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Drawing strength from Purim's message

By JAN LEE

JNS

For many of us this year, Purim festivities won't arrive soon enough. The Jewish holiday that is always marked by joyful celebrations seems to offer its own unique antidote to the challenges and pain that Jews everywhere are facing right now. For one night, we can forget our worries about the hostages, the war and anti-Semitism at home. We can don our masks and celebrate Mordechai and Queen Esther's bravery. Purim, the calendar's happiest Jewish holiday, emboldens our spirit and renews our sense of hope, even at the darkest of times.

Identity

But the true reason for this unusual tradition, rabbis tell us, has nothing to do with our need to "let loose" or de-stress. It has to do with identity and how we see ourselves.

There are a myriad of religious and cultural explanations for why the simple, humble costume mask fulfills such an integral part of Purim celebrations, but one of the simplest and most eloquent, is offered by Rabbi Ari Kahn: "Purim is a reminder that we spend so much of our lives dressing up and leading lives that are in dissonance with our souls,"



PHOTO COURTESY OF FERNAND-DE CANNE OF UNSPLASH.

Hidden or exposed identity is a focus of the Purim holiday.

explains Khan. "We allow our disguises to lull us into a false sense of identity ... rather than [acknowledge] the natural beauty of our Jewish identity."

Esther is said to have spent the first few years as queen masquerading as a non-Jew until she discovered that revealing her true identity might be able to protect her Jewish community. Our masquerade is a whimsical nod to Esther's story, but it's also a statement about the power of courage and standing up for who we are.

Memory Of A Purim

Each year, as we approach Purim, I find myself reflecting on one of my first real Purims. I say "real" because, until that night in 1974, my appreciation of why we celebrated this holiday each year was pretty superficial. I had been raised in a secular household with minimal exposure to Jewish traditions. It wasn't until I decided to start attending synagogue in my teens that I heard my first Megillah reading. Some four years later, freshly out of high school, I signed up for an ulpan, and to the consternation of my parents, headed to northern Israel to learn Hebrew.

The Yom Kippur War had formally ended by the time I arrived in January, but skirmishes on the Golan were still taking place. Tensions were still high in the Galilee Valley where I lived. By March, a new threat had begun to emerge from Lebanon: terror attacks from the PLO. My kibbutz was less than 10 miles from the border. Preparations for the holiday had been in the works for weeks. The kibbutz was buzzing with soldiers returning home for the holiday, and excitement was high. After months of what seemed like daily shelling in the valley, everyone was ready to enjoy a celebration.

But a few hours before the festival was to begin, the kibbutz canceled the event. There would be no Purim, we were told; the risk of an attack was too high. Residents weren't restricted to their quarters, but large public gatherings and noise, which the council worried could attract attention, were banned. The mood around the kibbutz was understandably bleak.

Strength In A Costume

Looking back, I realized that even three months into my stay, I was remarkably ignorant about the message of a terrorist alert. That evening, I decided to walk over to the dining hall to get a cup of tea. I took a short path to the stairs leading up to the dining room.

Just as I was about to climb the steps, I saw something move on the porch above me. I froze. The building was completely dark except for a bright light above the entrance. Standing to the right of the door, partially hidden in the shadows, was a tall figure. I could just make out the frame of a man in a green Israel Defense Forces uniform. In fact, his face was the only part that was fully illuminated. A bright red bulb sat perched on the tip of his nose, surrounded by swirls of blue, red and white paint. His mask, expertly applied, transformed his face into that of a jolly clown. As my eyes accustomed to the darkness further, I could see that his uniform was unaltered; only his face hinted at the fact that tonight was Purim. The soldier never once moved from his post. His eyes were locked on the entrance to the kibbutz, though I suspect his actual orders were to deter idiots like me from entering and turning on lights during an alert.

Strength In A Custom

Didn't he realize that the party had been called off? I thought naively as I walked back to my room. Maybe he didn't have time to wash off the make-up? It wasn't until later that I realized his appearance wasn't a mistake; it was meant to remind him of Purim's message. In a moment of danger, you can erase the festivities from the calendar, but you can't erase who we are—and the Jew from within.

Masks have the power to transform how we see ourselves, and in so doing, to reshape how others see us. At a moment of uncertainty as Esther initially found, a mask has a way of convincing us who we need to "be" at that moment. The soldier facing an unseen threat in the darkness can draw strength when he reminds himself that the courage and identity within are all he needs.

May this Purim be joyful, and may we all draw strength from its story.

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‘We need the joy’: Jews around the world gear up for Purim despite the pain

By SARAH OGINCE

JNS

More than 2,000 years ago, when the Jews of Persia triumphed over an existential threat, they celebrated by proclaiming a holiday: They gave charity, the Scroll of Esther recounts, sent each other presents of food, ate, drank and were happy.

But as Jews in Israel and the diaspora prepare to celebrate the raucous festival of Purim this year, many are feeling that the party is premature--the wounds of the horrific Hamas massacres on Oct. 7 are too fresh; the war's casualties mount daily; hostages remain in Gaza.

“On the one hand, we are still waiting for victory—we do not feel there at all, and we are all dealing with trauma,” says Sarah Reinstein, a psychiatrist living in Elkana, a Jewish community in the northwestern Samarian hills. “On the other hand, we need the joy.”

But Purim, which this year begins on the evening of March 23 and continues until nightfall on March 24, leaves little room for conflicted feelings. Feasting, masquerades, and giving charity and gifts of food are the prescribed order of the day. Jewish law actually prohibits public displays of mourning on the holiday, even for those grieving close relatives. (Observant Jews do, however, fast on March 21 from morning until evening—the Fast of Esther—commemorating the events in Shushan, the capital city where the Scroll of Esther is set.)

One time-honored Purim custom may seem particularly appealing this year—the rabbis of the Talmud famously advise Purim revelers to drink until they can't tell the difference between Mordechai, the Jewish hero of the Scroll of Esther, and Haman, the enemy of the Jews. But many Jews say they're not planning to overindulge this year.

If anything, the moment requires more vigilance, Elliot Cosgrove, senior rabbi at Manhattan's Park Avenue Synagogue told JNS: “The challenge right now is to be eyes wide open to what's happening in Israel and Gaza, and also appreciate the here and now.”

The synagogue's Purim play (“mischief, mayhem and mishugas aboard the cruise liner SS Shushan”) will be performed as usual, though the funds raised during the holiday will go to Israel, along with \$18 million the congregation has already sent. “The community response was incredibly affirming,” Cosgrove says, “but in the scope of the need, a drop in the bucket.”

The insistence on keeping Purim celebrations “as usual” is deliberate, Cosgrove says: “My congregants don't want their Judaism to be reduced to the hatred of others.”

Honoring The Victims

The most dedicated and zealous



group of Purim observers is unlikely to have any trouble carrying on as usual this year. Melinda Strauss, a news and social-media content creator in Long Island, has not shared her mixed feelings about the holiday with her kids. “I don't want to take away from their Purim joy,” says the mother of two. “If they want to hang out with friends, make a ton of mishloach manot, dress up, and all of that, I am so in to support them.”

But Strauss herself is looking for ways to keep Oct. 7 in mind, even in the midst of the holiday madness. “My mishloach manot will be smaller as I donate more to Israel,” she says. She is also planning to honor two of the victims—Hadar and Itay Berdichevsky—by baking and distributing Hadar's favorite cake. “I think we can feel joy and sadness at the same time, and that's OK,” she says.

Trauma

In Israel, however, where almost everyone has been touched directly by the events of the last few months, the question is not only one of sadness but of “trauma we have not seen in our generation,” psychologist Norman Goldwasser says. Goldwasser, who lives and practices in Florida, was in Israel on Oct. 7 and treated survivors in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. He recently returned to train other psychologists in a new trauma center for soldiers returning from the Gaza Strip.

He's not advising any of his patients to abstain from Purim celebrations this year, Goldwasser told JNS: “No one should allow Hamas or the delusional elements of the world who are attempting to vilify Israel to dampen our ability to celebrate a joyous holiday.”

And although it might seem counterintuitive, he believes that the Scroll of Esther resonates with those recovering from trauma. He cites the famous phrase v'nahafoch hu, which describes the many reversals in the Purim story, as good characters triumph and evil ones fall: “The concept of the reversal of

outcomes [gives us] the ability to have faith that God is in charge and can give us the strength and resilience to carry on,” he says.

Laughing At Ourselves

In the true spirit of reversals, for one group of Jews, having a more serious Purim is a reprieve. “For me, it's easier, because there are fewer expectations from comedians this Purim,” Mendy

Pellin says.

A “kosher comedian” and filmmaker, Pellin plans to spend the day at home in New York City, “schlepping around boxes” of mishloach manot with his kids. But as someone who has tackled once-taboo issues like child sexual abuse in his Brooklyn Chasidic community, he believes that Purim, like comedy, has the potential to “help us laugh at the way our mind processes trauma.”

Spark Some Joy

“Purim is a time to step away from logic and lean closer to irrational feelings of joy,” Pellin says, “V'nahafoch hu—turning things on their head—in today's climate means sanity.”

But perhaps the best reason to celebrate Purim this year is that it is a quintessentially communal holiday, the feasting, charity and gifts building bonds that endure to provide support and comfort. OneFamily, an organization that helps terror victims and their families in Israel, hosted a Purim party last month for bereaved families in Jerusalem, with more to come this month. “Every holiday is an opportunity to spark some joy, bring some light,” says CEO Chantal

Continued on page 14

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It's not too soon for humor in a post-Oct. 7 world, experts say

Experts have told Jewish News Service (JNS) that there's still room for humor in a post-Oct. 7 world. The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research planned to debut its online, self-paced, 13-hour course titled, "Is anything okay? The history of Jews and comedy in America" last November.

On Oct. 9, the institute's staff met to discuss the course and decided to postpone it. "We looked at each other and said, 'We can't launch this.' It's just not appropriate," Eddy Portnoy, YIVO's senior academic advisor and director of exhibitions, told JNS.

