

» HAPPY CHANUKAH!

Jewish Observer of Central New York

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

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December 2025

From the Editor



Barbara Davis

[Before you write to complain about the many ways we spell Chanukah in this issue, please remember that the Jewish community is diverse and there is no universally accepted spelling in English for this holiday.]

There are perhaps as many diverse ways to celebrate Chanukah as there are to spell it. While we in Syracuse think of Chanukah as a winter holiday, often lighting the candles as early as 4 pm, in Australia Chanukah is celebrated in the summer and they often must wait until after 8:30 pm to light the *chanukiya*. In the almost total darkness of Alaskan winters, Chanukah candles are lit in the evening when people are typically home and awake, because there is no sunset.

Chanukah food customs vary also. The Jews of Puerto Rico, Cuba and Colombia use plantains instead of potatoes to fry *tostones*. In Israel, it's all about the many varieties of *sufganiyot*. *Keftes de Prasa* are leek fritters popular in Turkey and Romania for Chanukah and *loukoumades* are honey-soaked doughnuts which are a Chanukah tradition in Greece.

Jews in Morocco extend the joy of Hanukkah into a ninth day, which became known as "the day of the shamash." Children go from house to house, collecting leftover Hanukkah candles or wicks and make a giant bonfire, dancing and singing around it, and jumping and leaping over it. A successful jump is supposed to bring good luck. Jews in Austria and other central European communities, scrape out potatoes, filling each potato space with oil and a wick to serve as the menorah. Rather than putting all eight out at once, each day they add another potato. It is a longstanding practice among North African Jewish communities that women refrain from doing the types of work prohibited on Shabbat while the Chanukah candles are burning because the light of the menorah is not to be used for anything besides enjoying the holiday.

In *Kohelet*, we read *Ein kol chadash tachat hashamesh*—There is nothing new under the sun. I prefer the longer version: What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. I do not see this as world-weariness but rather as an assertion that traditions do not die but rather may lie dormant, only to be revived when they are needed. Such is the case with a Jewish Chanukah observance that I had never heard of until this year: *Chag HaBanot*. This delightful female-centered observance, which celebrates women and their bravery and courage, seems so very new and modern, and totally relevant to a post-October 7th world, yet is actually quite old.

As we approach the Festival of Lights this month and address this issue's theme—Light Over Darkness—it is hard not to worry whether there are enough candles to dispel the gloom. A recent study by Alanna E. Cooper, a religious studies professor at Case Western Reserve University, found that there are roughly 20% fewer synagogues today in the United States than there were in 1990 and that more close each year than open. According to reports from the FBI, the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee, as of early 2025, antisemitism had reached historic and unprecedented levels in the U.S. and globally. There seems to be no imminent resolution of the conflict in the Middle East and anti-Israel animus played an unprecedented role in antisemitic incidents in the U.S.



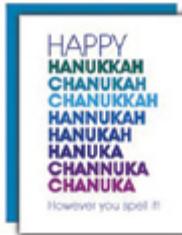
Rabbi Steven Abraham countered this situation forthrightly: "Hanukkah's message shines through the darkness: To be Jewish is not a liability; it is a privilege. Our history, our values, and our community are sources of immeasurable strength. When we light the menorah, we are not just remembering a miracle from long ago. We are making a statement: We are still here. We are still proud. And we recognize the honor it is to carry forward the legacy of our people, to uphold the light that has guided us through millennia of darkness. Being Jewish means belonging to a people who have contributed to the world with unwavering moral clarity, resilience, and hope. It means standing on the shoulders of ancestors who chose courage over convenience, faith over fear, and identity over invisibility. It means understanding that our light does not diminish in the face of darkness—it shines brighter."

Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, senior rabbi of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in New York City, offered the following illumination: "Criticizing Jewish organizations, opposing Israeli policies, advocating for Palestinians, protesting the carnage of war—these are all legitimate. But American Jews will not debate whether the Jewish state, of all the countries of the world, has a right to exist. We will not debate whether we have a right to national dignity and self-determination. If we cannot persuade you to leave us alone, we will defend ourselves. What other choice is there? We have already tried everything else. The days of prostrating before marauding murderers are over. Wherever individual Jews decide to live, Israel is the last stop for the Jewish people. There is nowhere else to go. We are open to all discussions related to coexistence. We will not debate with you national suicide."

It is encouraging, enlightening and inspiring to see how the spirit of the Maccabees reasserting itself as we celebrate Chanukah 5786. Writing in *The Jerusalem Post*, Jeremy Liebler, president of the Zionist Federation of Australia, argues that a Jewish identity based primarily on trauma and fighting hate, much like one rooted in Holocaust guilt, is unsustainable and will not ensure continuity for future generations. He points out that "if we allow October 7th to define Jewish identity purely through the lens of trauma, it may deepen engagement for a while—but it will not last. The coming years must be about more than fighting hate. They must be about ensuring that Jewish life—rooted in education, literacy, and connection to Israel—thrives on its own terms."

As we light the candles on our *chanukiyyot* this year, putting them proudly in our windows, let us commit to the true meaning of Chanukah—dedication. Let us commit to the strengthening of our community, to having the courage of our convictions and to spreading light in the face of darkness.

There are estimated to be between 12 and 24 ways to spell this holiday in English—no matter which version variations is selected, may the holiday be a bright and festive one for all of our *JO* readers!



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MESSAGE FROM MARK SEGEL

Federation President & CEO



In describing the third of my five pillars, Interfaith and Civic Engagement, I said, “I am personally committed to strengthening our ties with other faith communities and civic organizations like the chambers, other foundations, and government agencies promoting understanding, cooperation, and shared values. In a world that is too often divided, we will be a force for unity and justice, and greater Syracuse will know it!”

When I was working in Tampa, I was involved with organizations such as the Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce, the NAACP, and the national Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies as well as many other non-Jewish organizations that served my community. I did this because I knew I would earn a significant return on investment of my time—and I did!

This fall, in Syracuse, I was delighted to be invited to serve on the InterFaith Works Round Table of Faith Leaders and to attend the InterFaith Works Leadership Award Dinner. *JO* editor Barbara Davis is currently working on a history of IFW for its 50th anniversary in 2026. She shared with me the very significant role that the Jewish community and the Jewish Federation in particular has played in this organization’s creation and its continued work on behalf of all the people of Central New York. I thought you might be interested in learning a bit about this topic:

Rabbi Theodore Levy of Temple Society of Concord is considered one of the “Founding Fathers” of what is today InterFaith Works. He delivered the keynote address at the 1976 organizing assembly of IFW’s antecessor, the Syracuse Area Interreligious Council (SAIC), celebrating the birth of an organization that had “sprung from a life in union with the Father” and which was based on “charity, prayer and sacrifice.” Rabbi Levy praised the Council’s by-laws which “so succinctly and admirably state, ‘we believe the love of God is for all people of the world—the religious communities of our metropolitan area see themselves as being uniquely in covenant with God. God is leading us on a pilgrimage that requires openness to change and the courage of self-examination and growth.”

Rabbi Levy was SAIC’s first president, and the organization was first housed at Temple Concord. In 1980, The Syracuse Jewish Federation became one of the founding partners of the Syracuse Area Interreligious Council, the one ecumenical and interreligious organization serving Onondaga County and beyond. Seven Protestant denominations, the Roman Catholic Diocese and the Federation united with a common commitment “to further interreligious understanding and cooperation and to act as a united religious community in meeting human needs.”

Rabbi Daniel Jezer of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas became president of the InterReligious Council (as SAIC was renamed) in the third decade of its existence. At that time, he wrote, “The IRC approach towards building a community based upon shared religious values is based upon two prophetic principles. The first is that dialogue, understanding, and education are requisites to move a community into a reality that better fulfills the prophetic visions of justice, harmony and peace. The second is that service, ameliorating the pain, and suffering of those in distress is critical if the community is to fulfill its prophetic responsibilities and potentials.”

Members of the local Jewish community have historically played major roles in the interfaith community in Syracuse: Edward Green, Barry Silverberg, Elaine Rubenstein, Betty Levinstein, Myrna Koldin, Charlotte and Alex Holstein, Michael Moss, Marci Erlebacher, Marilyn Pinsky, Margery and Alan Burstein, Ira Dubnoff, Chaim Jaffe, Rebecca Reed Kantrowitz, and many, many others. I am proud to help continue this legacy of interfaith work.

The Jewish Federations of North America puts it well: “Building strong relationships rooted in trust are an affirmation of our values and identities, strengthen our collective safety and well-being, foster a more inclusive society, and help combat antisemitism.” Solidarity isn’t optional. The Jewish community is strong, but it cannot face challenges like antisemitism and social injustice alone. Alliances with people of different faiths, backgrounds, and perspectives are essential, to amplify voices, expand reach, and stand against bigotry. Standing together, communities show that injustice against one is unacceptable for all, creating a safer, more inclusive society where everyone can thrive.

Luminary Society Honors Its Leading Lights

The Federation hosted its annual Luminary Society Recognition Event for exceptional donors at Syracuse Stage. President & CEO Mark Segel celebrated these generous givers, noting that although they constitute only 5% of individual donors, they contribute 33% of the annual campaign. “Thank you for being the bedrock, the backbone, and the light of Jewish life in Central New York. This community, and the global projects we support, would simply not function without the incredible generosity of the Luminary Society,” he said.



Hanukkah 5765

by Rabbi Oren Steinitz, Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas

Many of us know the story about the dispute between the two major schools of the Talmud—Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai—about the lighting of the Hanukkah candles. Beit Hillel taught that one should start with one candle on the first night and add another one each night; Beit Shammai argued the opposite and insisted that we should start with eight burning candles and subtract one light each night. As we all know, Beit Hillel won the argument, and other than a handful of individuals, we all follow their teaching. The reason that is usually given is that on Hanukkah we aim to increase light in the world, not diminish it.

But maybe there is a little more to Beit Hillel's method.

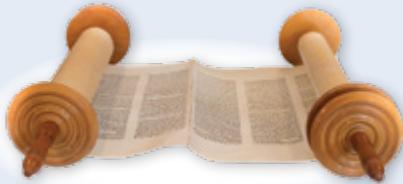
Think about the moment of lighting the first candle. Sometimes, when the *shamash*'s flame touches the wick, there is a moment of uncertainty. Did the wick actually "catch" the flame? All we see is a little tiny flicker, weak and unsure. For a moment we wonder if we will have to try again. But then, the little light grows and grows, and soon the darkness around it begins to shift.

Like the flame, the miracle of Hanukkah started out slowly. As the story goes, when the Maccabees entered the Temple, they could not find any oil that was not defiled. Eventually, they found one can that would burn for maybe one day. They lit it anyway. When the flame lit, the Maccabees did not expect a miracle. Their initial thought was probably "this is not much, but it's better than nothing!" Over the course of the next eight days, that small light proved to be much stronger, much more extraordinary, than they initially thought. It took some time to realize that a miracle was slowly unfolding.

We live in a world that loves the immediate and spectacular: grand gestures, over-the-top celebrations, viral moments. We want it all, and we want it now. In an age of soundbites and short videos, slow and steady doesn't win the race – it is a one-way ticket to oblivion. The little flicker doesn't stand a chance of grabbing anyone's attention before moving on to the next big thing. Hanukkah challenges this impulse – we don't get eight lit candles right away; we have to build up to that moment. The holiday teaches us to pause and appreciate every little bit of progress, every little increase of light, one wick at a time.

