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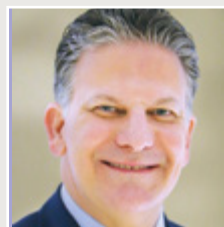
# Jewish Observer of Central New York

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

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## From the Editor



Barbara Davis

Our Jewish heritage is an unbreakable chain that links generations—ensuring that the stories and sacrifices, tragedies and triumphs of our people are never forgotten. This year, as we gather with family, friends and community for *Pesach* and then for *Yom HaShoah*, we commit to always remembering, always honoring and always carrying our legacy forward with strength and purpose.

The juxtaposition of these two observances is jarring. Passover celebrates liberation, the passage from slavery to freedom, the exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land. The Holocaust has been described as the anti-exodus, the descent from freedom to annihilation. Yet Judaism is a religion of life, not death, of hope, not despair. The Israeli Holocaust scholar and educator, Yehuda Bauer, taught that there were three lessons to be derived from the experience of the *Shoah*: “Thou shalt not be a perpetrator; thou shalt not be a victim; and above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.”

Carrying out these lessons is fraught with difficulty. We frequently joke about “two Jews, three opinions,” but the fact is, that despite our claim to be *am ehad*, one people, we are very diverse and hold very disparate views. Never in recent memory have the divisions in our peoplehood been more in evidence than since October 7<sup>th</sup>. Yehuda Kurtzer, president of the Shalom Hartman Institute, wrote in *Moment* that “the dominant characteristic defining different groups of Jews now is not how they pray or whether they keep kosher, but their politics.” In our local community, we have seen the effects of these divisions, many of them detrimental to unity of purpose.

Voices are starting to be raised against this situation. “In these perilous times, the Jewish community must transcend divisions and embrace unity for the sake of Israel’s survival and the future of the Jewish people,” wrote Alan Kadish, president of Touro University, in the *Jerusalem Post*. Kadish acknowledges that “we Jews have always expressed ourselves strongly, and we accept this trait as an essential part of our identity. One might argue that these strong beliefs and our ability to voice them have sustained us through the worst of times. But there are times – especially when Jews everywhere face genuine danger – that we need to transcend historical precedents and create a new reality. This is one of those times.” He adds, “In a post-October 7 world, it’s critical that we unite and work together in the face of outside threats; Jewish survival depends upon it. Minimally, we must attempt to understand other points of view within the global Jewish community.”

As we celebrate Passover, and as we commemorate the most awful chapter in our long history on *Yom haShoah*, it is vitally important to remember that, while we Jews have our differences, there are things that bind us together—a shared history, a common destiny and an enduring sense of responsibility for one another. In a world that often seeks to highlight division, it is crucial to keep in mind that what unites us as Jews is far greater than what divides us. Rabbi Aaron Potek, writing in *Truah*, made the important point that the unity does not mean uniformity. Rather, he said “Unity is the opposite of uniformity and is rooted in an appreciation for each person’s individuality.” We must remember that, in addition to four cups of wine and four questions at our *sedarim*, there are four sons in our Passover *Haggadah*. Each is different, each individual. We need them all. Our seders would be incomplete without them. In 2025/5785, we must proactively recognize and reaffirm this truth.

I was introduced to the term “*machloket*” by an article in this issue of the *JO* about a program at the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. “*Machloket*” is a Hebrew word that means “debate,” “dispute” or “disagreement” and it’s a fundamental part of rabbinic Judaism. It’s also an underlying theme of this month’s issue. In an era characterized by polarization, disagreement and disharmony, let us strive to use *machloket* to work through differing ideas and build a path forward. Let us follow through on the theme of transformation that we find in our seders: the bitter *maror* sweetened by the *charoset* and *matzah*, the bread of affliction, changed to the *afikoman*, symbol of redemption, hope and freedom. Let us debate, but let us also find the waya to move forward in harmony.

The *Jewish Observer* wishes all of the members of our Jewish community a *Chag Pesach Sameach!*

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## Federation and Foundation Welcome New Leader



**The Jewish Federation of Central New York and the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York are delighted to announce that Mark Segel will assume the leadership of both organizations on April 15th, after a national search.**

Mark is a native of Tampa, Florida who had an 18-year career in the financial services industry, holding leadership roles including director of

management training at Bank of America, commercial lender at The Bank of Tampa, and senior private banker at Fifth Third Bank. Transitioning to the nonprofit sector, Mark served as executive director of the Jewish Federation of Pinellas & Pasco Counties, chief administrative officer at the Tampa Hillsborough Economic Development Corporation and director of external relations at the Tampa Jewish Community Centers and Federation.

Most recently Mark served as the director of strategic initiatives at the Tampa JCCs and Federation and as a senior consultant for the Florida-Israel Business Accelerator. In these roles, he focused on fostering business relationships and supporting initiatives that benefited both local and international communities. Mark also was the interim executive director for the Tampa-Orlando-Pinellas (TOP) Jewish Foundation while the organization conducted a search to fill that position. In response to rising antisemitism, Mark's title was recently updated to executive director of combating antisemitism. He emphasized the importance of community

and education in addressing this pressing issue.

Mark's commitment to community service is evident through his involvement with such organizations as the Rotary Club of Tampa, Tampa Connection, Leadership Tampa Alumni Association, and the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay. He has also been a board member of the Tampa Bay Chamber and president of the Renaissance Center for the Arts.

When asked his feelings about relocating to Central New York, Mark shared, "When I told my friends and family I planned to move to the Syracuse area, there were the anticipated 'Why would you leave sunny Florida' comments, but once I had the chance to tell them all the reasons I'm so excited to help lead the Jewish community there, they got it."

He added, "Twenty years ago, I never thought I'd be working for the Jewish community in a professional capacity. I started as a Federation volunteer,

joined my first Federation mission to Israel in 1998, served on the board and eventually was offered a formal role. More than 18 years later, I'm as enthusiastic as ever about the important work we do. I can't wait to see where we take Jewish Syracuse!"

Mark has one daughter attending Stetson Law School in Tampa Bay. He also has two young adult nieces, Amia and Chaya Bernheim, who have been in his care for the past few years and have not yet decided whether they'll join their uncle in New York. Segel enjoys reading, traveling, movies, and personal fitness.

Federation's Board Chair Todd Pinsky said, "I am thrilled that Mark is joining our community and leading both the Federation and Foundation in these unique times. We feel lucky and confident that Mark's experience, professionalism, and talent will lead us to new opportunities and a vibrant and successful future. Please join us in welcoming Mark to Central New York."

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

*In response to the JO's article about Jewish women and the law, we received the following letter, accompanied by an August 1947 article from the Post Standard entitled "Women Students Like Law Course," which began as follows: "Four young women law students at Syracuse University have no particular reasons for taking up this profession other than fulfillment of a childhood desire to be lawyers when they grew up."*

To the Editor,

The legal system in our community is made up of men and women from all walks of life, which wasn't the case in the mid-twentieth century. Syracuse University did have a College of Law since 1895, but few women were included in the yearly graduates. Our mother was one of those women.

Dorothy Levine Newman grew up in Syracuse, was confirmed at Temple Concord, graduated from Nottingham High School in 1943, and from Syracuse University in 1946. She then enrolled in the SU College of Law as one of three women in a class of men returning from the war. Happily for us, she kept a scrapbook of those years. The students on the Dean's List were recorded in the Syracuse newspapers each semester, and the three women were prominent on each list. The 1948 commencement shows that of the 37 law graduates, three were those women. A 1947 *Post Standard* article highlighted these incredible women with the opening sentence, "The women students have no particular reason for taking up this profession other than fulfillment of a childhood desire to be lawyers when they grew up." Our mother was described as the "attractive law student." All of them were members of the Louis Marshall Legal Society, the local honorary law group where two of the three inductees in 1946 were women. They also took active roles as two of the four officers of the society.

They graduated in 1948, but their journey continued to be an uphill climb. They could clerk for a judge but were not hired to be attorneys in their firms. Our mother was married and another graduate, Joan Hardy, who we lovingly called Aunt Joan, were never able to actually practice. Our mother had us, which meant she couldn't continue in her profession.

We lost our mom in 1966 from cancer. She never had the chance to use her skills and abilities to impact our community through legal initiatives. We found a newspaper article that said in 1944 she was the only woman on the debate team and argued about disarmament in the United States' relations with Germany. What an opportunity lost. What she could have done. We are so proud to have had her as our mother.

David Newman

Sharon Newman Birnkrant





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# Passover and its Message of Freedom

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 *haroset*, 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 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.

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 person of our contemporary culture? We tend to think of freedom as being liberated



from persecution, enslavement, and the like. But, the truth is that freedom can only be enjoyed when we take a proactive stand for the betterment of society. When we live our lives with the freedom to use our religious heritage

in order to build a better community, then freedom is more than a word.

