

The Kibbitzer

Congregation Beth Shalom of Brandon

706 Bryan Road, Brandon, FL 33511

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www.BethShalomBrandon.org

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By Sasha Ginsberg

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Rabbi Sacks, ZT”L

Inspired by Faith, We Can Change the World



Rabbi Sacks

Twenty-two centuries ago, when Israel was under the rule of the empire of Alexander the Great, one particular leader, Antiochus IV, decided to force the pace of Hellenization, forbidding Jews to practice their religion and setting up in the Temple in Jerusalem a statue of Zeus Olympus.

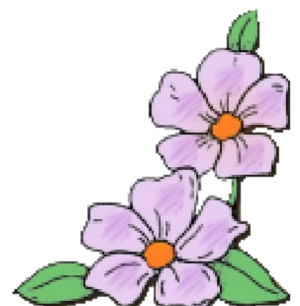
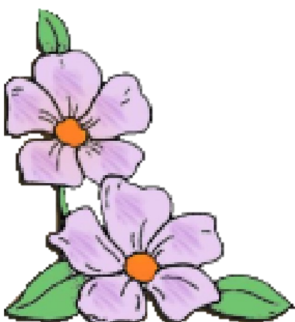
This was too much to bear, and a group of Jews, the Maccabees, fought for their religious freedom, winning a stunning victory against the most powerful army of the ancient world. After three years they reconquered Jerusalem, rededicated the Temple and relit the Menorah with the one cruse of undefiled oil they found among the wreckage.

It was one of the most stunning military achievements of the ancient world. It was, as we say in our prayers, a victory of the few over the many, the weak over the strong. It's summed up in wonderful line from the Prophet Zechariah: "Not by might nor by strength, but by My Spirit" says the Lord.

The Maccabees had neither might nor strength, neither weapons nor numbers. But they had a double portion of the Jewish spirit that longs for freedom and is prepared to fight for it.

Never believe that a handful of dedicated people can't change the world. Inspired by faith, they can. The Maccabees did then. So can we today.

Click on the menorah to listen to a Chanukah message from Rabbi Sacks, ZT”L.



The President's Corner



Steve Billor

Shalom Everybody

We just had our Saturday Morning Shabbat Torah Service on November 16th. We were blessed to have Rabbi Katz lead our service. Neil Spindel did an amazing job as our Torah reader, doing his Bar Mitzvah Torah and Haftorah portions. It was such a wonderful service with both Neil and Rabbi Katz passing on Jewish stories and heritage during our Shabbat service. We all socialized after the service with a kiddush Bagel and Lox brunch and caught up with each other. Hoping to attract more members to attend our Saturday Shabbat services as well as our other events. Praying and socializing together, allow our Jewish community to stay bonded and strong.

After our Shabbat morning service, we had a wonderful Dinner with the Tribe at a wonderful Japanese restaurant (Kanji Sushi and Ramen) in Brandon. Thank you to Anita Clifford, for always planning these events.

On another front, Neil and others are moving ahead with getting our Hebrew School fully functional with staffed teachers, which we are praying will bring in new and young families. We also have purchased a new web base internet system to manage our administrative items called "Shalom Cloud". It will assist us with sending messages out to everybody, remind us of anniversaries, and other significant events, and email members of those significant events.

So, in a nutshell, our congregation is moving forward with endless possibilities and looking forward to everyone taking part in our wonderful journey.

As always, Todah Rabah (Thank you very much) for being a part of the Beth Shalom Family and for your time in reading this article.

Steve Billor



Babylon's Fallen Tyrant



Rabbi Shraga Simmons

Saddam Hussein saw himself as the reincarnation of Nebuchadnezzar. And he suffered the same ignoble fate.

Evil tyrants are nothing new to the region of Babylon, present-day Iraq. One of the most vicious in history was Nebuchadnezzar (sixth century BCE), the Babylonian king who built the most powerful nation in the world by ruthlessly attacking and annexing neighboring countries.

