Immigration, intermarriage and education making US Jewry larger and more diverse

Stewart Ain, originally for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency

S
cince the publication more than half a century ago of a landmark article that referenced the “vanishing American Jew,” it’s been hard to shake that idea as the dominant narrative of American Jewish life.

Yet the U.S. Jewish community is the largest in the world, with an estimated 7 million Jews — slightly more than Israel’s 6.8 million.

And despite a low birthrate, American Jews actually are growing in number, primarily due to three factors: immigration, intermarriage and education.

Over the past three decades, Jewish immigrants have come in large numbers from the former Soviet Union, Latin America and Israel. Intermarriage, rather than acting as a net negative for Jewish population, actually has resulted in more Jews, as the children of intermarried parents increasingly identify as Jewish and some spouses convert. And Jewish education has helped retain the numbers of Americans who identify as Jews — and drawn some “Jews by choice” into the fold.

“The narrative of the Jewish community that we are a disappearing people — Look magazine famously referred to us [in 1964] as the ‘Vanishing American Jew’ — is not true,” said Leonard Saxe, a demographer at Brandeis University’s Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies. “What we know is that the American Jewish population is growing substantially, and we know where they are living, how old they are and their political attitudes. We also know that Ameri-
As I write this two days before Tu B’shvat but already thinking ahead to Purim, I’m feeling a bit topsy-turvy. Recovery from an attempted white nationalist takeover of our national Capitol building with a historic inauguration and also the on again/off again distribution of COVID-19 vaccines is more than enough to spin my head. I don’t think that events like these have intrinsic or obvious meanings for the Jewish community, but certainly give us a lot to think about. In this issue of Washtenaw Jewish News are two very thoughtful pieces about antisemitism. One is just below, a statement by ten American Jewish organizations that constitute the Progressive Israel Network, the other is commentary, on page 7, by Karla Goldman, Sol Drachler Professor of Social Work and Professor of Judaic Studies at University of Michigan, on widely-viewed recent presentations on “dismantling antisemitism”.

In addition, Dr. Michael Simon’s “Letter to the People of Geislingen” is both a moving tribute to his family who perished in the Holocaust, and also points in the direction of what we all can do to prevent atrocities. Your thoughts on these are welcome! You may notice that this issue is a bit shorter than recent issues. This is a direct result of a shortage of display advertising, which completely pays for the paper. Do you offer a service or own a business that you’d like more people to know about? Please consider advertising in the WJN. Finally, I’d like to thank the editorial team and I look forward to receiving more.

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**Progressive Israel Network groups oppose codification of IHRA working definition of antisemitism, citing strong potential for misuse**

The following statement was issued by the members of the Progressive Israel Network: Amenu, Americans for Peace Now, Hadhomin Dvir North America, Hasomer Hatzair, World Movement, Jewish Labor Committee, J Street, New Israel Fund, Partners for Progressive Israel, Reconstructing Judaism, and T’ruah on January 12, 2021.

As organizations that care deeply about the State of Israel and about the wellbeing of the Jewish people, we are deeply committed to the struggle against antisemitism. We are thus obligated to share our concerns about ways in which the effort to combat antisemitism is being misused and exploited to instead suppress legitimate free speech, criticism of Israeli government actions, and advocacy for Palestinian rights. In particular, the effort to enshrine in domestic law and institutional policy the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism, with its accompanying “contemporary examples,” risks wrongly equating what may be legitimate activities with antisemitism.

This effort has created opportunities for abuse and politicization by the outgoing Trump administration and others, undermining the moral clarity of the effort to dismantle antisemitism.

We respect the original creation of the IHRA Working Definition as an illustrative tool and as part of a larger and ongoing conversation about the nature of antisemitism. While we maintain no substantive objection to the core definition itself, our concern with its adoption as a legal tool is with the IHRA definition’s “contemporary examples,” which have been incorporated as integral to the definition. We fear its adoption in law or policy at the state, federal, and university levels and in corporate governance has the potential to undermine core freedoms, and in some cases already has. For this reason, the Progressive Israel Network opposes the codification in U.S. law or policy of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism.

There can be no doubt that some anti-Zionists and critics of Israeli policy can sometimes cross the line into antisemitism—and they must be confronted when they do. Yet Secretary Pompeo’s State Department’s unambiguous declarations that “anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism” and that “the Global BDS Campaign [is] a manifestation of anti-Semitism” represent a harmful overreach. This overreach, which is primarily aimed at shielding the present Israeli government and its occupation from all criticism, is made possible by the use of the Working Definition’s “contemporary examples.” The examples regard as antisemitic the claim that “the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor” and the application of “double standards” to Israel “by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.”

We are advocates for a future of equality, dignity, and safety for all Israelis and all Palestinians. As such, we insist that activists, academics, and all citizens must have the right to express a wide range of political opinions without fear of being suppressed or smeared by the government. This includes critiques of the legitimacy of Israel’s founding or the nature of its laws and system of government, even when we may disagree—sometimes passionately—with those opinions. These debates are critical for democracy and accountability. They belong in the realm of public discourse and must not be banished by anti-democratic laws or penalties.

We must express our alarm when the U.S. State Department proposes to blacklist non-violent activists and human rights organizations, who are targeted simply because they document abuses or oppose the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. Through its tenure, the Trump administration has shown a disturbing eagerness to deploy spurious accusations of antisemitism as a cudgel to attack its political opponents.

Kenneth Stern, the renowned antisemitism expert who drafted the original definition and examples from which the IHRA definition is derived, has written that it was never intended to be used as a sweeping, purpose-laden speech code and that its use as such by the Trump administration and right-wing Jewish groups “is an attack on academic freedom and free speech.”

The incoming Biden administration rightly makes clear that it intends to make the fight against rising antisemitism a high priority. Now there is an opportunity to change course. We encourage the new administration and the new Congress to pursue a comprehensive strategy that takes on all forms of antisemitism and extremist hate, and which does not ignore the surging danger and violence of the white nationalist, antisemitic far right. In doing so, both the Biden administration and Congress should reject facile, oversimplified doctrines that can easily be abused. They should refrain from legislating bans on Constitutionally protected speech and legitimate activism, which often wrongly target those who harbor no hatred towards Jews, and which make it more difficult to identify and confront genuine instances of antisemitism.

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Activism

Dayenu is a new movement of American Jews confronting the climate crisis

Robin Schwartz, reprinted with permission of the Detroit Jewish News

Concerns about climate change and its impact on our world “loom like big clouds” over everything for Josh Bender of Ann Arbor. The Michigan State University graduate, now in his second year of rabbinical school at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, says he’s made environmentally focused changes in his daily life like eating less meat and avoiding single-use plastics.

But he wanted to do something to tackle the global problem on a larger scale.

“When big societal changes you can sometimes feel powerless to do anything about them,” Bender says. “I remember during the election, I wanted whoever the nominees were to be people who got what a serious generational issue this is.”

Josh became an intern with the group Dayenu, a new movement of American Jews confronting the climate crisis “with spiritual audacity and bold political action.” The group was formed in April and in the months and weeks leading up to the presidential election, Josh helped facilitate volunteer events. Participants made phone calls and sent text messages to more than 270,000 Jewish climate-concerned voters in Michigan urging them to go to the polls.

“When I think how small the margins were, especially in places like Michigan, I know we had an impact,” he says.

The group’s nonpartisan campaign called “Chutzpah 2020” targeted Jewish voters in Michigan and five other key states: Arizona, Florida, Minnesota, North Carolina and Michigan and five other key states: Arizona, Florida, Minnesota, North Carolina and Michigan. The idea was to pilot an innovative get-out-the-vote effort centered on faith. Supporters would like to see our leaders prioritize environmental justice and move the country toward 100% clean energy by 2030 and net zero emissions well before 2050.

“President-elect Joe Biden will be inaugurated on Jan. 20, in the midst of a global pandemic, a deepening economic recession, accelerating climate change, and with a mandate to address racial injustice,” Dayenu said in an emailed statement. “These converging crises demand urgent action on Day One of his term, and a team with the chutzpah to do what science and justice demand.”

The statement applauded the climate team Biden has assembled so far.

For Bender, who has now completed his internship, working with Dayenu was especially fulfilling here in his home state, surrounded by the largest supply of freshwater on Earth.

“Religious voices play an important role in shaping our national narratives and solutions, ensuring the centrality of human dignity, social justice and the public good.”

Rosenn, whose mother, Sally Teitelbaum, grew up in Detroit, attended Mumford High School and was a longtime member of Congregation Shaarey Zedek, has spent more than two decades leading Jewish nonprofit organizations advocating for social change.

“Climate change affects everyone but not everyone equally. It disproportionally impacts communities that have been historically marginalized,” she said. “I started Dayenu because with the climate crisis bearing down, we need all hands on deck, and the Jewish community is not yet showing up with all its people and power. What is at stake is the very concept of living l’dor v’dor [from generation to generation].”

Moving forward, Rosenn and Dayenu’s supporters would like to see our leaders prioritize environmental justice and move the country toward 100% clean energy by 2030 and net zero emissions well before 2050.

“There are a lot of big and small ways climate change affects Michigan,” he says. “I’ve never worked in any political capacity before, and it was meaningful to feel like I had more of a stake and the chance to make an impact.”
receive the vaccine. Gornel is a prayer said by Jews who’ve come through a harrowing threat to life, like giving birth, a major illness or a car crash. It’s teaching syndicated expertise and re-ponded to by the full community, each person who has survived.

One day, when we are able to gather as a complete community in our sanctuary, I will lead us all in the most profound of shechechyanus, offering full-throated gratitude for being brought to the moment of collective, in-person religious expression for the first time in well over a year.

Rabbi Ben Greenfield, The Greenpoint Shul in Brooklyn

One might offer words of praise and blessing to Hashem upon the amazing event of receiving this vaccine! That is clear. The question is if one should do so using one of the official, canonical brachot of our tradition, which would entail uttering God’s sacred name. Here, too, the short answer is yes, compli- cated only by the fact that there are so many brachot which apply it is hard to know which one is correct? Shechechyanu, recited upon occasional events that spark gratitude (e.g. buying new furniture, eating new fruit, important rain falling on one’s field) seems, at first glance, to easily qualify. On the other hand, according to Rabbi Tov-sha-Meir (no is good and causes good) should be recited if the event is expected to be made for this blessing, too.

I’m thinking about is asher yatzar, a prayer that is traditionally said after using the bathroom. The ambiguity of “b chochmah” (with wis- dom) is fixed. As such, from the perspective of Jewish law, the best practice would be to recite the bracha while omitting the name of God. Many people are in the habit of doing this — perhaps unwittingly — upon hearing another kind of good news.

At a funeral, mourners say the bracha of neshamah, offering full-throated gratitude for being brought to the moment of collective, in-person religious expression for the first time in well over a year.

Rabbi Ben Greenfield, The Greenpoint Shul in Brooklyn

What blessing should you say when you get the COVID-19 vaccine? continued from page 1
Community

Beth Israel Congregation February events

Living Room Lectures Presents Wendy Evans: Life, Love, and Art: Alfred Stieglitz and Georgia O’Keefe
Sunday, February 14, at 1 p.m.
Especially for Valentine’s Day, here’s a story of art and passion. When Alfred Stieglitz and Georgia O’Keefe met, he was a famous photographer and gallery owner, and she was a young unknown art teacher. This May–December couple would grow close, have a huge impact on each other’s art and life, then grow apart. We’ll delve into the depths of Stieglitz’s photographs and O’Keefe’s paintings. Brought to you in partnership by Beth Israel Congregation and the Jewish Community Center of Ann Arbor, this series brings a variety of speakers to your screen. Register on the BIC website at bethisrael-aa.org.