Religious fundamentalism and sectarianism are often used as stumbling blocks to freedom. Clearly, the benefit of modernity is a sense for a greater use of the concept of pluralism – the notion that no one philosophy or group can claim to have “the truth”, at the exclusion of everyone else. The Sages of Jewish Tradition tell us that the grievous sin of Pharaoh in Egypt was not only the enslavement of the Israelites, but an attempt to deny them the opportunity to worship their god, even to the extent of trying to force the pagan religion of Egypt upon them. This is the reason for the Ten Plagues, say the rabbis. God could have simply brought the last plague (which was the most destructive) first – but He wanted the first nine plagues to both punish the Egyptians and to negate their many deities.

History has shown us that persecution is the end result of one people separating themselves from the majority, by triumphalism and the feeling of moral superiority over another group. In that sense, it can become very easy to “enslave” others – both by categorizing

them as unbelieving or different, and by designating that group as worthy of punishment for their “heresy”. No matter what time period you may examine – from Biblical times until today – this “slavery” of others by an elitist few is easily taught to the masses. It is often easier to find fault with others than to seriously examine one’s own beliefs and dogmas.

Thus, the message of Passover goes far beyond its place in history. This is the reason why it is examined so thoroughly each year by means of the *seder* ritual. It is not enough to merely repeat the historical event of the Exodus – we must understand its significance as a religious event that has eternal meaning, especially for us today. Slavery, in its various forms, is always a threat to humanity. Passover reminds us to be ever vigilant.

We should follow the lesson of Passover. Our goal must be to live in a pluralistic world where we can celebrate our diversity and learn from one another. Only then can we achieve God’s ultimate task for the Human Family – to build a better world in which to live.

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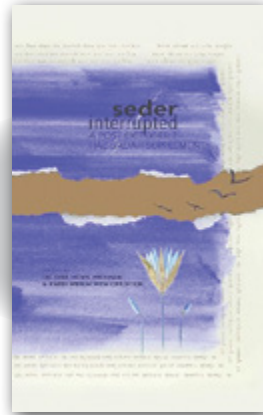


# SEDER interrupted

**SEDER interrupted** is a post-October 7th Haggadah supplement edited by Dr. Ora Horn Prouser and Rabbi Menachem Creditor. In the introduction, Dr. Prouser writes, “As we prepare to celebrate Passover, we find ourselves in uncharted territory. We celebrate freedom during Passover, but what is the definition of freedom this year? As we are still reeling from the horrors of October 7 and the ensuing events, both in Israel and in the United States, as we are still praying and working for the release of our hostages, we are left with many questions, and not many answers. That does not feel particularly appropriate to Passover, as the asking of questions is central to the seder. These questions, however, are far more difficult and filled with pain and fear. These questions leave us wondering how to engage with Passover this year.”

Rabbi Beth Naditch points out the contemporary relevance of the Order of the Service, noting that “2,000 years earlier, in the wake of the destruction of the temple and tremendous unrest, the rabbis used all the creative tools in their hands to restore order out of the chaos of destruction. Our seder, whose very name means order, offers us now familiar rituals so that we can step out of times of shattering chaos, even momentarily. It helps us to bring those fragments into an organized and coherent whole. Modern trauma theory eventually recognized what the rabbis knew instinctively: where trauma overwhelms, provide sensory grounding and order.”

Rabbi Matthew Goldstone writes that “at our seders this year we might find divisions among family and friends as to what should have been done in response to the events of October 7th and what Israel – and the world Jewish community – should do next. Or we ourselves, as individuals, might be internally conflicted about decisions – big or small – that Israel and our communities have made in response to the act of terror and ensuing antisemitism.” His recommendation is that “at our seders this year, let us remember that disagreement and uncertainty are inherent in the Exodus experience but that, even with their conflicts, the Israelites emerged from the sea as one nation.” He suggests that “like our ancestors, let us hope that we may also merit the sheltering presence of the divine to protect us in our moments of uncertainty and danger.”



Rabbi Margaret Frisch Klein contributed “A Plague Poem” to the book to answer the question, “Why does Torah give no command to rejoice during Pesach?” She quotes the Talmud: “The Egyptians were drowning in the sea. At the same time, the angels wanted to sing before God, and the Lord, God, said to them: ‘My creations are drowning, and you are singing before me?’” The poem is too long to reproduce in its entirety but several of the verses are

as follows: “My creatures are drowning... why are you singing?/ A drop of wine/ a drop of blood/ not just ten for the plagues/ too many drops to count this year/ maybe every year/ a drop of wine/ a drop of blood/ we rejoice with each hostage freed out of the narrow places/ a drop of wine/ a drop of blood/ a tunnel is a narrow place/ a very narrow place/ we weep for each life lost.”

Rabbi Linda Targin wrote “A Prayer for Pesach.” It says, “Presider over the Universe: we prayed for peace and the fulfillment of dreams. And we woke to a nightmare. A nightmare so unreal that we didn’t believe it and still can’t comprehend the truth. It happened! The unimaginable... Now we are left with the aftermath... and shock and questions and responsibilities and burdens and fears and disbelief and and and... please God, as we enter this season of liberation and renewal, we ask that you watch over us and our Israeli brothers and sisters... That you bring the hostages safely home from the narrow spaces, that you help heal the wounded. That you offer comfort to the bereaved. That you offer healing to shattered souls. That all innocents be protected. That there are changes in hearts

and minds. That there be love... that there be peace... that there be goodness in all of its iterations... and, and, and... amen.”

Rabbi Deborah Orenstein contributed an essay in which she wrote, “Judaism is a hopeful religion, despite calamities in our past and present. Hope was vital to our patriarchs, matriarchs, and prophets. Jewish liturgy, life cycle ritual, holidays, theology, and humor all reflect – and strengthen – great hope. Hope is necessary for *teshuvah* and *tikkun olam*; Improvement and repair would not be attempted without *tikva*, hope.” She adds, “Every Passover we stoke our hope. Like those who experienced the exodus, we gather to share a meal and the stories and journey of freedom. We remember the bitterness that we have overcome and recall the promise of redemption. Together we sing that next year will be better. Especially during hard times, it’s important to realize that hope is essential for making next year better. Do whatever it takes to nurture your agency and acceptance, because hope is not just a good feeling about the future it is the fuel we need to keep expanding our vision and collaborating to shape a better future.”



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# Recollections and Reflections: From My Life in Nazi Germany, Wartime England, and America by H. Richard Levy

Reviewed by Eileen M. Angelini, Upstate Regional Director, 3GNY - Descendants of Holocaust Survivors



As we prepare for *Yom HaShoah*, we would all do well to connect with a survivor's testimony. An example of a thoughtful and engaging memoir is H. Richard Levy's *Recollections and Reflections: From My Life in Nazi Germany, Wartime England, and America*. On March 15, 1939, four months after *Kristallnacht*, Levy, at the age of 9, was able to escape Germany on a *Kindertransport*. He considers himself exceptionally fortunate because despite the traumas from his early childhood (his father's passing from cancer shortly after he left Germany and being separated from his mother and younger sister), he went on to

forge a successful academic career in the United States and have a wonderful marriage with Betty Samuels (a relationship that led him to being active in the Civil Rights movement). He also writes fondly of his relationship with his adopted bi-racial daughter Karen with whom he made an emotional return visit to his hometown of Leipzig.

Levy is exceedingly careful to explain that all was not perfect in his life. He credits his mother for her strength of character. In addition, he is particularly grateful for the loving kindness of the Schlesinger family in England and for the education he received in the British school system that set him up well for his undergraduate studies at Rutgers University, where he flourished academically, despite starting at the age of 16, not being at the same emotional maturity as the American students and having much older roommates who were benefiting from the G.I. Bill.

Levy's insights about his marriage that are strikingly revealing: "Years later I began to search myself more deeply, to try to uncover what other factors might have been involved in my being so attracted to Betty. Despite our different backgrounds, we each belonged to a group that had been marginalized and despised for centuries, and that had suffered monstrous atrocities. I was a Jewish boy from Germany. Betty was an African American girl from the South Side of Chicago.

Before I came to the United States, I had never interacted with African Americans. I knew nothing about the history of African American in this country, about slavery, reconstruction, or Jim Crow. The only African Americans I had seen were among American soldiers stationed in England during the war." He digs deeper when he writes: "We also went through some very challenging times that severely strained our marriage. When we married in 1960, interracial marriages were still illegal in about half the states."