The Tenth of Tevet commemorates the day when Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem. The Babylonians eventually destroyed the First Temple, slaughtered 100,000 Jews, rounded up the rest and sent them into exile.

Whenever Nebuchadnezzar made a conquest, he used the stolen wealth to build monuments to his own glory. It was in his capital city that Nebuchadnezzar built the legendary Hanging Gardens of Babylon. In testimony to his grandeur, each brick was inscribed with Nebuchadnezzar's name.

And so it is in our time. Saddam Hussein pronounced himself as the reincarnation of Nebuchadnezzar, and dreamed of restoring the Babylonian empire to its former size and glory.

North of the ancient city of Ur, on the Euphrates River, lies the biblical city of Babylon. Years ago, Saddam commissioned archaeologists to restore the city and its Hanging Gardens. Like Nebuchadnezzar 2,500 years earlier, each new brick was inscribed - this time with Saddam's name.

During the course of the dig, archaeologists uncovered a plaque on the ancient city gate proclaiming Nebuchadnezzar's greatness. Saddam ordered stonemasons to place another plaque on the opposite side of the gate -- glorifying the greatness of Saddam Hussein.

With his megalomaniacal vision in place, Saddam embarked on a campaign of terror and conquest, first in Iran, then in Kuwait. Ultimately, he dreamed of recapturing Jerusalem.

In 1981, threatened by Saddam's burgeoning nuclear capability, the State of Israel sent a squadron of seven jets to destroy the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak. Saddam had named the reactor "Tammuz." As is well known, Tammuz was the calamitous Jewish month when the daily offerings in the Holy Temple were suspended during Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem, 2,500 years earlier.

DUST BINS AND SPIDER HOLES

Alas, we know the end of the story. The biblical book of Daniel (4:30) describes the downfall of Nebuchadnezzar:

He was driven from mankind; he ate grass like oxen, and his body was washed by the dew of heaven, until his hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails were like birds' claws.

And so it was with Saddam. Driven into a hole, grimy and disheveled. Reduced, like his ancient hero, to the dustbin of history. From the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, Saddam was left hanging with a noose around his neck..

On the Tenth of Tevet, we resolve to fight evil... in whatever millennium it may appear.

In the Bible (Genesis ch. 14), we read of a war between Middle East kingdoms. Abraham's nephew Lot was taken captive in this war, and Abraham -- although hopelessly outnumbered -- fought all these kings and won. It was an unlikely victory, but one that would portend well for Abraham's descendants.

One of the kingdoms mentioned in this Torah section is Shinar, identified as modern-day Baghdad. Incredibly, a skip-sequence code in this same section details Saddam's 1991 scud missile attack against Israel.

On the Tenth of Tevet, the Jewish people -- alive and well in their biblical homeland -- mark the deeds of Nebuchadnezzar and other tyrants, with determination and resolve to fight the evil oppressors... in whatever millennium they may appear.

Building and Grounds

6



Gabe Lifschitz

Listening and the power of the “?”

At the end of my articles in the Kibbitzer, I usually end with a question. The questions are meant to seek introspection and internal understanding. I present two examples below where questions are used for great significance in our faith.

The first example is about the four questions the child, or the youngest person asks during the Passover seder. The questions are meant to explain the meaning of Passover. What is not mentioned is that when the child is asking a question, there is a process of remaining silent and listening for an answer. Hopefully, the child realizes and gains experience that by remaining silent and listening, there is a better chance of learning and understanding, which by continuing this process the child grows into an adult with wisdom.

The second example is the prayer Michamocha. Aside from reciting the Shema, the importance of this prayer is to establish that by asking the question “Who is like thee?”, the powerful answer is that there is no equal. Again, there is that moment of quiet listening while waiting for an answer. In a conversation or prayer, we learn more and acquire more understanding by listening and asking questions. Here is the question, What questions do you ask in a difficult conversation where it is most important to reach a mutual understanding?