The miracle of Hanukkah was not only about the oil lasting eight days. It was that someone had the foresight to say, "It's not perfect, it's not grand, it may not work *at all*, but we should do it anyway."

In a world that rewards miracle cures and instant results, this kind of faith feels countercultural. The quick and grand may get the most "likes," but we know that real change takes time and dedication. Every lasting transformation begins with patient commitment. The willingness to take a chance on a little light, even when we know it might burn out quickly. Hanukkah reminds us that light doesn't have to be immediate to be real—it just has to be lit.



For Such a Time as This: On Being Jewish Today

by Rabbi Elliot Cosgrove

Reviewed by Rabbi Vicki Lieberman

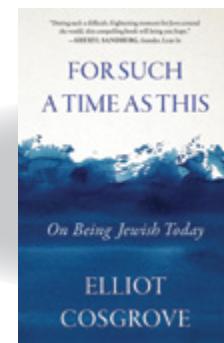
There are moments that change our world. October 7, 2023, is one of those moments. We remember where we were when we heard the news coming from Israel. We remember the world's reaction to that news. We remember the world's inaction to that news. We live in a post-October 7 world and it is a difficult world to understand.

Rabbi Elliot Cosgrove borrows a phrase from The Book of Esther, entitling his book *For Such a Time as This, On Being Jewish Today*. It is an amazing, educative, informative collection of sermons relating to October 7. Cosgrove simplifies a complex topic by organizing the book into three sections: how did we get here, the present situation, and prescriptive steps for the future. In barely 200 pages, he artistically weaves ancient texts, modern philosophies, opposing politics, offering us a foundation through which to understand the world we now inhabit noting that *we are traumatized... we are not paralyzed*.

Part One: *What was*. Cosgrove offers a multi-faceted answer exploring the history of Jewish identity prior to October 7. He asks, is this a new chapter in Jewish history or was it just *opening our eyes to the reality of the world?* Sharing personal examples, he explains what it means to be a hyphenated Jew. We are American-Jews. We assimilate America into our Jewish lives. We want to participate in secular culture and also participate in the Jewish community. Historically, Jewish identity with the land of Israel is woven into the fabric of our faith. But, despite a shared history and faith, how are today's diaspora Jews connected to Israel?

Part Two: *What is*. Cosgrove explores the paths of Jewish Identity marking October 7 as the breaking point from being *Genesis Jews* to being *Exodus Jews*. *Genesis Jews* feel bound to the larger Jewish community – *it is a positive pull of what it means to be a Jew*. *Exodus Jews* have been othered – just like our ancestors in Egypt when, *a new king arose*. October 7 is *proof positive of a widespread inhospitable stance towards Jews*. The world has become an *us vs them*. What does it mean when our Jewish identity has been "othered"? What does it mean when all lives matter except Jewish lives? What does it mean if our Jewish identity is reduced to fighting antisemitism?

Part Three: *What might be*. A staunch Zionist, Cosgrove does not back away from the *invisible thread of the Jewish faith and our ancestral home*. He discusses the tensions and the achievements of the Israel-American relationship. He recognizes the increasing right-wing of Israeli politics that does not recognize American-Jewish values. We share a family of origin but are in danger of having



nothing to say to each other. It is in support or criticism of Israel that American Jews who are family, neighbors, friends, congregants are the most divided. How then do we talk to each other about Israel, about a Two-State Solution, when we have opposing views?

With skillful writing Cosgrove tackles the most difficult discussions many of us have had – or avoided at family tables: the generational divide. How do we engage with the next generation who have *found themselves marginalized by the Jewish community that gave them life*. Cosgrove reminds us that Zionism is not Judaism and Judaism is not Zionism.

Cosgrove writes in April 2024. I am writing October 6, 2025, having attended our community's October 7 Commemoration. The war is not over. The hostages have not been freed. There is no consensus in American Jewry of how to build a modern version of Zionism and make whole the fractured American Judaism. Cosgrove gives us hope. We can begin with an American Zionism that prioritizes *love for the Jewish people and...our national longings, and our right to the land...we need dialogue with Israeli children by way of technology...we need to do more, we need to do better*.

This book easily lends itself to book clubs, dining room table discussions, and adult education programs. Cosgrove addresses how to engage with others when we have differences of opinions. He implores us to build a *conscious community*, one that expresses pride in Judaism. Let now be a time to recover and reclaim our Jewish self.

New Takes on Latkes in 2025

Sour cream and applesauce are so behind the times. For Chanukah 2025, the focus is on diverse ingredients, global flavors, unique toppings and creative presentations like Latke Bars. Key 5786 latke trends include ingredient swaps and unexpected variations, to wit:

Alternative Vegetables:

Swapping or mixing traditional potatoes with sweet potatoes, parsnips, butternut squash, zucchini, celery root, beets, carrots, kale or even Brussels sprouts provide different flavors and colors.



Cheesy Infusions:

Incorporating shredded cheddar, feta, or Parmesan directly into the latke batter creates a savory, cheesy latke, often paired with eggs and smoked salmon for breakfast.

Adding Crunch: Crunch is a major food trend in 2025. Using panko breadcrumbs instead of or in addition to matzo meal or flour helps achieve a guaranteed extra-crispy texture. Other crunchy additions are crispy grains and nut crumbles.

Gluten-Free/Vegan options: Utilizing alternatives like chickpea flour, potato starch, or simply relying on pure potato and specific frying methods cater to dietary restrictions.

New flavor profiles include:

Middle Eastern: Infusing latkes with flavors like za'atar, sumac, amba tahini sauce, or serving them with hummus and pickled onions for a unique twist.

Asian: Adding ingredients like fresh ginger, soy sauce, or serving with scallion brushes for dipping provides an Asian-inspired flavor profile. Kimchi latkes with scallions or ramen latkes with sriracha mayo are a popular innovation.

Mexican: Nacho-sized latkes topped with vegan cheese sauce, black beans, corn, pico de gallo, and avocado crema and chipotle cheddar latkes with guacamole are a new hit.

Gourmet Additions: Mixing in ingredients like fresh herbs (dill, mint, chives) or crispy garlic and using high-quality oils or fats like schmaltz for frying are trendy.

Latke Bars are trending this Chanukah, allowing diners to customize their latkes with toppings and sauces like smoked salmon, crème fraîche, guacamole, and cilantro. Other variations include carrot "lox" with cream cheese and dill, caramelized apples with brown butter, spiced pear compote, and spicy kicks like chipotle cheddar, jalapeños, or harissa mayo. Going even further, sophisticated toppings include hot honey and

red pepper flakes, mango, pear or apple-date chutneys, caviar, and olive tapenade. Ricotta combined with orange marmalade or Greek yogurt with cucumber and dill offer a fresh contrast to warm, salty latkes.

Latkes aren't just for dinner anymore. They can also be incorporated at breakfast in latke eggs Benedict, at lunch in latke Reuben sandwiches or gluten-free sandwich or burger buns. Popular flavor profiles are "swicy" (sweet and spicy) and "swalty" (sweet and salty). Latkes work for both. Non-traditional alternative latke preparations include oven baking a big



square latke on a sheet pan and then cutting into serving sizes, or using a waffle iron instead of a frying pan. Another variation is the family-style latke, a giant potato pancake prepared in a skillet, then sliced and served.

A Little History of the Latke

The earliest Hanukkah latkes were made from cheese, not potatoes. In medieval Italy and other parts of southern Europe, Jews marked the holiday by eating dairy foods fried in oil, recalling both the miracle of the oil in the Temple and the story of Judith, who used cheese and wine to defeat the Assyrian general Holofernes. Cheese pancakes were the ancestors of the modern latke.



Potatoes entered Jewish cooking centuries later. Brought to Europe from the Americas in the late 1500s, they became a staple in the 18th and 19th centuries, especially in Eastern Europe, where they were cheap, filling, and grew well in poor soil. Jews in Poland, Russia, and Lithuania adapted their Hanukkah foods and instead of expensive wheat flour or dairy, they grated potatoes, mixed them with eggs and onion, and fried them in oil. This was the latke that spread through Ashkenazi communities and came to define Hanukkah in Eastern Europe.

The word *latke* comes from the Russian *oladka*, meaning small pancake. Many variations developed: some cooks mashed the potatoes, others grated them finely; some used goose fat, others vegetable oil. In Sephardic and Middle Eastern Jewish communities, Hanukkah foods took other forms like *sufganiyot*, *buñuelos*, and *keftes*, all fried to honor the oil of the Hanukkah story. Jewish immigrants brought the potato latke to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, where it became the dominant Chanukah dish. Its ingredients were inexpensive and widely available, and its preparation fit the holiday's central theme.

In Israel, latkes are called *levivot* but they are not as popular as *sufganiyot*, doughnuts that come in myriad flavors and colors. Israeli *levivot* are served with an array of savory, local toppings such as *shakshuka* (eggs in tomato sauce), *schug* (Yemenite hot sauce), labneh cheese, hummus, Israeli salad, pickles, olives, and feta. The uniqueness of Israeli toppings may very well have influenced the 2025 latke scene in the U.S.

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ON THE LIGHTER SIDE OF CHANUKAH

It is always fascinating to see what new riffs on Chanukah themes can be transmogrified into merch each year. New gift offerings creatively reflect what is trendy, while staying traditional. This year's crop of Chanukah gift ideas is novel and appropriate to the season.

For foodies, Chanukah 2025 offers a cookbook about Jewish comfort food, an apron for little latke cooks that they can color themselves and a tee that would be perfect for a Chanukah party. After you light the *chanukiya*, you can play the Jewish Foods Memory Game, because we Jews are all about the food.



There are so many different *chanukiot* available nowadays that there has to be a special one for every taste, but the Pickleball Chanukiya and the Inspirational Chanukiya seemed to be very appropriate for 5786. Rite-Lite is offering Chanukah for a Cause candles, declaring "We are proud to stand with Israel" and sending a portion of the proceeds from their sale to support humanitarian aid agencies in Israel. The candles come in a variety of colors and combinations including blue and white, pink, and rainbow and support several different causes including autism and kids with courage. Another chanukiya look-alike that cannot be lit but is certain to be a hit over the holiday is an M&M menorah. A Chanukah photo accessories collection would make your holiday even more social media postable.



Chanukah-themed gifts for family and friends new this year include dreidel cuff links, eight nights of Chanukah socks, a coffee mug with a built-in dreidel, a Jerusalem Monopoly game which can be played in either Hebrew or English, and Hanukkah Havoc, a game that is described as a "ridiculously difficult, almost impossible, one word word-searching word game for kids, bubbes and brainiacs alike."



And if the eight days stress you out too much, you can get an emotional support dreidel, menorah or Chanukah gnome or have a drink from a dreidel whisky bottle. *Chag Urim Sameach!*



Many Menorot

Menorahs, especially *chanukiyyot*, come in more shapes and styles than one might expect. Each brings its own character to the holiday, a reflection of the countless ways people choose to celebrate. Their message lies not in one particular design, but in the sheer variety—a reminder that while the tradition is shared, the expressions of it are endlessly unique.