Levy is careful in his introduction to state that he wrote this memoir primarily for himself. His joy in writing creates a highly pleasure reading experience. However, there is much that we can all gain from his "awakening of some long-forgotten memories." He is careful to not pass judgment on past events, but sets the stage well for understanding the continued pain and suffering endured by survivors and the families of survivors when he writes "As David Gordis points out in his book *God Was Not In the Fire*, 'Holocaust' comes from the Greek word *holokauston*, itself a translation of the Hebrew *olah*, meaning 'completely burnt offering to God,' implying that Jews and other 'undesirables' murdered during World War II were a sacrifice to God, a totally abhorrent idea. They were not a sacrifice, they were murdered. Increasingly, Jews refer to this event as *The Shoah*, the Hebrew word for catastrophe or calamity, and while this is clearly preferable, the widespread use of the term *Holocaust* probably ensures that it will continue to be used."

As a result, what is distinctly poignant is Levy's ability to shed light on what we often take for granted in life. For example, he relates what transpired when traveling with the Ostrolenk family to Canada during one of his college summers: "When we got

to the Canadian border there was a major problem, namely my citizenship status. I did not know, or remember, that when we left Germany in 1939, our German citizenship was revoked. During the war in England, we were unable to become British citizens, so we were stateless. This was obviously a problem for the officers at the border crossing. I don't remember how it was resolved, but I know that Sam Ostrolenk had to call someone in Washington."

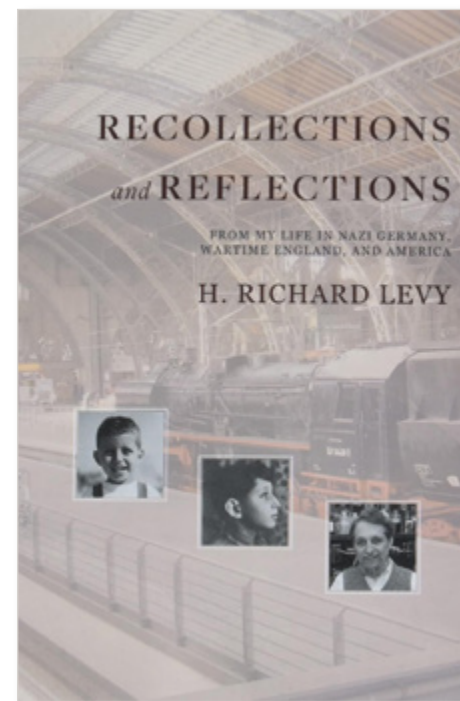
In February, Eileen had the pleasure of sitting down with Levy and asking him the following questions.

*You wrote powerfully about your mother's courage, resilience and determination and said that she was an inspiration because "despite her traumas and suffering, she was never, ever bitter. She learned from her ancestors and taught me that there is nothing in this world that is so terrible that some good does not come from it." Is this a message that we should share today?*

**We should certainly share the message in the careful context of explaining the singular event of the Holocaust. There was so much evil during the Holocaust. One of the remarkable characteristics of my mother is that despite all that she went through in life, she remained an optimistic person. She would encourage us to raise our voices and be heard. My mother was petit in stature and shy but there was so much depth to her. Every opportunity we have to tell the story of our experiences during the Holocaust, we must take advantage of it. Every time I tell my story, I am always moved by the reaction of the audience. The back and forth of questions and answers is especially gratifying.**

*You describe leaving on the Kindertransport in a very matter of fact manner, but was it not an emotionally wrenching experience that was traumatic for both you and your parents? How did the separation impact the rest of your life?*

**I did my best not to get too excited and emotional. It was helped by the fact that my**



mother took me and some other children from Leipzig to Westphalia. That helped a lot. I was a very excitable little boy. I was also very excited about going to London to a family with other children and a dog. I think that excitement carried me through. It was a very difficult departure for my mother because she knew that I would never see my father again as he was terminally ill with cancer. It was difficult to say goodbye to him. Moreover, to add to the harrowing experience and her tremendous stress, my mother had my eight-month-old sister to take care of and we had just been evicted from our apartment.

I was very fortunate that we knew the family with whom I was going to stay. Mrs. Schlesinger was particularly empathetic. We were related to the Schlesingers. They had five children of their own and in addition to me, they also set up a hostel for twelve other Jewish refugee children. I write about this in my book. I was extremely fortunate to be with the Schlesingers. They treated



me like one of their children. I called the Schlesingers “mommy” and “daddy” and to my mother’s credit, she understood.

It did take me a bit of time to understand the situation I was in. I missed my parents and my sister. Luckily for me, it was only about another six months until I saw my sister and my mother again. My mother and sister got out of Holland just in the nick of time on the last KLM flight before the war started.

My first few months in England were in London but the Schlesingers knew that we could not stay in London. They bought a cottage in the country and we moved there sometime in August of that same year. Dr. Schlesinger was called up in the army and was initially set to Norway but later sent to India where he spent the remainder of the war. When I think back to Mrs. Schlesinger being with all these children without her husband, it was absolutely remarkable. I am grateful to have been with such a loving family.

The lasting impact is that until

my mother died, she remained a very important part of my life. The more I knew her, the more I respected what she endured. I speak less about my father as I knew him for such a short time.

*You wrote that both you and your mother talked about your experiences, joining with others who believe that they have an obligation to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive in the hope that nothing like it will ever happen again. In view of the rising antisemitism that is currently occurring worldwide today, do you think that speaking out is enough? Is there anything else that can be done?*

For people like me, I do not think that there is anything else that we can do. We have to rely on our memories and share our personal experiences. When we share our stories, the stories have a profound impact on others. We can also speak out about antisemitism. Our stories are an extraordinary testimony to the Holocaust and our mission is to keep the stories alive. We have to do our best to keep the memories alive.

# YOM HASHOAH 5785



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Rabbi Emanuel, Rabbi Salis, Rabbi Shore, Rabbi Steinitz  
and Epstein School Students

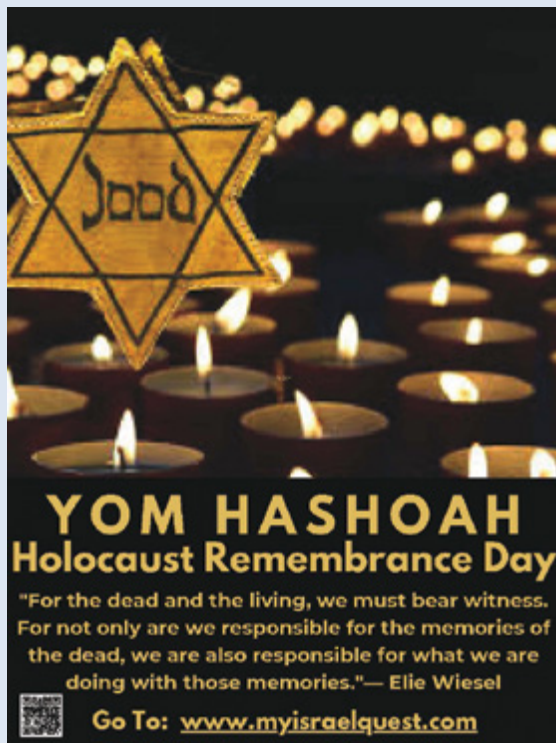
“Sanctioned Bigotry”  
Dr. Britt Tevis, Phyllis Backer Professor of Jewish Studies at Syracuse University  
Introduced by Anick Sinclair, Chair of Epstein School Board

El Malel Rachamim – Cantor Karl Eglash, Temple Concord

Conclusion – Mark Segel, Federation President/CEO



At My Israel Quest the April topic is *Yom HaShoah*, Holocaust Remembrance Day. This year, we are honoring Holocaust and Auschwitz survivors Daniel and Simona Szafran’s life and legacy. Their remarkable survival story serves as a poignant reminder of the resilience of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable terror. The Holocaust, one of the darkest chapters in human history, stands as a chilling testament to the systematic genocide and unimaginable suffering inflicted by Nazi Germany, with six million Jews and millions of others killed in its wake. Its horrors remain etched in history’s memory. Elie Wiesel, a survivor of Auschwitz, powerfully said, “To forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.” His words emphasize the vital need to remember and honor those lost, ensuring that such atrocities are never repeated, and that the courage of survivors like Daniel and Simona continues to inspire future generations.



Please go to: [www.myisraelquest.com](http://www.myisraelquest.com).

### Reading the Names of Those Lost in The Holocaust

The memory of the Holocaust grows more distant for each new generation. Only by remembering can the repetition of history be prevented. At our community Yom haShoah commemoration on April 22, the names of those who were lost during the Shoah, submitted by their families and friends in Central New York, will be read by our community’s rabbis and students from the Epstein School.

If anyone in the Central New York Jewish community wants the names of family members who were lost during the Holocaust recorded in the Federation’s Book of Remembrance and read each year, please send them to [bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org](mailto:bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org).



## » BOOK REVIEW

## When We Flew Away

Reviewed by Helen McDonald and Layla Kandel

Alice Hoffman's *When We Flew Away* is a fictionalized account for young adult readers of Anne Frank's life before the Frank family was forced into hiding by the Nazi takeover of the Netherlands. Two students from Temple Concord Religious School volunteered to read and review Hoffman's book for this issue of the Jewish Observer.