Tea and Torah Study with Rabbi Caine
Thursday, February 4, 11, and 18, at 6:30 p.m.
Brew a cup of tea and join Rabbi Caine for Torah study. We’ll delve into the depths of Torah, starting with Genesis (not the weekly parashah), as we bring our best selves and traditional perspectives to engage the text and apply it to our daily lives. A variety of teas will be sent on a monthly basis.

Monthly Lego Contest
Sunday, February 7, at 4 p.m.
This month we read in the Torah about Moses going up to Mt. Sinai and receiving the Ten Commandments. Portray the scene. Share your creation with the group and win a prize if you are the group favorite! For children ages K–6.

Worldwide Wrap
Sunday, February 7, at 10 a.m.
Join Beth Israel via Zoom for a Sunday morning minyan wearing Tefillin. The first five minutes will be spent encouraging and advising those who are learning how to wrap.

Tot Shabbat with the Caine Family
Friday, February 12 and 26, at 5:30 p.m.
Join Rav Nadav, Lynee, Merav, and Zica for Kabbalat Tot Shabbat by Zoom! Bring in Shabbat with music, dancing, candle lighting, and kiddush. Invite your friends! If you are new to the program and have not received your special Tot Shabbat bag, contact Sam at szielinski@bethisrael-aa.org.

Family Game Night
Sunday, February 14, at 5 p.m.
Get supplies delivered, learn new games, and have some fun! We’ll start with ice-breakers, test our knowledge with trivia, then learn a new game to play with your family. For families with children in grades K–5.

Shabbat Biweekly Lunch ‘N Learn: Contemplative Issues in Jewish law with Rabbi Caine
Saturday, February 20 at 11:45 a.m.
From the kashrut of eating in restaurants to electric cars to Zoom on Shabbat, Rabbi Caine brings traditional Jewish legal codes and responsa to have us consider Jewish law thoughtfully and to elucidate the issues of living Jewishly in our modern lives. Biweekly through May 15 following Saturday services.

Musical Purim with Neil Alexander and a Live Band
Thursday, February 25, at 6:30 p.m.
Grab a noisemaker (maybe a box of macaroni), fire up the big screen TV and the home audio speakers (if you have them), and join Neil Alexander, Rabbi Caine, and a live band for a Megillah and Live Music special Beth Israel Musical YouTube Purim.

Mystery Reader
Sunday, February 28, at 11 a.m.
Join us for stories read by a special Mystery reader! Who will it be this month? For children ages five and under.

Theology Book Club
Wednesdays, 8 p.m.
Beth Israel Congregation’s Theology Book Club welcomes you to join them to read together and discuss books on Jewish thought and law. The books are in English. Contact Paul Shafar at 248-514-7276 for more information.

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin
Mondays at 3:30 p.m.
Rabbi Dobrusin will be facilitating a Talmud class online on Monday afternoons from 3:30-4:30. While we will read the Hebrew/Aramaic text, translations are available, and all discussions will be in English. All are welcome to come regardless of the level of your familiarity with Hebrew.

Pirke Avot: Teachings of the Sages
Thursdays at 5 p.m.
Rabbi Dobrusin will facilitate Zoom discussions on the classic Rabbinic text Pirke Avot. While the title is usually translated as “Teachings of the Sages,” a more interesting translation is “Chapters of Fundamental Principles.” Pirke Avot consists of short rabbinic statements concerning ethics, faith, and interpersonal relationships. Reading Pirke Avot helps us focus on the values and principles that guide our lives. We will study the text in English, referring occasionally to the Hebrew. The text can be found in the Shabbat morning Sim Shalom siddur. Check the online calendar for specific dates.

Online Services
Everyone is welcome to join Beth Israel for services, classes, and events, all virtual. Beth Israel is now livestreaming services on the Beth Israel YouTube channel (Beth Israel Congregation AA MI). All Zoom links will be available on the Beth Israel homepage (www.bethisrael-aa.org). Please note that passwords are used. Contact the office to get the passwords at office@bethisrael-aa.org.

Evening Minyan
Sunday at 5:00 p.m.
Monday–Thursday at 7:30 p.m.
Join Rabbi Person for a Friday evening minyan at 6:30 p.m.

Shabbat Evening Services
Kabbalat Shabbat Service at 6:00 p.m.
Shabbat Morning Services
Saturday at 9:30 a.m.

Pardes Hannah events

Pardes Hannah events take place in Zoom. All interested participants are welcome. Information, including Zoom links, on these or any of our ongoing services, rituals, circles, and teachings can be found on the Pardes Hannah website at https://pardeshanannah.org or by calling Rebecca Robbins at 734-904-5459.

Chant circle
Sunday, February 7, at 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Using short scriptural texts, the chant circle will explore a theme, set personal intentions, chant, sit in silence, and reflect on the experience inwardly or by sharing. For information or questions, contact Linda Greene at lmgreene@gmail.com.

Rosh Chodesh Adar circle
Wednesday, February 10 at 7–8:30 p.m.
The Rosh Chodesh circle begins with rituals, circles, realms, and settings of intentions, followed by delving into the Kabbalistic perception of the energy of the coming month. For more information, contact Lucinda Kurtz at lucinda@lucindakurtz.com.

Rosh Chodesh Adar online minyan
Friday, February 12, at 9:00–10:15 a.m.
Parades Hannah’s Rosh Chodesh online minyan meets monthly to celebrate the new moon, weaving davening with teachings from Kabbalah on the unique qualities of each Hebrew month, which offer special opportunities for inner reflection and spiritual growth. For more information, contact Gabrielle Pescador at pescadorarte@gmail.com.

Zohar study and practice
Sunday, February 14, at 11 a.m.–1 p.m.
The focus of these sessions is the Zohar (Book of Radiance), surely the central and most richly evocative work of Spanish Kabbalah. The purpose is to enable participants to learn how to read the Zohar and to enter its symbolic universe and hear its inner music. Text study will be enriched by conversation and spiritual practices. Texts will be provided in English, Aramaic, and Hebrew. For texts and questions, contact Rabbi Elliot Ginsburg at rebelliot91@gmail.com.

Shabbat morning service
Saturday, February 20, at 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Join Pardes Hannah for the opportunity to pray, chant, meditate, share, connect heart-to-heart, and celebrate the gift of Shabbat and community. For questions, contact Rabbi Elliot Ginsburg at rebelliot91@gmail.com.

CCAR Press announces new Passover haggadah

Central Conference of American Rabbis Press
CCAR, a division of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, is honored to announce the publication of Mishkan HaSeder: A Passover Haggadah. Edited by Rabbi Hara E. Person and poet Jessica Greenbaum, the book combines age-old texts, fresh insights, inspiring poetry, new translations, and breathing-taking art to set a new standard of haggadahs. Mishkan HaSeder offers beautiful new translations by Rabbis Janet and Sheldon Marder, supplemented by an extraordinary collection of poetry from a diverse array of classic and contemporary poets, including Yehuda Amichai, Ellen Bass, Lucille Clifton, Edmond Hirsch, Ross Gay, Emma Lazarus, Denise Levertov, Ada Limón, Grace Paley, Dan Pagis, Adrienne Rich, and many more. Commentary by Rabbis Oren Hayon, Seth Limmer, and Amy Scheinerman draws out the historic background of the seder rituals, builds on the social justice issues of our day, and offers contemporary connections to Passover. “I first felt the organic relationship between poetry and Jewish text when I studied The Torah: A Women’s Commentary with Rabbi Person long ago,” says Jessica Greenbaum, co-editor of Mishkan HaSeder. “In choosing poems for this haggadah that might encourage an authentic inhabitation of the seder’s progressions, Rabbi Person and I looked for poems that reflected, or countered, the text so that each participant can relate candle lighting, drinking, washing, breaking, telling—and questioning—to their own journeys.”

The haggadah text and poetry are complemented by vibrant, thematic illustrations by acclaimed artist Tobi Kahn, printed in full color.

“These paintings are meant to be guides as a way of experiencing the seder — its underlying beauty and meaning. These images are meant to distill the complex beauty of the world into its elemental forms, while evoking at the same time the mystery beneath such seeming simplicity.”

The announcement of the Haggadah’s release was also met with praise by other leaders of the Reform Movement.

“Finally, a haggadah that is gorgeous, creative, serious, egalitarian, poetic, and inspiring!” says Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism. “With so many layers of meaning and beauty, this new liturgy for the seder will nourish the seekers, the seekers, and the seekers in your midst. This is the haggadah my family and yours have been waiting for.”

Mishkan HaSeder: A Passover Haggadah is available for preorder at http://ccarpress.org. Customers can receive a 30% discount with promo code MHS30 (valid until February 12). Books will ship in time for Passover.
Washington County is striving to provide true justice for all

By Shelli Weisberg, Political Director, originally published on the ACLU Michigan website

Efforts to reduce the U.S. jail and prison population by 50 percent and to combat racial disparities in the criminal legal system are gaining traction with the passage of laws in various states. A recent example is the reform of bail systems. Writing in the American Bar Association Journal, Shelli Weisberg, political director for the ACLU of Michigan, discusses a unique model of change — the prosecutor transparency project.

In a recent conversation with The Blade, Weisberg explained the initiative. It is a project designed to shine a light on systemic racism and to promote racial justice in Washtenaw County. The project is a partnership between the Washtenaw County Prosecutor’s Office and the University of Michigan’s Center for Educational Equity.

The goal of the project is to create a transparent and accountable system for criminal justice decisions. This involves collecting and analyzing data regarding decisions made by prosecutors. The nature of those choices reflects the vast power placed in the hands of prosecutors, including deciding whether a person is charged with a crime, the nature of the charge, the penalties sought, and other crucial information such as plea-bargaining conduct.

This initiative is part of a broader movement to reform the criminal justice system in the United States. As Dr. Shelli Weisberg notes, the starting point will be an audit of the system. The project aims to create a foundation for meaningful change. This requires a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence criminal justice decisions and a commitment to transparency and accountability.

The project is not just a local initiative. It is part of a broader movement to reform the criminal justice system in the United States. The University of Michigan is a leader in this movement, and the project is an example of the kind of work that is being done to promote racial justice.

Shelli Weisberg, Director, ACLU of Michigan
Dismantling antisemitism: Dueling panels

Karla Goldman, special to the WJN

In December 15, 2020, the organization Jewish Voice for Peace offered a mid-Hanukkah online Zoom panel titled Dismantling Antisemitism: Winning Justice. Designed perhaps to provoke the mainstream Jewish community to take notice, the panel featured two speakers who have become almost shorthand in parts of the Jewish community for antisemitic views. If the goal was to provoke, that goal was effectively realized when the Tel Aviv Institute and the organization Combat Anti-Semitism announced their own event for the following day with an almost identical title, Dismantling Anti-Semitism: Jews Talk Justice.

The second event’s subtitle drew attention to the problem of putting perceived enemies of the Jews in the position of pronouncing the meaning of antisemitism.

Those outraged by the JVP event pointed to the participation of Rashida Tlaib, a United States Congresswoman representing part of the city of Detroit, and activist and scholar Marc Lamont Hill. Both Tlaib and Hill are known in the Jewish community for their opposition to the Israeli occupation. Marc Lamont Hill became a prominent Ethiopian Israeli anti-racism activist; and Rabbi Sandra Lawson as the “first openly gay black rabbi.” Along with Han Mazzig, a gay Israeli of North African descent who sat alongside the moderator addressing the video wall of diverse women, this group turned out to be willing to push back against some of the rigid framing of the event.

The moderator opened the discussion by asking Mazzig whether “antisemitism has become a problem in popular social justice movements and the progressive movement as a whole?” Mazzig agreed that it “has become a problem, not only in the progressive movement on the left,” but inserted that the “deadliest” antisemitism came from white nationalists on the right. Similarly, when asked, “Why do you think that antisemitism has become a problem in social justice movements in the progressive movement as a whole?” Rabbi Sandra Lawton deflected the question, asserting that antisemitism “is not a left problem, not a right problem” but was endemic to American and Christian culture overall.