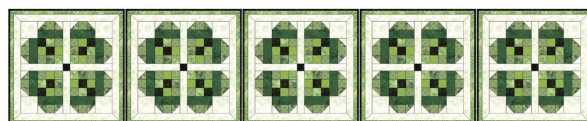
Since the removal of the trees that blocked the driveway, tree debris and fallen wooden fencing remains that need our attention. A major project will be to remove the large oak tree that fell by the fire pit where we planned to hold a morning Shabbat service. Alyssa Vinson, a forester from Hillsborough County, met with us and graciously offered her expertise and a way to manage the hundreds of trees on our property. She is open to investing time in a class for teens and will include the local 4H club to explore the use of the wooded area.

This presents a great opportunity for CBS. We need to have an expert arborist provide CBS with a long-term tree plan. Additionally, the building is functional, but one portion of the admin gutter was crushed, and a lamp was broken along with a security camera. At the recent combined ritual, building, and grounds committee meeting, I presented several lists of items that need to be organized in order of importance so we spend wisely for the remainder of this budget year. What will make a huge difference is what and how you can help.

Taking care of CBS is a mitzvah and every little bit you can do is greatly appreciated. We need help with handy skills like interior electrical work, patchwork for drywall, and plumbing. Again, there is a lot of tree debris to clear, and the a need to remove the damaged wooden fencing. If you know someone who does work for you regularly, please send the name and contact information to: cbs-building@outlook.com

Thank you

Gabe Lifschitz



Dinner With the Tribe

Plaza Mexico Restaurant

Plaza Mexico Restaurant

724 Cypress Village Blvd

Sun City Center, FL 33573

Saturday

December 14, 2024

6:30 PM

Plaza Mexico Sun City Center's Cuisine is a vibrant celebration of fresh ingredients and rich flavors, loving crafted for the discerning palate.

Prepared with passion and respect for tradition, these dishes are a true testament to Mexico's culinary heritage. So, come and savor the love that is poured into every dish. Please RSVP so I can get an accurate head count.

Anita Clifford niewdnarb@yahoo.com

December Yahrzeits



11/17	Cheshvan 16	Florence Finkel	Aunt of Steven Feldman
11/18	Cheshvan 18	Ellen Fuksman	Grandmother of Jason Howard
11/14	Cheshvan 14	Ruth Gutenstein	Mother of GERALD Gutenstein
11/17	Cheshvan 17	Mildred Spindel	Grandmother of Neil Spindel

Over 400 items hidden by Jews in WWII found during renovation of Polish building

A trove of over 400 items, most likely hidden by Jews during World War Two, has been discovered during the renovation of a historical building in the Polish city of Łódź.

The objects, mostly silver-plated household items, will now be transferred to a local museum. Among the discoveries were two Hanukkah candelabras that, eight decades after being hidden, were used by the city during its celebration of Hannukah last month.

The find was made last year during work on an old tenement house on Północna Street in the center of Łódź. The contractor immediately contacted the city's conservation authority, which arrived to find around 280 metal objects buried in the ground. The building work was suspended while further archaeological research was carried out. That resulted in dozens more objects being found. The trove included candlesticks, a cigarette case, cutlery, glasses, and a set of toiletries. The local Jewish community was kept informed during the process. Two of the unearthed hanukkiah were lit last month during a Hannukah celebration organized by the municipal authorities.

The objects are now being cleaned and restored, after which they will be donated to the city's archaeological and ethnographic museum. There are then plans to hold a special public exhibition of the items. "The discovery is remarkable, especially the quantity," said Agnieszka Kowalewska-Wójcik, head of the city's board of municipal investments. "These are extremely valuable historical items that testify to the history of the inhabitants of this building." "The nature of the objects suggests that they were deposited all at once, most likely at the beginning of World War Two, by followers of Judaism," added Ms. Kowalewska-Wójcik.