ICE MENORAH IN RUSSIA



HANNAH POLSKIN MENORAH SCULPTURE



UKRAINIAN MENORAH MADE FROM ROCKET DEBRIS



WORLD'S TALLEST MENORAH [36' NYC]



EGGSHELL AND BONE MENORAH FROM ISRAEL



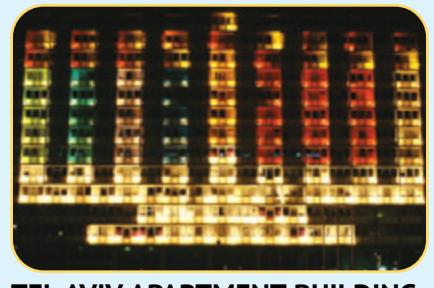
MUNICH JAKOBSPLATZ MENORAH



BONG MENORAH



STATUE OF LIBERTY MENORAH



TEL AVIV APARTMENT BUILDING MENORAH

Hannukah Humor

Miriam goes to the post office to buy stamps for her Hanukkah cards. She says to the cashier, "Please may I have 50 Hanukkah stamps?" The cashier asks, "What denomination?" Miriam says, "Oy vey! I don't know! Give me 6 Orthodox, 12 Conservative, and 32 Reform."

Joshua and his new wife were going to visit Bubbe for Chanukah. He called for directions. "I'm in apartment 4C," Bubbe told him. "There is a big panel at the door. With your elbow push button 4C and I will buzz you in. Take the elevator on the right. Get in, and with your elbow hit 4. When you get out, I am on the left. With your elbow, hit my doorbell." "Grandma, that sounds easy enough," replied Joshua, "but why am I hitting all the buttons with my elbow?"

Bubbe answered, "You're coming empty handed?"

CHANUKABLANCA

From Casablanca by Joe Hample (sung to the tune of "As Time Goes By")

You must remember this,
A bris is still a bris,
A chai is just a chai.
Pastrami still belongs on rye,
As time goes by.

With holidays in view,
A Jew is still a Jew,
On that you can rely.
No matter if we eat tofu
As time goes by.

Old shtetl customs, never out of date.
All those potatoes someone has to grate.
One flame in the window,
keep counting till there's eight
To light the winter sky.

In the Bronx or in the Mission,
It's still the same tradition,
That no one can deny.
We roam, but we recall our birthright,
As time goes by.

Dreidels and chocolate, never out of date.
Ancient Semitic glories to relate.
Blue-and-white giftwrap, ain't this country great,
And festive chazera!

It's still the same old Torah,
It's still the same menorah,
We've latkes still to fry.
December's when I feel most Jewish,
As time goes by.

As the El Al plane prepared to land at Ben Gurion airport, the voice of the Captain came on:

"Please remain seated with your seatbelt fastened until the plane is at a complete standstill and the seat belt signs have been turned off."
"To those of you standing in the aisles, we wish you a Happy Chanukah."
"To those who have remained in their seats, we wish you a Merry Christmas."

A REVERSE HANNUKAH MIRACLE:

I had 8 days' worth of donuts and they lasted for one day.

Marketing blunder:



Maga Dreidel Set:



Q: What happened when the jelly donut crossed the road?

A: It caused a traffic jam.

Not Really a Chanukah Story, BUT it's Funny...

A lawyer and an elderly Jewish man are sitting next to each other on a long flight. The lawyer is thinking that Jews are pretty dumb and that he could trick them easily. So the lawyer asks if the Jew would he like to play a fun game.

The old Jewish man is tired and just wants to take a nap, so he politely declines and tries to catch a few winks. The lawyer persists and says that the game is a lot of fun. "I ask you a question, and if you don't know the answer, you pay me only \$5. You ask me one, and if I don't know the answer, I will pay you \$500," he says. This catches the Jew's attention and to keep the lawyer quiet, he agrees to play the game.

The lawyer asks the first question. "What's the distance from the Earth to the Moon?" The elderly Jew doesn't say a word, reaches in his pocket, pulls out a five-dollar bill, and hands it to the lawyer.

Now, it's the Jew's turn. He asks the lawyer, "What goes up a hill with three legs and comes down with four?"

The lawyer uses his laptop and searches all references he could find on the internet. He asks AI; sends e-mails to all the smart friends he has. All to no avail. After one hour of searching, he finally gives up. He wakes up the Jewish man and hands him \$500. The old Jew pockets the \$500 and goes right back to sleep.

The lawyer is going nuts, not knowing the answer. He wakes the elderly Jew up and asks, "Well, so what goes up a hill with three legs and comes down with four?" The Jew shrugs, reaches in his pocket, hands the lawyer \$5 and goes back to sleep....

Moral: Don't mess with us Jews.

Hannukah Riddles

How much Hanukkah gelt did the skunk get?
One cent.

What's the best Hanukkah gift for the person who has everything?
A burglar alarm.

What do you call a speck that falls into the latke pan?
An unidentified frying object.

Where do you get honey for your latkes?
From the Maccabees.



Did you hear about the two dreidels that fell in love?
They met at a spin class.

How did the dreidel feel about calling in sick?
He felt a little geltty.

"DECK THE HALLS WITH BOUGHS OF CHALLAH"

Chag HaBanot: A Celebration of Women

For centuries, Jewish communities of North Africa celebrated another holiday during Chanukah called *Chag HaBanot*—the Holiday of the Daughters. Observed on *Rosh Chodesh Tevet*, which falls on the sixth night of Chanukah, *Chag HaBanot* was explicitly about women. In Jewish communities in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Morocco, Greece and Yemen, families gathered to honor daughters, sisters, and mothers.

Women exchanged gifts of jewelry or clothing, baked sweets, and sang traditional songs. Mothers laid hands on their daughters' heads to bless them with health, wisdom, and joy. In some towns, women were invited to touch or kiss the Torah scroll, a rare and powerful honor. *Chag HaBanot* was also traditionally a time to give gifts to brides and daughters and to pass down inheritances.



On *Chag HaBanot*, girls and women refrained from work and gathered to recall Jewish heroines, particularly Judith, the Jewish woman



who lived during the time of the Maccabees and helped prevent the impending siege of Jerusalem by decapitating the invading Assyrian general. A 19th century Italian *chanukiya* depicting Judith holding a sword in one hand and the severed head of Holofernes in the other can be seen at The Jewish Museum in New York City.

The once vibrant tradition fell into decline among many who emigrated to Israel. Recent years, however, have seen a revival of the holiday. Israelis of Sephardic and Mizrahi backgrounds have begun to embrace *Chag HaBanot* as a meaningful part of their cultural

identity and also as a celebration of strong women in Judaism. In Israel today, the holiday is celebrated in synagogues, community centers, and women's organizations, which hold gatherings featuring study sessions, blessings for girls, and Sephardic music and food. Girls of bat mitzvah age are honored during the festival, emphasizing continuity and the role of women in Jewish life.

Chag HaBanot festivities often include eating sweets and fried treats, dancing, visiting the synagogue to kiss the Torah scrolls and singing well into the night. In some households, women begin the evening by singing a *piyyut* before lighting the candles of the *chanukiya*. In others, each candle may be dedicated to a specific woman—such as mothers, daughters, grandmothers, or community leaders—followed by the *Mi Shebeirach Imoteinu* blessing, a prayer for mothers.

Whether celebrated in the Jewish communities of Djerba a century ago or in contemporary Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Be'er Sheva, *Chag HaBanot* resonates as a recognition of women's courage, creativity, and continuity. It is a living reminder that Jewish tradition has been sustained not only by texts and rabbis but also by the women who carried faith, culture, and memory through the generations.

Don Cronin to Retire After Two Plus Decades

Behind every effective nonprofit is a steady hand guiding its finances. For the past 25 years, the steady hand guiding the finances of the Jewish community has been that of Don Cronin. Don has served both as community comptroller and chief financial officer of the Jewish Federation of Central New York and the Jewish Community Foundation. While the titles may sound technical, the positions involve much more than bookkeeping. Don has been both a protector and a strategist, safeguarding financial resources while helping the Federation, the JCC and the community chart a course toward mission success.

The bedrock of this role is financial expertise. The complexity of nonprofit finances require skill and precision. Don understands accounting standards, the difference between restricted and unrestricted funds, and the requirements of IRS 990 forms. He has managed budgets, forecasts, and cash flow with confidence, producing accurate reports that leadership, boards, auditors, and funders can rely on. He has ensured that internal controls are strong, audits are smooth, and compliance is never in doubt.

Integrity and mission commitment lie at the heart of his role. Don has been entrusted with donor dollars, grants, and public trust. He



has made financial operations efficient and reliable. Accounts payable, receivables, payroll, and grant tracking run smoothly under his watch. He is a valued colleague, a patient teacher and a respected collaborator. Steve Volinsky, chair of the Federation Finance Committee, says of Don, "I respect Don Cronin for his ability and his integrity. Don Cronin has strong leadership and communication

skills as well as strong technical skills including accounting, budgeting, financial planning and analysis. Don will be missed by everyone at the Jewish Federation of Central New York."

Those who know Don solely in his professional role, where adjectives like "quiet," "professional," "serious" and "detail-oriented" abound may not be aware of the many other things he does from repairing bikes for the annual bike giveaway to climbing all 46 high peaks in the Adirondacks (he is now working on climbing the fire towers) and biking 20 miles weekly with the Onondaga Ski Club. He is also a competitive pickleball player and an SU sports fan.

Federation President & CEO Mark Segel sums up the esteem in which Don is held by the community, "Although I've only known Don a short while, he has impressed me greatly. His unwavering commitment has been remarkably beneficial to the Jewish community and he will be sorely missed."

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New NYS Curriculum for Teaching the Holocaust

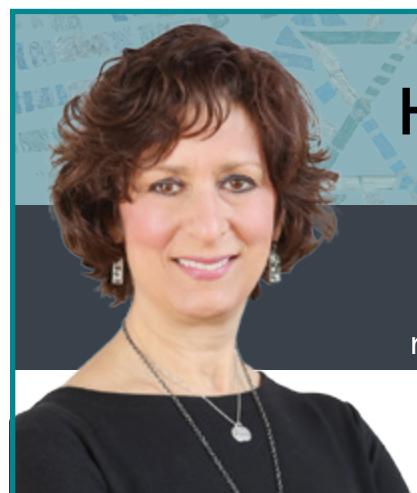
Teaching the Holocaust AND OTHER GENOCIDES

In 2024, the New York State Education Department engaged the Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center (HHREC) in White Plains to lead a major statewide initiative revising and expanding Holocaust and genocide curricula. Under the direction of Steven A. Goldberg, HHREC assembled 29 active and retired educators from across New York State to produce new teaching resources for elementary, middle, and high school classrooms in Social Studies and English Language Arts. The resulting guide provides lesson plans, primary sources, case studies, and analytic tools designed to help educators teach about the Holocaust and other genocides with depth and accuracy.

Central New York played an important role in this new curriculum for two reasons. First, the inclusion of the Safe Haven Holocaust Refugee Shelter in Oswego, the only site in the United States to welcome nearly 1,000 refugees during the war, highlights New York's unique connection to Holocaust history and ensures that students in the region can see how global events intersected with their own communities.