Importantly, the panelists did call out ways in which many Jews feel excluded from the progressive left because of commitments to Israel, including the right to self-determination, that went unaddressed during the JVP forum. At the same time, though in a somewhat haltingly fashion, Hen Mazzig was able to acknowledge the concern that was at the center of the JVP discussion: “There is a real issue, there is a conflict, there are people aspiring for self-determination. We have a conflict that is unsolved, and this needs to be solved. . . We can’t ignore the Palestinians, and [I] hope that will be solved.”

This acknowledgement wasn’t much in a 90-minute webinar, but it did something essential. If those concerned about antisemitism want to move beyond fighting about which form is worse and who gets to define it, it is imperative that they recognize the intense concerns and vulnerabilities that lay at the heart of these opposing sessions.

The presentations on December 15 and 16, 2020 — still available online — may not be the starting points for a deeper discussion of the nature of antisemitism, but they open a fascinating window on the difficulty of discourse around this issue and might point in the direction of reducing the tendency to reduce it to a spat for targeting the right or the left.
Feature

Letter to the people of Geislingen on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, January 27, 2021

From Michael S. Simon

Michael Simon moved to Ann Arbor in 1983 for medical training at the University of Michigan. In 2013, he traveled throughout Europe to trace his mother’s past, bringing along his son. In 2016, he dedicated stolperstein at the family homes in Vienna. Recently, Michael had the privilege of working with a group in Geislingen whose motto is “Remember - Honor - Reconcile” (Erinnern - Ehren - Versöhnen). Michael would have addressed the 75th anniversary of the camp’s liberation last May, but unfortunately, the event was cancelled due to the pandemic. Hilde’s testimony is available through the USC Shoah Foundation.

To the people of Geislingen from the child of a survivor:

Today I write to you with mixed emotions. I am happy to have the opportunity to write to you, the people of Geislingen, and to hear about the wonderful work that your community is doing to better understand and remember sad times from the past. I am the son of a courageous woman who worked as a slave laborer in the former munitions factory in your city. Against all odds, this woman survived to become my mother.

At the same time, I am sad because of the memories of everything that my mother, Hildegard Simon née Lustig, had to live through as a young girl and teenager. Hilde had happy memories of her childhood, with her extended family, including her mother, father, brother, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Standing are Hilde’s maternal grandparents Pinkus Herlinger and Rosa Herlinger nee Rechnitzer, and in between them are Hildegard and her brother Viktor. In the window from the left are Hilde’s uncle, Karl Goldstein (he later married Paulina), Hilde’s aunt, Paulina Herlinger in the middle, and her mother Margaretha Lustig nee Herlinger, on the right.

Hilde’s former life, recounted as if from a fairy tale, vanished as if at the drop of a hat, never to return. For the rest of her life, Hilde was left with deep and dark memories, some of which had their origins in your city, a topic which she preferred to avoid discussing with her children. My sister and I grew up in the shadow of her experiences. We learned from a very young age that there was a time when Hilde had barely enough to eat, and that it was almost a crime for us to waste even a crumb of food. While Hilde’s nightmares were lived out for her in real life, for us, the children, our nightmares were born out of Hilde’s memories.

The truth is that Hilde and her family faced tremendous pressure and trauma long before she reached the gates of Geislingen. On March 25, 1938, her family fled her birthplace of Vienna for her father’s hometown of Nagykanizsa, Hungary, just three weeks after the Anschluss, leaving behind her grandparents Rosa and Pinkus. On the train ride to Hungary, the family was stopped at the Austro-Hungarian border, where her brother responded to a question about whether the family was carrying any guns. When Hilde’s brother said “I have a water gun,” all four family members were taken and strip-searched.

On March 4, 1941, while Hilde and her family were in Hungary, Pinkus and Rosa were deported from Vienna to Modliborzyce, Poland. The ghetto in Modliborzyce was liquidated on October 8, 1942. Older people were usually killed on the spot, and the rest were expelled to the Krasnik ghetto and in November from there to the Belzec death camp. Meanwhile, on March 14, 1941, Hilde’s mother Grete died after a long bout of tuberculosis.

Also during this period, Hilde’s Uncle Robert and his family were desperately trying to get passports out of Prague. Robert, his wife Annie, and daughter Renee were deported to Theresienstadt on April 28, 1942, only days after receiving the needed papers. Two days later, Robert and his family were transported to Zamosc, Poland. Only 20 passengers on the transit would survive.

In the meantime, Hilde, her father Istvan, and her brother Victor, lived an uneasy life in Hungary, facing more restrictions when the Germans entered on March 19, 1944. Nagykanizsa was one of the first places in Hungary to become Judenrein, a place where Jews were now excluded or cleansed from the rest of society. Hilde, Istvan, Victor, her maternal aunt, and her paternal grandmother Fanny were deported together to Auschwitz by cattle car on May 17, 1944, arriving on May 24. Her paternal Aunt Mariiska and Uncle Dezso were transported a few days earlier. It was truly a stroke of luck that in July of 1944, Hilde was chosen to work in Germany and was taken with 700 other Hungarian Jewish women to an unknown destination. The rest of Hilde’s family were not so lucky. No one else from her family about why my mother had a deformed finger. She only told me later as an adult, how a soldier doctor, or maybe someone that was not really a doctor, never really fixed her broken finger. For some reason, the “doctor” thought that it was best, or maybe easiest, to cut off the injured section without the use of anesthesia. She was left in agonizing pain, which she later told me that she had to keep quiet for the fear of calling unnecessary attention to herself.

Sometimes I wonder why the WMF factory where my mother worked is still standing in Geislingen and able to proudly produce kitchenware for happy families. Meanwhile, Hilde and the other inmates had to work long, grueling hours, sometimes starting in the middle of the night, under brutal conditions, with no compensation, and some paying the ultimate price, their lives. An early memory of mine from when I was four years old, at WMF was flourishing in the post-war period, was my mother being hospitalized for...
of the memorial at the factory and at the site of the camp. It is a testament to the good people of Geislingen that you are taking the time and opportunity to learn about the history of the camp, to properly respond to it, and to teach your children that such a thing should never happen again.

What can be learned from the events before and during the Holocaust, and how can we move forward, now some 76 years from the liberation of Geislingen? Of greatest importance to me is that your city is remembering the past, teaching the history in schools, telling the stories, and honoring the victims. Another important question is this: How do we as people, descendants of survivors and of camp guards, Jews, Germans, and innocent bystanders, all of us, come together, understand each other, and find common ground as human beings? In my mind, this is the only way that we can close the circle on the horrible injustice that took away so many lives and deprived so many of the love and companionship of their families. Perhaps this is a question that I have been thinking about for most of my adult life, and the reason why I wanted to write to you, the people of Geislingen, and to share my mother’s story.

depression. This was a memory that I had long repressed. Hilde later told me that at the time of her hospitalization, she could not stop thinking about her family and everything she had gone through.

After nearly one year of slave labor at the munitions factory in Geislingen, my mother was liberated by American troops on May 1, 1945. Hilde moved to America and met my father, Richard B. Simon, in 1952. After a short courtship, Hilde and Richard married. They had a happy marriage, and she was a wonderful mother and proud member of our Jewish Community in Chicago, Illinois. As her son however, I was aware of her bitter memories and developed a better understanding of her experiences through her Shoah Foundation testimony and talks for grade school children. Hilde always carried these memories deep inside, and sometimes, particularly during times of stress, her memories came close to the surface.

War is gruesome for everyone, with innumerable victims on both sides of the conflict, and particularly horrible for all those who lose their lives. It was also horrible for all of those who were enslaved in the thousands of death camps and work camps across Europe. It is unimaginable how a human being can be forced to live as a slave laborer, or to reside in a concentration camp, every moment wondering where the next blow will come from, sometimes, as Hilde recounted from her time in Auschwitz, knee-deep in mud. I cannot imagine how it would be, always wondering whether you would live to see the next day, or ever see your family and friends again. It was brutal for the inmates, but also a continued legacy for many survivors who never fully recovered from their tortured past, and who in some fashion were forced to live with their memories. It was also profoundly difficult for the children of Holocaust survivors. We grew up with the memories of our survivor parents and inherited their legacy of the Holocaust.

I also believe that we need to also consider the impact on the children, grandchildren and family members of camp guards, soldiers, and former Nazis. We need to consider the family members of the legions of people that ran the munitions factory, the concentration camps, and the entire Nazi enterprise. While I understand that not everyone in Geislingen is a descendant of a camp guard or others who ran the munitions factory, I imagine that it must be difficult to know that some of the former residents of your community — fathers, mothers, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and neighbors — were responsible for forcing people to work under brutal conditions, or worse, may have been responsible for their victim’s deaths.

I am aware that in recent years, it has become known in Geislingen that a slave labor camp existed in your own town. It must have been a shock to many of you to find out about the horrible things that happened before you were born, right there in the place where you live with your families, where you send your children to school, and where your children play with their friends. At the same time, I am happy and grateful with how your community is dealing with and confronting the past. My son and I visited Geislingen in January 2013, before the recent development...
Young families make legacy commitments

Margaret Schreiber, special to the WIN

LIFE & LEGACY® is an initiative of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation that assists communities across North America, through partnerships with Jewish Federations and Foundations, to promote after-life giving. These funds will be used to build endowments to sustain valued organizations and vibrant Jewish communities for the next generation and beyond. Through training, support, and monetary incentives, this program inspires Jewish organizations to secure legacy gifts, steward donors, and integrate legacy giving into the philanthropic culture of the local Jewish community.

The question has arisen whether it is acceptable to donate a cash gift now to the endowment of an organization participating in LIFE & LEGACY®. While this is allowed, it is not necessarily the goal of the program. The program is about after-life gifts and the impact those gifts will have on future generations. For members of the community with young families, there is another reason to designate an after-life gift. The practical side of life for a 30- to 40-something in Ann Arbor raising a family makes it cost prohibitive to give as much during life as would be given via an after-life gift through a retirement account or a will. Here are two stories from two members of our community discussing why they decided to participate in LIFE & LEGACY®.

Meet Monica Rosen, a community member in her 30s who made a legacy commitment:

Monica Woll Rosen met Ben Rosen at a Shabbat dinner when they were both in Madison studying at the University of Wisconsin. Monica was in medical school, and Ben was in graduate school getting his Ph.D. in medical physics. The couple married and moved to Ann Arbor eight years ago. They now have three children, and their eldest son, Solomon, completed his first summer at Camp Ramah in 2020 and loved it. This school year he is fortunate to be enrolled as a kindergarten student at Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor. Monica is the current president of the Ann Arbor Orphan Foundation. Monica points out that the beauty of the program is that she does not need to make a specific dollar amount gift. Instead, she is promising that there will be a gift to those organizations she holds dear. By completing a letter of intent, Monica has chosen to promise a future gift to the organizations most important to her family.

Meet Marci Sukenic, a community member in her 40s who made a legacy commitment:

Marci Sturman Sukenic met Josh Sukenic when they were living in Chicago as young adults in their 20s. After they married and had their eldest son, the Sukenics moved out of the city and into a house in the northern suburb of Highland Park. The couple had three children and loved their life, but they decided that it was time to move their family closer to their grandparents.

Sukenic Family

Sukenic will continue to give generously to the Jewish community. She knows that over the years at different stages of her life, there will be various ways of doing this, but the LIFE & LEGACY program provides a huge opportunity now. In signing a letter of intent today, Monica and Ben have taken action — they have made a promise for the future. They have set the wheels in motion for money to be invested in the community for generations to come. Monica points out that the beauty of the program is that she does not need to make a specific dollar amount gift. Instead, she is promising that there will be a gift to those organizations she holds dear. By completing a letter of intent, Monica has chosen to promise a future gift to the organizations most important to her family.

