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# The Jewish WORLD

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Key moment for Rabbi Jonathan Rubenstein with a pan of freshly-baked challah in the kitchen of Temple Sinai in Saratoga Springs.

## Challah—a bread for the soul

By JEFF KLEIN

A pleasant aroma wafts through the halls of Temple Sinai on Broadway in Saratoga Springs Friday mornings. It emanates from the synagogue's small kitchen where you will find a team of volunteers baking challah. The leader is Rabbi Jonathan Rubenstein. The resulting product is Slice of Heaven Breads.

Rabbi Jonathan is a tall, soft-spoken man, dressed on that rainy morning in an apron and heatproof gloves. He has just removed a pan of loaves from the oven to brush on an egg glaze and then a sprinkling of sesame seeds. Watching and learning are the day's assistants, Amalia Jerison of Niskayuna and Arlene Holzman of Cambridge.

### Simple Recipe

Now in its second year, Slice of Heaven Breads is the brainchild of the rabbi, who developed his love of baking shortly after graduating from Haverford College in Pennsylvania before attending Hebrew Union College. A friend of his mother taught him how to make challah, and he has been creating his bread for the soul ever since.

The recipe is quite simple: flour, yeast, oil, sugar or honey, kosher salt and eggs. After being mixed and left in a warm place to rise, the dough is rolled, braided and baked, resulting in the lovely rich brown loaf so important to Shabbat meals throughout the world.

In biblical times the first loaf was set aside for the kohanim, priests who administered sacrificial rites. Modern bakers, including Rabbi Rubenstein and his volunteers, separate a small piece of dough, the challah, say a blessing and burn it in the oven, symbolically re-enacting the sacrifice through the tradition of "separating the challah from the dough."

### Small, but Efficient

The kitchen at Temple Sinai is barely 14 feet by 14, crammed with cabinets, coolers and a small commercial oven. Nearly 100 loaves are produced in a variety of sizes and ingredients. One can order regular (white), whole wheat, vegan (with a flax meal syrup replacing eggs), seeded and unseeded loaves, as well as a delicious granola based on a recipe from Rabbi Jonathan's mother.

Skipping tradition, the rabbi encourages customers to use e-mail for placing orders. With so many variations of product and such wide distribution, he could not remain organized without it.

Slice of Heaven products are available by special order throughout the entire region. Dough and finished loaves may be picked up at the synagogue. Deliveries can be arranged via telephone 258-5546.

### Sharing the Wealth

Sharing the fruits of their labor is the constant theme of Slice of Heaven's not-for-profit activities. About a quarter of the loaves are given away, and cash sales help subsidize the overall operation. In Rabbi Jonathan's words, baking and distributing bread help them get

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## Volunteers at Ohav Shalom to complete packing prior to start of renovations

ALBANY—A ceremony Sunday, Jan. 14, will open the building remodeling and renovations at Ohav Shalom Synagogue, which will begin Monday, Jan. 15, and are expected to continue through May 31.

The modernization of the sanctuary, chapel, gift shop, lobby and men's room will cost under \$2 million, according to Lauren Schur, executive director. The fund was raised through a capital campaign by congregants.

The addition of skylights will provide more light for the lobby. A new, glass enclosed small chapel to accommodate 50 people is planned. Schur stated that enclosed chapel will provide a quiet area for spiritual programs, away from the main sanctuary.

### Different Seating

The main sanctuary will have different seating with new pews, lighting, redesigned walls and ceilings and a smaller bimah that will be 100% handicapped accessible, according to Schur. The social halls and men's room will be improved. Two energy-efficient, environmentally correct boilers will replace the current furnace.

Members of the design committee include Laurie Rubin Abelson, Wendy Bates, Jeff Bernstein, Jeff Fox, Dorothy Ganz, Liz Gellis, Ken Getnick, Rabbi Susan Gulack, Mona Hack, Mona Habi Susan Gulack, Mona Haulack, Mona Hampson, Joel and Julia Helfman, Ellen Kattleman, Saul Kattleman, Amy Klein; Cynthia Laks, David Levine, Ira Lobel, Dr. and Mrs. Lozman, Richard Magidson, Anne Rothenberg, Danny Sanders, Sue Swartz, Dan Tyson, David Weinstein, Jay Worona; and Sandi Worona.

### More Volunteers

"More volunteers are needed for last minute moving, Sunday, Jan. 14, in prepara-

## Ford backed Helsinki accord, Jackson-Vanik for USSR Jews

By BEN HARRIS

New York City (JTA)

His presidency lasted less than 1,000 days, but it was enough time to support an international accord that provided a significant boost to the Soviet Jewry movement and marked a pivotal moment in the history of the Cold War.

Gerald Ford, who died Tuesday, Dec. 26, at 93, signed the Helsinki Declaration in August 1975, along with the leaders of the Soviet Union, Canada and 32 European nations.

### Pressure on Soviets

The agreement required the Soviet Union to respect human rights, including fundamental freedoms of religion, thought and conscience, and contributed to mounting international pressure to free persecuted Soviet Jews.

"His administration's signing of the Helsinki accords, which established a clear link between international relations and human rights, was the most important step in the struggle to win the Cold War—even though, when they were signing it, both sides didn't necessarily realize this," said Natan Sharansky, an icon of the Soviet Jewry movement.

Sharansky was a founder of the Moscow Helsinki Group, an organization

started to monitor Soviet compliance with the accord.