Before the war, Łódź had a thriving Jewish community, over 230,000 strong, representing around one-third of the city's population. After the Nazi German invasion of Poland in 1939, Jews were forced to live in a newly created ghetto. In 1942, mass deportations to the gas chambers of the Chelmno death camp began and in 1944 the ghetto was liquidated. While some of the few thousand Łódź Jews to survive the Holocaust returned to the city, most then left again during the anti-Jewish campaign led by Poland's communist authorities in 1968. By 2006, only 600 Jewish residents were remaining in Łódź, though the city is still home to one of the largest Jewish cemeteries in the world.

<https://notesfrompoland.com>



General Judah: How the Maccabees Won the War

Judah "The Maccabee's" battle plan is still studied in military colleges all over the world, including West Point and Sandhurst. It was ingenious in its simplicity and yet devastatingly effective in its outcome.

Initially the Seleucid King Antiochus IV attempted to crush the Jewish forces, led by Judah, by military might. The Seleucids had the most powerful military machine in the world outside of Rome. They could deploy in the legendary and much feared phalanx formation, which had enabled Alexander to conquer much of the known world on the open field of battle. In addition, they had crack infantry troops, trained war elephants and a seasoned cavalry.

The Jews were fortunate that Antiochus was unable to deploy the full might of his army on the Judean front due to both external and internal threats throughout his empire. Initially, he tried sending in local commanders to quell what he thought was a small rebellion. But Judah realizing that his untried soldiers were no match for the seasoned Greeks in open warfare chose to rely on the strategy of ambush, thus exploiting the Jews superior knowledge of the local terrain and conditions. These tactics were extremely successful and allowed Judah to defeat both Apollonius the governor of Samaria and Seron, a Seleucid General, and their troops whose surviving remnants fled in disarray. Apollonius fell in battle and Seron was defeated by an extraordinarily successful ambush on the slopes of Bet Horon. Judah took the dead governor's sword and continued to fight with it until his own death.

After the defeat of these two forces Antiochus realized that he had a serious insurrection on his hands and pulled out all of the stops. He sent a massive force commanded by three of his top generals Ptolemy, Nicanor and Gorgias to put down the Jewish forces. This advancing juggernaut seemed unstoppable, yet Judah and his men once again defied the odds and won a historic victory on the fields of Emmaus.

The Battle of Emmaus

The massive Seleucid army marched down the coast avoiding the steep and narrow passes of the Judean hills that had led to the defeat of the two previous armies attempting to quell the rebellion. The three seasoned generals then set up their base camp on the plains of Emmaus about fifteen miles (25 KM) west of Jerusalem, next to present day Modiin. Gorgias, one of the experienced commanders, then led a force on a surprise night attack towards the Jewish camp. Judah, alerted by his spies, force-marched almost his entire army through the night in order to lead a surprise dawn counter-attack on the Greek base camp. He did however leave many fires burning at his camp to leave the impression that his army was still encamped. When Gorgias arrived at the Jews almost deserted camp he was ambushed by a small rear-guard force that Judah had left behind. The small rear-guard lured the Greeks away from the camp and continued to harass the massive column for many hours in order to keep them away from Judah's main force.

Meanwhile, the Greeks had been alerted that the main Jewish force was on the way. Rather than surprise an unsuspecting encampment, imagine Judah's surprise when he was met with his worst nightmare—a fully armed and prepared Greek phalanx supported by cavalry on an open field of battle. Rather than withdraw in panic, Judah once again turned the tables on the Greeks. He divided his men into three columns, who each proceeded to attack a different flank of the Greek phalanx.

The Greeks, unused to such unorthodox tactics, began to panic. Their panic was compounded when another force of Judah's sallied forth and attacked their base camp behind them. Gorgias returned in time to see a full-fledged rout. The cream of the Seleucid army beat an inglorious retreat and fled in disarray back to the coast pursued by Judah's army. Judah, by thinking on his feet and adapting his strategy as events warranted, won a famous victory. In the words of IDF General Chaim Herzog, former President of Israel:

Far from rooting out the Judean irregulars and destroying the Jewish people, the empire of Antioch had been handed a humiliating defeat. The Jews, for their part, had ensured their survival and taken a giant step on the road to religious and political freedom. They were a fighting people again, after a pause of nearly four centuries."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tuvia Book has a doctorate in education and is the author and illustrator of the internationally acclaimed Israel education curriculum; "For the Sake of Zion; A Curriculum of Israel Studies" (Fifth edition, Koren), "Jewish Journeys, The Second Temple Period to the Bar Kokhba Revolt, 536 BCE-136 CE," (Koren), "Moral Dilemmas of the Modern Israeli Soldier" (Rama) and the soon to be published "Jewish Journeys, The First Temple Period, 1000 -586 BCE" (Koren).