Federation Main Event 2021: A Virtual Cabaret starring Tovah Feldshuh and Ari Axelrod

Rachel Wall, special to the WIN

The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor invites the entire community to attend an evening of song and storytelling at its Main Event 2021: A Virtual Cabaret, starring Tovah Feldshuh and Ari Axelrod, to be held via Zoom on Sunday, February 21, at 6:30 p.m.

Tovah Feldshuh is a longtime star of the Broadway stage (including Tenet and Goldilocks’ Balcony), film (Kissing Jessica Stein), and television (Crazy Ex-Girlfriend, Law & Order, and The Walking Dead). Ann Arbor native Ari Axelrod is a New York-based solo cabaret performer and creator of the sold-out shows Taking the Wheel and A Celebration of Jewish Broadway. Now these two extraordinary talents have joined forces to bring this musical showcase directly to forces to bring this musical showcase directly to your screen or to a virtual living room. “We listened — and we promised a kind of reset, and something special and memorable, and we hope and expect that this year’s event will draw a record crowd,” says Federation’s executive director Eileen Feldshuh’s new book, Lilyville: Mother, Daughter, and Other Roles I’ve Played. Tovah Feldshuh is a longtime star of the Broadway stage (including Tenet and Goldilocks’ Balcony), film (Kissing Jessica Stein), and television (Crazy Ex-Girlfriend, Law & Order, and The Walking Dead). Ann Arbor native Ari Axelrod is a New York-based solo cabaret performer and creator of the sold-out shows Taking the Wheel and A Celebration of Jewish Broadway. Now these two extraordinary talents have joined forces to bring this musical showcase directly to your screen or to a virtual living room. “We listened — and we promised a kind of reset, and something special and memorable, and we hope and expect that this year’s event will draw a record crowd,” says Federation’s executive director Eileen Feldshuh. “We are optimistic,” Milgrom says, “that this wonderful event will draw a record crowd.”

Another byproduct of the nearly all-virtual current state is the opportunity to share this program and some of its costs with other Federations across the country. Thus, Connecticut’s United Jewish Federation of Greater Stamford, New Canaan, and Darien will also be joining the event live that evening.

“There is tremendous opportunity for collaboration across the Federation system right now,” says Federation’s executive director Eileen Freed. “We are proud that Jewish communities beyond Greater Ann Arbor will be enriched by this incredible program.”

Those who have not already done so can register now for the Main Event at jewishannarbor.org/mainevent21. Tickets are priced at $36 for the event only. A $54 ticket comes with a copy of Feldshuh’s new book, Lilyville: Mother, Daughter, and Other Roles I’ve Played. Those who purchase a $136 ticket will also be admitted to the post-event cabaret. Tickets are priced at $36 for the event only. A $54 ticket comes with a copy of Feldshuh’s new book, Lilyville: Mother, Daughter, and Other Roles I’ve Played. Those who purchase a $136 ticket will also be admitted to the post-event cabaret. Tickets are priced at $36 for the event only. A $54 ticket comes with a copy of Feldshuh’s new book, Lilyville: Mother, Daughter, and Other Roles I’ve Played. Those who purchase a $136 ticket will also be admitted to the post-event cabaret.
Looking for Rose: Delmar-Wabash Station
Clare Kinberg, 14th installment in a series

I'm writing a story about my father's out- cast sister Rose who, against norms and expectations for white Ashkenazi Jews in 1930s St. Louis, married a non-Jewish Afri- can American man. I looked for Rose for 40 years, and finally, in 2016, I found her death certificate on the internet. She had died in 1982. The merchant of her life I found was the 1940 federal census, which showed Zebedee A. and wife Rose living in Chicago at 5168 South Michigan Avenue. Ev- eryone on the census page is coded “Negro.” Rose is coded as working in the home. Mr. A. is working as a huckster for a vegetable dealer.

Rose's young son, Joey, did not go with her to Chicago. He lived with Rose's sister Gert and her husband, Hy, who Gert had mar- ried in 1934. They finalized Joey's adoption in 1939, when the boy was 12. According to the 1940 census, Gert, Hy, Joey, Gert’s oldest sister Laura, and Laura’s twin children, born in 1940, were all together in an apartment on Clemens in University City. Their apartment was just a block away from U. City's storied elementary school, Delmar-Harvard, where Joey might have been in the 6th grade.

Located in U. City’s Loop, Delmar-Harvard was in the heart of a Jewish neighbor- hood, that, according to long-time St. Louis Jewish Light editor, Robert Cohn, “was an incredibly secure experience.” Cohn says, “When Jews called U. City ‘New City,’ it was not considered anti-Semitic; it was simply a reflection of perceived demographics.”

Delmar-Harvard, which I also attended 20 years later (in the 1960s), was a campus of three large brick buildings, with several playgrounds and an underground tunnel connecting the buildings. It fronted onto Delmar, a major thoroughfare. To the west were the famed Central Circular University Care Hall and other municipal buildings. On the eastern edge of the Delmar-Harvard campus was a white stone retaining wall abutting the playgrounds and elevated over the sidewalk. On top of the stone wall was a black wrought-iron spoked fence.

Something about that edge of the play- ground always made me anxious, and I never went close to it. The fence collected ominous dry fallen leaves; the wall provided cover for lurking strangers. It was an odd feel- ing because most everything else about the school and the short distance to my home felt familiar and protective. Even at five years old, I walked with other young kids, passing the homes of other friends, the few blocks to kindergarten at Delmar-Harvard. I don’t think I could possibly have known that in 1940 my aunt Rose had taken the train down from Chicago and concealed herself near the playground. I imagined her son, Joey, on his way to and from school.

In my search for Rose, I had heard a story that Rose would go down to St. Louis to see Joey, but she would watch him from a dis- tance. She might have taken the train to the Delmar-Wabash Station, another U. City landmark, which put our little suburb on the map with its direct service several times a day to Kansas City and Chicago. The sleep- ing cars that opened at 9:30 p.m. advertised, “Stay longer at the party; you’ll still be on time for your train at the Delmar Station,” making train travel between St. Louis and Chicago the way to go.

Though convenient, I imagine the trip from Chicago to St. Louis would put Rose into psychological knots. In St. Louis, among everything familiar, she was part of a family and a community, yet an outlaw.

Did the rhythmic clack of the gliding train accompany her thoughts? Did I make a mistake? Did I make a mistake? Did I make a mistake?

I conjure Rose, and she tells me:

When I moved to Chicago, I stewed about Joey all day and night. It tore me up to leave him, but I couldn’t have him with me in Chi- cago. Chicago was six hours and a world away from St. Louis. I was plagued with worry. Did I do the right thing by coming to Chicago?

I had to go back to St. Louis to make sure. There were three Wabash trains each day that went straight to the Delmar station, not far from where Joey was in school. Hy had moved them all into a little apartment on Clemens, right behind the school. If I got there at the right time, I could see Joey walking home from school. I knew he didn’t want to see me, but I thought I could just catch a glimpse. I might stop worrying so much.

Zeb argued with me about going. He was totally against it, sure if I took the train to St. Louis, I’d never come back. I caught what we called the Midnight Special. It had sleeping cars, but I just sat up and dozed a little, arriv- ing when it was still dark.

I walked the few blocks to Clemens, stay- ing close to the buildings across the street till I could see theirs. Joey came out with the twins, holding hands, their big cousin Joey walking behind them all the way to school. I followed almost a block behind. He never knew.

My son was comfortable in this neighbor- hood, with friends and family around him all the time. Why didn’t I think that he might want to come with me? But me, I’d jumped the color line and would never turn back.

Though she traveled to see Joey, she re- turned to Chicago.

The year my father died (1975), my mother moved to Southern California to a suburban area northwest of Los Angeles. I’d visit her but couldn’t wait to get back to my life in St. Louis, where I’d made a home in the Tower Grove Area. The vast and sprawling Los Angeles suburb appeared to me freshly constructed, sun-bleached, and deliberately and completely white. My mother’s mobile home park for seniors wasn’t completely white, or at least new, but I was uncomfort- able with the contrast between it and my racially segregated neighborhood of four-family brick flats. When I was visiting my mother, I felt angry all of the time. Racially segregated white neighborhoods exist because of a mil- lion little and big, deliberate acts, conditions, laws, practices, regulations, attitudes, and expectations that white people living there choose to either abet or ignore.

White people in my mother’s suburban area had their own insidious California ways of avoiding what in the 1940s Black Metropo- lis, A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City called social equality. “When white people in Midwest Metropolis [Chicago] express fear that Negroes will demand social equal- ity, they do not mean . . . semi-social acts of courtesy, friendliness, and informal social intercourse. They mean, rather, the pros- perfet of Negroes becoming members of white cliques, churches, and voluntary organiza- tions, or marrying into their families.”

Aunt Rose would have been painfully aware of most white people’s absolute aver- sion to social equality. At the same time, while living in Chicago, she would have also experienced how little chasing social equality was part of Black life.

Instead, as Black Metropolis explains, “Negroes are generally indifferent to social intermingling with white people, and this indifference is closely related to the existence of a separate, parallel Negro institutional life which makes interracial activities seem un- necessary and almost ‘unnatural.’”

“Since the 18th century, a separate Negro institutional structure has existed in Amer- ica. Through the years it has been develop- ing into an intricate web of families, cliques, churches, and voluntary associations, or- dered by a system of social classes. This ‘Ne- gro World’ is, historically, the direct result of social rejection by the white society. For Negroes, however, it has long since lost this connotation . . . It is now the familiar milieu in which Negroes live and move from birth to death.”

W.E.B. Du Bois used the metaphor of the “Veil” to invoke Black life on the side of the color line that white people do not see and cannot experience. Rose may have recog- nized her new neighbors’ heymish feeling of being part of a separate institutional and so- cial structure, so similar to the Jewish family and community she’d left.

Yet, traveling back and forth from Chica- go to St. Louis, Rose would have confronted a heart-stopping difference between the Jew- ish and Black communities’ separateness. Mr. A’s presence as a social equal was absolutely and actively rejected by Rose’s family and community, while Rose’s presence as the rare white woman in the Black Belt might have been occasionally remarked upon, it was in- consequenceal among the community’s other joys, sorrows, and challenges.

Black Metropolis devotes one chapter to the estimated 400 interracial couples that lived in the Black Belt in the late 1930s. For the book, over 147 extensive interviews were conducted with these couples by the white sociologist Robert E.T. Roberts, and the book included this quite intriguing passage from an interview with a white woman: “Some of my sisters and some of my brothers disapp- proved, but they still wrote and visited me. My other relatives don’t approve at all. I have a brother in St. Louis who is very good to me. However, he doesn’t approve of my marriage and is ashamed for people to know that his sister is married to a colored man.”

The page in my copy of Black Metropo- lis that contains this quote is worn thin. I’ve parsed every word looking for the definitive clue that this interviewer is Aunt Rose. I’ve just discovered that the African American scholar Dorothy E. Roberts (Robert E.T. Roberts’ daughter) has the archive of all of her father’s interviews with interracial cou- ples, and she is working on a book based in the interviews from the period in which Aunt Rose and Mr. A lived in Chicago. Until the COVID-19 pandemic is controlled, however, her project is delayed.

Immigration, intermarriage and education making US Jewry larger and more diverse continued from page 1

But according to an analysis of American Community Survey data conducted by Ira Sheskin, director of the University of Mi- ami’s Jewish Demography Project and au- thor of dozens of Jewish ity Center in Palo Alto, California, as part of Z5’s 2020 virtual conference, “Visions for a Shared Future: Re- imagining Diaspora-Israel Relations.” This article was produced by JTAS native content team.
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Magic in mame-loshn: translating ‘Harry Potter’ into Yiddish
Kelsey Robinette Reeves, special to the WIN

The Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling is the most translated book series of all time, having appeared in languages including Tamil, Ancient Greek, and Hawaiian. On March 1, at 12 p.m., Arun Viswanath will discuss the journey and challenge of translating Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone into Yiddish. His lecture is a part of the Frankel Institute’s 2020-2021 theme year, Translating Jewish Cultures.

