORKIN BESDIN
March 23, 2024

Phyllis Sorkin Besdin, 90, passed away peacefully in Rochester on March 23. Born in Washington, DC on September 10, 1933 to Sol and Ada Sorkin, she was a resident of Syracuse since 1950 when the family moved to Syracuse.

She was a graduate of Nottingham High School and attended Syracuse University. Besides raising her family, she also worked at Empire Vision. Phyllis and Mel owned Camp Walden in Lake George and spent countless summers running their camp. Phyllis was the director of the women's waterfront.

She was a former member of Temple

Adath Yeshurun, loved snow skiing, was an avid swimmer and was a member of several bridge groups. She was especially proud to have run in the New York Marathon as an adult.



Her family includes her beloved husband Melvin of 70 years; their daughters Jill, Susan (Chip) and Jane (Gary), 8 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren and her sister, Lynne Miller. She was predeceased by her brother Bobby Sorkin and her brother-in-law Larry Miller.

Contributions to perpetuate her memory may be made to the Alzheimer's Association.

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THELMA D. TROTTY-SELZER
AKA Ms. T. D. Trotty
March 25, 2024



The call of the wolf is quiet today, coordinating to the 15th day of the Lakota month of the moon when eyes hurt, as we announce the death of Thelie Trotty-Selzer. Thelie was born on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota to Thelma I. Bass Trotty and James E. Trotty. They were of the Oglala Lakota Nation and members of the Wolf Clan. Thelie was predeceased by her parents, her brother James Trotty, Jr. and her sister Constance Trotty Canfield.

Ms. T.D. Trotty, as her students called her, became the first Native American faculty member in the Syracuse City School District and only the second person of color. She taught one year at Levy Jr. High and spent the next 28 years at William Nottingham High School. She would often be heard saying "Use your Intellect" and calling her students "Mr." and "Ms." as she consistently worked to harvest the best that each student could accomplish. Ms. Trotty and her students helped to plant the trees and flowers across the Nottingham campus, many of which remain to this day.

Thelie was always committed to her community and issues of social justice. She was an active member of the Civil Rights movement, helping to integrate the lunch counter at W.T. Grant's here in Syracuse. She served on the boards of the Metropolitan School for the Arts, Jewish Community Center and National Council of Jewish Women. She volunteered at the Everson Museum of Art, taught at the Epstein School and Temple Concord and was a global lecturer about Native American culture and history.

She was passionate about the arts and

loved poetry. Through their worldwide travels together, she and her smitten husband Jon were often in museums, enjoying ballets and operas, theater and concerts. They had a wonderful marriage, and her children and grandchildren left her fulfilled.

She is survived by her loving family: Jon, Haniya (Ryan) Mee, Rebecca (Tim) Canfield and Alvah Canfield, VII, by her adoring grandchildren Trotter and Capucine Mee and Gerald Woodruff and by a circle of family and friends around the world.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to perpetuate Thelie's memory to Temple Concord, 910 Madison Street, Syracuse, NY 13210; The National American Indian Museum, Smithsonian Institution, PO Box 23473, Washington DC 20026; or Oglala Lakota College, 490 Piya Wiconi Road, Kyle, SD 57752

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CORRECTION: Funeral Services for Nancy Levine were provided by **Birnbaum Funeral Services**. The *JO* apologizes for the incorrect attribution in the April issue.



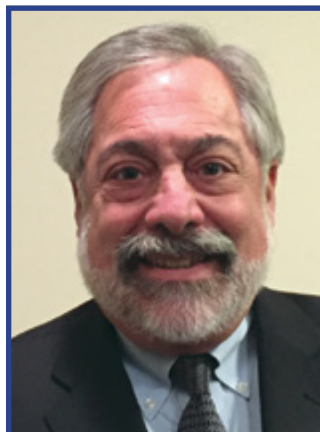
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