Helen McDonald attends Leighton Elementary school in Oswego. Helen likes acting at the local theater and plays saxophone and piano. She had never read Anne Frank's diary but now would like to. "After reading *When We Flew Away*," she says, "I learned a lot more about Anne's family and what she was like as a young girl. I learned that she was a bright, fun person who didn't like to follow rules like her sister Margot." Helen "liked the way Hoffman incorporated historical facts with the rest of the story because it made the

book interesting, and I learned from it. I knew some of what the Holocaust was, from bits and pieces my family has told me, but this book gave me a different understanding. Since the book is written from the perspective of Anne, a girl around the same age as me, it helped me think about it as if I were there."



Layla Kandel is an avid reader, loves performing in musicals at her community theater and attends Jamesville Dewitt Middle School. Layla had read Anne Frank's diary but did not particularly like it. But after reading *When We Flew Away*, Layla says, "I'm thinking about reading it again because while reading *When we Flew A way* I was given the backstory for a lot of the characters in Anne's diary, which all of a sudden made them a lot more interesting." She felt that Hoffman's "showing Anne as a smart brilliant child and

giving depth to her made you sad thinking about her and many other children just like her who died horrible gruesome deaths in camps all around Europe."

Both of the girls found the motifs in the book intriguing. "I also really loved how they personified evil in the black moths throughout the book," says Layla. "I thought that was a great way to show how evil spreads." Helen said, "At first I didn't understand what the motifs meant, but later in the book, I understood that the birds represented Anne wanting to fly away and the moths represented evil. These motifs helped me think about the book a bit differently. They made the story even more intriguing. I feel that the best way to understand more about the Holocaust is to realize what certain individuals went through. Learning more about Anne's situation made me understand how people got trapped, and how they could not feel safe and free while soldiers watched their every move."

## » BOOK REVIEW

## The Many Lives of Anne Frank

Reviewed by Angela Locke

We've read *The Diary of Anne Frank*. We've seen the Broadway play. Maybe we've read one of the books where Anne Frank appears as a fictional character or backdrop, like Roth's *The Ghost Writer*, John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*, and many others. How about the graphic novel? The movie? The documentary narrated by Helen Mirren or the numerous YouTube videos? Anne Frank has permeated not only our culture and our understanding of the Holocaust, but cultures and countries all over the world. Over thirty million copies in seventy languages have sold. The one that is still pending, a translation by an Eritrean refugee into his tribal dialect, might be one of the most touching chapters in *The Many Lives of Anne Frank* by Ruth Franklin, published just weeks ago by Yale University Press.



Part I of *The Many Lives*, Franklin's impeccably and thoroughly researched book, illuminates every phase of Anne Frank's life from her idyllic babyhood in Germany in a family of wealthy and assimilated Jews to her rambunctious but precocious childhood in Amsterdam, where the family fled to escape Hitler's rise to power. In Amsterdam, we see Anne's normal life: her thirteenth birthday gift of her first diary from her father Otto, her friendships and nascent flirting, her problems with her teachers, her sense of humor and liveliness and her love of the outdoors. We learn about Otto Frank's seemingly endless and increasingly desperate attempts to get his family out of the Netherlands. Because of Franklin's understanding of the demands of biography, we readers move into the top two floors above Otto's former business with the Franks, the Van Pels family and Fritz Pfeffer, a single man. We meet the four friends who for two years risked their lives to provide the attic denizens with food and whatever comfort they could. And in an excruciatingly accurate retelling, we learn details of the gradual, then sudden and total annihilation of the Dutch Jews and the German refugees.

Ruth Franklin is brilliant at choosing and presenting facts we may not know. For example, did you know that the "Annex Eight" listened to Radio Orange, the broadcast service of the Dutch government-in-exile in London? And on one of these broadcasts, in early 1944, Gerrit Bolkestein, past Minister of Education and Arts, announced the planned creation after the war of a national archive of material relating to the war years and asked for personal documents, calling attention to "the diary of an average citizen"? So began Anne's *revision* of her diary—called Version A now—into something more mature, more literary, more akin to memoir than diary—now called Version B. And, though Anne stopped writing when she was imprisoned, we learn more about Anne's time in the camp from friends who survived Bergen-Belsen, where Anne and her sister Margot both died of typhus.

In Part II, Franklin presents the fascinating if upsetting journey, directed by Otto, of Anne's diary, Version C, into the world. The 1955 Broadway play won a Tony, a Pulitzer and the New York Drama Critics' Circle award, but the road to the stage was anything but smooth. From distressing legal wrangling to serious disagreements about what to cut and what to create, anyone involved experienced frustration at best and career-threatening damage at worst. The play has been criticized for downplaying the specifics of the Holocaust and is considered by many to be a failure. Otto himself explicitly said he did not want the play to be "a Jewish play," though he backtracked somewhat and said it should expose antisemitism. He wanted Anne's diary to reach the broader, i.e. non-Jewish, public, both in America and around the world, feeling that Anne herself would want to emphasize a message of peace and tolerance. The play did, in fact, travel around the United States, selling hundreds of copies of *The Diary*, educating non-Jewish Americans about the horrors of the Holocaust and inspiring teachers to bring *The Diary* into their classrooms.

Curious and sometimes disturbing reiterations of *The Diary of Anne Frank* have appeared in books, on stage and on screen, and now in the seemingly uncontrollable cyber world. *The Diary* has been attacked, used for incongruent political ends, rewritten and challenged. Ruth Franklin's fascinating book sheds light on these continuing controversies, but importantly, she never sways from honoring Anne, the girl she was, the writer she became, the dreams she had, the life taken from her and the power she holds, still, in the world.



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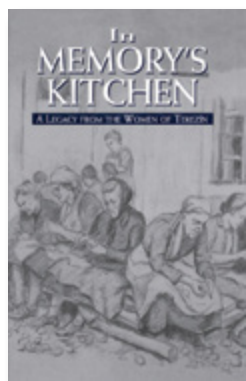
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# The “Fantasy” Cookbooks of the Holocaust

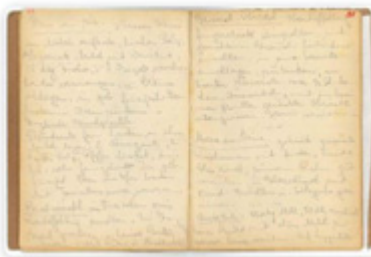
The following description of the Terezin concentration camp appeared in *The New York Times* in 1996, as the introduction to a review of *In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy From the Women of Terezin*:

“Theresienstadt was created by the Nazis in 1941 in the Czechoslovak garrison town of Terezin. Once the native population was evicted, it became, at least initially, a special ghetto and transit camp for special Jews: all Reich Jews over the age of 65; disabled or highly decorated Jewish war veterans; and prominent Jews whose disappearance might cause difficulties for the Nazis. The large number of intellectuals and artists, professors and musicians funneled into Theresienstadt created a fervent, if bizarre, cultural life in the camp. Children were educated; concerts and plays were performed.... Although it was not a killing center with gas chambers like Auschwitz ... it killed nonetheless, and a crematorium was built to deal with the large number of dead. Unique among hundreds of concentration camps, Theresienstadt was used as a ‘model camp’ — in a perverse piece of Nazi public relations — to show the world how well Hitler was treating the Jews. The reality of Theresienstadt was far different. There was overcrowding and disease, lice and vermin. Fed an inadequate and meager diet of barley, watery soup and moldy bread, people died of hunger and malnutrition.... The elderly became desperate scavengers, pouncing on piles of potato skins and rummaging in garbage. It was in this hell that Mina Pachter made her cookbook.”



*In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy From the Women of Terezin*, by Mina Pachter, belongs to a genre of cookbooks called Holocaust cookbooks or “fantasy cookbooks.” Written on scraps of paper or stolen office supplies, some of them survived the *Shoah* and are today found in Holocaust museums. Rosalind Sugarman, head curator of the Jewish Museum of Sydney, Australia, has written that “the phenomenon of talking about food in the concentration camps of Europe was commonplace because the inmates were continuously starving, with food rations calculated to starve them. Talk of food was not only a way of comforting each other, though. [It was] an act of resistance to maintain a sense of hope and humanity.” Historian Natalie Frank writes that “when undergoing an experience that is unimaginably horrible, these women fell back on what made up some of their most important memories of normal life and home.” She adds, “Food is one of the things that Jewish women use to create a home for their families and their communities. It is no wonder that when in desperate need of a coping strategy, the women in the Holocaust relied on memories of home and hearth and the creation of meals for those they nurtured to help them remain hopeful.”