Viswanath had done translation work in the past but had never before translated literature — and translating Harry Potter into Yiddish had unique challenges. He knew that no matter what choices he made in the translation, there would be critics. “Each genre has its quirks,” he says, “but I don’t think that Yiddish has ever confronted the young adult fantasy genre the likes of Harry Potter,” he says. “There was also a fair bit of work I had to do to develop a voice that fits Rowling’s writing and narration style.”

Yiddish, like English, is a Germanic language, so many of the terms created by Rowling, like “Muggle” and “vindigard levisoa” felt at home in his translation, says Viswanath. However, there were some terms specific to the world of Harry Potter that did need to be converted. For example, “Slytherin,” which contains the “th” sound that doesn’t exist in Yiddish, became “Samderin” which translates literally to “poison within,” and “golden snitch” became “dos golndene flater,” which translates to “the golden butterfly.”

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Federation, JFS, and JFNA partner to raise $210,000 for human services
Eileen Freed, special to the WIN

The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor is proud to announce the completion of a successful effort to raise $210,000 to address COVID-19-related social service needs in the Washtenaw County Jewish Community. Thanks to a 50% match from the Jewish Federations of North America’s Human Services Relief Matching Fund, the $140,000 contributed by generous local donors brought $70,000 in additional resources to the community. Federation collaborated closely with Jewish Family Services and Jewish Family Services. Together, they identified Jewish communal needs, developed a clear fundraising plan, and worked closely to achieve the initial goal of $120,000. They then requested from JFNA an opportunity to raise an additional $20,000, which, with the match, resulted in an extra $30,000 for the community.

“We were seeing a growing need for our services as a result of the pandemic, including increased distress among those in our Jewish community,” said Ana Abramzon, executive director of JFS. “Federation’s tenacity in reaching — and exceeding — the match goal means we will be able to do so much more to meet the crucial needs of the expanding number of clients we serve.”

Federation and JFS will continue to partner to determine how best to utilize the funds to address the pressing needs of the Ann Arbor community. This may include support for kosher and kosher-style meals to an increasing number of clients we serve.

For Viswanath, the greatest challenge in translating the book was adapting the story to be congruous with the Yiddish language. “As a Jewish language, Yiddish encodes Jewish concepts and culture into the language itself. In many ways it presupposes a certain worldview,” he says. “But once you’re dealing with characters who are not Jewish or otherwise connected to Judaism, the Jewish-codedness of Yiddish can create some interesting pragmatic tension. So for me, the challenge was how to make this story, set very much in this classic Christian-European fantasy tradition with non-Jewish characters, seem at home in a language which is in many ways intrinsically linked with Jewish culture, history, and religion, without actually ‘converting’ any of the characters to Judaism.”

He intends to continue to translate the Harry Potter series and is also considering expanding into other young adult fantasy series. “There’s something special for me personally about taking two things that I grew up with and combining them to create something new. It’s given me a lot of nachas, a lot of joy, to see that this translation has a similar valence for others as well, even if they didn’t grow up speaking Yiddish or don’t speak Yiddish at all but still want to have it on their bookshelf.”

‘Bubbe’ or ‘Grandma’: What do you call your grandmother?
Martin B. Shichtman, special to the WIN

The Eastern Michigan University Center for Jewish Studies and Jewish Historical Society of Michigan will present “Bubbe” or “Grandma!” Language and Change in Jewish Greater Detroit on February 15 at 7:30 p.m.

This initiative was effective largely due to the strategic partnership between Federation and Jewish Family Services. Together, they identified Jewish communal needs, developed a clear fundraising plan, and worked closely to achieve the initial goal of $120,000. They then requested from JFNA an opportunity to raise an additional $20,000, which, with the match, resulted in an extra $30,000 for the community.

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Language is at the heart of people’s history, culture, and identity. Research on and portrayals of the language and linguistic practices of Jewish Americans tends to focus on major coastal cities in the United States, while relatively little is known about what language looks like in Jewish communities in the rest of North America. Eastern Michigan University’s Jewish Life and Language of Southeast Michigan project aims to address this gap, providing insights into what life and language here in Jewish Metro Detroit look like today, and how they have changed over time.

In this talk, the team will focus on the language of 10 women in the Detroit metropoli-
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Reconstructionist congregations partner across the miles

Emily Eisbruch, special to the WJN

The past year, with all its challenges, has seen the flowering of many new online collaborations. One such growing collaboration within the Jewish Reconstructionist community actually began over 10 years ago when future rabbi Ora Nitkin-Kaner and Alex Weissman met and became friends in Philadelphia at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College’s Institute for Prospective Rabbinical Students. They entered CRC the same year (2011), overlapped in many classes, and were housemates for their first two years of rabbinical school.

Little did these two rabbinical students imagine that within a decade they would bring together their Reconstructionist congregations — one located in Ann Arbor and one in Attleboro, Massachusetts — for joint worship services and holiday celebrations on a platform called Zoom.

“The pandemic has shaken up how congregations pray, learn, and create community together, but has also allowed for new forms of connection across long distances,” says Nitkin-Kaner, of the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation. “Rabbi Alex Weissman, leader of Congregation Agudas Achim in Attleboro, and I spoke over the summer of 2020 about the particular challenges and Zoom-based opportunities this year. We thought that with so many people hungry for more connection and more stimulation, shared services would be a wonderful experiment. Our congregations are natural partners because of similarities in size, demographics, and values.”

Rabbi Ora and Rabbi Alex decided on a tri-annual celebration for the summer solstice, fall equinox, and Christmas. “The opportunity to meaningfully interact with new people in this moment is a rare gift. Positive feedback from both congregations led to a second collaboration, this time for a Shabbat Hanukkah with the theme of hagamuz — ‘hidden light.’” During this service, Rabbi Ora shared Rosenmeyr Waltola Trummer’s poem, “The Way It Is” and a guided meditation on inner light, while Rabbi Alex shared the experience with a text study on how hagamuz is connected to Hanukkah.

“It has meant so much to partner with AARC for these holidays,” says Rabbi Alex. “The opportunity to meaningfully interact with new people in this moment is a rare gift. Positive feedback from both congregations led to a second collaboration, this time for a Shabbat Hanukkah with the theme of hagamuz.”

Change, to respond to the needs of Jewish communities. We are actively participating in this project through this innovative collaboration and couldn’t be happier about it.

Plans for additional events with Agudas Achim in the spring are in the works right now: a shared Tu B’Shvat program and another shared Shabbat. The AARC also intends to join again with Reconstructionist Congregation Keillah Israel in Jerusalem and its new leader, Rabbi Matthew Kaufman. Past collaborations with Kehillat Israel have required one or the other congregation to drive 70 miles across the state. Thanks to online expertise gained in 2020, the coming months may see some joint activities or programming occurring virtually.

Each Reconstructionist congregation has its own cherished identity and character, and yet, by teaming up for some special occasions, we can expand our vision of community and offer more varied experiences. If you would like to learn more about the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation, please visit www.aarecon.org or contact Gillian Jackson at aarc-gillian@gmail.com or Rabbi Ora Nitkin-Kaner at rabbi@aarcon.org.

AA Reconstructionist Congregation events

Second Saturday Ta’Shma/Come and Learn February 13 at 10 a.m. Join us as we launch a new Ta Shma series: Pray What? Each month, we’ll focus on a different prayer from the Shabbat morning service, discussing its origin and point of view, how it came to be included in our liturgy, and why it’s relevant or not to how we see God, ourselves, and the world. This event uses the same zoom link as Saturday Morning Shabbat Service.

Second Saturday Shabbat Morning Service February 13 at 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Join us for a special celebratory Shabbat as we welcome our newest and youngest member, Adir Lesser-Lee, into the community, and celebrate with his parents Paula and Bori!

A Taste of Talmud: The First Heretic Sundays, January 24 and 31, and February 7 and 14, at 6:00–2:30 p.m.

Elisha ben Abuya is one of the most intriguing figures in rabbinic literature: a rabbi and a mystic who rejected mitzvot, betrayed his fellow Jews to the Roman authorities, consorted with prostitutes, and even tried to kill his students. Ben Abuya was a violent apostate who should have been ostracized by his fellow rabbis. So why did they treat him with care and respect? What can we learn from this early heretic about the possibilities and limits of rebellion, belief, shame, and forgiveness? We’ll spend four weeks studying the stories of Elisha ben Abuya in the Palestinian Talmud’s tractate Chagigah (using the Schottenstein English translation). Learning will be cumulative, so please come to all four sessions, and drop-ins are welcome.

Fourth Friday Shabbat: Family Friendly Pu’rim Celebration and Megillah Reading February 26 at 6:00–7:30 p.m. Followed by the Great Purim Debate at 7:30 p.m. Email info@aarecon.org to participate.

AARC Community Book Club, Sundays, February 28 and April 11, at 10:00–2:30 p.m. Sunday, February 28: Menachem Klein, Lives in Common: Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Hebron. Sunday, April 11: Rabbi Alex will lead a discussion of Bryan Stevenson’s Just Mercy, a 368-page nonfiction book about an unfair treatment by the criminal justice system of those who are impoverished or black. For more information about services or events or to receive zoom links, please email aarcgilligan@gmail.com. For the Zoom link, please email Greg Saltzman at saltzman@allion.edu.

2020 Jewish Book Festival best ever

Clara Silver, special to the WJN

The Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor has completed its largest, and arguably most successful, Ann Arbor Jewish Book Festival, which spanned November 30, 2020 to December 22, 2020, and featured 26 authors via 23 programs that explored a wide variety of genres and subjects. The festival took place completely online, and the average number of screens at each presentation was 40, with a high of 66 screens and estimated over 100 people attending. Ultimately, hundreds of people participated as presenters, moderators, and attendees, some from as far away as Israel, such as authors Eshkol Nevo and Uri Adoni, and England, such as moderator Helen Fry and author Raffi Berg.

“The response from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. According to Noemi Herzig, director of Jewish cultural arts and education at the Ann Arbor JCC, “I received many emails saying how wonderful the book festival was, too many to count. What set this year’s Festival apart is that it made the world seem smaller and more accessible. The authors were all in our living rooms.”

Ann Arbor JCC board president Bruce Herzig says, “The book festival was great. I loved the online format. It was super easy to join in and attend, and I went to events that I ordinarily would not have.”

Robert Takanowsky says, “I am thrilled with the attendance numbers. Everyone I spoke with loved the talks.”

Susan Fisher shares, “Great numbers reflect a great event. Kudos!”

The 2020 Festival also included expanded partnerships and sponsoring groups, the Ann Arbor JCC became a member of the Jewish Book Council, a nonprofit organization “devoted exclusively to support and celebration of Jewish literature,” that connects members with authors, book reviews, and more.

Six authors events were presented in partnership with the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit’s 2020 Jewish Book Festival. The University of Michigan’s Frankel Center for Judaic Studies provided moderators for four author events, deeply enriching those conversations. For the first time in the festival’s 33-year history, participating authors’ books could be purchased through a special partnership with local purveyor Literati Bookstore, encouraging the support of a local business. New or expanded festival sponsoring organizations include the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, Temple Beth Emeth, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor ORT Book Group, the Center for Judaic Studies at Eastern Michigan University, and Jewish Family Services.

Herzig also says, “the festival would not be possible without the countless hours of work from the dedicated volunteers of the festival committee. I could never have managed this size festival without them.”

“Committee chair and past executive director of the Ann Arbor JCC, Leslie Bash, was completely responsible for the amazing sponsor- norship. She coordinated with Amanda Fisher to provide an amazing dinner for our sponsors to pick up, she kept track of all the dinner reservations, and she even placed chocolate gilt in every dinner package. Leslie did so much that I can’t mention it all here. The members of the committee do so much work for months, reading many books, finding moderators appropriate to the topics, getting involved with the fundraising aspect of the festival, writing the introductions and biographies, and so much more. I can’t thank them enough. They were really the key to this year’s success.”