Secondly, Dr. Eileen M. Angelini, a French Studies scholar and the Upstate Regional Coordinator of 3GNY (3rd Generation Holocaust Survivors of New York), contributed three case studies to the project. Her work highlights Charlotte Delbo, a French Resistance member deported to Auschwitz whose writings bear witness to her fellow prisoners; the Safe Haven refugee shelter in Oswego; and the *Vel d'Hiv* Round-Up, the 1942 Paris arrest of more than 13,000 Jews. Angelini's career has long been shaped by Holocaust education. While completing her doctorate in twentieth-century French literature, she noticed a striking difference in writing before and after World War II, which led her to interview survivors, hidden children, resistance members, and Righteous Gentiles. She later brought these testimonies into her classrooms, even arranging for students to write letters in French to survivors, forging meaningful intergenerational dialogue. Angelini's promise to survivors—that their stories would not be forgotten—now lives on through this statewide project.

The project was approved by the New York State Board of Regents and after fifteen months of research, writing, editing, vetting/reviewing, and formatting, the on-line platform of resources is now a reality and available to teachers in New York State and beyond. *It is housed on the platform "Consider the Source" and can be accessed at <https://considerthesourceny.org/teaching%20-holocaust-and-genocide>.*



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The Jewish Federation
OF CENTRAL NEW YORK

For a quarter of a century, Susan DeMari has stood at the heart of our community's safety and resilience, guiding, protecting, and caring for us all with unwavering dedication and compassion. She will retire on December 31, 2025.

Now it's our turn to honor her extraordinary commitment and celebrate her legacy. In tribute to Susan's service, donations may be made to the Federation's Magen Circle, which supports vital community security initiatives. To contribute, please visit: <https://jewishfederationcny.org/donate/> and select Magen Circle.

If you would like to send words of congratulation or thanks in tribute to Susan's years of steadfast protection and celebrate the peace of mind she has given us all, please email them no later than December 24, 2025 to bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org



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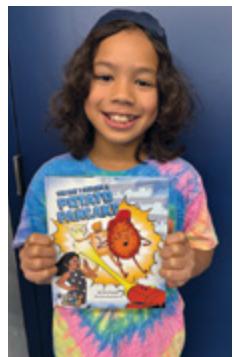
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SHDS Reviews New Chanukah Books for Kids

The Day I Became a Potato Pancake by Arie Kaplan



Reviewed by Davin Moodie

The story starts off with two friends named Ben and Naomi. Naomi's mom is a scientist who created a machine that is called a "transfogram" that transforms you into whatever you are thinking of. Ben and Naomi sneak into Naomi's Mom's secret lab even though they were told not to. They find the "transfogram" and then Ben pushes a button on the "transfogram" and...ZAP! It turns Ben into a potato pancake! Naomi's mom is trying to find a cure to turn Ben back into a human, because if she does not find a cure in a week the transformation will be permanent.

Ben was initially surprised, but then he enjoyed being a potato pancake because he became popular at school and in his town. People are interested in his transformation. During this time, a mysterious character from another planet has been spying on Ben. Later, Naomi and Ben get sucked into a spaceship and the mysterious character turns out to be a floating dreidel alien named Kevin. He collects Hanukkah items from different planets, and he is planning to make Ben a part of his museum. Naomi and Ben won't let that happen. They fight Kevin's robots and win. Ben does not get captured, and Kevin confesses he is lonely, so they invite him over for Hanukkah. They find a cure for Ben before it is too late, and he transforms back into a human.

I think this story is good overall, because it teaches you not to break rules. If you do, it might not end well. I would recommend this book for kids 8 years old and below.

Uri and the King of Darkness by Nati Bait



Reviewed by Nathan Rosenberg

Uri and the King of Darkness by Nati Bait, illustrated by Carmel Bel Ami, is about two kids, Uri and Uzi, who were scared that their dad was not going to come home. They thought the King of Darkness and his army were attacking their dad and they decided they had to go out to rescue him. This story shows how when you don't know what is going on, your imagination can run wild.

During the book, I liked how the author talks about the father coming home late and Uri being worried. It felt relatable, because when my dad says he will come home late, it also makes me worried. I also liked that they were all ready to go out and help their dad even though they did not know what would happen. When they went to fight, who was at the door? It turned out to be their dad after all. Meanwhile, their dad acted all casual; he had just stopped for doughnuts! Overall, I liked the book and would recommend it to younger students.



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Don't Invite a Bear Inside for Hanukkah by Karen Rostoker



Reviewed by Danya Boschan

Don't Invite a Bear Inside for Hanukkah is a good book because it will be interesting for any age and it is cute. In some parts it is silly and makes you want to laugh, and in other parts it's sweet and makes you feel happy. After reading it with my siblings we could all agree that it was fun and exciting to read.

The book will inform the reader a lot about Hanukkah. *Don't Invite a Bear Inside for Hanukkah* is important because it talks about being inclusive. It is also important because there are not that many Jews in the world, so the fact that in the story the bear is Jewish is important in giving representation.

Overall, I think that *Don't Invite a Bear Inside for Hanukkah* is a fun, educational, silly, sweet, and great book to read. Of course, I recommend reading it with siblings!

Rachel Friedman and Eight Not-Perfect Nights of Chanukah by Sarah Kapit



Reviewed by Joey Rosenberg

Rachel Friedman and Eight Not-Perfect Nights of Chanukah by Sarah Kapit is about a girl who loves Chanukah, but things don't all work out the way she wants. The book starts off with Rachel talking about Chanukah. Then a boy in her school says he thinks Christmas is way better than Chanukah. Rachel disagrees. They get into an argument about which is better, and he tells Rachel that she is missing out.

Rachel wants to have the best Chanukah ever, so she makes a list of what to do for each day of the holiday, but she doesn't know what to do for the last one. In the end, she decides to finish it later.

She does the first thing on the list: build a Lego menorah. She asks her friend Maya to help, but Maya got sick. So she asks her older brother to do it with her, but he doesn't want to. She tries to do it herself but can't. She decides to finish it later.

The next day she looks at her list and sees that she is going to make a Macabee out of snow. She wants to ask her friend to do it with her, but remembers she is sick. She tries to make it herself, but she doesn't think it looks good because it only has two balls for the snowman parts. She also has a dreidel spinning contest with her brother. The next few days go by. They go skating at the park and Rachel and her brother race, and her brother wins. Her brother sees his crush, and tries to talk to her, but Rachel wants to play, so she shoves him, and accidentally breaks his foot. Rachel has a fun time during all eight nights of Chanukah, even if they don't all go as she planned.

I liked the story because it had a cool plot about proving Chanukah is a fun holiday. My favorite character was Rachel's brother because he is very stubborn and didn't want to do Chanukah-y things. My favorite part was when Rachel built a snow Maccabee and she could only make two balls. I would recommend this book to second and third graders because it isn't long and there aren't very complicated words.



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How To Have a Jewish Conversation That Is Not an Argument

Poet Amanda Gorman wrote, “There is always light. If only we’re brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to be it.” Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi wrote, “A little bit of light, dispels a lot of darkness.” Author Katrina Mayer wrote, “Let your light shine so brightly that others can see their way out of the dark.”

Conversations about Israel and Judaism have become increasingly fraught in today’s polarized world. What might once have been thoughtful debate or shared reflection often turns into silence, defensiveness, or hostility. For many, the weight of politics overshadows Jewish identity and culture, while social media reduces nuance to slogans and sound bites. People grow afraid to speak, worried about being judged or misunderstood.

Yet Judaism has always valued debate and dialogue. Our tradition says there are *shiv'im panim laTorah*—seventy ways to interpret Torah. Debate, dissent, and multiplicity of views are not weaknesses; they are the very methodology of Jewish learning. The ability to wrestle with hard truths, ask questions without fear, and listen to divergent perspectives are the essence of Judaism requiring courage, patience, and above all a commitment to building understanding rather than winning arguments.

The following guidelines are adapted from two very different sources: Jewish Voices for Peace and the Anti-Defamation League. May the light of Chanukah inspire the courage and compassion needed to talk openly about Israel and Judaism, illuminating a path where difficult conversations become opportunities for understanding, healing, and unity.

1. Take a breath. Know that you might



get upset. Losing your temper may be deeply justified, but it is almost always counterproductive to your goal.

2. Approach the conversation intentionally. You will have the most productive conversations if you can remain calm, measured, and strategic in how you engage.

3. Position yourself as a learner, not an expert. Ground yourself in the facts and explain yourself simply. Be ready to listen, ask questions, and keep your goal in mind.

4. Lead with shared values. Root the conversation in those values as guideposts.

5. Establish an environment for a mutually respectful discussion. Develop goals for the conversation, such as seeking to build greater understanding.

6. Strive for a common language based on respect when discussing complex issues. Recognize and challenge language that is meant to inspire anger and turn people against each other.

7. Accept and expect that there won’t be closure at the end of the conversation nor will all questions be answered and resolved. That may cause some discomfort.

When having discussions specifically relating to Israel or antisemitism:

People often use language and aspects of the Holocaust and Nazism to demonstrate

the seriousness of discrimination or bias-motivated violence that is taking place. Making direct comparisons to Nazism or the Holocaust is painful and potentially retraumatizing to Jewish people, especially those who are survivors of the Holocaust or their descendants. The Holocaust was not a “lesson” for the Jewish people to learn.

Explore definitions and origins of terms that are used to describe mass atrocities in history. Using terms like “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing” inaccurately to provoke a strong reaction can further cause harm. Watch for and challenge the antisemitic idea that Jewish people are deserving of violence, displacement or retribution.

Anticipate and seek to hold space for Jewish people to fear for their safety. As antisemitic incidents in the U.S. and around the world spike when there is a conflict in Israel, validate the safety concerns that Jewish people express. Safety refers to the absence of risks and threats of harm, and when someone feels unsafe, they may be in physical or mental distress.

Challenge language that holds Jewish individuals and groups accountable for the actions of the state of Israel. Understand that holding a community or person accountable for the actions of a nation and their government has a history resulting in violence and oppression.

Remember that Jewish people hold a wide range of opinions related to the government of Israel and its actions and treating a Jewish person or group as representative of all Jewish people is tokenizing and unfair. Be sure to include nuanced and different perspectives and minimize one-sided points of view.

Challenge voices that demand Jewish people condemn Israel’s policies and

actions, reject Zionism or otherwise speak on behalf of the Israeli government. Ask and listen to how individuals define their identity as Jewish people, Israeli people, or Zionists. Identity is complex and not everyone identifies in the same way. For many, Zionism and a connection to the land of Israel are integral to their practice and identity as Jewish people.

Ground conversations in reliable informational resources. Learn about the history of antisemitism, its roots, and contemporary manifestations. Recognize that misinformation and disinformation are widespread, especially as violence and conflicts are unfolding. Practice media literacy by assessing the quality of the sources you find and share.

Center empathy by listening to the voices of people directly affected by the conflict. Listen to and center voices that have personal experiences, familial ties and trauma associated with this region. War and violent conflict have dire consequences for ordinary people of any or no political ideology. Though news and social media can be informative, people living outside of Israel and the Palestinian territories will always have a limited perspective on the conflict compared to a person who lives in the region.

Hold space for the distinct experiences of pain and trauma that Jewish and Palestinian people carry from this conflict. Listening to different peoples’ narratives without attempting to correct or rank them builds empathy and perspective.