Michael Berenbaum, of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, describes the cookbook compiled by the starving women of Terezin as “a spiritual revolt against the harshness of given conditions.” He points out that a Holocaust cookbook “is not to be savored for its culinary offerings, but for the insight it gives us in understanding the extraordinary capacity of the human spirit to transcend its surroundings, to defy dehumanization, and to dream of the past and of the future.”

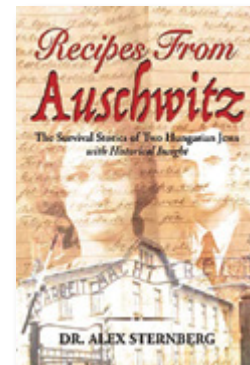


Edith Peer, an inmate at the Ravensbrück concentration camp for women, located in northern Germany, was the author of one of “fantasy cookbooks.” Peer described the cookbook’s significance as evidence of “how women fought for their survival under the most inhuman circumstances by using the only positive approach available - fantasy cooking.” Women, who had lost their homes, their families and their heritage searched for some reminder of the life they once lived. Thus the recipe book includes dishes that they remembered fondly – their mother’s poppyseed strudel, their aunt’s almond bread or their grandmother’s chicken soup. Inmates recalled family dishes that were rich and heavy, meant to fill the belly: goulash, potato dumplings, stuffed cabbage, paprika fish and desserts, lots of sweet desserts, such as nougat cream, sachertorte and kaiserschmarrn. More than half of the 97 recipes, written in Hungarian and German, are for cakes, cookies and creams.



*Honey Cake & Latkes: Recipes from the Old World*, published by the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation, is another collection of heirloom recipes. In the foreword, Ronald Lauder, chair of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation, writes that the book “is a story of hope and triumph of the human spirit.” Over one hundred recipes are accompanied by survivors’ pre-war recollections and post-liberation memories, accounts of loss and trauma and poignant tales of new beginnings and healing. Recipes include blintzes, kugel, matzo ball soup, cholent, goulash, kasha varnishkes and rugelach, with a special chapter devoted to classic holiday dishes (latkes, charoset, gefilte fish, knishes, tzimmes and challah).

*Recipes from Auschwitz: The Survival Stories of Two Hungarian Jews with Historical Insight*, by Alex Sternberg, chronicles the story of two of the nearly 600,000 Hungarian Jews who were deported to Auschwitz, among them the author’s parents—Olga Elek and Marton Sternberg. *Recipes from Auschwitz* highlights Olga’s optimism and determination, brought to life through the sharing of recipes between her and her fellow inmates to bolster their hope despite starvation and great personal loss. Olga’s recipes, which she memorized and recorded after her liberation, preserve the culinary and cultural legacy of a world obliterated.



For many survivors, food was a symbol of life before the horrors of the Holocaust—of vibrant Jewish communities and family gatherings filled with love and abundance. The recipes served as tangible connections to a world that had been destroyed. Some of the cookbooks also documented the terrible reality of starvation in the ghettos, labor camps and concentration camps: creating soup from potato peels or bread from sawdust and remnants of flour. One of the contributors to the *Holocaust Survivor Cookbook*, by Joanne Caras, explains the motivation for the recipe sharing: “We were starved in Auschwitz and to alleviate our numerous hunger pangs, we invented frequent ‘dream meals’ ranging between coffee klatches, luncheons, informal and formal dinner parties. We planned our menus carefully for hours and in great detail. Our favorite dishes and desserts took priority and were frequently repeated. The table settings, the color of dishes, tablecloths, napkins, flowers for each occasion and the seating arrangements were also discussed... This may sound delusional I know, but during these meal planning sessions, we were briefly transported to a normal world, a world that was so far from our miserable reality. We actually tasted the dishes we prepared and our hunger pangs disappeared during the hours of planning. We could hardly wait for the next planning session.”

Holocaust cookbooks are more than just collections of recipes; they are acts of remembrance and illustrations of the strength of the human spirit in terrible circumstances. The cookbooks may also have therapeutic value for survivors as a way to process trauma. For contemporary readers, the cookbooks serve as reminders of the cultural vibrancy that existed before the Holocaust and as a testament to the resilience of those who survived. As we lose the last living Holocaust survivors, these cookbooks ensure that their voices are not silenced. Fantasy cookbooks are not just about food; they are about identity, memory and the unyielding human spirit.



# HADASHOT TOVOT

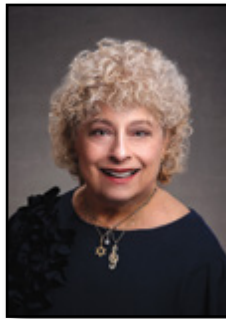


Dave Allen received the 2024 Blood Services Hero Award during the American Red Cross Real Heroes Celebration. Dave is the morning host on 570 WSYR radio.



Sydney Kanter, a 9th grader at Fayetteville-Manlius High School, was recognized by the CNY Art Council through the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards for two art drawings she created at Wellwood Middle School in her first studio art class. Sydney received a silver key recognition for her drawings of "Tea Party" and "Bubbie and Zayde" in the Drawing and Illustration category.

Francine Berg has been asked to be the Jewish chaplain at Crouse Hospital. She visits all the Jewish patients twice a week, talking to them for comfort and praying/singing for healing. She finds this position very meaningful for the patients and herself.



The Jewish Federation of Central New York was honored with the Town of DeWitt Police Department's Ken C Andrews Police Commission Award. Shane Spencer, Chief of Police and Public Safety, told Federation Security Director Susan Case DeMari that "the working relationship between the JFCNY and the DeWitt Police Department has never been stronger. Everyone here at the Police Department would like to thank the members of the JFCNY for their continued support and for the strong working relationship between both organizations."

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# Day School Celebrates 65th Anniversary

by Phyllis Zames

The Syracuse Hebrew Day School is celebrating 65 years of providing outstanding Jewish and general education to the children of the Central New York Jewish community. In 5785, SHDS students have had a particularly exciting year of change and excitement. In addition to a new Head of School, Melissa Klemperer, SHDS welcomed three new teachers: Ayala Goren, third through sixth grade Hebrew teacher, Mandy DiCola, fifth and sixth grade general studies teacher and Kyle Simons, PE teacher. Each of these new members of the SHDS family enriched the school community with fresh insights, dedication to learning about the school and devotion to their students.

Ayala Goren noted, “I was surprised to see how strong the connection between the teachers and students is and how well the teachers deeply know their students. Additionally, the atmosphere at the school



is wonderful. It feels like a family. It’s touching to see how well the students interact with one another, regardless of age or grade.” Kyle Simons agrees, “The kids here get along so well together. The older students are great role models in every way. They show the younger students good sportsmanship, safe ways to have fun and how to be a good friend.”

SHDS honored its history of community involvement with improvements to its traditional programming as well as new projects. Students visited The Oaks to perform for and socialize with the senior community. A partnership with the Rescue Mission provided opportunities for students to learn about working to end hunger

and homelessness through hands-on experiences such as putting together mishloach manot for Purim for Rescue Mission clients. Sixth graders are currently working on their community service requirements for graduation. After a unit on the benefits of service and personal reflection, they designed service projects based on their own talents and passions. This year, the Class of 2025 will be giving out “blessing bags” to the homeless, raising money for Golisano Children’s Hospital and tutoring students in English.

Learning to use computers safely is an essential skill, so this year SHDS provided Chromebooks for all students for academic practice, research and communication. Students in grades four through six are learning responsibility by bringing the computers home to complete homework assignments. Day schoolers expanded their critical thinking skills off-line as well, through discussions

and debate in English and Hebrew about Torah stories, Jewish laws and customs, who we are as individuals and as members of a community. Experiences such as the Central New York Science and Engineering Fair are encouraged. Students were prepared for this experience throughout their elementary years, as student-led assemblies from Kindergarten through sixth grade provided opportunities for practicing public speaking and performance.

Arts are another integral part of the SHDS curriculum. All students learn about music and visual art every year, and are invited to participate in full-scale musicals, both on stage and backstage, which are performed for the community. Many students take instrumental music lessons in school and the hallways are covered in creative and delightful student artwork.

Fifth and sixth grade students are in charge of leading a Schoolwide Shabbat service each month, and often community clergy make a guest appearance to offer a *d’var Torah*, Shabbat story, or lead some prayers with SHDS families. “And there is nothing better for the students than sledding with their friends at recess during the winter, taking part in a school club such as sports, chess, writing and chorus, and for the older students, enjoying activities like hiking, hanging out in a sukkah, or going bowling with Club 56,” says Head of School Melissa Klemperer.