Judah Maccabee at West Point

By Ambassador (ret.) Yoram Ettinger

The legacy of Chanukah — faith, patriotism, defiance of extreme odds and tenacity in the battle of liberty against tyranny — has underlined the American spirit since the early pilgrims, enhancing the unique foundation of the U.S.-Israel covenant: shared values.

For instance, the statue of Judah the Maccabee, the hero of the Jewish rebellion against the Syrian-Seleucid Empire, is displayed at the West Point Military Academy, the most prestigious U.S. military academy, founded in 1802. The statue of Judah the Maccabee, known for his principle-driven leadership and daring battle tactics, is displayed along with the statues of Joshua, David, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Hector, King Arthur, Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon — "the Nine Worthies."

George Washington became acquainted with the spirit of the Maccabees, upon settling, in December (Chanukah) 1777, at his new headquarters at Valley Forge, Penn., with ill-equipped, weary troops. Faced with a superpower, George III of Britain, Washington concluded that only a dramatic change could avoid a defeat. According to the diary entries of Louisa Hart, Washington told the Harts about a Jewish soldier at Valley Forge who lit a Chanukah candle and explained its significance. Washington's reaction was: "Perhaps we are not as lost as our enemies would have us believe. I rejoice in the Maccabees' success, though it is long past ... It pleases me to think that miracles still happen."

...the Continental Army implemented the battle tactics of Judah the Maccabee...

Six months later, on June 19, 1778, the Continental Army implemented the battle tactics of Judah the Maccabee, leaving Valley Forge in pursuit of the British, who were moving toward New York. Although the war would linger for five more years, Washington won a decisive victory.

Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were inspired by the Maccabees, proposing "Rebellion against tyrants is obedience to God" as the American official seal. Just like the Founding Fathers, the Maccabees were a tiny minority of "rebels" - condemned by the "loyalist/pragmatist" Jewish establishment - rebelling against an oppressive superpower. They prevailed thanks to their conviction-driven determination. They knew that swimming against the stream gets one closer to the source. The Maccabees were a role model for Paul Revere, who was referred to as "a modern day Maccabee" and the organizers of the Boston Tea Party, who realized that there were no free lunches for freedom-seeking nations.

"In God We Trust" was inspired also by the Maccabees' battle cry...

"In God We Trust" was inspired also by the Maccabees' battle cry, which adopted Moses' battle cry against the builders of the Golden Calf. A literal translation of the battle cry is "Whoever trusts God; join me!" The Maccabees' sacrifice and lack of political correctness also inspired Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death!"



Judah Maccabee at West Point

pg 2

In 2011, Chanukah is still a living experience in the U.S. For example, the residents of Billings, Mont. celebrate Chanukah in solidarity with the Jewish community of 40 families, and in protest of the 1993 vandals who broke the windows of Jewish homes that displayed Chanukah menorahs. In response, more than 10,000 of the city's residents put makeshift menorahs in their own windows. They persist, annually, in this ritual.

Chanukah and the Maccabees have become an integral part of the American way of life, culturally and politically. Americans respect the legacy of the Maccabees, who fought the Syrian-Seleucid super-power, mostly, in the mountains of Judea and Samaria, in the Judean Desert and in Jerusalem. Judah the Maccabee's own Valley Forge was at Beit El; his capital was Jerusalem; he scored dramatic victories in Beit Horon (over Seron), Hadashah (over Nicanor), Beit Zur (over Lysias) and Ma'aleh Levona (over Apolonius); he was defeated at Elazar and killed at Ba'al Hatzor — all are located beyond the "1967 Lines."