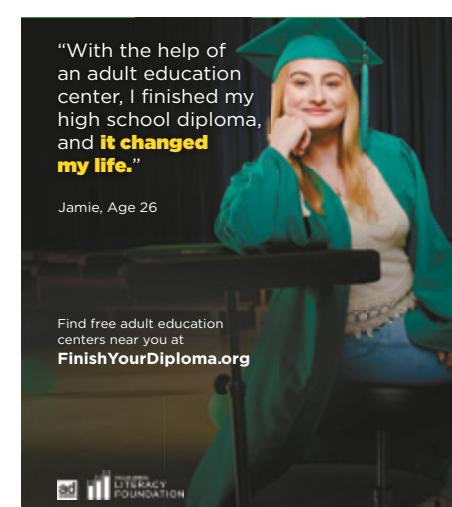
Resist the temptation to directly compare the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to other identity-based issues in the United States or elsewhere. Direct comparisons can cause more harm and confusion rather than building understanding.



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Hanukkah and PDJs

There is a debate in the Talmud about how to display a *chanukiya*. We are told to place the Hanukkah *menorah* in our window to publicize the miracle of the holiday and to celebrate that the Jewish people prevailed in the face of persecution and are free today to celebrate our religion openly. Nonetheless, the rabbis accept that, if people are living in “times of danger” and fear that placing the menorah in their window might threaten their life, they are permitted to light it away from the window (Shabbat 21b).

Are PDJs (Public Displays of Judaism) dangerous? Many articles have appeared in the media recently on this topic. *On Being Jewish Now* published “Jewelry: An Identity Crisis. Making the decision to wear my Magen David.” *Quora* polled, “Fellow Jews: do you still wear a Star of David necklace? Why or why not?” *JewBelong* inquired, “Are you scared to wear your Jewish star?” And the *Workplace Stack Exchange* wondered, “Could Wearing My Star of David Be Bad for My Career?”

Rabbi Neal Gold, a teacher and author, wrote that “what I hear from many of my students is an increasing fear of being recognizably Jewish in public. Some parents are telling their children—even in the tony suburbs of Massachusetts—to tuck in that chai or Jewish star before going out in public. I’ve even heard, with shock and sorrow, of children asking their parents to take down the mezuzah from their front door.” *The Jewish Exponent* warned that “Menorahs on Public Property Can Lead to Trouble.” *The Guardian* reported that “half of British Jews will not display public signs of Judaism” and even *Chabad.org* asked the question: “Are Public Displays of Judaism a Bad Idea?”

It is ironic that this question is being debated at the very moment that a holiday based on PDJs is being celebrated. The decision to publicly affirm Jewish



identity is both a courageous stand and a calculated risk. The fear is real, yet so is the determination to remain visible. We see that in the responses that appear to the questions asked online.

Rabbi David Jaffe, writing on *ReformJudaism.org*, says, “Who gets to be visible in the public square is more important than ever. Aggressive deportations by the federal government intimidate many immigrants from appearing in public. Neo-Nazi rallies in cities across the country intimidate Jews, Blacks, Muslims, and others from showing themselves in public. Hanukkah is the perfect time to assert our presence, the celebration of difference, in the public square. Although Chabad has taken the lead on public displays of Judaism, with 20-foot-high menorah lightings in cities across the country, I am suggesting something different. What our

society needs are public displays of difference in a context of mutual support. We need to accompany each other, across our differences, making the public square safe for all.”

Writing on *Kveller*, Yvette Alt Miller asserts “Afraid to Wear a Jewish Symbol in Public? That’s Exactly Why You Should.” She goes on to say, “We all need to ‘wear kippahs’—and that can mean either literally wearing a kippah or committing to other acts of public Jewishness. (Or both!) Wear a *hamsa* or a Star of David necklace. Subscribe to an Israeli newspaper. Start talking about taking your next family vacation in Israel. Blog about Jewish lifecycle events on social media. Next time you go out to dinner, choose a kosher restaurant. Invite guests for Shabbat. In whatever way is comfortable, ramp up your Jewish expression.”

The Times of Israel reports that, contrary to what many might have expected, “since the October 7, 2023 attacks on Israel by Hamas and the ensuing war and rise in global antisemitism, the Star of David has become an even trendier and more ubiquitous

symbol in the Jewish community worldwide.” Dean, an Israeli *shaliach* (ambassador) to the Jewish Federation in Washington, D.C., encapsulated the views of many young people when he wrote, “Many Jews, especially from younger generations, are feeling more connected to their Jewishness and to the rest of world Jewry than ever before and are seeking ways of expressing it. This includes wearing one’s Jewish identity proudly and defiantly—and Star of David necklaces are a popular way to do just that. Wearing the beloved Jewish star is a way of showing solidarity and camaraderie with the rest of Am Yisrael, as well as having something special and with so much history close to one’s heart.”

As the Jewish community celebrates Chanukah for the second time in 2025, public expressions of Jewish identity remain deeply meaningful. Public Chanukah celebrations continue in full force, despite underlying currents of fear. Chabad will light 15,000 giant public menorahs around the world in 2025, marking the 50th anniversary of the first such menorah in Philadelphia. “Kippah Walks,” solidarity events at which both Jewish and non-Jewish participants wear kippahs in opposition to antisemitism and to show support for Jews who may feel unsafe wearing them, have taken place in cities in Sweden, Germany, Poland and Denmark. People magazine reported on “Project Menorah,” a grassroots movement encouraging Jewish allies to place menorahs in their windows, along with their other holiday decorations, in support of the Jewish community. Locally, Reverend Anna Gheen, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Cazenovia, displayed a *chanukiya* in the window of the Presbyterian Manse because last winter because, she wrote, “by displaying a menorah, I want to send a clear and poignant message: Hate has no home here.”

As unlikely a source as the Siouxland Energy Cooperative in Iowa summed up the importance of PDJs at Hanukkah when it wrote on its website: “Menorahs are more than just symbols; they’re carriers of history, tradition, and values. They unite us, remind us of our shared past, and light up the path for future generations. As they stand tall and glowing, they promise that the flame of Jewish resilience will never die out.”



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Messiah Thoughts

by Michael Gordon, Ph.D.

Not to sound like the beginning of a joke or anything, but four Jews went to a magnificent cathedral to hear a rendition of Handel's "Messiah." One of them desperately needed to use the restroom prior to the performance. He was confronted with long lines of others waiting to use one of the two commodes available for the over 800 concert goers.

It was a tense wait but he/I made it to the front of the line before Handel's Water Music Suite would have been better suited to the occasion. As it was, I launched into a premature, inside-my-head rendition of the Hallelujah chorus when I finished my turn.

At intermission I asked a priest standing at the entrance how it was that such a large facility had so few bathroom stalls. He smiled and said, "Our services only last 50-55 minutes and most people can hold it at least that long." All I could think about was how our synagogues were built with much larger bathroom facilities because services are just gathering steam after an hour.

Back at my pew, I marveled at the grandeur of the building, the perfection of the acoustics, and the awe-inspiring glory of the music – and once again I realized how we Jews don't have all the marketing and production values just right in comparison. Our religion has generally gone for more modest and portable gathering spots for worship, even though we ask people to pray in them for far longer periods of time (except perhaps for funerals and weddings, which can be uncharacteristically and mercifully brief).

Some of the reasons for the contrasts are obvious. Once organized Catholicism got rolling, they have far outnumbered us in most places in the world. Even now, 23% of the U.S. population is Catholic versus 2.4% for Jews. They have needed more space because they have had more people to serve. Except on the High Holy Days, we don't often need more room for congregants to sit. Most of our shuls would cry with joy if their Shabbat services were overcrowded. And to maintain a cavernous facility for two or three services a year would be impractical.

Of course, for much of our history, we didn't exactly want to broadcast to the world where to locate a large gathering of Jews. It would be like feeding targeting information to our enemies. We also haven't fared well when the rest of the population has had reason to envy our



accomplishments. That dynamic has sometimes gotten us relegated to ghettos or worse. Maintaining a low profile has often accrued to our advantage.

I therefore understand the reasons we've opted for more modest architecture, even when we haven't had to plan for a hasty departure. I can also see how, for many, the intimacy of a smaller space and emphasis on congregant participation is more appealing, albeit less grand.

I'm less sure why we need so much more time to pray. Is Jesus a better listener? Does he need less proof of devotion? Is our God simply more demanding? Less trusting that 55 minutes would do the trick? Or it that Catholics have generally been more focused on marketing their religion by making it easier to worship (not to mention foregoing that whole circumcision requirement).

We Jews seem to be more intent on making sure lessons are learned and rules are followed. We might also be a bit more on the obsessive side of life. Do we really need to repeat the Amidah at least three times? Why isn't once enough?

As always, for most of us it comes down to what feels soothing, evocative, and worthwhile. If that's three hours of prayer on a Saturday, so be it. But many of us are fine with services that are accessible, inspiring, and under an hour's time.



Channuka TRIVIA

1. How many blessings are said on the first night of Hanukkah?
2. Are the Hanukkah candles lit from right to left or left to right?
3. What is the name for money given as presents during the Jewish festival of Hanukkah?
4. Which Hanukkah toy was used as a decoy after learning the Torah was outlawed?
5. What is the shamash?
6. Where is the best place to put a chanukiya?
7. What is the name of the courageous Jewish woman who defied the Greeks and killed one of their generals?
8. What do the four Hebrew letters on the dreidel (nun, gimel, hey, shin) stand for?
9. In what month on the Jewish calendar is Hanukkah?
10. What is the most popular Chanukah fried food in America?
11. What is the most popular Chanukah fried food in Israel?
12. What's the difference between an Israeli dreidel and an American dreidel?
13. What does the word "Hanukkah" mean?
14. What's the difference between a menorah and a chanukiya?
15. Why is food fried during Hanukkah?
16. What is a highlight of the Hanukkah festival in contemporary Israel?
17. What's another way to say Chanukah Sameach?
18. What holiday within Chanukah celebrates women and girls?

ANSWERS

1. Right to Left
2. Nes gadol haya po/A great miracle happened HERE
3. Gett
4. The dreidel
5. The tall candle used to light the other
6. In the window
7. Judith/Yehudit
8. Nas gadol haya shad/A great miracle happened there
9. Kislev
10. Latkes
11. Suganiyot
12. Nes gadol haya po/A great miracle happened HERE
13. Dedication
14. 7 candles vs 8 candles plus shamash
15. As a symbol of the miracle oil that burned for eight nights
16. The annual relay race from Modiin to Jerusalem
17. Chag L'Yom Sameach
18. Chag HaBanot

HAPPY CHANUKAH



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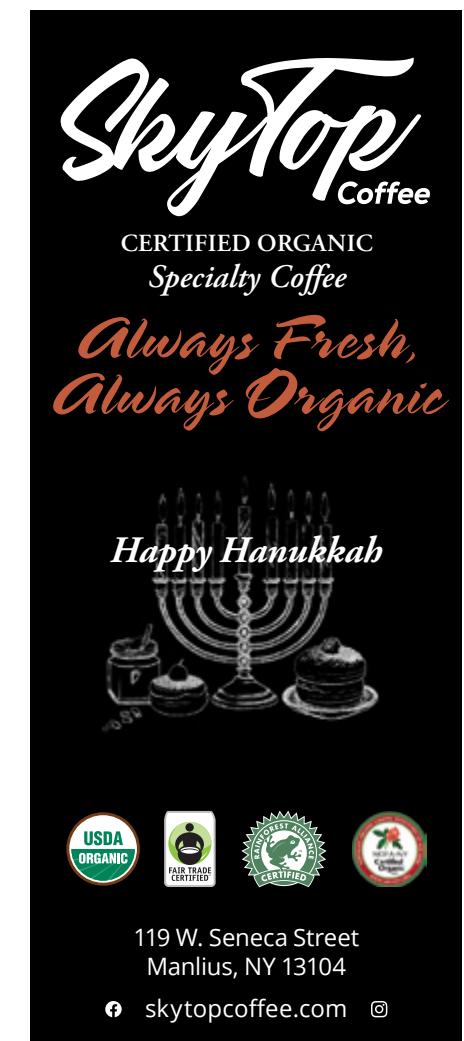


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Osem Chicken Consomme
14.1 oz.