Regarding next year’s festival Herzig says, “My hope is to continue building partnerships from this year and doing more joint events. This festival was simply amazing and while I hope it will be safe to join together in person next year, we will definitely continue to have online events as well. I want the festival to continue to bring people together from all over the world.”

For more information about Jewish cultural arts and the associated festivals, contact Noemi Herzig at noemiherzig@aarcannabor.org.
Temple Beth Emeth events

All events and services are virtual. Go to the Temple Beth Emeth website for the Zoom links and more information. Contact Cantor Hayut at cantorhayut@templebethemeth.org for more information.

**Daily morning blessings**
- Daily at 9:15 a.m.
  - Join Rabbi Whinston each morning via Zoom for a short morning blessing.

**Daily afternoon blessings**
- Mondays–Thursdays at 3 p.m.
  - Join Cantor Hayut each afternoon via Zoom for a short afternoon blessing.

**TBE Adult Education Series, Session I**
- Tuesdays, January 5 through February 2, at 7 p.m.
  - TBE Adult Education Series, Session I

**TBE Adult Education Series, Session II**
- Sundays, January 10 through February 7, at 7 p.m.
  - TBE Adult Education Series, Session II

**Mondays and Thursdays at 3 p.m.**
- Adult Education Series, Session II

**Mondays, February 1 and 15, at 3:30 p.m.**
- TBE adult b’nai-mitzvah classes

**Saturday Shabbat Services**
- Saturdays at 9:30 a.m.
  - All of your favorite songs led by TBE’s tot director, Cantor Emeritus Annie Rose

**Sunday Shabbat service**
- Sundays at 10 a.m.

**Lifelong Learning Series**
- Mondays, February 1 and 15, at 3:30 p.m.
  - TBE adult b’nai-mitzvah classes

**WTBE Virtual happy hour**
- February 11 and 25 at 5:30 p.m.
  - Join WTBE virtual happy hour to catch up and schmooze.

**WTBE community wellness: The Chemistry of Staying Young**
- Thursday, February 11, at 7:30 p.m.
  - With Murray Rosenenthal

**Weekly mahzor**
- Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.
  - Wednesday, February 3, at 1 p.m.
  - Offsite, see contact info on TBE website

**WTBE Book Club with Cantor Hayut**
- Thursdays at 11 a.m.
  - Sundays at 3 p.m.

**Twenty-five-minute mindfulness with Jewish spiritual director Linda Greene**
- Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m.
  - Zoom room opens at 8:15 a.m. for optional check-in. Blessing and intention setting 8:30–8:35 a.m. Meditate 8:35–9:00 a.m. Start your day centered and connected.

**Meditation with Claire Weiner**
- Wednesday at 5 p.m.

**Biblical Book Club with Cantor Hayut**
- Thursdays at 11 a.m.

**Women’s Torah study**
- Mondays, February 1, and 15 at 3:30 p.m.

**Spirituality Book Club with Cantor Emeritus Annie Rose**
- Tuesday, February 9, at 7:30 p.m. and Thursday, February 11, at noon

**Back Door Food Pantry**
- Thursdays at 4–7 p.m.

**Weekly Lunch and Learn**
- Fridays at noon
  - Rabbi Whinston meets on Fridays for an informal discussion about religion. Sessions are open to the entire community. Feel free to bring your lunch.

**Shabbat**
- Fridays
  - Tot Shabbat Services at 5:45 p.m.
  - Shira Service at 6:15 p.m.
  - All of your favorite songs led by TBE’s tot director, Cantor Hayut and Rabbi Whinston.

**Shabbat morning Torah study**
- Saturdays at 8:30 a.m.
  - Join us for this weekly discussion of the Torah portion led by Rabbi Whinston.

**Shabbat Sabre service**
- Saturdays at 10 a.m.

**Havdalah from the Whinston Home**
- Saturdays at 7:30 p.m.
  - Join Rabbi Whinston and his family for a short prayer marking the end of Shabbat.

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TBE participates in Life & Legacy

The Temple Beth Emeth members Marc Kessler, Judie Lax, and Robin Little had a conversation about TBE’s LIFE & LEGACY campaign. Judie and Robin are co-chairing the campaign.

**Marc:** Hi Robin! Hi Judie! Thanks for agreeing to share your thoughts about the LIFE & LEGACY program, funded by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, now underway at TBE and other Jewish organizations in Ann Arbor and across North America.

**Robin:** It’s my pleasure, Marc. The future of TBE and our Jewish community is very important to me.

**Judie:** Thanks for the opportunity. I feel that it is important for our members to think about what they want their legacy to be.

**Marc:** Let’s start with the basics. When did you join TBE and what areas of congregation life have you been active in?

**Robin:** I have been a member since 1993. So many memories! My son David had the last bar-mitzvah in the old sanctuary. I served on the Genesis board and I am a member of Kol HaLev.

**Judie:** I joined in 1970 and have enjoyed so many memorable experiences and life events at TBE. I have been on numerous committees and the TBE board. Having my own bat-mitzvah just five years ago was so very special. Marc, what about you?

**Marc:** I joined in 1998 and have been on the board of TBE, Genesis, and the Backdoor Pantry. I was also the inaugural VP for development at TBE and worked on many fundraising efforts. I certainly have very fond memories of working with both of you on the campaign for the Music and Spirituality Endowment in Honor of Cantor Emeritus Annie Rose.

**Judie:** Thanks for bringing that up. Marc. The goal of the LIFE & LEGACY campaign is to build endowments that will help our community for generations to come. I spent over a decade working with the broader Jewish community to leverage gifts. Having TBE participating in this national program is very heartwarming for me.

**Marc:** Planning for the future is certainly an important responsibility for all of us. What does success for the LIFE & LEGACY campaign look like?

**Robin:** For me, it is all about telling the story of how TBE enriches our lives. We have seen over the past year how our clergy and leadership have stepped up to keep us connected to one another. That demonstrates why we must have stepped up to keep us connected to one another. That demonstrates why we must move TBE forward.

**Judie:** As Robin said, legacy gifts help us guarantee stability to pursue so many aspects of TBE life. With strong endowments, we can start each year with a much healthier budget.

**Marc:** How can TBE members learn more about LIFE & LEGACY? Most importantly, what can they do now?

**Robin:** Anyone who has already made a legacy gift, or wants to do so, should reach out to us or the office (734-665-4744). We are having a series of informational gatherings, via Zoom and are also happy to schedule individual meetings.

**Judie:** It is important to remember that this is not about donating now, but rather a pledge for the future for TBE and the other participating organizations in our community. We are thrilled to report that TBE, in the first four months, secured 25 letters of intent, which means we’ll receive a $5,000 incentive grant funded by the Grinspoon Foundation and our Federation!

**Marc:** Thanks again! I look forward to seeing LIFE & LEGACY grow at TBE. More information is available on the homepage of the TBE website, www.templebeth.org.

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Pursuing Tzedek at TBE

Naomi Goldberg, special to the WIN

The Temple Beth Emeth is a place for Jewish social action in Ann Arbor, especially at this moment, with a particular focus on direct support for those in need. Although forced to close for several weeks, the Back Door Food Pantry located on the TBE campus has recently reopened with COVID-19-safe protocols in place. The Back Door Food Pantry is an interfath partnership that includes volunteers from the Jewish community as well as St. Clare’s Episcopal Church and Muslim Social Services. It offers food for up to 250 families each week. Through programs sponsored by the Delonis Center and the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County, TBE volunteers also provide meals, housing, socks, and gloves for others in need in the local area. Truly, Temple Beth Emeth is a place for g’milut chasadim, acts of service.

The driving force behind TBE’s social action efforts is the recognition that housing insecurity and homelessness, job losses and economic turmoil, disproportionate deaths of Black and Latinx people during the COVID-19 pandemic, unequal access to the ballot, and the myriad other challenges facing our world cannot be solved merely through acts of service.

In addition to direct service, our efforts are inspired by tzedakah, in the truest sense — the pursuit of justice in our world. Last summer, TBE’s Social Action Committee and the Civic Engagement Subcommittee cosponsored a Washtenaw County Prosecutor candidate forum. We recognized the potential for serious shifts in criminal justice and the impact of the system on people of color as a result of the election. The Civic Engagement Sub-committee also worked tirelessly to make sure that every eligible congregant was registered to vote and had the information to vote safely and securely.

Rabbis Josh Whinston spoke during a High Holy Day sermon about racism, the role of race in each of our lives, and how race impacts our communities. A cohort of congregants then embarked on a multi-month education series taught by Rabbi Whinston and community advocate Chuck Warpehoski to learn more about anti-racism. From that work, TBE’s Social Action Committee drafted a statement of commitment to anti-racism along with a resource page for Jews to learn more about how to shift thinking, purposefully work for racial justice, and influence societal structures that continue to perpetuate racism.

In 2021, the congregation’s commitment to social action includes prayer, learning, and service focused on gun safety, hunger and poverty relief, and LGBTQ and racial justice. TBE has also hosted a Pride Shabbat to celebrate LGBTQ diversity. These and other efforts are intended to pursue tikun olam, repairing the world.

TBE’s social action projects are not restricted to TBE members. All members of the Jewish community are invited to participate in direct acts of service, learn about the root causes of inequality in our country, and advocate for changes in our county, state, and country to uphold Jewish morals and democratic ideals. For more information, visit www.templebethemeth.org or email socialaction@templebethemeth.org.
Kosher Cuisine

February 2021

Kosher Cuisine February 2021

I sincerely hope everyone is still okay, making the best of our continued indoor isolation. Since cooking has become a big part of our days, probably more than in our “old” lives, I thought it might be fun to ask some of you what you are cooking. I wrote about my new obsession with chickpeas last year and covered the new skills that this time has allowed us to learn, especially the younger generation. This time around it’s our “go to” or “comfort” foods that we are able to make just by opening the refrigerator or pantry. A bowl of Raisin Bran doesn’t count and neither do grilled cheese sandwiches. Here are some ideas and recipes that people I know are making on a regular basis. Some of these recipes are for soup that is easy to freeze for multiple meals. Others are good for the one day or maybe the next but not really for freezing. If you have more ideas, feel free to send them to me at lonnieuss@aol.com. I’m happy to include them in a future column.

Vegetable Bean Soup

This recipe came from Anita Liberman-Lamper. She told me that it’s been a regular on their table, especially when it’s cold outside. She uses a dried soup mix from a brand called Aliden’s Mill House, but any package of dried bean mix would work as would any dried beans you have. I can almost hear someone asking if you could use canned beans and the answer is “use anything you want.” If you use canned beans you should rinse them well first to rid them of the tin flavor from the cans. Using dried beans bumps up the flavor significantly.

1 to 2 cups dried beans
3 or 4 large carrots, peeled and chopped
4 or 5 stalks celery, washed and cut up
1 large or 2 medium onions, peeled and cubed
2 parsnips, peeled and cut up
1 large can whole tomatoes, cut up or use 3 to 4 fresh tomatoes
Add other vegetables if you want to.
Vegetable stock and water — enough to cover all the beans and vegetables.
Rinse and drain the dried beans (or canned) and add to 4 cups of the liquid in a soup pot, then add the vegetables. Season with your favorite seasonings, salt, pepper, garlic powder, dried or fresh dill. Cover and bring to a boil and then lower the heat to simmer until the beans are soft, 3 to 4 hours. Alternatively, wait until the beans are softening and then add the fresh vegetables. My mom used to say that vegetables shouldn’t be “boiled to death” or if they are very soft, 3 to 4 hours. Alternatively, wait until the beans are softening and then add the fresh vegetables. My mom used to say that vegetables shouldn’t be “boiled to death” or if they are very soft, 3 to 4 hours. Alternatively, wait until the beans are softening and then add the fresh vegetables. My mom used to say that vegetables shouldn’t be “boiled to death” or if they are used for the flavor, add more fresh vegetables at the end and cook until tender.