Chanukah is not a holiday of "occupation," but a holiday of deliverance.

The descendants of the Maccabees are not "occupiers" in the cradle of their own history. Chanukah is not a holiday of "occupation," but a holiday of deliverance. Chanukah is a holiday which highlights the moral high ground of Jews in their ancestral homeland.

Shimon the Maccabee - who succeeded Judah and Yonatan the Maccabees — articulated the Jewish territorial case when responding to an ultimatum by Antiochus, who demanded an end to the Jewish "occupation" of Jerusalem, Jaffa, Gaza, Gezer and Ekron: "We have not occupied a foreign land; we have not ruled a foreign land; we have liberated the land of our forefathers from foreign occupation," Shimon said.

Pressuring the Jewish state to withdraw from the mountain ridges of Judea and Samaria defies the American story. Either you are with George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and other defenders of liberty, or you provide — inadvertently — a tailwind to the forces of tyranny.

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Source: From Israel Hayom and Israpundit, as posted on <http://lazerbrody.typepad.com> (December 28, 2011). Yoram Etinger was (1989-1992) the Israel's Minister for Congressional Affairs — with the rank of Ambassador - at the Embassy in Washington, DC.

**An excerpt of the painting, “The Triumph of Judas Maccabeus” by famed artist Peter Paul Rubens, captures the legendary allure of the Jewish rebel leader.**



# Candle Lighting Times

| Date                | Time    | Parsha     |
|---------------------|---------|------------|
| Friday, December 6  | 5:12 PM | Vayeitzei  |
| Friday, December 13 | 5:14 PM | Vayishlach |
| Friday, December 20 | 5:17 PM | Vayeishev  |
| Friday, December 27 | 5:20 PM | Mikeitz    |



## December Sponsors

*There can be no joy without food and drink.*

Talmud, Mo'eJ Katan

|                    |                  |                              |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>December 6</b>  | CBS Congregation | Please bring a dish to share |
| <b>December 13</b> | CBS Congregation | Please bring a dish to share |
| <b>December 20</b> | CBS Congregation | Please bring a dish to share |
| <b>December 27</b> | CBS Congregation | Please bring a dish to share |

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# Congregation Beth Shalom

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**Meeting ID: 897 1074 4448**

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**Find the Mishkan Tefilla (Siddur):**

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### CBS Office Hours

The administrative office is currently open by appointment only. We can be reached by calling the office, (813)681-6547, email, cbsbrandon@outlook.com.

Although our hours are limited, we are always here for you. Do not hesitate to reach out with any needs, concerns, or questions.



### Congregation Beth Shalom

provides a meaningful spiritual home for people of all ages and levels of knowledge, a place to learn and to question, a place to worship and to celebrate, and a place to find a community that cares.

#### We offer:

- ✧ Friday worship services at 7:00 PM
- ✧ Complete B'nai Mitzvah preparation
- ✧ Adult Education classes
- ✧ Communitywide events
- ✧ Community Food Bank

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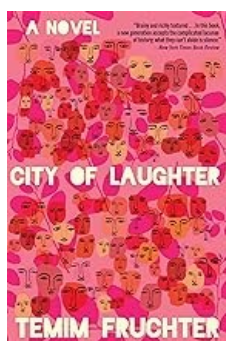
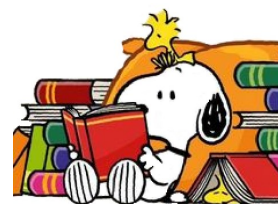
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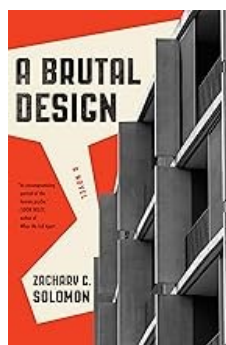
# Sampling of the Best Jewish Books from 2024



Unpacked—By Elizabeth Karpen



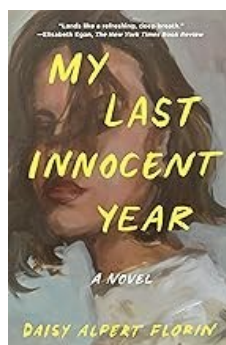
Aa young woman as she learns about her family's generational secrets and better understands her origins and identity.