5⁹⁹

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Osem Mini Croutons
14.1 oz. • The Original Mini "Mandel"

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17 oz. • Select Varieties

2⁹⁹

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Gefen Whole Roasted Chestnuts
5.2 oz. • Shelled

3⁴⁹

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Kedem Concord Grape Juice
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Joya Sesame Tahini
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CBS-CS Cares and Takes Action

by Joan Bordett



For 25 plus years, Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas has held a pre-Thanksgiving program in conjunction with Pebble Hill Presbyterian Church. This year's program, on Sunday, November 23, was a Social Justice Concert. Jeff Stanton, a musician himself, asked several well-known local musicians, including Colleen Kattau and John and Cathy Cadley, to perform original social justice-themed compositions at the concert. The program also included readings and refreshments.

Each year, the two congregations include a mitzvah project as part of their joint program. This year they collected donations for the InterReligious Food Consortium.

Food insecurity is one of three focus areas for the CBS-CS SATO Committee this year, along with healthcare access and immigration/refugees. Nationwide, more than 22 million families will lose some or all of their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits this year; in New York State, 4.6 million people are seeing average benefit cuts of \$190 per month.

In addition, 4 million people in the U.S. could lose healthcare benefits this year because of the government's policies, with the steepest losses among the poorest households. CBS-CS offers a number of concrete actions people can take to address these issues, including:

- Donate money and/or volunteer to help serve and deliver meals at the Samaritan Center, We Rise Above the Streets, Meals on Wheels, the CNY Food Bank, and other food distribution entities
- Volunteer to support patients' access to health care through local clinics, transportation networks, or support groups
- Call state and national representatives and encourage them to oppose cuts to Medicaid, CHIP, SNAP, and other anti-hunger and healthcare access programs.

The CBS-CS Social Action-Tikkun Olam Committee is also planning a Social Justice Shabbat and a reading of Dr. Martin Luther King's "Letter from A Birmingham Jail" along with other faith groups, as well as other hands-on activities and advocacy efforts.

For more information about the CBS-CS Social Action-Tikkun Olam efforts, contact Joan Bordett at sato-vp@cbcs.org.

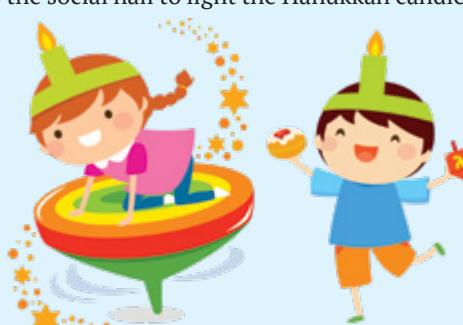
Hanukkah Glow Party at CBS-CS

by Yolanda Febles

This year, Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas wants to bring extra brightness to the Festival of Lights with a Glow Party on the first night of Hanukkah! The spectacle will begin with ballroom dancing lessons from 5 to 6 pm, all ages welcome. Attendees are encouraged to wear their sparkliest clothing, and everyone is welcome to join in in the dancing, or to relax, enjoy the music, and watch the show. Kids not interested in ballroom dancing are welcome to participate in youth activities in the school wing. Offerings will include a movie, arts and crafts, and active games.

Then, at 6 pm, everyone is invited to the social hall to light the Hanukkah candles together and enjoy a delicious meal. At 7 pm, the Glow Party will shift to an all-ages rave with blacklights, glow sticks, and dance music. The CBS-CS Hanukkah Glow party will wrap up at 8 pm, but the bright memories made will last much longer.

For more information, contact admin@cbcs.org.



TAY Latkes & Vodkas Returns: A Festive Adult Hanukkah Celebration

by Alicia Gross

Temple Adath Yeshurun's beloved *Latkes & Vodkas* celebration returns on Saturday, December 13, just in time for Hanukkah. Back by popular demand after last year's unforgettable event, this year's gathering promises another sparkling evening of tradition, flavor, and community. Guests can expect an elevated twist on holiday favorites, with gourmet latkes served fresh and specialty vodka cocktails crafted especially for this program.



Event organizers wanted to create something that blends the warmth of tradition with the energy of modern celebration. Hanukkah is about bringing light into the darkness, and this event truly captures that spirit. Last year's soirée drew an enthusiastic crowd who came for the food and stayed for the festive vibes—enjoying everything from traditional latkes to sweet potato or zucchini, as well as electric lemonade and a geltini. This year's lineup is expected to be just as dazzling, with new culinary surprises and a few returning favorites.

Whether to honor tradition, enjoy cutting-edge cuisine, or just warm up with friends and a few laughs on a winter night, *Latkes & Vodkas* is quickly becoming a seasonal staple. Reserve a spot early at www.adath.org—this is one Hanukkah party you won't want to miss.

SCHS Celebrates Hanukkah with "Latkes with Love"

by Jeannette Myshrrall

This Hanukkah, the Syracuse Community Hebrew School (SCHS) brought tradition, learning, and community together through its annual "Latkes with Love" fundraiser. The event reflects SCHS's mission to foster Jewish identity, intergenerational engagement, and experiential learning, while providing families a meaningful way to celebrate the holiday.

The board and SCHS families got together to cook latkes, the aroma filling the space with festive cheer. *Madrichim* (student leaders) helped organize and package the latkes for community distribution, gaining hands-on experience in Jewish leadership and service. Two senior volunteers, who participate weekly, brought enthusiasm and mentorship, delighting students and reinforcing the school's multigenerational approach.

"'Latkes with Love' is a dynamic initiative that meets both community needs and educational goals," said Ora Jezer, Head of School. "It gives families an easy, accessible way to celebrate Hanukkah while supporting SCHS's programs that cultivate Jewish identity, values, and intergenerational connection. The excitement it generates, through participation, tradition, and hands-on engagement, demonstrates that Jewish learning thrives when it is both communal and experiential."

The fundraiser provides families with a ready-to-enjoy Hanukkah dinner while modeling SCHS's core values: *L'dor v'dor* (from generation to generation), *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), and learning in action. By participating, students, families, and community members witness how tradition, leadership, and service intersect, reinforcing SCHS's mission to cultivate proud, knowledgeable, and connected Jewish learners.

Through "Latkes with Love," SCHS shows that Jewish education and community flourish when every generation contributes, learns, and celebrates together, all while sharing the simple joy of a meaningful Hanukkah meal.

“We Remember. We Stand Together.”

by Orit Antosh

On October 5, 2025, two years after the tragic events of October 7, 2023, the Syracuse community gathered in solemn remembrance and unwavering solidarity for its second annual memorial. Organized through the collaboration of local Jewish organizations, the evening stood as a powerful expression of unity, mourning, and resilience in the face of profound loss.

On October 7, 2023, what began as a day of joy, Simchat Torah, was transformed into one of the darkest days in modern Jewish history when Hamas unleashed an unprecedented terror attack on the people of Israel. The assault devastated communities, claimed countless lives, and left a nation forever changed. Civilians and soldiers were brutally murdered, others were taken hostage, and the collective sense of safety was shattered.



As Mark Segel, CEO of the Jewish Federation of CNY, Marci Earlebacher, Executive Director of the Jewish Community Center of Syracuse, and Brian Raphael, president of End Antisemitism now, reminded the audience, the memorial was not only a reflection on the past but also a commitment to truth, justice, and healing.



This year's memorial was made possible through the support and collaboration of the Jewish Federation of CNY, the JCC of Central New York, and End Antisemitism Now. Special appreciation was extended to many synagogue leaders: rabbis, presidents, and administrators from Temple Adath, Yeshurun, Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas, Chabad, Temple Concord, Hillel, and Shaarei Torah, for standing together in unity during this moment of reflection and strength.

The central part of the evening was devoted to honoring the victims of October 7, each life lost representing a family forever changed and a future tragically cut short. From the outset, the message was clear: the community had come to remember the murdered, to give voice to those still held hostage, and to tell stories that must never be forgotten.

Among those stories was that of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, a 23-year-old music lover abducted from the Nova Music Festival. Gravely injured in a shelter before being taken hostage by Hamas, Hersh became a symbol of hope and resilience. For nearly eleven months, his fate remained unknown, until August 31, 2024, when it was confirmed that Hersh, along with five



other Israeli hostages, had been executed in a Hamas tunnel complex in Rafah. His memory, however, lives on. Through a special video message, Hersh's parents, Jon and Rachel, addressed the Syracuse community, expressing gratitude for their son's remembrance and calling for continued unity and strength. Hersh's profound mantra, spoken during his captivity and later shared by fellow released hostage Or Lev, "He who has a why can bear almost any how", became the guiding theme of the night. Adapted from the teachings of Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl, these words captured the spirit of the gathering: even in grief, we seek purpose; even in despair, we reach for hope.

The evening unfolded as a moving tribute to resilience, remembrance, and the enduring strength of the human spirit. Megan Coleman, WSTM anchor, guided the audience through moments of reflection, remembrance, and quiet reverence, weaving together the stories, music, and memories that gave the night its profound meaning. The program featured a heart-



wrenching account from a survivor of the Nova Music Festival massacre, whose emotional retelling brought the raw trauma of that day to life. Her words painted a vivid and painful picture of a moment that began in joy and celebration, only to descend into horror. The evening also included first-hand testimony from Frida Kristal Golan, a survivor of the Hamas attack on Kibbutz Kfar Aza, who recounted the harrowing events of October 7 with raw honesty and

quiet strength. Her story served as a solemn reminder of the unimaginable loss and terror endured by so many.

The program further featured a BBYO presentation highlighting the rehabilitation journey of an IDF soldier—a powerful narrative of courage, healing, and determination in the face of both physical and emotional wounds. Interwoven between these stories were stirring artistic performances, including a soulful violin



On October 13th, erev Simchat Torah in Israel, the last twenty living hostages held in captivity by Hamas for 738 days, were released, ending a nightmare that has consumed the Jewish community for two full years. They are home at last and there is hope for the future. As we give thanks to God for this miracle, let us also offer gratitude to the young soldiers of the IDF, who fought so bravely over these past two years, a civilian army who left their homes, jobs, and families to defend the State of Israel. We must remember also those who gave their lives, and their grieving families who carry the pain of that sacrifice, for whom there will be no moment of sweet homecoming. For two years, we have come together as a community to pray for this moment. Let us remember that unity and community and echo the words of President Trump to the Knesset: "Today, the skies are calm, the guns are silent, the sirens are still and the sun rises on a holy land that is finally at peace and a region that will live, God-willing, in peace for all eternity."

piece by Michelle Rosenberg and an evocative dance choreographed by Ariella Goldberg and dancers Abby and Marrissa Carello, capturing the emotional turmoil and resilience of a community still reeling, yet standing strong.