More than four months later and with Purim—the holiday that most embodies absurdity and levity—approaching, the YIVO course is set to debut on March 21.

Coping And Understanding?

It's not too soon after Oct. 7 for humor, according to Ezra Cappell, professor of Jewish studies and English at the College of Charleston in South Carolina, who has lectured and published on Jewish humor.

"There's this notion that humor is a way of understanding. It's also a way of fighting back," Cappell, who is not involved in the YIVO course, told JNS. "In that sense, I don't know about it being too soon. When I teach humor, I use it as a form of protest, a way of keeping your dignity."



Milton Berle with an unnamed woman at Grossinger's Country Club in the Catskills in 1954.

There has been "quite a bit of humor" that has sought to "make sense of the horrors of Auschwitz and Jewish history," according to Cappell, the grandson of Holocaust survivors and whose grandfather shared with him some of the humorous things that helped him get through life in a concentration camp.

"I have no doubt that Oct. 7, despite the recent difficulties and the horror that we went through, is still going to do the same, as a means of coping and

understanding," he said.

"What is holy? What is not? They were making jokes in the Warsaw Ghetto," Cappell added. "I think that humor is so interwoven in the Jewish experience of making sense of the world and of survival."

'We Haven't Changed'

"Moments of violence and discrimination" punctuate Jewish history, according to Ben Kaplan, director of education at YIVO.

"We want to be able to tell this history in a way that people understand how to contextualize how Jews have responded to this throughout the centuries," Kaplan told JNS.

The forthcoming course, which will unveil new, free content weekly and be archived for later binge-style watching, focuses largely on Jewish influence and impact on the development of the U.S. comedy industry.

Participants, who need to register in advance, will receive a mix of short video lectures from scholars and academics, interviews, oral histories and personal reflections from Jewish comedians, writers, producers and entertainment-industry insiders.

The course will address the Borscht



PHOTO COURTESY OF YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH.

Rodney Dangerfield.

Belt, the Catskills getaway where New York Jews flocked when other vacation spots were off-limits. That area would become a legendary home to Jewish comedy, birthing the careers of countless entertainers.

But as one YIVO lesson imparts, the original farmhouses where Jews stayed provided no hired entertainment, as typical resorts did. So, Jews came up with their own.

Enlisting well-known comedians, including Paul Reiser (of "Mad About You"), Lewis Black and Marc Maron (of an eponymous podcast), the course draws on YIVO's vast archives, including documents, sound recordings and photos.

The course will address Mendeley Mocher Sforim (1835-1917), known as the grandfather of Yiddish literature, and his musings on Jews. One of the writer's earliest stories, which delves into the informality of Jews meeting each other for the first time, will be part of the course, Portnoy told JNS.

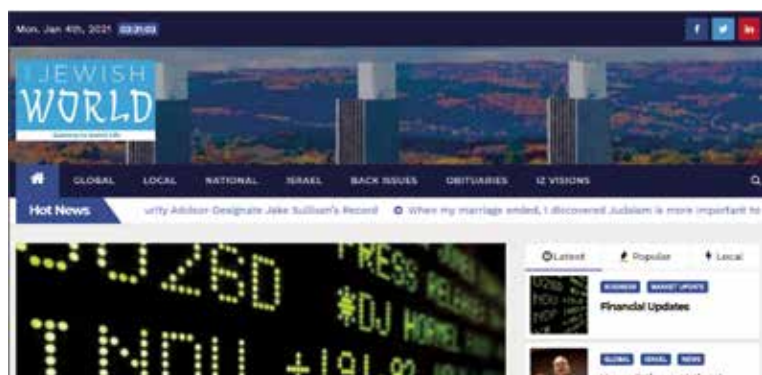
"They ask personal questions, and they also constantly touch each other's clothing," Portnoy said, paraphrasing the writer's reflections. "They rub the clothing between their fingers, and they ask how much it costs."

Portnoy hadn't realized that comedies like "Seinfeld" and "Curb Your Enthusiasm" made similar observations about unsolicited touching of clothing more than a century later. He said that's "one of the weird little details" in the course. "To be able to connect Jewish culture from Mendeley Mocher Sforim to Jerry Seinfeld—it spans a great distance."

"It seems like Jews haven't really changed at all," he added.

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See page 2

Hamas steals food from its citizens, yet Israel gets blamed

By JASON SHVILI

JNS

“Israel has been intentionally starving the Palestinian people in Gaza since 8 October,” say United Nations “experts.” This accusation is blatantly false: Israel is neither responsible for nor complicit in Gazans going hungry.

First, Israel facilitates unprecedented deliveries of food to Gaza, despite enormous obstacles. Second, there is no food shortage in Gaza. Third, it is Hamas who is starving Gaza’s civilians, using their suffering to bring international pressure on Israel to cease its campaign to destroy the terrorist group.

Given these realities, why do the media and leftist politicians willingly swallow and perpetuate the lie that Israel is starving Gazans? All evidence shows that while there is food in Gaza, most Gazans cannot afford it. The reason: Hamas prevents needy Gazans from accessing donated food by stealing and reselling it on the black market—forcing Gazans to pay exorbitant prices for what should be free.

Hamas is also working to prevent Israel’s efforts to facilitate aid delivery to ordinary Gazans through local clans and business people, threatening reprisals against Palestinians who cooperate with Israel as it attempts to prevent theft by the terrorists.

For the media, politicians, the United



PHOTO COURTESY OF ABED RAHIM KHATIB/FLASH90

Trucks with aid arrive on the Gaza side of the Kerem Shalom border crossing, Feb. 17, 2024.

Nations and NGOs to blame Israel for the suffering of Gazan civilians is not only inaccurate and unfair, it distracts world attention from the real reasons for Gaza’s hunger crisis. Where are the stories exposing Hamas’s profiteering in food it steals from the mouths of starving children and families? Where are the cries to stop the plunder and safely deliver donated food directly to ordinary Gazans?

The accusation that Israel is “starving Gazans” is a blood libel—malicious

and unproven. There is no proof that Israel intentionally limits food supplies to Gaza. To the contrary, Israel makes Herculean efforts to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza. Over the last five months, Israel has allowed nearly 14,000 aid trucks into Gaza—an average of about 2,800 a month, 665 a week. Some 126 food trucks per day enter Gaza at press time. COGAT, the body responsible for implementing the Israeli government’s civilian policy in the Gaza Strip, has stat-

ed, “There is no limit to the amount of aid that can enter Gaza.”

Remember, Israel itself facilitated the aid convoy that in February gave rise to another blood libel—the lie that the Israel Defense Forces murdered over 100 civilians seeking aid on Feb. 29. Israel organized this convoy in partnership with local Palestinian businessmen. Contrary to media reports, nearly all the civilians killed trying to access the aid died in a stampede that ensued when they swarmed the convoy.

Israel welcomes every effort to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Gaza, including its suggestion of aid delivery by sea, which the United States is currently implementing.

While the media and many NGOs portray the humanitarian situation in Gaza as apocalyptic, this seems a gross exaggeration, especially when comparing Gaza now to, say, Somalia in 2011, where a famine was only declared once 100,000 people had died. The Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry claims 21 people have died of malnutrition and dehydration—tragic, but hardly a humanitarian disaster.

Still, media run such headlines as, “Gaza residents surviving off animal feed and rice as food dwindles.” In contrast, evidence indicates sufficient food is available in Gaza markets—for those who can afford it.