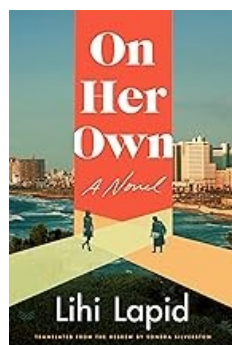
A Jewish architecture student knows his time is running out in his homeland after a fascist takeover and the murder of his parents. He receives an out when offered a job.



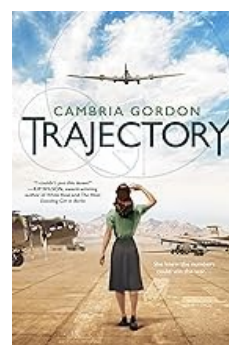
Abigail Meyer and Freya Jonsson are sworn mortal enemies — at least they think they are. A decade after high school, they run into each other again and their rivalry ensues.



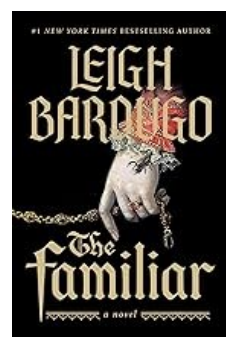
Just as Isabel finally starts to feel settled at college during her final semester, she is sexually assaulted by one of the only other Jewish students on campus.



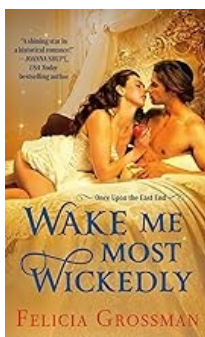
A teenage runaway Nina after she wakes up in an unfamiliar Tel Aviv apartment building in a ripped dress.



Eleanor, a Jewish-American girl who is grieving the loss of her father and consumed with worry about her Jewish relatives stuck in Poland.



Sephardic Jews during the Spanish inquisition in her new magical realism novel, "[The Familiar](#)."



Historical romance author **Felicia Grossman** is back with a Jewish retelling of Snow White in "[Wake Me Most Wickedly](#)."









Inspired by Jewish folklore, "[The Sins on Their Bones](#)" follows two ex-husbands on opposite sides of a civil war.





# January 2025



| Sunday                 | Monday | Tuesday                                            | Wednesday                                                                              | Thursday                        | Friday                                                                                                                         | Saturday |
|------------------------|--------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
|                        |        |                                                    | 1<br> | 2<br>Hebrew Lessons<br>6:30 PM  | 3<br>Erev Shabbat<br>Service 7:00 PM<br>    | 4        |
| 5                      | 6      | 7<br>Ex Com Mtg<br>6:30 PM<br>Board Mtg<br>7:00 PM | 8                                                                                      | 9<br>Hebrew Lessons<br>6:30 PM  | 10<br>Erev Shabbat<br>Service 7:00 PM<br>  | 11       |
| 12                     | 13     | 14                                                 | 15                                                                                     | 16<br>Hebrew Lessons<br>6:30 PM | 17<br>Erev Shabbat<br>Service 7:00 PM<br> | 18       |
| 19<br>Food Bank<br>1-3 | 20     | 21                                                 | 22                                                                                     | 23<br>Hebrew Lessons<br>6:30 PM | 24<br>Erev Shabbat<br>Service 7:00 PM<br> | 25       |
| 26                     | 27     | 28                                                 | 29                                                                                     | 30<br>Hebrew Lessons<br>6:30 PM | 31<br>Erev Shabbat<br>Service 7:00 PM<br> |          |