Attendees experienced the October 7th Memorial Exhibit, a profoundly moving collection of photographs by award-winning Israeli photojournalist Ziv Koren, one of the first photographers on the ground in southern Israel that day. His work, recognized with the ICP Infinity Award and the Siena International Photo Award, offered an unfiltered window into the devastation and resilience that followed. Alongside Koren's photographs, guests explored the "Blooms of Resilience" silent art auction, featuring original paintings by Syracuse-based artist Katya Bratslavsky, donated in support of the Hersh Goldberg-Polin Memorial Fund, a powerful act of solidarity through creativity.



The evening welcomed key civic leaders, including Deputy Mayor Sharon Owens, City Council member Marty Nave, and County Legislature member Mark Olsen, who publicly stood with the Jewish community. All elected officials were recognized, a visual reminder that hate will not be tolerated and that community bonds remain unbreakable. Special appreciation was also extended to the October 7 Memorial Committee: Moree Shoemaker, Hadas Golan Kord, Orit Antosh, and Michal Jurán, whose efforts ensured the program reflected the essence of an Israeli-style yizkor (memorial). Thanks were also extended to the many volunteers, readers, performers, and artists who made the evening possible.

The memorial was a call to conscience. As speakers reminded the audience, Jewish Americans must not turn away from the struggles faced daily by their Israeli brothers and sisters. Support is not optional; it is a moral imperative. "If we, Jewish Americans, won't stand up for Israel, who will?" echoed the evening's central message.

That night, Syracuse stood shoulder to shoulder, affirming an unbreakable bond: to memory, to justice, to Israel, and to one another.

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JCC

JCC's Dollar & a Dream Promo

by Ashley Schmitz



As the new year approaches, the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center of Syracuse is inviting the community to take the first step toward better health and wellness without breaking the bank. Beginning on December 15, the Neulander Family Sports & Fitness Center will launch its Dollar & a Dream promotion, giving new members the chance to join for just \$1. Those who sign up in December will receive the rest of December and all of January for free, giving them a head start on their fitness goals. New members who join in January will enjoy one full month of membership, to the day, for just \$1. In addition to the low-cost trial, participants in the Dollar & a Dream promotion will receive an exclusive offer for a discounted one-year membership upon completion of their trial period, making it easier to continue their fitness journey at the JCC.



"This is a great opportunity for anyone that has been wanting to try a new gym, but isn't exactly sure where to begin," says Nick Finlayson, Director of Membership and Fitness Coordinator. "This promo allows individuals to give us a test drive before making a serious fitness commitment. Between our weight room, track or more than 40 fitness classes offered every week, you can choose how to tailor a fitness routine that is enjoyable, fun and right for you!"

The offer is valid for first-time gym members only and excludes pickleball, personal training, and TRX sessions. Those interested in taking advantage of this limited-time offer can contact Nick Finlayson at nfinlayson@jccsyr.org for more information or to sign up.

Snow Much Fun at JCC Winter Break Vacation Camp

by Ashley Schmitz

A great way to keep the kids busy over winter break is provided by the Jewish Community Center of Syracuse's School Age Program with their annual Winter Break Vacation Camp. Designed to keep kids active and engaged while school is out, the JCC's vacation camps feature a variety of themed days and local field trips. "At the JCC, we love turning school breaks into opportunities for joy and connection," says Pamela Ranieri, Director of Children's Programming. "Winter Break Vacation Camp gives children the chance to explore new experiences, make memories, and enjoy time with friends." This year's schedule is jam packed with fun, from crafts and an obstacle course on Superhero Training Day, to games and relay races during a Pirate Adventure, a Music and Movement Day, Pajama Day and a Movie and so much more!



The 2025 Winter Break Vacation Camp will run from 9 am to 4 pm on Monday, December 22 - Wednesday, December 24, Friday, December 26, and

Monday, December 29 - Wednesday, December 31 and wraps up on Friday, January 2. There will be no camp over the weekend, December 25 or January 1. Families can choose to register for the full week, individual days, or any combination that fits their schedule. The daily rate to attend the camp is \$70 for JCC members and \$80 for non-members. The JCC understands that every family has

different routines and sometimes requires extra care, therefore, there will be optional early care (7-9 am) and late care (4-6 pm) available for an additional \$5 per day fee for members or \$8 per day fee for non-members.

Campers should bring a non-meat lunch, while an afternoon snack will be provided by the JCC. Since many activities will take place outdoors, children are encouraged to dress appropriately for winter weather, including coats, hats, gloves, waterproof pants, and boots. Sneakers are required for gym activities. Vacation Camps fill up fast and parents are encouraged to submit their completed registration forms and payment by Friday, December 12 to avoid late fees and guarantee participation.

For more information on this year's schedule of activities or to register, visit jccsyr.org/vacation-camps or contact Kevin Smith, School Age Program Manager, at ksmith@jccsyr.org.



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JCC Annual Chanukah Festivities

by Ashley Schmitz

The Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center and Jewish Federation of Central New York invite the entire Syracuse community to join in on the Chanukah festivities! Kick off the fun in the JCC's gymnasium with the annual Community Chanukah Party on Sunday, December 14. Everyone is welcome from 12:30-3 pm for traditional Jewish bites and refreshments while children enjoy a variety of activities including inflatables, crafts, face painting and photo-ops with the JCC mascot, Dizzy.



The JCC will continue their celebrations with the lighting of the Menorah on weeknights throughout Chanukah, beginning at 4:30 pm on Monday, December 15 at the JCC's front steps.

For questions or more information on the JCC's holiday schedule, please contact info@jccsyr.org or call 315-445-2360.



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HADASHOT TOVOT GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS!



ATTORNEY BARRY SHULMAN was honored by the Hiscock Legal Aid Society at its Justice for All Fundraising Event on September 17. In explaining the recognition HLAS said, "For nearly six decades, Barry Shulman has exemplified the ideals of fairness, mentorship, and public service. Shulman's legal and civic legacy spans law, mentorship, performance arts, and advocacy. He has long been a champion of equal access to legal representation, especially for those unable to afford it." "I've always believed that legal representation is not a privilege—it's a fundamental right," said Shulman. "Hiscock Legal Aid Society gives people a fighting chance during their most vulnerable moments. I'm honored and humbled to be recognized by an organization that truly lives that mission every day." "Barry is more than a great lawyer, he's a mentor, a community builder, and an inspiration," said Gregory Dewan, Executive Director at HLAS. "He embodies the spirit of our work, and his advocacy on behalf of those without a voice has made a lasting difference in this region."

SYRACUSE HILLEL welcomed 100 students and their families throughout Syracuse University Family Weekend, celebrating Shabbat together on Friday night and enjoying brunch on Sunday morning, when Dean Brian Konkol of Hendricks Chapel spoke with families on behalf of the University's leadership team. Students observed a meaningful Yom Kippur together with delicious pre and break fast meals at Hillel, as well as reflective services for Kol Nidrei and throughout the day at Hendricks Chapel. Hillel provided additional opportunities for students to be engaged, including home-hosted break fasts and the delivery of 33 dozen bagels to 13 Greek life chapters. Hillel celebrated Sukkot by welcoming students from the Syracuse Hebrew Day School to decorate the sukkah, enjoying pancakes while studying *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of our Fathers), and hosting lunch for faculty and staff.



CALL IN FOR CANCER is an annual phone-a-thon in support of the Upstate Cancer Center's mission of unwavering dedication to excellence in cancer care. Hosted by the Upstate Foundation, the event is broadcast on radio and television through media partners: iHeartMedia, Inc. and CNY Central. Pamela Wells, Upstate Director of Grateful Patient, Family Engagement and Annual Giving and WSTM anchor Megan Coleman proudly display the success of this year's campaign.



THE FEDERATION'S YOUNGEST FUNDRAISER is eight-year-old Syracuse Hebrew Day School third grader Eitan Kord. When Head of School Melissa Klempner told him that the school wanted to make a donation to the Federation's campaign in appreciation of its support of the school, Eitan decided to do his part. He organized a garage sale at his home, with the help of two of his classmates (Iton Gewirtz and Cason Adcock) and was able to present a gift of \$147 to Federation President & CEO Mark Segel.



This column features businesses owned by members of our community, as well as artists and musical programs and is generously sponsored by RAV Properties.

Light Over Darkness

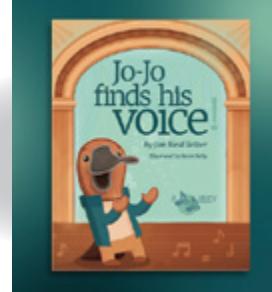


Syracusan Jon Neal Selzer is committed to making a difference for others. He has worked as an actor, social worker, financial planner and now author. He is passionate about the arts and travel and continues to spend his life trying to improve the world. He is the force behind the Today's Seeds Foundation, which promotes the arts through children's literature, sowing seeds for a long-term process of enriching civility in our broader community. A solutions-based organization, Today's Seeds seeks an end to the divisiveness permeating our society, making tangible social changes that build bridges, promotes collaboration and impacts on the great challenges of our time.

Jon's ambassador is his good friend Jo-Jo. Jo-Jo is a duckbilled platypus. He is an artist, singer, dancer and a clever, inquisitive third grader. His music teacher, Mrs. Picklejuice, thinks he has a lot of potential. Asked why he selected a platypus as his protagonist, Jon answered, "Mostly

because I think 7-year-olds might find it a funny thing to say. Besides, as a mammal they glow. They lay eggs, have a bill and webbed feet like a duck, and a tail like a beaver."

Can Jo-Jo live up to his teacher's expectations? *Jo-Jo Finds His Voice* is a gentle invitation to children ages 4-8 to discover their courage. The book uses the world of opera to explore something every child faces at some point: the fear of being seen and heard. Through



Jo-Jo's journey, young readers will discover the magic of music and the arts as tools for confidence and self-expression, learn that stage fright is normal—and something that can be overcome and learn the value of facing fear instead of giving up on new adventures

This debut title launches a five-part series introducing children to the arts, including dance, visual arts, musical theatre, and symphonic music. Each story is crafted not only to entertain but to uplift, build self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and a love for creativity.

"One of my lifelong passions is the arts," says Jon. "I find joy in watching live performances, exploring museums, and immersing myself in a wide range of creative expression. The arts have significant benefits for our well-being. The arts have the power to unite people, strengthen communities and ultimately help us build a better, more connected society we really need to embrace the arts more fully."

Jon has been inspired by message of the story of Honi and the Carob Tree: I will plant for my children as my ancestors planted for me. He also cites the Native American tradition which says, "That which you do today, impacts seven generations." Jon's books are focused on harvesting all the benefits that research has concluded the arts will bring to our overall well-being. His foundation, Today's Seeds, as well as his Jo-Jo books, seek to build bridges, find pathways and enrich the communities in which we live.