In an interview with **The New Arab**,
Continued on page 16



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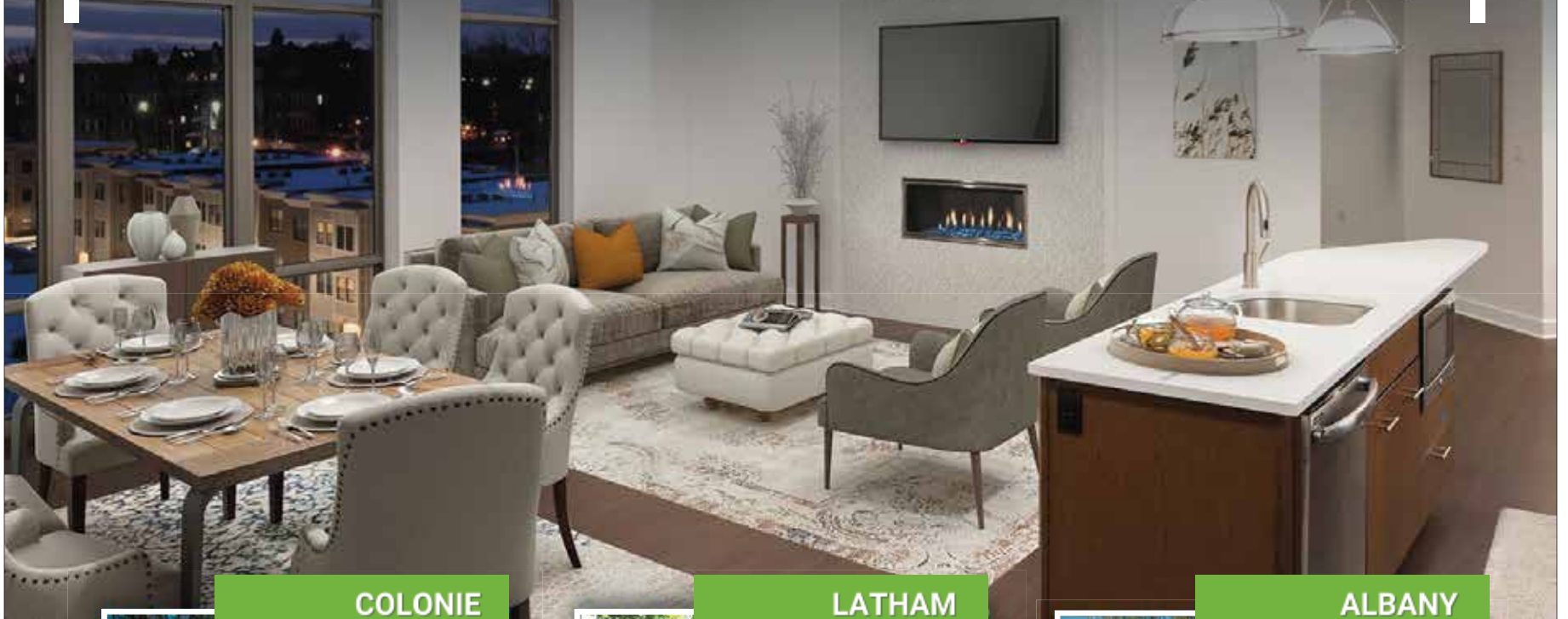
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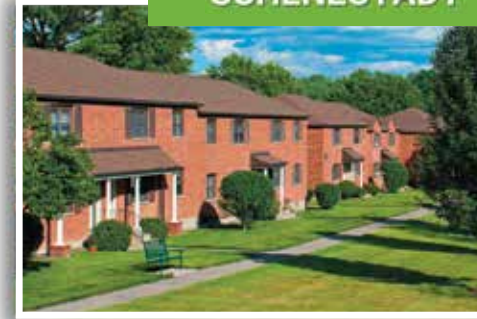
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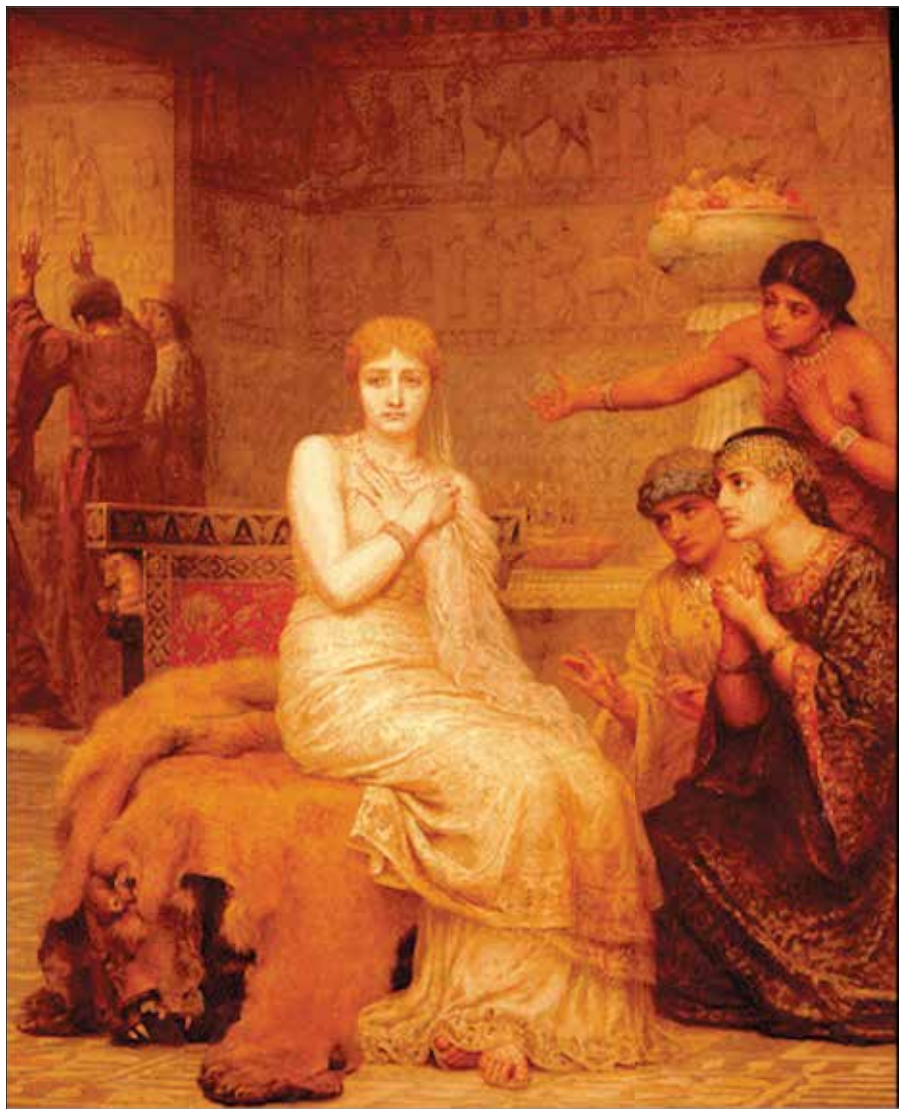


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Two Purim heroines: one saves a people, one her self-respect; both offer lessons for today



Vashti refuses the king's summons, an 1879 painting by Edwin Long. Vashti was queen of Persia and the first wife of Persian King Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther, which is read on Purim.

By MARILYN SHAPIRO

Fifty-one years ago this March, Larry, my husband, and I met at a Purim party held at Herbie's Restaurant on Central Ave. in Albany. In a corny, hastily put-together shpiel, Larry a.k.a. Ahasuerus chose me a.k.a. Esther and bypassed my competitors, Libby the Lib and the sassy, insolent Vashti.

Heroines

Would Larry have chosen me if I had played Vashti? After all, for most of Jewish history, she was portrayed as the headstrong, rash woman who incurred not only the wrath of King Ahasuerus, but also the condemnation of the other male leaders of Persia. "Not obey the king? Why, next thing you know, all the women in our kingdom will be disobeying the men in their lives!" they cried. "Banish the hussy! Or even better yet, execute her to set an example!"

In Purim party after Purim party, most girls—and women—have preferred to dress up as the beautiful, passive replacement who obediently followed the edicts of her husband, King Ahasuerus, and the directions of her uncle Mordechai. Fearing the same fate as her predecessor, even

when faced with the extermination of all the Jews in Persia, Esther took time approach her husband. She fasted for three days, threw one banquet, then another, and waited patiently and gracefully for the right moment to reveal the evil machinations of the notorious Haman.

Esther finally came through for us, resulting in her always being viewed as the heroine of the story.

With age, wisdom, and more feminist leanings, I have learned to cheer for Vashti, who refused to bow to her husband's misogynistic demands to dance naked in front of a group of of inebriated male chauvinists. In a 2023 article in the [Harvard] *Crimson*, writer Arielle C. Frommer dates the history of feminist interpretations of the Purim story to as early as the mid-nineteenth century.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a 19th century leader in the women's rights movements, described Vashti as "a sublime representative of self-centered womanhood." Harriet Beecher Stowe, abolitionist and author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, praised Vashti's resistance as a "first stand for women's rights." "We shall stand amazed that there was a woman found at the head of the Persian empire that dared

to disobey the command even of a drunken monarch," Stowe wrote.

Praise for Vashti continues into the present day. LaVerne McCain Gill, journalist and pastor, describes Vashti as a "model of rebellion against the patriarchy." Christian *Pentateuch* scholar Alice L. Taffy views the disgraced first wife as a greater hero for her lack of dependence on any male figure to make her decision. As while many stories feature Jewish heroes vanquishing their persecutors, Frommer writes that the Purim story is "dependent on a female heroine taking a stand against a patriarchal monarchy, thus linking Jewish liberation directly to the feminist experience."

A Life For Vashti?

So if Vashti was banished, but not beheaded, I wonder what happened to her? Did she escape to another country that respected strong-willed women who stood their ground?

And did King Ahasuerus and Esther live happily ever after, enjoying wine and challah on Shabbat? Did he give up excessive drinking and look at not only Esther, but all women with more respect?

Get Up, Stand Up...

In this election year, it may be wise for all women to remember the story of Purim and the traits of these women. In 2022, the United States Supreme Court overturned *Roe vs. Wade*, ending the federal constitutional right to abortion in the United States.

According to Planned Parenthood, as a result, one in three women now live in states where abortion is not accessible. In the first few months after *Roe* was overturned, 18 states banned or severely restricted abortion. Today more states are working to pass bans.

In February, a state Supreme Court ruling that found frozen embryos have the rights of children under the state's wrongful death law.

The resulting news stories have been horrifying. In Florida, a woman was forced to carry her child to full term despite the doctors' knowledge that he would die shortly after birth. In Texas, doctors in one hospital told a 25-year-old woman whose ectopic pregnancy endangered her life to "go home and wait." [She had emergency

Continued on page 10



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Calendar of Events



FRIDAY, MARCH 22

Beth Emeth Erev Shabbat Service – 5:30 p.m. in-person at 100 Academy Rd., Albany, or via live-stream at www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Info. – 518-436-9761, ClergyAdmin@CBEAlbany.org.

SATURDAY, MARCH 23

Megillah & Martinis – 8:15 p.m. Clifton Park Chabad. Info. – Cliftonparkchabad@gmail.com, 518-495-0772/9.

Agudat Achim Purim Shpiel – 8-10 p.m. 2117 Union St., Schenectady. Adult program. Info. – 518-393-9211.

Chatham Synagogue: Purim A La Parisienne – 6-8:30 p.m. 1536 County Rt. 28 Valatie. Megillah, costume parade, music, spiel. Info. – thechathamsynagogue@gmail.com.

Beth Emeth CBE & Me Purim – 9-10 a.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany. For kids, 0-5 and their grown-ups. A Shabbat experience with Purim focus. Costumes welcome. Reg. – www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Info. – 518-436-9761, Andrea@CBEAlbany.org.

Ohav Shalom, Havdallah, Megillah – 7 p.m. Ohav, 113 New Krumkill Rd., Albany. Info. – 518-527-1163.

Beth Emeth Torah Study – 9:30 -10:30 a.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany. Discussion of the Torah portion **Vayikra**, in-person, led by Spencer Mandell, rabbinic intern, ClergyAdmin@CBEAlbany.org. Zoom link: <https://Us02Web.Zoom.us/j/89304372729>. Password: CBE. Info. – 518-436-9761

Bethlehem Chabad Saturday Night Live – 8:30 p.m. 393 Delaware Ave., Delmar. Free. Info., Res. – www.bethlehemchabad.com/purim/info@bethlehemchabad.com, 518-439-3310.