While SHDS practices *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) and takes pride in the strong academic rigor provided to students, there are also plenty of opportunities for social interaction and celebration. SHDS parents are invited to participate in breakfast conversations with community experts throughout the year, on a wide variety of topics, such as alternate ways to celebrate Chanukah (aside from giving presents), remaining grateful even in difficult times, and how Magen David Adom brings people of all religions, colors, and ethnicities together to save lives. “I love the community that is created during our parent breakfasts,” says SHDS parent Davia Moss. SHDS also has an energetic Parent Committee committed to offering parents opportunities to stay in touch, support the school, and enjoy working together.

The Day School celebrated its 65th year of contributions to the Jewish community of Central New York and honored those who have supported the school’s mission with a Casino Night on March 23. **For more information about SHDS, please visit [www.shds.org](http://www.shds.org).**

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## Why *Mahloket* Matters to Syracuse Community Hebrew School



by Jeannette Myshrall

Students in grades 3 through 7 aren't the only ones attending Syracuse Community Hebrew School (SCHS) this year. The new mini-program, *Mahloket* Matters, brings SCHS students and senior adults from the Jewish community, together once a month to bridge generations and bring diverse perspectives together.



*Mahloket* is a Hebrew word that means "disagreement" or "controversy." In Jewish tradition, it refers to a kind of disagreement that is not necessarily negative but can be productive and enriching. In this context, *Mahloket* emphasizes the value of healthy disagreement, one that challenges perspectives, promotes growth, and fosters mutual understanding. Through a fellowship funded by Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, the new program focuses on creating a space where participants can engage in thoughtful, respectful debates or discussions, allowing them to learn from different viewpoints rather than simply trying to "win" an argument. This approach is especially enriching for students, as they can learn how to approach disagreement in a way that is constructive and respectful, rather than divisive.

In February, seniors and students gathered during school hours for a *Mahloket* Matters program which incorporated tree drawing alongside

Jewish values. Participants gathered in small groups, *chavruta*, which refers to a traditional Jewish method of learning in pairs or small groups. The word "*chavruta*" emphasizes the idea of studying together in a collaborative, interactive way. During this particular program, participants used a periodic table style chart of Jewish values to select specific Jewish values which represent them. Then, after drawing their own style of tree, participants filled in their drawings with their selected Jewish values, how they use these values, and how their values fit into their respective communities. Sessions such as these create unique opportunities for students and seniors to engage in exploration of ideas and respectful disagreement, just as traditional Jewish learning encourages dialogue and differing opinions. The combination of *Mahloket* Matters, *chavruta*, tree drawing, and the exploration of Jewish values gave participants a rich, hands-on approach to fostering respectful disagreement and understanding.

*Mahloket* Matters offers a meaningful opportunity for people to come together across generations and explore the richness of Jewish tradition while engaging with current issues. By blending prayer, experiential learning, and intergenerational dialogue, the program not only strengthens Jewish identity but also encourages participants to view both ancient texts and modern-day challenges through a collaborative lens.

**SCHS invites the community to the upcoming session on April 23 to join these discussions. For more information, email Syracuse Community Hebrew School Director, Ora Jezer, at [schs.syracuse@gmail.com](mailto:schs.syracuse@gmail.com).**

## The Social Scene

According to *The New York Times*, Mahj is trending in the west and Federation's Lions and Pomegranates are in line with the times. Everyone had a wonderful evening.

The Federation's Next Gen group also enjoyed a recent Happy Hour and is looking forward to many upcoming fun events.





## Temple Concord to Host Kids' Jewish Book Festival April 5-6

by Chana Meir

Crafts, food, and fun with in-person children's book authors will be on hand for local religious-school students and the grown-ups in their lives as Temple Concord hosts a Kids' Jewish Book Festival on April 5th and 6th, 2025. The Festival is a collaboration of the religious schools of Temple Concord, Temple Adath Yeshurun, and Congregation Beth Sholom Chevra Shas, along with the Hebrew Day School, and is supported by the Jewish Federation of Central New York, the Jewish Book Council, and Temple Concord's Regina F. Goldenberg Cultural Series. There will be a wide range of activities for children and adults.

Four writers will be in residence over the weekend, chosen from among the Jewish Book Council's 2024 – 2025 Network authors. Their books represent a range of themes and appeal to different ages. They are:



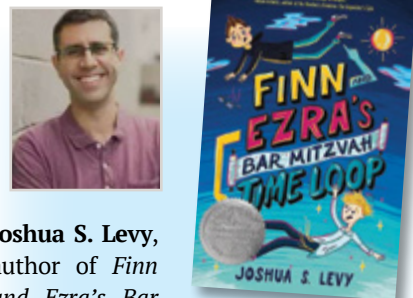
**Sara Ackerman**, author of *Challah for Shabbat Tonight*, a rhyming picture book about the joys of Shabbat, for ages 4 – 6.



**Lori Dubbin**, author of *Perfect Match: The Story of Althea Gibson and Angela Buxton*, a picture book that tells the true story of the challenges faced by—and the ultimate friendship and doubles team of—Jewish tennis star Angela Buxton and Black tennis star Althea Gibson, for ages 6 – 11.



**Bonni Goldberg**, author of *Doña Gracia Saved Worlds*, a picture book that tells the true story of a 16th century Portuguese Jewish woman who protected and saved Jews During the Spanish Inquisition, for ages 5 – 9.



**Joshua S. Levy**, author of *Finn and Ezra's Bar Mitzvah Time Loop*, a sci-fi novel about two boys approaching Bar Mitzvah from very different family perspectives, for ages 8 – 12.

The Festival kicks off on Saturday evening, April 5, with a dessert buffet and panel discussion for parents and other aspiring children's book authors. The authors will discuss what inspires them to write for kids, their writing processes, and their publication experiences. A Q&A session will follow.

On the morning of Sunday April 6, kids will meet in age-appropriate groups with the authors, then get hands-on with projects relating to each book such as challah-making, a mini-synagogue art project, ping-pong, poster-making, and collaborative puzzle-solving.

The Festival concludes mid-day Sunday, as kids, parents and teachers gather for lunch. A display of newly published children's, middle-grade, and teen books by the in-person authors will be on display and available for purchase.

The Saturday evening session starts at 7:15 pm and is open to the public. There is no charge but registration is required. **To register, go to the events calendar at [templeconcord.org](https://templeconcord.org).** The Sunday activities are limited to members of the religious school community who have registered through their schools.

## Billy Joel Shabbat: Scenes from a Kosher Deli

by Yolanda Febles

The sounds of Billy Joel will fill the air at a special Kabbalat Shabbat service on April 4 at 6 pm at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas. With the legendary musician bringing his tour to Central New York, this unique service honors his musical legacy by setting familiar Shabbat prayers to some of his greatest hits.



Billy Joel, along with Sting, will perform for one night only at the JMA Wireless Dome in Syracuse on April 11. This Shabbat service celebrates his music and its deep connection to so many fans ahead of his highly anticipated concert.

Though Joel considers himself an atheist Jew, his Jewish heritage has influenced his work. His song "We Didn't Start the Fire" includes references to Jewish figures such as Menachem Begin and Albert Einstein. In 2017, Joel made a powerful statement against rising antisemitism by wearing a yellow Star of David during a concert at Madison Square Garden, acknowledging his family's history.

Rabbi Oren Steinitz, a musically gifted composer and multi-instrumentalist, along with CBS-CS members known for their musical talents, will lead this special Shabbat service. CBS-CS has established a tradition of musically-themed Kabbalat Shabbat experiences, including Jazz Kabbalat Shabbat, *Tu B'Av* Musical Shabbat, and Shirat Shabbat with Lisa Levens and Mark Wolfe. More unique musical experiences are planned for the future.

Rabbi Steinitz and the CBS-CS Musicians will perform on piano, drums, bass, guitar and violin, creating an immersive musical Shabbat experience. The community is invited to join CBS-CS for a bottle of red (Manischewitz), a bottle of white (Kedem), light hors d'oeuvres and a creative take on Kabbalat Shabbat.

**RSVP is required:** <https://cbcs.shulcloud.com/event/Billy-joel>

## Jewish Overnight Summer Camperships

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## An Unforgettable Summer at the JCC

by Shane Tepper

Summer may feel like a distant dream, but the time to plan is now. Registration for the Jewish Community Center of Syracuse's 2025 Summer Camp opens on Monday, March 3 at 7 am, and with spots filling quickly, early registration is highly recommended to secure your family's top camp choices.



This year's camp season will run from **June 30 to August 22**, with camp hours from **9 am to 4 pm, Monday through Friday**. Extended care options will also be available for busy parents who need flexibility. From toddlers to teens, JCC Summer Camp offers something for everyone, making it the perfect place for children to spend their summer days.

"Summer camp is such an incredible opportunity for kids to grow, learn, and make memories that last a lifetime," said Amy Bisnett, Associate Director of Children's Programming at the JCC. "We love seeing returning campers reconnect each year, welcoming new friends into the fold, and watching the joy and growth that happens over the summer. It's truly something special."