Vegetarian French Onion Soup

Levana Aronson told me about this soup that she and her husband, Steve, have enjoyed. It’s very easy and you probably have the onions in the pantry. It will take some time to really deepen the color and caramelization of the onions, but it will be worth it.

Vegetarian French Onion Soup

6 lbs butter or olive oil
3 lbs yellow onions, halved and thinly sliced vertically
2 cups water — you may need more to deglaze the pot
6 cups vegetable broth
6 sprigs of thyme — about 1 1/2 tablespoons
2 lbs flour
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 1/2 lbs tamarind
1/2 lbs Balsamic vinegar
1 bay leaf
Salt and pepper to taste
Top with thick slices of baguette or crusty bread and top them with 4 oz. of Gruyere or Swiss Cheese or Parmesan cheese

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onions, salt and some pepper and toss to combine. Reduce the heat to low and cook for about 40 minutes. You want to get the onions to be very soft. Then increase the heat back to medium, stirring often until they onions start to get golden brown. Add the vinegar, tamarind, thyme, and garlic and stir. Sprinkle a few table spoons of flour on the onions and cook for about two minutes. Add the vegetable broth and bay leaf and simmer over medium heat for 30 more minutes. For the topping, preheat the oven to 450 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place the baguette slices with the cheese on top and bake until the bread is toasty and the cheese is melted, about 8-10 minutes.

Vegan Chickpea-Spinach and Coconut Curry

Paul and Stephen Landau like Indian food but have not gone to any restaurants. Instead, they are making one of their favorite dishes. Serve it with basmati or jasmine rice, or whatever you like. Adjust the seasonings to your tastes.

3 lbs canola or other neutral oil
1 large onion, finely chopped
4 cloves minced garlic
1 inch fresh ginger, finely chopped
1 lbs ground coriander
1/2 lbs turmeric
1 lbs cumin
1 lbs curry powder (Pam likes Hot Curry Powder or Maharajah Curry Powder)
1/4 tsp cardamom
1/4 to 1/2 tsp cayenne pepper or chili flakes (or not, if you don’t like that much heat)
1 can crushed tomatoes, undrained
2 cans chickpeas, rinsed and drained
1 pound, baby spinach, sliced in strips
1/2 to 1 tsp salt
2 tsp garam masala
1 can coconut milk
Use a large pan to heat the oil over medium heat and saute the onions until golden. Add in the garlic and ginger and cook for 1-2 minutes, stirring frequently. Then mix in the ground coriander, turmeric, cumin, curry, cardamom and cayenne for a few minutes more, stirring often. Add the crushed tomatoes and the chickpeas and stir. Increase the heat to high until the mixture comes to a boil, then lower the heat to simmer for 10-15 minutes, stirring as needed and add a little water if it gets too dry. Next add the salt and stir and then the spinach, a handful at a time, until wilted. Add the garam masala and the coconut milk and stir until all the ingredients are mixed thoroughly. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer about 5 minutes. Serve over the rice and enjoy.

Mandelbread

A few months ago, I got a phone call from Marilyn Friedman. We know each other from Congregation Beth Israel where we are both members. She lives also at the same facility as my dad. She called to ask what I thought was a good Channukah menu that would go with latkes. The head chef at the facility had asked her to recommend what he could make for the Jewish residents. Along with latkes she thought about mandelbread. They were not served during Chanukah, but my dad reported a lunch of latkes made from sweet potatoes that he determined were “good, but different”. Here is Marilyn’s family recipe for mandelbread. I have to mention that a few years ago I wrote about Hilda Diogenes’s (z.l.) recipe for her version of mandelbread. Some of you may have your own from your mom or grandmother. They may be a little different or maybe you like to add chocolate chips or dried fruit or add cinnamon. It’s good to carry on a tradition.

3 eggs
1 cup neutral oil
3/4 cup (scant) sugar
1 tsp. vanilla
2-1/2 cups sifted flour
1 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
1 cup chopped walnuts

Beat the oil, sugar and vanilla. Gradually add the rest of the ingredients. Spread evenly on a cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees for about 25-30 minutes. Remove from the oven but don’t turn it off. Cut the dough into 9 rows across and 3 rows down. Then reverse the bars and bake for another 10-12 minutes until they are toasted.
Thoughts on Purim: In the merit of Jewish women
Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, special to the WJN

B elieve it or not, we are already getting ready for the holiday of Purim, which is going to begin on the evening of Thursday, February 25, and ends on Friday, February 26. Speaking about Purim, in general, women are exempt from positive mitzvot that are time bound. Nevertheless, we may find an exception to that.

First of all, there’s the mitzvah of Purim that women are obligated to hear the megillah. The Talmud gives the reason for it: they were involved in the miracle of Purim. Therefore, they are obligated to read the story of Purim and do the mitzvot of Purim. Furthermore, it says that the reason why women are considered to be involved with the miracle of Purim is because the decree was that Haman wanted to plot against all the Jews—not just the men, but women as well. So when the salvation came from Purim, women also benefited. Furthermore, the main miracle of Purim happened through Esther. That reinforces why women are obligated in the mitzvah of Purim.

Not only on Purim do we find that women are obligated, but also, the Talmud says that during Hanukkah women are obligated a little at lighting of the menorah and the observance of Hanukkah. Why? Because the Jewish women suffered from at the hands of the Greeks, the Jewish women were violated by the Greeks, and furthermore, the miracle of Hanukkah happened through a woman. It happened through Tehudis, when she beheaded the head Greek general. That was the turning point for the Jewish people to win back Jerusalem. Also, on Purim, women are obligated because on the merit of the righteous women of that generation, the Jews were redeemed from Egypt.

Furthermore, women are exempt, but at least in these three, women are obligated.

One of the reasons why Purim is so special is explained in the midrash that tells us the story that when Haman came out with his decree against the Jews, God forbid, the decree was nullified only on the merit of Mordechai gathering together 20,000 Jewish children and studying the Torah with them. The emphasis here is that Mordechai did it himself—he didn’t appoint someone else to do it for him. He taught the Jewish children Torah. There were other leaders and great scholars who could have done it, but he learned with the children because he wanted to make sure that the education that he was giving to them was coming through in a pure, proper manner. This shows that the nullification of Haman’s decree came through proper Jewish education—learning Torah with children.

Speaking about educating children—that has a special connection to women. This is because women are considered the main foundation of the house, and what keeps Judaism going through the generations is the education from women in their homes. There are those who occupy themselves educating the children and raising them with a strong sense of Judaism. So, therefore, women are the ones who lay the foundation for the continuity of the Jewish people. So, being that women are the foundation of the continuity of the Jewish home, therefore, when the Mishnaic times comes there’s something special about the women that they will be the crown to the men. Therefore, when it came to Purim, who was the one who saved the Jewish people? This came through a woman, through Esther, who caused the decree of Haman to be nullified. Hence, came the miracle of Purim.

This threatening that took place during the time of Haman takes place in every generation. Haman is a descendent of Amalek, and Amalek’s mission is to “cool a Jew from their enthusiasm toward things of holiness. Therefore, not only at that time did the Jewish people have to fight Haman (and thank God be successful), but it is the same thing now, in that it is demanded of us to stand strong and not to be fazed by the Hamans of every generation. Especially through the women, we are given the power to do this—by the manner in which they transmit the power in the household to the children and eventually to the adults. It’s just like in the times of Mordechai, when the strength to overcome the decree came from the people dedicating themselves to God—especially with children learning Torah in its purity. So it’s the same thing now, in our days. The women of this generation have to dedicate themselves to educating the children to be dedicated to Torah and not to be busy with other things. To know that the important thing is Torah. Torah makes sure that we can continue with our Jewish identity, and this will bring great success in all our endeavors and to all the Jewish people.

Course in Ann Arbor explores life, death, and the afterlife
Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, special to the WJN

W hen Rabbi Jared Anstandig, special to the WJN

I n the heart of quarantine, a certain Jewish meme floated around my family’s WhatsApp group. The title of the meme was Jewish Holiday Flowchart, and by answering a series of yes or no questions, you could identify any Jewish holiday you were celebrating. The first question on the tree:

Did they try to kill us? Answering yes yields nearly half of all holidays listed. Then answer no to being in the Torah, yes to eating food, and yes to wearing a costume, and you end up with the holiday of Purim, which we will celebrate later this month. It’s quite remarkable that a holiday with its origin story being about the near genocide of our people is celebrated with traditional food, costumes, and humor.

In truth, throughout Jewish history, there is a cultural association with Jews and comedy. As early as the Bible our people evidenced comedic sarcasm. As the Israelites stood at the shore of the Red Sea watching the Egyptians bear down on them, they turned to Moses and asked, “Was there a short time that you had to bring us here to die?” (Exodus 14:11). In the face of complete obliteration, our ancestors responded with humor. Allowed us to cope.

The Talmud in Tractate Taanit (22a) refers to the following story about the power of laughter: Rabbi Beroka was sitting in the marketplace when the prophet Elijah appeared to him and indicated two individuals who were destined for Heaven. The Talmud describes, “Rabbi Beroka went over to the men and said to them: What is your occupation? They said to him: We are jesters, and we cheer up the depressed.”

According to the Talmud, it is deeply meritorious to make people laugh and to forget their troubles. Such an occupation appears to grant automatic entry into Heaven.

Twentieth century rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik suggested that to be light-hearted is to stir. In the Divine (Nefesh Hayarz page 69, quoting from a eulogy, no less, that Soloveitchik delivered for an esteemed rabbinic colleague), Rabbi Soloveitchik referenced a passage in the Talmud (Tractate Avoda Zara 3b) that records God’s daily schedule. Interspersed between essential tasks like sustaining all life in existence, the Talmud describes that God takes a break to “sit and make sport with the leviathan.” God engages in play daily.

Rabbi Soloveitchik continued, “God Himself plays in order to show people that they shouldn’t always be so serious. If someone impinges one’s honor or causes one grief, one should remove it from one’s heart . . . because so many things in this world really don’t matter. Obviously, there are certain circumstances when it would be inappropriate to make light. But Rabbi Soloveitchik’s point is that sometimes it is beneficial for us to take a step back, to go to a different perspective, and to laugh a little at whatever it is we’re dealing with. As Rabbi Soloveitchik concisely makes many times, “It’s just not worth it to get upset.”

Over the last 12 months we have experienced many serious challenges that are no laughing matter. But perhaps this Purim, among all the joyous festivities, we can remember that we still have plenty in our lives to laugh at.

Rabbi Jared Anstandig

Why are Jews funny?
Rabbi Jared Anstandig, special to the WJN

T his winter, Rabbi Aharon Goldstein of Chabad House in Ann Arbor will offer Journey of the Soul, a new six-session course by the acclaimed Rohr Jewish Learning Institute that will answer a question which has occurred to every self-reflective person: What happens when we die?

John Marion on Wednesday, February 10, at 7:30 p.m., students who enroll in this course will embark on a journey that will edify them and put them at ease with the topics of life and the afterlife. Practical and powerful, reflective and relatable, Journey of the Soul teaches a Jewish perspective on life that begins before birth and lasts well after a person’s passing.

The course will be offered over Zoom. Sign-up information will be provided at the time of enrollment.

“Death is both mysterious and inevitable,” Rabbi Goldenstein, the local JLI Instructor in Ann Arbor, says. “Understanding death as a continuation of life reveals the holiness of life while putting everything in a dramatically new context. The soul is on one long journey that is greater than each particular chapter.”

Journey of the Soul considers what happens to the soul at birth and again at death, whether there is a better place after this one, whether our loved ones continue to connect with us, the Jewish understanding of reincarnation, and how to relate to an afterlife even if we’re not spiritual.

The subtitle of Journey of the Soul, “How to look at life, death, and the rest—in peace,” is indicative of an approach to the topic that is once serious, relaxed, and sometimes whimsical.