Purim Family Potluck – 5-9 p.m. Temple Gates of Heaven, 852 Ashmore Ave., Schenectady. Dinner, play, service. Info. – 518-374-8173, <http://www.cgoh.org>.

Star Wars Purim – 6-9 p.m. Temple Berith Shalom, 167 Third St., Troy. Info. – 518-272-8872.

Temple Israel Havdallah-Megillah – 8-9:30 p.m. Temple Israel, 600 New Scotland Ave., Albany. Snacks. \$15. Info. – 518-438-7658.

SUNDAY, MARCH 24

SJCC Purim Carnival – 2-4 p.m. Schenectady Center, 2565 Balltown Rd. Reg. – \$15 for members, \$18 for nonmembers. \$25 at the door. Info. – 518-377-8803.

No Need To Panic In Persia Party – 9:20 a.m.-1 p.m. Agudat Achim Synagogue, 2117 Union St., Schenectady. Services, Megillah, costumes. Luncheon. \$5, kids, \$10, adults. Info. – 518-393-9211.

Temple Sinai Purim Carnival – 9-11 a.m. Knights Of Columbus Hall, 50 Pine

Rd., Saratoga Springs. Megillah reading, 9:45 a.m. \$10. Info. – Temple Sinai, 518-584-8730.

Colonie Chabad Purim In Israel Party – 4 p.m. All ages. Dinner, music, Megillah, misloach manot. Free. Res. required, chaicentercolonie@gmail.com or 518-368-7886.

Bethlehem Chabad Emoji Purim – 11:30 a.m. 393 Delaware Ave., Delmar. Reg. – \$15 adult and \$10 child. Info., Res. – www.bethlehemchabad.com/emoji/info@bethlehemchabad.com, 518-439-3310.

Clifton Park Chabad Family Purim In Jerusalem – 5-7 p.m. Clifton Park Senior Center, 6 Clifton Common Ct., Clifton Park, multi-media Megillah reading, crafts, “dinner at the shuk.” \$20 adults, \$15, children. Info. – 518-495-0772/9.

Beth Emeth All Committees Fair – 9:30 -10:15 a.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany. Ways to become involved in the CBE community focus. Info. – 518-436-9761, Info@CBEAlbany.org.

Beth Emeth Purim Spiel & Carnival – 10:15 a.m. – 100 Academy Rd., Albany. All ages welcome. Costumes encouraged. Megillah reading, Spiel: Esther’s Story/Taylor’s Version, followed by carnival games run by CBE youth group members. Food for sale (cash only) cooked by the brotherhood. Info. – 518-436-9761, Info@CBEAlbany.org.

Beth El, Vt. Purim Celebration – 11 a.m. Beth El, 107 Adams St., Bennington Vt. Megillah, spiel, banquet. Res., Info. – 802-442-9645.

MONDAY, MARCH 25

AJCC Teen Food Competition – 6:30 -8:30 p.m. Albany Center, 340 Whitehall Rd., Albany. Teams of 4 teens to compete in cooking for prizes. Chopped. \$20. Info. Reg. – www.albanyjcc.org or 518-438-6651.

TUESDAY, MARCH 26

This Is Your Song Too – 7:30 p.m. Emerson Auditorium, Palamountain Hall, Skidmore College, 815 N. Broadway. Skidmore alums Oren Kroll-Zeldin (Class of 2003, religious studies) and Ariella Werden-Greenfield (Class of 2004, religious studies) to note the release of **This is Your Song Too**, a collection of essays exploring Jewish identity through the band Phish and their diehard fans. The coeditors will discuss the book. Part of Jacob Perlow series at Skidmore.

Our Solidarity Trips To Israel – 6:30-8 p.m. SJCC, 2565 Balltown Rd., Schenectady. Ed and Andrea Leighton and Judy Ben-Ami to review their recent Israel trips. Free. Res. – judyb@schenectadyjcc.org. Info. – 518-377-8803.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27

Beth Emeth Lunch and Learn: Israel at 75 – 12 -1:15 p.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany. Participants bring lunch. Reg. – www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Info. – 518-436-9761, ClergyAdmin@CBEAlbany.org.

Beth Emeth Youth Group – 5:30 -7 p.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany. Weekly meeting for high school students. Info. –

518-436-9761, CBEYouthGroup@gmail.com.

Beth Emeth Jewish Basics – 7-8 p.m., in-person at 100 Academy Rd., Albany or via Zoom. Twice-monthly class. Led by clergy Rabbi Greg Weitzman, Cantor Emily Short and Director of Lifelong Learning Rabbi Shara Siegfeld with guest speakers. Free for B.E. members. \$72 for non-members (covers materials). Reg. – www.BethEmethAlbany.org.

THURSDAY, MARCH 28

The Braid: Yearning To Be Free – 7 p.m. SJCA virtual program. True stories of Jewish immigrants as theater pieces. Info., Reg. – 518-584-8730, <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/cu/Db0ZvTj/SJCA-HomePage>.

SATURDAY, MARCH 30

Beth Emeth Torah Study – 9:30 -10:30 a.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany. Discussion of the Torah portion **Tzav**, in person and via Zoom. Zoom link: <https://Us02Web.Zoom.us/j/89304372729>. Password: CBE. Info. – 518-436-9761, ClergyAdmin@CBEAlbany.orgmailto:Info@BethEmethAlbany.org.

SUNDAY, MARCH 31

Women Rabbis, Cantors Kallah – 1-3:30 p.m. Temple Israel, 600 New Scotland Ave., Albany. Noting 40th anniversary of women rabbis and cantors in the area. Free. Study sessions with: Julie Wolkoff: “B’Tzelem Elohim: Finding God’s Image in the World of Dementia,” Rena Kieval: “Women Poets on the Bible,” Susan Gulack: “Embodied Prayer: Signing as a Path to Understanding and Embracing Prayer,” Zoe B. Zak: “The Joy of Niggun — A Song Without Words,” Beverly W. Magidson: “The History of Women Rabbis’ Admission to the Conservative Movement,” Wendy Love Anderson: “Women Rabbis and Spiritual Leaders Before the 20th Century.” Info. – 518-438-7858, ext. 110.

Beth Emeth Soup Kitchen: Volunteers cooking and serving meals – 11-2 p.m. Sister Maureen Joyce Center, 369 Livingston Ave., Albany. Sign up is at www.bethemethalbany.org/event/soup-kitchen.html. Info. – Andrea@CBEAlbany.org or 518-436-9761 ext. 236.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3

Beth Emeth Jewish Basics – 7-8 p.m. in-person at 100 Academy Rd., Albany or via Zoom. Twice-monthly class led by clergy Rabbi Greg Weitzman, Cantor Emily Short and Director of Lifelong Learning Rabbi Shara Siegfeld with guest speakers. Free for Beth Emeth members. \$72 for non-members (covers materials). Reg. – www.BethEmethAlbany.org.

THURSDAY, APRIL 4

Beth Emeth Brotherhood Game Night – 6:30- 8:30 pm. Card games, ping pong, pool or socializing at a member’s home. Spouses welcome. Address will be provided to those who register. Reg. – www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Info. – 518-436-9761, Andrea@CBEAlbany.org.

Continued on page 12

WAR IN GAZA!



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By Rabbi SHLOMO RISKIN

Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them: When any person of you brings an offering unto God, you shall bring from the cattle, the herd or the flock.
(Leviticus 1:2)

EFRAT, Israel—Leviticus continues where the book of Exodus left off: after the exquisite description of the complexity of the sanctuary's components, the Torah is ready to introduce the priestly duties of sacrifices described in the verse above.

Closeness To God?

Undoubtedly, the entire sacrifice system, replete with whole burnt offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings and peace offerings, has a rather raucous ring for the modern sophisticated ear.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch attempts to provide a symbolic significance for each of the sacrifices, and etymologically suggests that the essence of korban (Hebrew for sacrifice) is to bring the individual close (karov) to God.

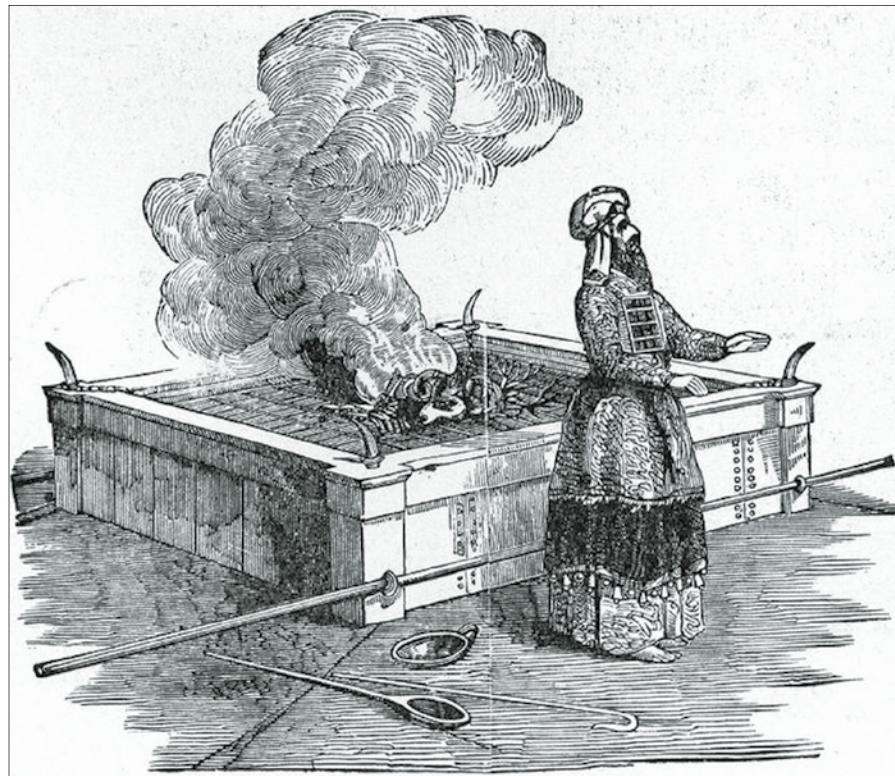
For our purposes, I'd like to approach the entire holy Temple ceremony by analyzing a rather striking midrash which emphasizes an otherwise innocuous pronoun in our opening verse: *When any person of you (mikem) brings an offering unto God...* The fact is that if the purpose of our verse is to issue a command to bring offerings, it could just as easily have been transmitted without the word mikem. Indeed, this particular pronoun in this particular context never appears in the Bible again. Teaches the midrash: Why does [the biblical text] state mikem [of you]? From here we derive that whoever fulfils the obligation to recite one hundred blessings each day is considered as if he/she offered a sacrifice. How do we know this? From the Hebrew word mikem [of you], which has the numerical equivalent of one hundred [mem-kafmem=40+20+40]. (Midrash Yalkut Ma'ayan Ganim, ad loc.)