For children as young as six weeks old, Early Childhood Camp provides a fun introduction to summer camp with a mix of indoor and outdoor activities, plus daily Red Cross swim lessons. School-aged children in grades one through six will enjoy a range of traditional day camp experiences, specialty programs, and off-site field trips, offering endless opportunities to explore new interests and build new skills. For teens in grades seven through ten, the SyraCrusin' Teen Travel Camp offers five weeks of adventure, running from **July 7 to August 8**, with an exciting lineup of field trips and activities that are sure to keep older campers engaged and energized.

This summer, the JCC has even more in store to make camp a season to remember. In July, the Friendship Caravan, a group of Israeli teens touring the U.S., will stop by the JCC for a special performance that brings Israeli culture to life through music, dance, and storytelling. Campers will also have the unique chance to connect with two Tzofim Israeli Scouts, who will join Camp Romano for the entire 8-week camp season, housed each week with a different community host family. The scouts bring their energy, enthusiasm, and a hands-on opportunity to learn about Israeli culture, creating an unforgettable experience for all. "Summer camp isn't just about having fun, though there's plenty of that—it's about creating a sense of community, a space for kids to grow into their best selves, and a place where families can trust their children will be safe, cared for and thriving," Bisnett added.

The Jewish Community Center of Syracuse has long been a trusted and beloved destination for summer fun, and 2025 promises to be no exception. While summer may still be months away, the demand for spots is high, and families are encouraged to register early to ensure their children don't miss out on this one-of-a-kind experience.

**For more information or to register, visit [jccsyr.org/summer-camp](http://jccsyr.org/summer-camp) or contact Amy Bisnett at 315-445-2360 or [abisnett@jccsyr.org](mailto:abisnett@jccsyr.org).**

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## Passover at the JCC: Hands-On Traditions for All Ages

by Shane Tepper

Passover isn't just a story — It's an experience. The holiday brings people together to reflect, learn and celebrate through symbols, songs and shared meals. This year, the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center of Syracuse is making those traditions even more engaging with special programming for all ages.



Young children will get an early start on the celebration with a special seder hosted by the JCC's Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP) on Wednesday, April 9. Through storytelling, music, and hands-on activities, they'll explore the themes of Passover in a way that's both meaningful and fun. "As one of the most important Jewish holidays, Passover is a time for reflection and connection," said Pamela Ranieri, Director of Children's Programming. "This seder gives children a chance to experience these traditions in a way that feels engaging and accessible." Each



classroom will share a meal prepared by the JCC's kosher kitchen, featuring traditional foods like charoset, eggs, and fresh vegetables. A visit from PJ Library will bring the story of Passover to life, and every child will receive a bag of "plagues"—turning learning into play.

Spring break also means a full week of activities at the JCC's Vacation Camp, running from Tuesday, April 15 through Friday, April 18. The camp keeps school-age children active and engaged with

creative projects, outdoor play (weather permitting), and group activities. Regular camp hours are 9 am to 4 pm, with extended care options from 7 am to 6 pm.

For older members of the community, the JCC will host a Senior Passover Lunch on Friday, April 11 at noon, led by Raven DiSalvo-Hess, Director of Senior Programming. The gathering will feature a kosher for Passover meal, including slow-roasted brisket and tzimmes—a traditional Ashkenazi dish made with carrots and dried fruits for a sweet and symbolic side. To honor the spirit of the holiday, Rabbi Shore will lead a Passover prayer, bringing a meaningful connection to the occasion. "For many of our lunch-goers, Passover is filled with deep memories of family, tradition and community," said DiSalvo-Hess. "This gathering is a chance to share stories, enjoy a delicious meal and connect with the heart of the holiday in a welcoming space." Reservations are required and it should also be noted that the Senior Lunch Program will be closed from April 14 through April 18 in observance of the holiday.

In recognition of Passover, the JCC offices will be closed on April 13, 14, 19, and 20, ECDP will be closed on April 14 and the fitness center will remain open with regular hours.

You can find more information on what's happening at the JCC by visiting [jccsy.org](http://jccsy.org). For questions specific to the children's seder or vacation camps, contact Amy Bisnett at 315-445-2360, ext. 122, or [abisnett@jccsy.org](mailto:abisnett@jccsy.org). For questions about the Senior Passover Lunch, contact Raven DiSalvo-Hess at 315-445-2360, ext. 128, or [rdisalvo-hess@jccsy.org](mailto:rdisalvo-hess@jccsy.org)



# Happy Passover

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## Epstein Teen Taste of Israel 2025

by Anick Sinclair



On the Epstein School's Teen Taste of Israel 2025 trip, 12 teens and their chaperones spent two amazing and wonderful weeks in the Jewish state. Details of their visit will appear in the next issue of the JO, but we are sharing some of their experiences in this issue.

The fifth Teen taste of Israel trip for 10th and 11th grade students at the Rabbi Jacob H. Epstein High School of Jewish Studies took place in February. On this exciting trip, the teens visited sites of biblical, medieval and modern history – the old city in Jerusalem, the Kotel and its tunnels, the City of David and Caesarea. They spent the night with Bedouins, rode camels, visited the Salad Trail and hiked Masada.



They were exposed to a new language and culture. They met with Israeli peers, who shared firsthand details about what life is like for teens growing up in a democracy in the Middle East, especially since October 7th. They visited Hostage Square, the Nova Festival site, Yad Vashem and the Israel Museum – and, of course, all the great *shuks*. This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the teens.

All students who begin learning at the Epstein School in 8th grade are eligible for the Teen Taste of Israel trip. Thanks to generous support from the community and the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York, Teen Taste of Israel is a fantastic way to deepen students' connection to the Land of Israel and to create a life-long relationship with Israel and Judaism.





# Azerbaijan: 3 Things That Make This Hidden Ally Fascinating

by Samantha Garelick

*Can you find Azerbaijan on a map? I couldn't either—at least not before my recent trip. Tucked between Iran and Russia, this small country—about the size of Maine—holds significance far beyond its geographical footprint. I had the privilege of visiting Azerbaijan as part of a delegation from the Israel Economic Forum. Over five days, we met with political leaders, business people, and members of local communities, toured the vibrant city of Baku along the Caspian Sea, and visited the historic region of Quba, home to the Mountain Jews. What I discovered was a remarkably hospitable country marked by resilience and a powerful bond with Israel and the Jewish people. Here are three insights that make this hidden ally truly fascinating.*



## A Unique Bond with Israel

At a time when Israel often finds itself isolated, Azerbaijan shines as a steadfast ally—not just politically, but also in spirit. This Muslim-majority nation genuinely embraces its relationship with Israel, especially when it matters most. After the October 7 attacks, when missile assaults closed Israel's Mediterranean oil ports, Azerbaijan stepped forward, providing crucial energy resources during a pivotal moment when much of the world turned away. This moment should never be forgotten; it stands as a testament to the fact that, when Israel was at its most vulnerable, Azerbaijan answered the call as a true friend. We heard stories from locals about how this was not mere diplomacy, but born out of heartfelt mutual respect and friendship. As we walked through shops and dined

in local restaurants, it became clear that Azerbaijanis refer to Israel not as a distant nation, but as a “brother” or “friend.”

This friendship extends into economic collaboration, with Azerbaijan's state-owned oil company, SOCAR, acquiring a 10% stake in Israel's Tamar gas field—a move that deepens cooperation in energy security and regional stability.

## A Muslim-Majority Country with No Antisemitism

During my time in Azerbaijan, I was struck by its lack of antisemitism. As a country where over 96% of the population is Muslim, it was refreshing to see that Azerbaijan's Jewish community thrives openly and proudly. We visited the grave of Albert Agarunov, a celebrated Jewish war hero, where we recited Kaddish and shared stories of his bravery. Hikmet Hajiyev, advisor to the President, spoke about Agarunov's legacy with genuine

admiration, emphasizing that his heroism is cherished not only by many but also by himself.

Azerbaijan's history with the Jewish people isn't a recent development. During the Holocaust, more than 55,000 Jews found refuge in Azerbaijan. After the October 7 attacks, ordinary Azerbaijanis brought flowers and letters of condolence to the Israeli embassy—gestures that spoke volumes about their empathy and solidarity. At a recent Holocaust Remembrance event in Baku, a rabbi who lost both his parents in the Holocaust shared, “Azerbaijan stands shoulder to shoulder with Israel against evil today.” Those words, spoken in a Muslim-majority country, carry the weight of history and the promise of the future.

In Quba, we visited the renowned Red Village, home to one of the largest Mountain Jewish communities, who have lived harmoniously with their Muslim neighbors for over 2,000 years. We visited their synagogues and toured their state-of-the-art Mountain Jewish History museum. We concluded with a festive lunch hosted by local Jewish leaders, toasting with a “L'chaim” and dancing together to Israeli music—These are moments I will never forget.