“The topic of death and the afterlife is one that has always fascinated thinking people,” explains Rabbi Naftali Silberberg of JLI’s Brooklyn, New York, headquarters. “But particularly during these tumultuous times when, sadly, so many have lost loved ones to COVID, the need has become even more pressing for a course that presents the uplifting Jewish perspective on mortality, death, and the afterlife.”

Simon Shumshob Rubin, Director of the International Center for the study of Loss, Bereavement, and Human Resilience at the University of Haifa considers Journey of the Soul a timely and timely tool that cannot help but deepen our appreciation of human connections and the way in which we find and make meaning in life.”

As with all of JLI’s programs, Journey of the Soul is designed to appeal to people at all levels of knowledge, including those without any prior experience or background in Jewish learning. All JLI courses are open to the public, and attendees need not be affiliated with a synagogue, temple, or other house of worship.

People interested in participating may call 734-995-3276 extension 2, or visit www.myJLI.com for registration and other course-related information.
**Monday 1**

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin. BIC. 3:30 p.m. WTBE.Cooks. 3:30 p.m.

Adult B’nai Mitzvah Class: TBE. 6 p.m.

*Women’s Torah Study*: TBE. Zoom. For questions, contact Cantor Regina Hayat at cantorhayat@templebethemeth.org. 7 p.m.

**Tuesday 2**

Twenty-five minute Mindfulness with Jewish Spiritual Director Linda Greene: TBE and Pardes Hannah. 8:30 a.m.

Talmud Tuesdays w/ Rabbi Alter: TBE. 11 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Tea and Torah on Tuesday—for Women: Chabad. 8 p.m. See first Tuesday of month.

**Wednesday 3**

Yidish tish (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group: Zoom). About 45 minutes each of conversation and reading. Free and open to all those interested. Yiddish language, literature, and culture, no matter what level of proficiency. All manner of topics covered with an effort to improve participants’ Yiddish speaking and reading skills, especially vocabulary. Everyone is welcome to join in at any time, or to just listen. For more information, to get the link, and to make certain that we are meeting on a specific day, please e-mail Elliot H. Gertel at egertel@chabad.org at least one day before scheduled meeting day every Wednesday (except major Jewish holidays). 2 p.m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner: TBE. 5 p.m.

Sister Scholars: The Emergence of Orthodox Girls’ Education in Intervar Poland: U-M Frankel Center/JCC of Metro Detroit SAJE event. Naomi S. Sneider, Frankel Institute Fellow. 7 p.m.

Theology Book Club: BIC. Online 8 p.m.

Journey of the Soul: A Fresh Look at Life, Death, and the Rest—in Peace. Chabad. 8 p.m.

**Thursday 4**


Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayat leads discussion. 11 a.m.

Pirke Avot with Rabbi Dobrusin: BIC. 5 p.m.

Tea and Torah Study with Rabbi Caine. BIC. 6:30 p.m.

Talmud-Jewish Civil Law: Chabad. 8 p.m.

**Friday 5**

**Candle Lighting 5:37 p.m. Yitro**


Lunch and Learn: TBE. Zoom. Rabbi Whinston meets on Fridays for an informal discussion about religion. Noon–1 p.m.

**Saturday 6**

Hanvulalah 6:39 p.m.

Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. Weekly discussion of the Torah portion led by Rabbi Whinston 8:00-9:30 a.m.

Sunday 7

World Wide Wrap: BIC. Sunday morning minyan wearing our tefillin. First 5 minutes encouraging and advising those who are learning how to wrap. 10 a.m.

Chant Circle. Pardes Hannah. 11 a.m.

Tanya-Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidim and discover the beauty and depth of Judaism. 11 a.m.

Intro to Judaism with Rav Nadav: BIC. 11 a.m.

A Taste of Talmud: The First Heretic. AARC 11 a.m.

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayat leads discussion. 11 a.m.

Family Game Night: BIC. 5 p.m.

**Monday 15**

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin. BIC. 3:30 p.m.

WTBE.Cooks. 3:30 p.m.

Adult B’nai Mitzvah Class: TBE. 6 p.m.

*‘Bubbe’ or ‘Grandma’? What do you call your grandmother?* EMU. 7 p.m.

Women’s Torah Study: TBE. Zoom. For questions, contact Cantor Regina Hayat at cantorhayat@templebethemeth.org. 7 p.m.

**Tuesday 16**

Twenty-five minute Mindfulness with Jewish Spiritual Director Linda Greene: TBE and Pardes Hannah. 8:30 a.m.

Talmud Tuesdays w/ Rabbi Alter: TBE. 11 a.m. and 8 p.m.


Tea and Torah on Tuesday—for Women: Chabad. 8 p.m.

**Wednesday 17**

Yidish tish Conversation & Reading Group: Every Wednesday, see above. 2 p.m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner: TBE. 5 p.m.

Releasing Roots: Hebrew Poetry in Translation: U-M Frankel Center/JCC of Metro Detroit SAJE event: Adriana X. Jacobs, Frankel Institute Fellow. 7 p.m.

Theology Book Club: BIC. Online 8 p.m.

Journey of the Soul: A Fresh Look at Life, Death, and the Rest—in Peace. Chabad. 8 p.m.

**Friday 19**

Candle Lighting 5:55 p.m. Terumah

Lunch and Learn: TBE. Zoom. Rabbi Whinston meets on Fridays for an informal discussion about religion. Noon–1 p.m.

**Friday 20**

Hanvulalah 6:36 p.m.

Tovah and the Rest—in Peace. Chabad. 8 p.m.

Shabbat BiWeekly Lunch N’Learn: Contemporary Issues in Jewish Law with Rabbi Caine BIC. From the kashrut of eating in restaurants to electric cars and Shabbat, Rabbi Caine brings traditional Jewish legal codes and responses to have us consider “Jewish Law” thoughtfully and to elucidate the issues of living Jewishly in our modern lives. Weekly through May 15 following Saturday services. 11:45 a.m.

**Saturday 21**

Tanya-Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidism and discover the beauty and depth of Judaism. 11 a.m.

Intro to Judaism with Rav Nadav: BIC. 1 p.m.

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayat leads discussion. 3 p.m.

**Sunday 28**

Mystery Reader: BIC. 11 a.m.

Passover Sale: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Tanya-Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidism and discover the beauty and depth of Judaism. 11 a.m.

****Jewish Federation: 2939 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-444-5910, aaroncall@jewishfederation.org****

Purim Carnival: TBE 3 p.m.

Biblical Book Club: TBE. Cantor Hayat leads discussion. 3 p.m.

**Phone numbers, websites and addresses of organizations frequently listed in the calendar:**

Anna Arbor Orthodox Minyan (AAMO): 1429 Hill Street, 248-408-3269, annarborminyan.org

Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-444-5910, aaroncall@jewishfederation.org

Beth Israel Congregation (BIC): 2001 Washtenaw Ave, 734-665-9887, bethisrael-aa.org

Chabad House: 715 Hill Street, 734-995-3276, jevemich.com

Frankel Center: 200 S. Thayer St., isa.umich.edu/frankelcenter

Jewish Cultural Society (JCS): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-975-9872, jccannarbor.org

Jewish Family Services (JFS): 2245 South State Street, 734-769-0209, jfsannarbor.org

Jewish Federation: 2939 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-677-0100, jccannarbor.org

Jews for Judaism: 2010 Washtenaw Ave., 734-761-5324, pardeshannah.org

Temple Beth Emeth (TBE): 2309 Packard Road, 734-665-4744, templebethemeth.org

UM Hillel: 1429 Hill Street 734-769-0500, michi-gan-hillel.org
Irving Borowitz, 90, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, died on December 18, 2020. Beloved husband of 55 years of the late Grace Borowitz. Cherished father of Susan (Scott) Bohing, Borowitz and Lisa (Carl) Enfield. Loving grandfather of Eli and Samuel Enfield.

Harvey Danowitz, 85, passed away on Thursday, December 17, 2020. Harvey was born November 13, 1935, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to the late Simon Danowitz and Rose Nicoll Danowitz. He graduated from John Harris High School and then went on to study accounting and business at the University of Toledo, graduating in 1958. He also proudly served in the ROTC. After college, he returned to Harrisburg, where he worked for the Internal Revenue Service, then for various firms including Kreolek, Rubins, and Lasday. In addition to his state tax work, he also was an active CPA. He provided tax services as a partner at Devaney and Company and most recently with Barbush, Hoffman and Short. He never retired and continued to serve his hundreds of clients, often making house calls to visit with them. Harvey was honored as Man of the Year in 2008 by the synagogue for his decades of service. He was also on the board of the Jewish Home of Greater Harrisburg. Harvey was honored with the Man of the Year in 2008 by the synagogue for his decades of service. He was also on the board of the Jewish Home of Greater Harrisburg. Harvey was honored with the Man of the Year in 2008 by the synagogue for his decades of service. He was also on the board of the Jewish Home of Greater Harrisburg. Harvey was honored with the Man of the Year in 2008 by the synagogue for his decades of service. He was also on the board of the Jewish Home of Greater Harrisburg.

Alan L. Schneyer, 66, of Concord, passed away on November 18, 2020. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on July 12, 1954, he was the son of the late J. Wesley and Irma Schneyer. After completing his studies at Central High School and the University of Pennsylvania, Alan earned a PhD in marine biology from the University of Miami. Among his many professional achievements, Alan was most proud of the research he conducted during his 20 years in the Reproductive Endocrine Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital. After another 10 years at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Pioneer Valley Life Science Institute, his career took a new path when he founded a startup working on a therapy to cure diabetes. Alan was a longtime and active member of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology and the Endocrine Society. Most recently he spearheaded efforts to open entrepreneurial opportunities to young researchers. Alan was an innovative scientist, a caring mentor, a willing collaborator, and a truly bold entrepreneur. Both Harvey and Alan were great salesman and manager at the store, building relationships with customers, his many devoted employees, and other retailers and downtown businesspeople. He operated Sam’s Dry Cleaners and Ivory Cleaners until retirement in 1989, saying “he had a bad day.” His son Duncan worked with him in the store for many years before taking over ownership, and is now having his own store. So, he planned construction — and he and Harvey worked together to build two others that they lived in, as well as invested and managed commercial real estate. After retirement he enjoyed playing golf at Ann Arbor Country Club and became a go-for-ever son of Gary, who started an architecture and construction firm, Rockman Design-Build, in 1989. During the early years of RDB, Gary was known in town as Mil’s Son, and then as time moved on, Mil taught him how to become a town driver. He and his son loved his grandson, Jonathan, and his wife, Aly. She loved Gary for the outstanding care provided to her over the last years of her life. Tracy, Marilyn, Chell, and many others cared for him. Milt was a devoted husband of 55 years of the late Grace Borowitz. He is survived by his stepson, Richard Borowitz. He is also the brother of Herb, and sadly, he is last of that generation to turn to Michigan and eventually moved to Hillsdale, where Ethel completed her degree at Hillsdale College. While in Hillsdale, she taught second grade, and later served as Sheldon’s secretary in his law office. She was a longtime member of the Hillsdale College Board of Women Commissioners (volunteers supporting Hillsdale College through scholarships and gifts) and the American Association of University Women (AAUW). She also served on the board of Hillsdale Hospital and was a member of Hilldale Woman’s Club. She was a wonderful cook, an accomplished bridge player, and a dear friend to all who knew her. Ethel’s zest for life was equally matched by her love for her family. She was a devoted wife to Sheldon, who took great pride and joy in her twin sons and their wives, and adored her grandson, Jonathan, and her wife, Aly. The family is grateful for the outstanding care provided to her over the last years of her life by Tracy, Marilyn, Chell, and many others.

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Participants will be asked to support the community with a minimum $100 pledge to the Jewish Federation’s 2021 Annual Community Campaign; students and those under the age of 30 will be asked to make a pledge of a meaningful amount.

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