Blessings And Sacrifice

Why does the midrash link these 100 daily blessings with an offering to God? Presumably, if we understand the connection, the world of blessings might well illuminate the world of sacrifice.

Let us examine the essence of a blessing. Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi in his classic work **The Kuzari**, teaches that the laws of proper blessings enhance our pleasure, create heightened awareness and a more sensitized appreciation of every object in the world; indeed the necessity of our making a blessing precludes the possibility of our taking for granted God's many bounties. After all, pleasure demands awareness, and a blessing sharpens our senses, leading us to appreciate what we

Blessings can turn the whole world into a sanctuary; Are sacrifices to Hashem needed?



High priest offering a sacrifice of a goat, as on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur; from Henry Davenport Northrop, Treasures of the Bible, published 1894.

have and are about to enjoy: a glorious sunrise, a burst of lightning, the children around the Sabbath or festival table, or even a bright, red strawberry.

World Without Blessing

But what then should we do with our awareness? How do we channel our newly found awakening to the gifts of the world around us? A comment of the late Rabbi Aaron Soloveitchik, on a passage in Tractate **Berakhot**, can provide us with an interesting insight:

Rabbi HaLevi asked concerning two contrasting texts. It is written: *'The heavens are the heavens of God but the earth has He given to the children of men,'* (Ps. 115:16), and it is also written, *"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof"* (Ps. 115:16). There is no contradiction: in the one case it is before a blessing has been said, in the other case after. (Berakhot 35a)

The usual interpretation explains that before I make a blessing, everything belongs to God; the blessing is my request for permission to partake of God's world. Hence, partaking of something without a blessing is in effect committing thievery against God; it is as a result of our blessing that the Almighty grants us permission to partake of His physical world. In effect, before the blessing, the world is God's, and after the blessing, He gives the world's bounty to us humans.

In a unique twist, Rabbi Soloveitchik turns this interpretation on its head: *"The heavens are the heavens of God, but the earth has He given to the children of men."* (Ps. 115:16) is the description of the world before blessings, and the verse, *"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,"* is after the blessing!

Why? A world devoid of blessing is a world without any divine connection, a neo-platonic world with an iron curtain

separating the human and godly realms.

Blessing The Physical World

Suddenly, earth and heaven are no longer enemies, strangers in a strange universe, but all of God's creations magnificently and miraculously come together. If the Torah has one urgent message, it is the sanctification of our physical world. For Jews, the divine and the physical meet in an eternal dialogue, and the first expression of that dialogue is the blessings we make.

An additional and related aspect of the significance of blessings is the Chasidic-Kabbalistic nation. Early in the **Genesis**, God becomes disappointed with His world and decides to destroy it (except for the righteous Noah, that is):

And God said, "I will blot out the human being whom I have created.... both humans, and beast, and creeping things, and fowl of the air..." (Genesis 6:7)

Rashi asks why God's anger is directed toward animals? After all, these brute creatures are innocent of any wrongdoing. Rashi then presents us with two possible interpretations. First, that all of creation including animal life had become so depraved that nothing could be called innocent — a perversity that pervaded all of reality. But his second answer is the one that concerns us here:

Everything was created for the human being. When he ceases to be, what need have I for them (beasts, creeping things, fowl)! (Rashi, ad loc.)

God's Hierarchy?

This is a profound idea that looks at God's creation as a hierarchy, starting with inanimate rocks, ascending toward living plant life, and from there to animal creatures of mobility and then reaching upward to the communicating human being. All the mobility of an animal cannot alter the fact that animals are ruled by the earth and the waters and the skies, into the mold of each individual species. Only the human being's gift of communication enables him to relate to God — if indeed he utilizes his freedom of choice properly.

Now when the human being takes the objects of the world around him, and he makes blessings over the world he lives in, he brings all of existence — including plant life, animal life, and every worldly object into a relationship with God. In effect he is giving a higher purpose to all of these realms, thereby bringing everything back to its ultimate divine source. By uplifting the world, by restoring it to its divine dimension, the human being repairs a world broken by iniquity and despair, alienation and materialism. Without this potential for uplifting the world, without a lofty and up-reaching human being, all of creation becomes short-circuited, the universe has no purpose for being, a reverse "bang" takes place.

Continued on page 12

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Over 450 Jewish Hollywood figures condemn Glazer's Oscar remarks

JNS

More than 450 Jewish executives and Hollywood professionals have signed an open letter denouncing director Jonathan Glazer's Oscars speech.

Direct Rebuff

"We refute our Jewishness being hijacked for the purpose of drawing a moral equivalence between a Nazi regime that sought to exterminate a race of people, and an Israeli nation that seeks to avert its own extermination," the letter states, according to *Variety*.

The condemnation was a direct rebuff to the director, who said at the Academy awards after accepting the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film:

"Right now, we stand here as men who refute their Jewishness and the Holocaust being hijacked by an occupation which has led to conflict

for so many innocent people. Whether the victims of Oct. 7 in Israel or the ongoing attack on Gaza, all the victims of this dehumanization, how do we resist?"

Distortion Of History

The letter response states that, "The use of words like 'occupation' to describe an indigenous Jewish people defending a homeland that dates back thousands of years, and has been recognized as a state by the United Nations, distorts history."

Moreover, "It gives credence to the modern blood libel that fuels a growing anti-Jewish hatred around the world, in the United States, and in Hollywood. The current climate of growing anti-Semitism only underscores the need for the Jewish State of Israel, a place which will always take us in, as no state did during the Holocaust depicted in Mr. Glazer's film," it continues.

"Every Death Tragic"

The letter also notes that while every civilian death in Gaza is tragic, the moment Hamas releases the hostages it is holding and surrenders, the five-month-old war will end.

Celebrities that signed the letter include actors Debra Messing, Tovah Feldshuh, Mayim Bialik, Tara Strong, Michael Rapaport, Jennifer Jason Leigh; "Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" creator Amy Sherman-Palladino; producers Lawrence Bender ("*Pulp Fiction*," "*Inglourious Basterds*"), Gary Gilbert ("*La La Land*") and Amy Pascal ("*Spider-Man*"), as well as additional film and TV directors and representatives of talent agencies in Hollywood.

Glazer and his billionaire financial backer, Ukrainian-born British-American businessman and philanthropist Leonard Blavatnik, have declined comment since Glazer's remarks were made.

Two Purim heroines ...

Continued from Page 7

surgery 24 hours later in another hospital, where the doctor said she came close to losing her life. In Ohio, a 10-year-old child who had been raped by a family member had to travel to Indiana for an abortion.

Conservatives may have rejoiced with the Supreme Court decision, but it has resulted in a voter backlash. According to a Reuters/Ipsos poll taken in December 2023, it resulted in limited Republican gains in the 2022 congressional midterm elections, as well as propelling Democrats to victories in recent off-year elections. The same poll reported 70% of Americans said protecting abortion access in their state would be an important issue in determining their vote in November, including around two-thirds of independent voters. The poll also showed that half of Americans said they would support a law legalizing abortion nationwide, including close to one-third of Republicans.

My Takeaway

Who is in the forefront of the battle? Women. For many women, protecting reproductive rights have become the number one factor in voting decisions. "I am a one-issue voter," a friend told me recently. "I believe in a woman's right to choose."

I believe that it is many old white men in expensive suits with \$300 haircuts denying women their rights. It is time for women to take some lessons from Vashti. She believed that she had the right to choose what she did with her body. In 2015, my hero Ruth Bader Ginsburg said, "The state controlling a woman's body would mean denying her full autonomy and ultimately full equality."

Vashti would agree.

Reproductive rights were center stage in President Biden's State of the Union address earlier this month. "With all due respect, justices, women are not without electoral or political power," Biden said. "You're about to realize just how much."

<https://www.jta.org/2019/03/13/ideas/empowered-feminism-is-the-real-hero-of-the-purim-story>

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/mar/07/biden-state-of-the-union-reproductive-rights-abortion>

<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/3/23/queen-esther-vashti-purim-feminist-history/>

Marilyn Shapiro, formerly of Clifton Park, is now a resident of Kissimmee, Fla. Keep Calm and Bake Challah: How I Survived the Pandemic, Politics, Pratfalls, and Other of Life's Problems is the newest addition to her line-up of books. It joins Tikkun Olam, There Goes My Heart and Fradel's Story, a compilation of stories by her mother that she edited. Shapiro's blog is there-goesmyheart.me.



The Touro University community mourns the loss of

JOEL P. MARGOLIS ל"ד



A generous benefactor whose friendship, philanthropy and values were steadfast. Through the scholarship and Torah he supported at Touro, his legacy will live on for generations to come.

May his memory be blessed and may his family be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

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Albany Center names 2024 Community Pillars

ALBANY—The Sidney Albert Albany Jewish Community Center (AJCC) has announced the selection of its 2024 Pillars of the Community Award recipients. Rob and Margie Dorkin, Dr. Michael and Sharon Lozman, and Michael and Melissa Lurie have been selected as this year's honorees by Center leadership and past Pillars recipients. An in-person program at Beth Emeth, 100 Academy Rd., Albany has been scheduled for Sunday, April 21, at 10:30 a.m.