## A Nation of Resilience and Pride

Azerbaijan is a young country, having gained independence just 30 years ago after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yet, in that short time, it has transformed itself from the turmoil of its past into a beacon of entrepreneurial spirit and national pride. Built on the ancient routes of the Silk Road, Baku dazzles with a skyline that tells a story of an oil

boom, modern architecture, and cultural renaissance. Everywhere you turn, you are amazed by the spectacular architecture, skyscrapers in the shapes of flames that light up the night with the colors of their flag and shopping malls that reflect some of the most respected buildings in the world such as the Sydney opera house. The city reflects a culture committed to independence, evident in its educational policies where girls do not wear hijabs in public schools. This isn't an act of oppression but a commitment to ensuring that religious practices are a personal choice. The government believes that children should grow up free to make their own decisions about faith and identity. Notably, Azerbaijan was a pioneer in granting women the right to vote in 1919, even before the United States—a testament to its enduring commitment to equality. Arabic, often associated with religious instruction in many Muslim-majority countries, is not taught in Azerbaijani schools. This isn't a rejection of Islam; rather, it's a conscious effort to foster a national identity.

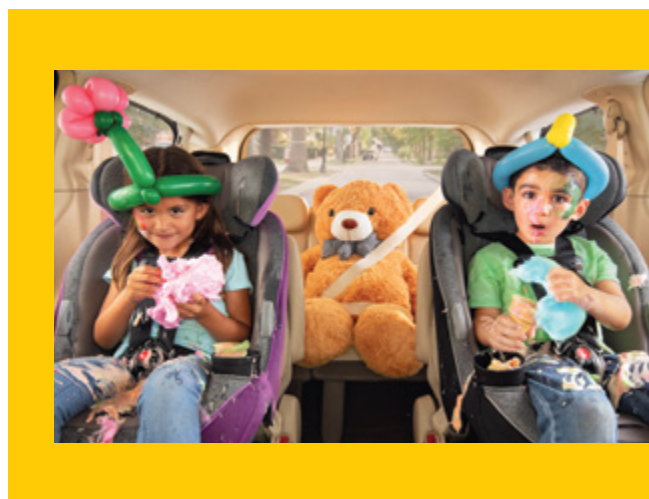
Azerbaijan stands as an island of tolerance, friendship, and resilience amid geopolitical challenges. Like Israel, it has fought for survival but refuses to embrace victimhood. It honors its past while looking towards the future. As I reflect on my experience, I realize that my journey with Azerbaijan is far from over. I remain committed to strengthening the bond between the United States, Israel and this important ally. It's time we recognize and support Azerbaijan, not just as a strategic partner, but as a true friend to Israel and the United States.

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**KAREN DIANE  
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**February 16, 2025**



Karen Diane Krassenbaum, 81, died peacefully in her home, surrounded by her three children, on February 16, 2025.

Karen will forever be remembered as a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and nurse - caring, kind and inquisitive, always wanting to know more about your story no matter who you were - instilling in her children, and grandchildren a love of music, theater and intellectual curiosity.

Karen's Jewish faith was important to her. She was a longtime active member of Hadassah and Temple Beth Sholom while she lived in Syracuse - and she cherished her many friends and family members within the Jewish community and beyond.

As a registered nurse, Karen inhabited many roles throughout her career - from managing the first ICU in the country, to wound care, to enterostomal therapy, to ending her career creatin and, running the CNA program at SUNY Morrisville, where for over five years she taught hundreds of people to become NYS Certified Nursing Aides - holding them all to a high standard of giving excellent care to the elderly within the local community. With her encouragement, many of her students were also able to further their education in a variety of careers in nursing.

Karen was married to Allen Krassenbaum for 42 years. They loved each other dearly and were a constant source of support for each other, working together to create a business, a home, raise three children and, in their later years, travel to many countries together.

Allen passed away in 2011 with Karen by his side. While she missed him deeply and always kept him close in her thoughts, and in her heart - Karen continued to live a vibrant life - attentive to her children, grandchildren and friends - old and new. Above all Karen's compassion for her community, her friends and her family drove her everyday life.

She is survived and loved by her three children Mark (Iliana), Adam (Shannan) and Sarah, and her two grandchildren Jordan and Adler.

Contributions may be made to Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas or the Oncology Unit at Crouse Hospital.  
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**HARRIET SILVERMAN**  
**February 17, 2025**

Harriet Silverman, 84, passed away on February 17, 2025 at Crouse Hospital. She was born on December 26, 1940 in Brooklyn to Sam and Celia Smilowitz. Harriet was a member of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas. For many years she was a consultant for OCM BOCES, finding employment for individuals with disabilities. She always had a ready smile and was a great friend. She will be missed.

Her family, whom she adored, includes her son David (Jessica), her daughter Stephanie, and her grandchildren Raia and Samuel. She was predeceased by her husband Robert, her son Paul and her sister Bernice Silverstein.

Contributions may be made to Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas or AccessCNY.

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**NORMAN ALLEN KRUTH**  
**FEBRUARY 14, 2025**



Norman Allen Kruth 80, passed away on February 14, 2025 at Matthews House in Auburn. Born on October 23, 1944 to Julius and Natalie Black Kruth, he had been a life resident of Syracuse.

Norm was an Army veteran, having served in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Combat Infantry (1965-1967), a 30-year veteran of the Onondaga County Sherriff's Department where he also served as DSBA Union President, a Mason 32nd degree Scottish Rite and past Master of Pulaski Lodge 415, High Priest and Grand Master of the 3rd Veil Royal Arch Masons, a Masonic War Veteran supporter, a VFW member, a member of The American Legion Post 113, a volunteer fireman in Clay, a Boy Scout master and an avid hunter and fisherman with membership in multiple Rod & Gun clubs surrounding Syracuse. He loved pastrami sandwiches from The Brooklyn Pickle.

He was predeceased by his parents and his wife Michele Anne (Tremont) Kruth. He is survived by his children Rachel Kruth, Joshua Kruth and Aaron Kruth (Cindy Secreti Kruth), three beautiful grandchildren Natalyn Michele Walts, Hannah Lynn Kruth and Caleb Julius Kruth, his close and supportive brothers Sheldon (Karen Charney) Kruth, Marc (Tina Myers) Kruth, M. Louis (Marianne Rimaldo) Kruth and many nieces and nephews and multiple cousins.

Donations may be made to the Masonic Home or American Legion.  
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**TERRY CARMEN**  
**FEBRUARY 26, 2025**

Terry Carmen, 68, passed away peacefully with his wife by his side at home on February 26, 2025. Born on Valentine's Day in 1957 to Morton and Eleanor Carmen, he had been a life resident of Syracuse. He was a graduate of Manlius Pebble Hill.

For most of his professional career Terry was a software engineer. Most recently he had established an appliance repair business. He was trusted by his customers, always honest, and forthright with the best option...to repair or not.

Terry enjoyed scuba diving, scooter riding, going on cruises, and cooking for his friends. He loved animals, was a great friend, and a beloved husband. His family includes his wife Stephanie, his brother Jeffrey (Kathy), and his sister Rona (Charles) D'aniello.

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**LOIS ABRAMSON MEYER**  
**FEBRUARY 27, 2025**

Lois Abramson Meyer, 95, passed away on February 27, 2025. Born on August 2, 1929 to Samuel and Jeanette Silverson Abramson, she had been a life resident of Syracuse. She met her beloved husband Gerald at Syracuse University. They were married in June of 1953. They had been married for almost 71 wonderful years when he passed a year ago.

Her family includes sons Jeffrey (Audrey) and David (Sandy), son-in-law Robert Nash, grandchildren Daniel, Rebecca (Michael), Ariel, CJ, Allison and Eliana and great-grandson Landon. She was predeceased by her beloved husband Gerald, their daughter Laurie and her sister Barbara Ruth Abramson.

Graveside services for the immediate family were held in Adath Yeshurun Cemetery

Contributions to perpetuate her memory may be made to Temple Adath Yeshurun, or The Foundation of Menorah Park.

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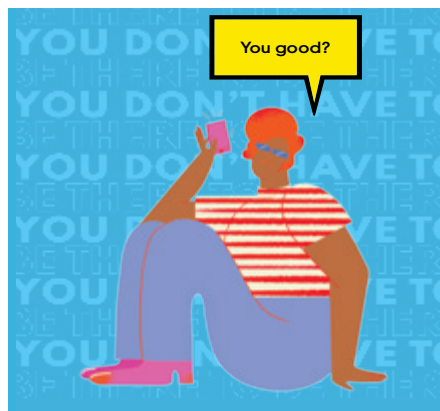
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Either way, you will leave a wonderful legacy of help and hope for generations to come.

**Call Barbara Davis at 315-445-0270 to make it happen.**