The Pessimist's Son: A Holocaust Memoir of Hope by Alexander and Martin Kimel

Note: Martin Kimel is the first cousin of Dr. Paula Trief, Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at Upstate Medical University. His father, Alex, was Paula's brother so Alex's story is also Paula's mother's story. The JO asked Dr. Eileen Angelini, the Upstate Regional Coordinator of 3GNY, to review the book.

Martin Kimel pays the ultimate tribute to his parents, survivors of the Holocaust, by bringing their heartbreak stories to the page in a palpably loving manner in *The Pessimist's Son: A Holocaust Memoir of Hope*. Martin's father Alexander is the pessimist's son of the title.

Part 1 is a combination of Alexander's memoir and Martin's edits, constituting a dialog between generations. In Part 1, the reader learns about Alexander's life in a Polish Ukrainian shtetl, the collapse of his world as he knew it, his struggles in a Nazi ghetto, and his eleven years in Communist Poland. In fact, it is this exceptional portrayal of Jewish survivors who remained in Communist Poland after the war that truly distinguishes *The Pessimist's Son: A Holocaust Memoir of Hope* from other Holocaust memoirs. Martin explains: "My dad read widely, often surprising people with his breadth of knowledge (though you would draw a blank look if you asked him anything about sports teams). This, combined with his deep knowledge of Judaism and European history, allowed him to put his life events—including shtetl life—into interesting cultural and historical contexts. My dad also spoke eight languages—including Yiddish, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Hebrews, and German—which enabled him to communicate with all the different people he encountered before, during, and after the Holocaust. Around



1990, my dad wrote a manuscript, *Anatomy of Genocide*, in which he attempted to answer fundamental questions about the Holocaust. I draw on that book here in places."

Part 2 is the haunting story of Martin's mother Eva (née Ewa Najnuł) whose father was a tragic victim of the "Holocaust by Bullets." The horror continues with the post-Liberation period when reunions in Lódz reveal how many Jews had been killed as well as descriptions of the destruction of Jewish Radom. However, especially poignant is the final chapter of Part 2 that details the painful reality that antisemitism did not stop with the end of World War II

Part 3 relates Alexander and Eva's life together from 1956 when they left Poland for Israel, their emigration to the United States, and Poland's denial of Eva's request to attend her stepfather's funeral in 1967. Despite the multiple traumatic hardships, the reader learns how Alexander and Eva come to achieve the American Dream and provide a good life for Martin and his sister Pam, complete with learning to celebrate American Thanksgiving where it was permissible to substitute potato kugel for pumpkin pie. Part 3 also includes two of Alexander's poems, "We Will Never Forget—Auschwitz" and "Holocaust Lamentations" as well as two lists of relatives, the first for Alexander and the second for Eva, known to have perished in the Holocaust.

The Pessimist's Son: A Holocaust Memoir of Hope is much more than just a Holocaust memoir. What begins as a depiction of life in Poland amidst the Nazi and Soviet takeovers of Europe and their catastrophic reverberations evolves into a comprehensive portrayal of Polish Jewry before, during, and after World War II.

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BARBARA OLUM
September 25, 2025

Barbara Olum, 95, passed away peacefully on September 25, 2025 at The Cottages in Cicero. Born on July 13, 1930 to Allen and Hannah Steinberg Olum, she had been a resident of Fayetteville for more than 70 years.

Barbara was raised in the family home on Euclid Avenue. She was a graduate of Syracuse University with a degree in fashion merchandising. While at SU she was a member of Phi Sigma Sigma Sorority. She was a past member of Temple Concord, a former board member of Mott Road Elementary School, and was involved with the League of Women Voters. Barbara was



proud to have helped found "Take A Break", a respite program for children with developmental disabilities and their siblings, part of the Parent's Information Group for Exceptional Children.

Her family includes her daughter Beth Weinstein (Joel) Shepherd of Seattle, grandchildren April (Caren) Hathaway of Syracuse, and Ardea (Beth) Shepherd of Seattle and son-in-law Jay (Caren) Hathaway of Syracuse. Barbara was predeceased by her daughter Caren Weinstein Hathaway and her sisters Shirley Olum Smith and Roslyn Olum Greenhouse.

A celebration of Barbara's life will be held at a later date.

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CAROL DAVIS
HERSHMAN
October 6, 2025



Carol Davis Hershman, 87 passed away peacefully on October 6, 2025 at her home surrounded by her family. Born in Queens, New York on January 18, 1938 to Rueben and Marion Epstein, she had been a resident of Syracuse for 43 years until moving permanently to Florida in 1999.

While attending Syracuse University she met and fell quickly and deeply in love with her future husband Louis Davis. They were married in 1957. Together they built a life and home in Syracuse where they would raise their three children. They enjoyed 33 years together until Louis' passing in December of 1990. In 1999 Carol met Sheldon Hershman. They married and enjoyed 23 golden years together. Sheldon passed away in October of 2023.

Carol was a successful real estate agent for Kupperman and Wood Realty and several other real estate agencies. Carol was an active member of Temple Beth El where she was known as the Candy Lady for

her unmatched sales of Passover candy. She was a seasoned golfer and proficient card player. Carol's favorite times and memories were with her children and grandchildren who were the loves and light of her life. In her later years she could be found most days enjoying golfing, playing canasta, shopping and dining with her many lifelong friends.

Carol taught a master class in resilience, strength and the ability to move forward. She is a role model for a life well lived and her lessons will live on in so many for years to come.

Her family includes Isaac Stephen (Kathleen) Davis, Susan (Russell) Rothstein and Marion (Philip) Cantor; her six grandchildren Joshua Ian and Louis Davis, Louis and Richard Rothstein and Jacob and Ross Cantor. She was predeceased by her eldest grandson Joshua Ian Davis.

Funeral services and burial were in Florida. Contributions in her memory may be made to the Joshua Ian Davis Memorial Fund c/o the Jewish Community Foundation of CNY, 5655 Thompson Road, Dewitt, New York 13214.

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DANIEL M. WATERMAN
October 8, 2025



It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Daniel M. Waterman, 22, of Liverpool, New York, who left this world on October 8, 2025, far too soon following a tragic act of violence. Daniel passed away after courageously fighting for eight months from injuries sustained in a crash.

Daniel was an excited, soon-to-be father of a baby girl. He wanted nothing more than to come home to her and to the family who loved him so dearly. A natural athlete, Daniel especially loved basketball and could often be found on the court, where his passion and determination shone through. His strength, determination, and infectious energy left a lasting impression on everyone who knew him.

Daniel's family includes his loving mother,

BERNIE BUGIN
October 14, 2025



Bernie Bugin, 96, passed away on October 14, 2025 at Menorah Park. He was born on October 23, 1928 in Buffalo to Sam and Eva Bugin. Bernie served his country during the Korean War and was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army in 1960.

He and Virginia Jacobs were married on February 14, 1953, and were married for 40 years until her passing on January 1, 1993. In October 1993, he met Linda Stone, who has been his companion for 32 years.

ARLENE ABEND
October 17, 2025



It is with great sadness and an abundance of unique memories that family and friends mourn the passing of Arlene Abend on October 17, 2025. She was born in Brooklyn on June 23, 1931. Always drawn to the ocean, she frequented Brighton Beach in her early years. A graduate of the Arts at Cooper Union, finishing her bachelor's at Syracuse University, her artistic endeavors continued well into her early nineties. She was embedded into the creative culture of Syracuse and Upstate New York for over six decades.

Beginning with pastel portraits, Arlene expanded her talents into the mediums of ceramics, bronze, resins, and steel, focusing the majority of her career on metal sculpture, from whimsical figurines to her favorite commissions for towering creations.

A trailblazer and an avid feminist before it was fashionable, Arlene would never back down from misogyny. Her stories were infectious and her love for sunsets and fresh snow on the ground was immeasurable. "I'm explaining, not complaining," was a favorite quote from her mom, notwithstanding another favorite adage, "When you make plans, God laughs."

Arlene is survived by her adult children, Tema Abend and Les (Carol) Abend, and her grandchildren, Alyssa O'Neal-Abend and Shira O'Neal-Abend. A Celebration of Life will be held at Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevra Shas on the evening of February 25, 2026.

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KATHY ANNE
BRODSKY
October 19, 2025



Kathy Anne Brodsky, 73, passed away peacefully with family by her side on October 19, 2025 after a long illness. She was born on December 19, 1951 in New York City to Joan and Howard Smith. She had been a resident of Syracuse for more than 50 years.

Kathy was a graduate of Syracuse University with both undergraduate and master's degrees in social work. During her professional career she was a social worker for the Onondaga County Department of Health's Home Care Unit, SUNY Upstate Hospital, and the Regional Oncology Center. She then joined the American Cancer Society as a patient services provider, where she worked until her retirement.

Kathy was a former member of Temple Concord, volunteering in the gift shop for many years. She was an avid quilter and knitter, lovingly creating gifts for her family and friends in her free time. Kathy was an active member of the Dewittshire Community Club, organizing events and tending gardens in the neighborhood that she held so dear. Most importantly, Kathy was a loving wife, mother, grandmother, aunt, sister, niece, and friend.

Her family includes Howard, her husband of 52 years, their sons Benjamin (Tracy), Jacob (Erin), David, and Peter (Erika), their grandchildren Ashlin, Martin, Paul, Dara, Elena, Seth, Reuben, and Evelyn. Kathy was predeceased by her parents and her loving brother, Arthur Smith.

Contributions in her memory may be made to the Food Bank of CNY or Upstate Medical University.

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ALAN A. KOLDIN
October 25, 2025



Alan A. Koldin, 80, died peacefully at his home with his wife by his side on October 25, 2025 after a courageous battle with progressive supranuclear palsy. Alan was born in Syracuse to the late Herman and Harriet Koldin. A 1963 graduate of Nottingham High School, he received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Syracuse University. Alan spent his career working as a probation officer for Onondaga County, followed by work in life insurance, retail sales as a small business owner, and title insurance.

Alan was a huge fan of SU sports. He enjoyed sitting in his comfortable recliner donning his SU shirts to cheer on the football and basketball teams. He was a long-term supporter of SU women's sports. Alan played in several bowling leagues and was an avid golfer, enjoying weekend rounds with friends and family. He was also a lifelong member of Temple Adath Yeshurun. For many years in retirement, he volunteered delivering for Meals on Wheels and was recognized as the Eagle Bulletin Volunteer of the Month in 2013.

Family was central to Alan's life, treasuring time spent at family meals and get-togethers. He told classic dad jokes, sang to the oldies, and loved dancing the twist. His kindness will be remembered for years to come and he will forever be missed by all who loved him. He loved his entire family, and particularly cherished spending time with his granddaughters. Above all, he loved his wife, with whom he celebrated 50 years of marriage in May.

Alan is survived by his wife, Myrna Rubin Koldin; their daughter Hillary Koldin and son Andrew (Cindy) Koldin; their granddaughters Brianna, Emily, and Mirabel; his brother Leonard Koldin, sister Barbara (Robert) Schulman, brother-in-law Jeffrey (Leslie) Rubin, several nieces and nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews, and many cousins.

Contributions in Alan's memory can be made to CurePSP or Kosher Meals on Wheels at Syracuse Jewish Family Service.

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To learn more, contact Mark Segel at msegel@jewishfoundationcny.org or 315-445-0270.