Rob, Margie Dorkin

The Dorkins have been married for 43 years and are the parents of Arielle Dorkin. Margie, originally from New Jersey has been a resident of this area for many years. Rob is a lifelong resident of Albany and a member of Congregation Beth Emeth.

As a Jew by choice, Margie completed her conversion over 35 years ago as Rabbi Scott Shpeen's (then spiritual leader of Beth Emeth) first student. She has served as sisterhood president and on the Beth Emeth board. She was the first recipient of the Beth Emeth President's award. She continues to volunteer at Beth Emeth by preparing one platters and creating flower centerpieces for congregation functions. Margie and Rob have been honored with a Jewish Family Services Menschen Award. They continue to serve as co-chairpersons of the annual Beth Emeth garage sale and have been doing so since 2007.

Rob is a graduate of The Milne School, Boston University, and the College of St. Rose. He retired in 2018 as an independent IT consultant. He grew up around the corner from the Center and participated in various activities including Boys Scouts Troop 33, ABG fraternity, day camp, and swim lessons from Betty Clark. He served on the Camp Chingachgook Alumni Council and is on the Jewish Federation of Northeastern NY board. Having served as board member of Congregation Beth



ROB AND MARGIE DORKIN

Emeth and president of its brotherhood, he continues his service at Beth Emeth heading up the crew of kitchen volunteers for congregation dinners. He also volunteers for the Diane's farm community garden and for the Beth Emeth soup kitchen.

Dr. Michael, Sharon Lozman

Dr. Michael and Sharon Lozman moved to the Capital District in 1971, and are the parents of Robin Anderson, an orthodontist in practice with her father, and Tobie Schlosstein, an attorney. They have been married for 63 years.

Sharon is a graduate of Kingston High School, Fairleigh University where she obtained her undergraduate degree and Russell Sage for her master's degree in health education. She has been head of the Lower School of Albany Academy for Girls, an agent of Roberts Real Estate and owner and manager of Park View Terrace and of the Kingston Camelot Manor Apartments for 25 years. Subsequently she sold the properties and retired from ownership.

She is the head of house and grounds of Congregation Ohav Shalom of Albany and has held the position for 23 years. She and Michael have been



DR. MICHAEL AND SHARON LOZMAN

members of Ohav since 1978.

Michael, a Brooklyn boy and the son of Eastern European immigrants, received his college degree from Wilkes College, his dental degree from Fairleigh Dickinson University, and his orthodontic training from New York University. Opening his Latham orthodontic office in 1971, he is in fulltime practice with his daughter Robin. Some of the of the several leadership roles he has held include president of the NY State Society of Orthodontists, member of the NY Dental Board of Governors, member of the NY State Board for Dentistry, and the first dentist to be on the



MICHAEL AND MELISSA LURIE

three member panel of the NY Regents Review Committee.

His involvement in Jewish affairs include the development of two foundations; the Restoration of Eastern European Jewish Cemeteries, Inc., through which he took college students and restored 15 Jewish cemeteries, 10 in Belarus and five in Lithuania, over a 17 year period. The second foundation is the Capital District Jewish Holocaust Memorial Inc. created to install a Holocaust memorial in the Albany area. Michael was appointed by President Biden to be a member of the United

Continued on page 12

Applebaum, Bellin and Shpeen Awards presented at AJCC with Pillars on April 21

ALBANY—The Sidney Albert Albany Jewish Community Center (AJCC) has announced the recipients of its 2024 Applebaum, Bellin and Susan Shpeen Awards. Jacob Mosden of Schodack will receive the Applebaum Award, Sasha Greenberg of Delmar will get the Bellin Award, and staff member Peggy Hogan will receive the Susan Shpeen Staff Award. All three will be honored at the in-person Pillars of the Community event to be held at Beth Emeth on Sunday, April 21, at 10:30 a.m.

Greenberg is a senior at Bethlehem Central High School. Early associations with the AJCC included preschool, and then continued through elementary school at Camp

Olam. She is, with her family, a member of Congregation Beth Emeth in Albany. Greenberg is a vice president of the CBE youth group (CBEYG) and sings there during the High Holy Days. She is also involved with the Girls Who Start club at Bethlehem, with a focus on giving back to the community while empowering women to make a difference.

A senior at Columbia High School in East Greenbush, Jacob Mosden was born and raised in Dutchess County and moved with his family moved to the Town of Schodack during the height of the COVID pandemic in 2020. A member of Temple Israel in Albany, where he is known

Continued on page 12

Celebrate Purim at Congregation Beth Emeth!

Saturday, March 23

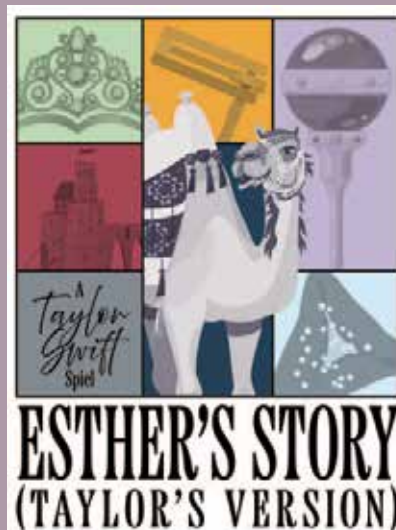
9:00 am CBE & Me - Purim

Children 0-5 and the grown ups who love them singing, snacks, and making hamantashen!

Register at BethEmethAlbany.org. Wear a costume!



Sunday, March 24



100 Academy Road
Albany, NY
518.436.9761

**10:15 am
Purim Spiel**

For all ages.

Costumes encouraged!
Stay for our...

**11:00 am
Purim Carnival**

Fun free games, bounce house and more led by youth group. Lunch for sale by our amazing Brotherhood Team (cash only)

Rabbi Greg Weitzman
Cantor Emily Short
Exec. Dir., Kathy Golderman
President, Robyn Marinstein

**Hey
Swifties!
Free Tickets!**

Applebaum, Bellin and Shpeen ...

Continued from Page 11

as an “amazing teen volunteer,” Mosden is a volunteer with the SATO Committee in supporting the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York, providing lunch sacks for The Little Food Pantry, baking cookies for community first responders, setting up backpacks for Equinox and the Capital City Mission, and according to administrators of the award, “pretty much anything else Temple Israel asks for help with.” In December 2021, his frequent engagement and time that he has spent helping others led to him receiving the first- Macca-bi Youth Award “for going above and beyond” from Temple Israel.

Peggy Hogan was familiar with the Albany Center long before starting to work at the Center. Born and raised in western NY, Hogan moved to Albany 29 years ago. Her ex-mother-in-law worked for the Center as a membership associate and through her work introduced Peggy and her children to the AJCC. Hogan brought her children to the JCC for swim lessons and other

activities such as youth Zumba. In 2015, Hogan, who had worked full time as a lunch aide for the City School District of Albany, joined the Center as a part-time staff person in fitness babysitting. From 2015 to 2020 Hogan was a familiar face for the parents and children that utilized the babysitting room. When COVID started and schools went virtual, she joined the JCC fulltime, first as the temperature taker and then as a membership associate. Now, every Monday through Friday you can find Hogan opening the Center. In addition to work in the membership department, in 2023 Hogan accepted the invitation to become an instructor in the JCC’s Senior Technology Center (a first-in-the-country JCC collaboration with AARP), teaching courses such as “How to Use Your Smartphone.”

Hogan lives close to the JCC and on nice days walks to work. She has three adult children, a son who lives in Albany, and two daughters who also work for the JCC. They are a three generation JCC family.

Albany Center names 2024 ...

Continued from Page 11

States Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad.

Michael, Melissa Lurie

Michael and Melissa Lurie have generational bonds to the Capital District and have lived in the Capital District for their entire marriage of over 20 years. They are the parents of Paul and Jack Lurie.

Melissa is a graduate of the University of Albany where she earned her master’s degree in public health. She works as an epidemiologist with the New York State Department of Health, where she specializes in chronic disease surveillance and research and was involved in the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic in New York.

Michael is a graduate of Bethlehem Central High School and SUNY Oswego. Michael has made a career in public accounting and finance for over 25 years. He has been president of Lurie and Co, CPAs PC for 15 years. He specializes in helping families and small businesses achieve their life and financial goals.

Melissa serves on various youth sports and school committees and is a member of Congregation Beth Emeth. Michael has served as a board member of Jewish Family Services and serves on its finance committee. He is a board member of B’nai B’rith Housing Foundation and has served on Congregation Beth Emeth’s board for over 20 years, including as president from 2020-2022. He continues to serve on several financial committees of the congregation.

Melissa served on the board of the ASAAJCC and Michael has served on various committees of SAAJCC including the audit committee and finance committee. Michael reports that he has wonderful memories of his childhood at summer camp at the JCC and Michael and Melissa sent both of their children to the pre-school at the Center.

According to organizers, selection criteria to become a Pillar of the Community include acting as moral pillars and dispensers of wisdom and advice (Torah), providing continued service and/or leadership (avodah), and acting generously in the spirit of Tzedakah (Gmilit Hasidim).

Blessings can turn ...

Continued from Page 9

Now we are ready to return to our midrash, the rabbinic concept which

identified the daily blessings with the sacrifices that brought humanity close to the divine. What God wants from us


is not only to build a sanctuary, but to transform the entire world into God’s sanctuary, God’s Temple. “*You shall make for Me a sanctuary so that I may dwell in your midst*,” commands God. And so the sacrifices bring cattle, grain and fruits back to the Almighty who created them, enlisting the world—inanimate, vegetative and the human facilitators—in the service of the divine.

Just as the Temple sacrifices brought God and all of His creations into the

world, so do the daily 100 blessings bring God into the world—suffuse the material world with divine spirituality—in our world today. By means of daily blessings we have the potential of making the entire universe a divine sanctuary.

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin is chancellor emeritus of Ohr Torah Stone and chief rabbi of Efrat, Israel.



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Calendar of Events

Continued from Page 8

FRIDAY, APRIL 5

Beth Emeth Erev Shabbat Service – 5:30 p.m. in-person at 100 Academy Rd., Albany, or via live-stream, www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Info. – 518-436-9761, ClergyAdmin@CBEAlbany.org.

SUNDAY, APRIL 7

Medical Ethics And Judaism— 10 a.m.-noon. Ohav Shalom Synagogue, 113 New Krumkill Rd., Albany. Dr. Beth Dollinger to moderate. Sunday Schmooze Brunch. \$10. Info—518-527-1163.

MONDAY, APRIL 8

Malka and Eitan Evan Yom Ha-Shoah Lecture—6:30 p.m. Standish Room (Science Library, third floor), UAlbany Uptown Campus, Albany. Dr. Atina Grossman, will discuss “Trauma, Privilege, and Adventure: Jewish Refugees Between ‘Orient’ and European Catastrophe.” Refreshments prior to lecture at 6. Free. Info.—518-442-5300.

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Scenes from recent “The Power Of Tehillim” performance of Maimonides school



ALBANY – Maimonides High School girls of Albany recently led a play production, “The Power Of Tehillim.” They were assisted by 8th graders.

The production featured varied elements of drama, dance and choir. All girls at Hebrew day school, from grades 2 and up, were part of the show.

The story was a adaption of a classic Chasidic story, which reflects on the power and impact of reciting Psalms as a personal informal prayer in times of need.



HAPPY PURIM



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Potluck Dinner**

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Dr. Atina Grossmann named Evan Yom Ha-Shoah lecturer set for UAlbany on April 8

ALBANY—Prof. Atina Grossmann, professor of history at the Cooper Union in New York City will present the 2024 Malka and Eitan Evan Annual Yom Ha-Shoah Lecture on Monday, April 8, at 6:30 p.m. in the Standish Room (Science Library, third floor), at the University of Albany Uptown Campus.

Grossmann, will present on “Trauma, Privilege, and Adventure: Jewish Refugees Between ‘Orient’ and European Catastrophe.”

According to Dr. Federica Francesconi, associate professor, history department and director, of the Judaic studies program at the University at Albany, Dr. Grossmann will examine the ambivalent, paradoxical, and diverse experiences, emotions, and memories of Jews who found refuge from National Socialism and the Holocaust in India and Iran after 1933.

Grossmann’s publications include **Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close**



**PROF. ATINA
GROSSMANN**

Encounters in Occupied Germany and Wege in der Fremde: Deutsch-jüdische Begegnungsgeschichte zwischen New York, Berlin, und Teheran (2012), and as co-editor, Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union and Our Courage/Unser Mut: Jews in Europe after 1945 (with K. Bohus 2020). Her current

research focuses on “Trauma, Privilege, and Adventure: Jewish Refugees in the ‘Orient’ as well as the entanglements of family memoir and historical scholarship. Her most recent publication on the topic of “Jewish Refugees in Iran and India” is included in the volume **Jews and Colonialism**, ed. Stefan Vogt (Bloomsbury 2023).

Refreshments will be served prior to the lecture beginning at 6 p.m. Parking will be available in the Dutch Student Lot. Details may be obtained by calling 518-442-5300, or at cjs@albany.edu.



Obituaries

Dr. HERBERT JACOBSON

100, March 15, 2024; widower of Reva Veis; survived by daughters Trudi Jacobson and Carol Weston; and grandchild Kyle Weston.

SUSAN KUSHNER

81, of Albany, March 11, 2024; survived by husband Philip Kushner; sister Nanci Saltwell; daughters Ayal Kushner, Leore (Erin Coufal) Kushner and Liat (Bryan) Kushner Richman; and grandchildren, Isaiah and Caela Kushner, and Arielli, Michalle and Sasha Richman.

JOEL P. MARGOLIS

79, of Albany; March 15, 2024; survived by brother Herbert Margolis.

DOUGLAS SPECTOR

77, of East Greenbush, formerly of Glens Falls, March 9, 2024; survived

by wife Harriet Sue Spector; son Jeffrey Newman (Heather) Spector; and grandchildren, Avery Elizabeth and Tate Preston.

FANNY VENER

90, of Cohoes, formerly of Rensselaer, Albany; March 9, 2024; widow of Lawrence Vener; survived by daughter Kathy (Mark Snyder) Vener of Slingerlands; son Norman Vener of Kirkland, Washington and grandchildren Kohl and Slayd Snyder.

PAMELA OAKES WEAVER

72, March 6, 2024; survived by son Chris (Katie) Weaver of Hudson Falls; and grandchildren Tyler and Jonathan Weaver.

CHAUNA E. WEINBERG

46, March 12, 2024; survived by parents Peter and Diana Weinberg; brother Ben Weinberg; and sister Alissa (Aaron) Sodickson.

The Jewish World publishes obituaries containing age, date of death, spouse and immediate family survivors at no cost. For other options, contact Jim@JewishWorldnews.org

Havurah Vatik lists April program

SARATOGA SPRINGS—Havurah Vatik, a group for Jewish seniors, ages 55 and older, has announced its Tuesday, April 16, speaker will be Kirsten Mishkin. She will discuss her Great-Uncle Noach Mishkowsky and his autobiography. The luncheon program sponsored by Temple Sinai and held at the Shaara Tfilie, 84 Weibel Ave., Saratoga Springs on the third Tuesday each month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. features a speaker and a catered lunch.

Mishkin has translated about a quarter of the 700 page, two volume account of her uncle's autobiography,

Mayn Lebn un Mayne Rayzes beginning in Mir, Belarus, continuing in Warsaw detailing his ties to socialism and to several Yiddish writers, including Peretz and Asch.

Mishkin is a member of Temple Sinai and is retired as administrator of Skidmore College's University without Walls. She now lives in the Adirondacks with her husband Roy Ginsburg.

Reservations are required by April 10 and may be obtained by calling 1-518-584-8730, ext. 800.

Co-chairwoman Caroline Seligman at jollysel0@gmail.com 518-937-6751 can provide details.

Presenters set for "In Celebration of 40 years of women rabbis, cantors in the Capital District"

Presenters for the program, "In Celebration of 40 Years of Women Rabbis and Cantors in the Capital District: An Afternoon of Learning Together," have been announced by Rabbi Beverly W. Magidson, an organizer. The program will take place at Temple Israel, 600 New Scotland Ave., Albany, on Sunday, March 31, 1 - 3:30. It is open to the public, free of charge.

Presenters are: Wendy Love Anderson: "Women Rabbis and Spiritual Leaders Before the 20th Century," Debora Gordon: "Women's Voices at the Sea and at Sinai: Contemporary Midrash," Susan Gulack: "Embodied Prayer: Signing as

a Path to Understanding and Embracing Prayer," Rena Kieval: "Women Poets on the Bible," Beverly W. Magidson: "The History of Women Rabbis' Admission to the Conservative Movement," Linda Motzkin: "Sacred Sewing Circle — an opportunity to participate in The Community Torah Project by helping to sew two panels of Torah together," Julie Wolkoff: "B'Tzelem Elohim: Finding God's Image in the World of Dementia," and Zoe B. Zak: "The Joy of Niggun — A Song Without Words."

Information may be obtained by contacting Temple Israel, 518-438-7858, ext. 110.

'We need the joy' ...

Continued from Page 3

Belzberg, "and to use the power of community and togetherness to help the very people hurting the most."

Israel Defense Forces soldiers stationed in the Gaza Strip should celebrate the joyous holiday of Purim on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Adar II, which this year falls out on March 24, Sephardi Chief Rabbi Yitzchak Yosef ruled recently according to the Arutz 7 network.

Purim celebrates the Jewish people's deliverance in the Persian Empire during the fifth century. The Scroll of Esther describes how the Persian viceroy, Haman the Agagite, plotted to annihilate the Jews.

Through a series of miraculous events, the Jews survived—and Haman ended up hanging on the gallows he had

erected for his arch-enemy Mordechai the Jew.

Jewish law states that while most places celebrate Purim on the 14th, cities that were surrounded by walls during Joshua's conquest of the Land of Israel—primarily Jerusalem—observe the festival a day later.

However, halachic uncertainty exists regarding Gaza, Hebron, Shechem (Nablus), Jaffa, Haifa, Safed, Tiberias, Lod and Acre.

Hamas launched its war against the Jewish state on Oct. 7 with a large-scale invasion of southern Israel, murdering 1,200, wounding thousands and kidnapping 253 people, with 136 hostages remaining in Gaza (at least 32 are confirmed dead and another 20 may have been killed).

Friday, March 22 12, Adar 2 Shabbat candle lighting at 6:52 p.m.

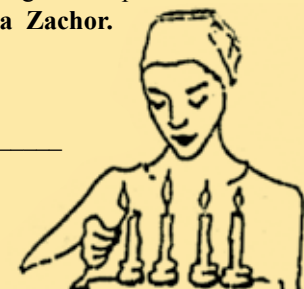
Saturday, March 23, 13, Adar 2. Sedrah: Vayikra Zachor. Shabbat ends at 7:54 p.m.

Sunday, March 24, 14, Adar 2. Purim.

Monday, March 25, 15, Adar 2. Shushan Purim.

Friday, March 29, 19, Adar 2. Shabbat candle lighting at 7 p.m.

Saturday, March 30, 20 Adar 2. Sedrah: Tzav Parah. Shabbat ends at 8:02 p.m.



CANDLELIGHTING TIMES

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Bat Mitzvah



ELIJAH MONTIJO, son of Rebecca and Eric Montijo of Colonie, will be bar mitzvah at Beth Emeth in Albany on Saturday, March 23, 2024.

Maternal grandparents are Carol and David Kron of Teaneck, N.J. Paternal grandmother is Constance Montijo of Florida. The late Raul Montijo, Jr. was paternal grandfather.

Elijah enjoys playing baseball and basketball, participates in math club and tech cub at school and is a high honor student. This year he will be involved

in a math counts competition. In his free time, Eli enjoys building models and completing puzzles.

ISAIAH MONTIJO, son of Rebecca and Eric Montijo of Colonie, will be bar mitzvah at Beth Emeth in on Saturday, March 23, 2024.

Maternal grandparents are Carol and David Kron of Teaneck, N.J. Paternal grandmother is Constance Montijo of Florida. The late Raul Montijo, Jr. was paternal grandfather.

Isaiah loves playing sports, particularly basketball and baseball. He enjoys singing and is participating in the chorus for Suburban Council. He is a high honor student and enjoys technology.



ROBERT ROSENBLAT, son of Alison and Geoffrey Rosenblat of Glenmont, will be bar mitzvah at Beth Emeth in Albany on Saturday, March 30, 2024.

Maternal grandmother is Evelyn Pratt of Glenmont. Paternal grandmother is Robin Constantino of Jackson, N.J.

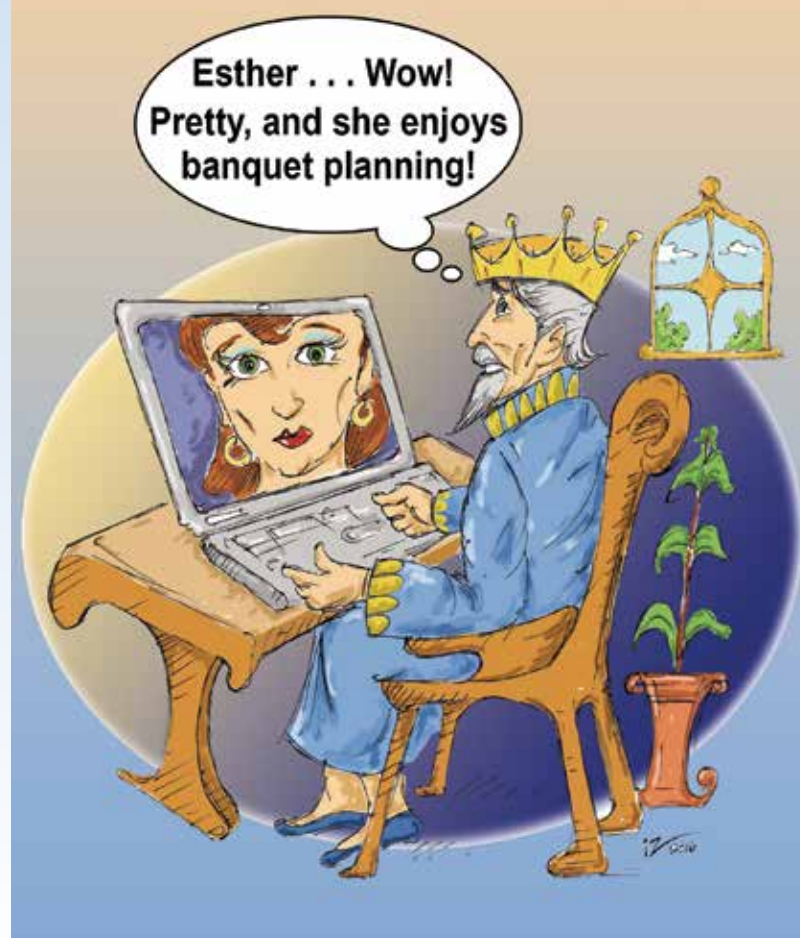
Robert enjoys playing sports like soccer and tennis and running cross-country for Bethlehem Central Middle School. In his free time, he plays chess and cheers on his favorite sports team, the Buffalo Bills.

He also loves dogs. This year, Robert has been volunteering his time as a madrichim teen aide for the second grade class.



Iz Visions A Look at Purim

King Ahasuerus on JDate . . .



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Israel– 4 months after Oct. 7 to be theme at SJCC; Leighton, Ben-Ami to reflect on recent visit

SCHENECTADY – Andrea Leighton and Judy Ben-Ami will talk and reflect about their recent trips to Israel on Tuesday, March 26, at 6:30 p.m. at the Schenectady Jewish Community Center, 2565 Balltown Rd.

Leighton and Ben-Ami will share what they saw, the places and areas they visited, and how they found the people

they talked to. Many of the people they spoke to were misplaced individuals, or parents and friends of hostages. They were urged not to forget their loved ones still kept against their will in Gaza.

Leighton and Ben-Ami will also show photos that illustrate their experiences in Israel, four months following the attack on Oct. 7.

Purim carnival in Saratoga on March 24

SARATOGA SPRINGS–Temple Sinai will host its annual Community Purim Carnival on Sunday, March 24, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 50 Pine Rd., Saratoga Springs. The program is open to families and youngsters of all faiths.

The carnival will feature 15 interactive games and activities, dance parties, a photo-booth, crafts, snacks and carnival games with prizes for everyone (every player wins every time!)

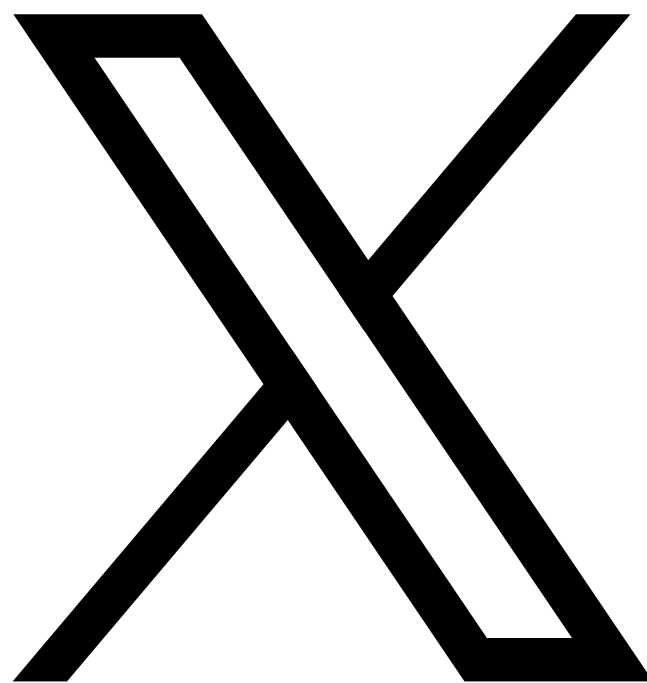
A central feature of the Purim holiday is a retelling of the story from a megillah—this year's telling runs from 9:45-10:15 am. The story will be told in English and also will include many of Temple Sinai's religious school students

reading from the scroll in Hebrew.

"The story of Purim is a universal tale of good guys and bad guys, strong women, betrayal, bravery and redemption. The celebration of Purim is full of costumes, noisemakers, goofiness and festivities. We invite all our friends and supporters to come to the carnival to have fun and celebrate," said Beth Sabo Novik, Temple Sinai president.

Wristbands for unlimited games and activities are \$10 each. Popcorn, cotton candy, and beverages will be available for purchase.

Information may be obtained by contacting Sylvia Bloom, Temple Sinai's director of education at educator@saratogasinai.org, cell: 518-409-1800.



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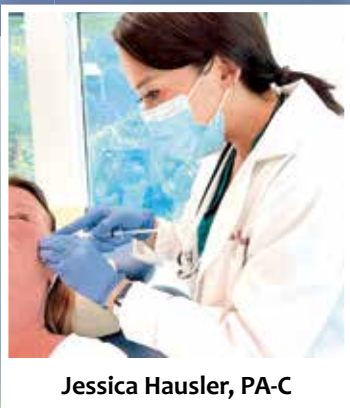
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Hamas steals food from ...

Continued from Page 5

Gaza resident Mohammed al-Ashram said, "Because of the unreasonable prices, I can barely buy a few vegetables and some meat for my children...and we do not get enough food or even water. In return, we are forced to buy it from the black market." It is because of Hamas that Gazans like al-Ashram do not receive the aid they should be getting.

Hamas deliberately prevents needy Gazans from accessing humanitarian aid. They distribute to themselves, then sell the rest on the black market. One Gaza resident told **The Media Line**, "[The aid] goes to the gangs. Hamas controls 70% of it, and the rest goes to merchants who sell it in the market. We do not receive aid except for a few things on rare occasions. The rest is for Hamas, and the merchants belong to Hamas. The prices are very high, and we cannot buy it."

Israeli intelligence estimates Hamas steals as much as 66% of the aid meant for Gazan civilians. **The Media Line** reporter also witnessed armed men, who locals identified as Hamas operatives, surrounding the aid trucks and firing into the air to keep Gazan civilians away.

Hamas also prevents Gazan civilians from ensuring safe delivery of humanitarian aid. In an effort to prevent Hamas from pirating aid, Israel is working to enlist influential, often well-armed, large families or clans in Gaza. However, many

clans refuse to work with Israel, fearing reprisals from Hamas.

Recently, Hamas executed the leader of the Doghmush clan in northern Gaza because Israel allegedly contacted him about supervising aid distribution. Hamas's *Al-Majd* website issued a warning to any Palestinians against helping Israel secure aid convoys. Until Hamas's vise-like control over Gaza is broken, it's hard to imagine stopping them from routinely stealing humanitarian aid.

Hamas alone is employing starvation as a weapon of war. Hamas knows enemies of Israel will blame the Jewish state for hungry Gazans, helping push Israel to end the war, thus allowing Hamas to survive. Hamas's strategy seems to be working, as Biden and other Western leaders use all manner of excuses—first fake death statistics, now "starvation"—to increase pressure on Israel to discontinue destroying the barbaric terrorist group.

Yet it is in Hamas's power to end the suffering of Gazan Palestinians. First they can stop stealing food aid meant for their citizens. Second, they can lay down their arms, surrender and release the hostages, in which case hunger in Gaza—and deaths on both sides—will end. In the long term, the people of Gaza will become free of Hamas's brutal repression and gain a chance to live in peace with their neighbor, Israel.

Originally published by Facts and Logic About the Middle East.

*Maybe you'll get everything you wished for...
Maybe you'll get more than you ever could have imagined...
Who knows where life will take you...*

*What we do know is you
Will always get more at the...*

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