### Principle Important

"The West thought that making a connection to human rights was important in and of itself, even if there was a chance that it turned out to be mere lip service," said Sharansky, a former Israeli Cabinet minister who now is head of strategic studies at the Shalem Center, an academic research institution in Jerusalem. "As it happened, it ended up being the most decisive move to help dissidents in the U.S.S.R.:"

Ford already had distinguished himself as a vocal supporter of Soviet Jews. In January 1975 he signed into law the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which denied most-favored nation trading status to countries with restrictive emigration policies—an attempt to pressure the Kremlin into approving more exit visas for Soviet Jews.

"His brief presidency was very significant for the movement," said Mark Levin, executive director of the NCSJ, which advocates for Jews across the former Soviet Union. "By signing into law the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which was one of the pillars of the Soviet Jewry movement, as well as being president when the Helsinki Accords were implemented, which provided the international community a tool to confront the Soviets directly on their human rights abuses, particularly as they impacted the Soviet Jewish population—for that his administration will be remembered within the American Jewish community."

As a congressman from Michigan and Republican minority leader in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ford attended a

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## Federation to seek \$3.5 million in drive

LATHAM—The United Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York has established a campaign goal of \$3.5 million, announced Dr. Martha Farber, 2007 general campaign chairwoman.

Farber said, "This record setting campaign goal is our community's call for action in response to this past summer's war in Israel. The campaign will be named the Federation-Israel Emergency Campaign to reflect our combined campaign in support of our traditional programs and services and the increased needs of Israel."

Super Sunday, the first community-wide outreach for the 2007 Federation Campaign will be Sunday, Feb. 11.

Farber cited financial needs in Israel that are in addition to the regular programs and services:

- \$176 million for educational programs and financial assistance for tens of thousands of students in economic hardship. Many of these students had their studies interrupted when the war began. Others require retraining because of job losses;
- \$53 million for trauma services, including psychological counseling, for people in Northern Israel and areas surrounding Gaza;
- \$20 million more needed for the Fund for Victims of Terror to aid victims and their families.

ration for the synagogue renovations," stated Schur. A nosh at 10 a.m. will precede the packing and moving of boxes to the Ohav Shalom Apartments for storage.

Steve Gally and Sharon Lozman led the first day of packing Monday, Dec. 25, coordinating 60 volunteers in packing up the library, chapel and lobby. Rabbis Dan Ornstein and Rena Kieval provided spiritual and educational insights for the crew, which included 20 children, who filled 200 boxes with 2,000 books. A Chinese meal, prepared by Lisa Gally, Marci Galinkin, Anne Fass and Marian Alexander, fueled the volunteers.

Schur, at 489-4706, can explain more details about the renovations and the moving program.

## Russians shun Iran to protest conference

JERUSALEM (JTA)—Russia called off a parliamentary mission to Iran to protest its recent Holocaust denial conference. The speaker of the Russian Parliament recently revealed the decision in talks with Israeli Foreign Ministry Director-General Aharon Abramowitz, who was visiting Moscow.

In an interview with Israel Radio, Abramowitz said several high-level Russian officials, including Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, his deputy and the director of the National Security Council, had been outspoken in condemning the conference hosted by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Russia has been less decisive on Iran's nuclear program, resisting many Western initiatives to curb it through the threat of sanctions.



# CHALLAH

Continued from Page 1

closer to "the spirit of our ancestors—a spirit of thankfulness and gratitude."

Volunteers bring free challah to the elderly and shut-ins at senior housing throughout the region, including the Wesley Nursing Home, Woodlawn Commons and Prestwick Chase. Regular customers and supporters make donations to cover the cost of these loaves.

Six to eight surplus loaves are usually sold through Eats Gourmet Marketplace in Stuyvesant Plaza, Albany. The manager of Eats, Stephanie Pelham, takes



**Zachary Stoup  
Planning His Own**

advance orders for the loaves she receives each Friday.

Temple Sinai recently won a \$40,000 grant from the Alfred Z. Solomon Trust to update and improve the kitchen equipment, which will help create more challah.

## Volunteers Help

Rabbi Jonathan has amassed a large group of volunteers to help bake and distribute bread. On the day I was there, people were coming and going by the minute, picking up bags of bread, lending a quick hand in the kitchen or shepherding a group of preschoolers learning to make their own loaves.

Longtime volunteer Cynthia Guile was just leaving after a busy morning making bread. A member of the Temple Sinai congregation, Cynthia started baking in May 2005, shortly after the project began. She is the primary early morning assistant, doing prep work, baking and showing newcomers the ropes. She said that more than 100 volunteers have helped the project, guided by a core of eight to 10 steady

workers like herself.

## Kids Day, Too

The first Friday of each month is children's day at challah central. Small pieces of dough are given to the children, who then roll, shape and eventually eat their own miniature loaves. It adds a bit of pandemonium, but Rabbi Jonathan and his wife, Rabbi Linda Motzkin, calmly hand out bread, pour grape juice and lead the blessings, maintaining some sense of order as the youngsters scurry throughout the kitchen.

Slice of Heaven offers dough and pre-shaped loaves on baking pans ready for your own oven, if you seek the satisfaction of completing the challah task. Most of the ingredients are organic; even the water is taken from the State Seal Spring at Saratoga National Park.

Orders must be placed by Thursday night, and arrangements can be made for local delivery. To get on the e-mail newsletter distribution list or for other information, e-mail [sliceofheaven@nycap.rr.com](mailto:sliceofheaven@nycap.rr.com). For those desiring to get into the dough itself, the rabbi suggests a call to set up a time.

To make your own challah:

- 1, Measure 2 1/4th cups warm (skin temperature) water into a bowl.
- 2, Stir 2 packets of active dry yeast into the water and let rest a few minutes.
- 3, Add 1/3rd cup sugar and 1/3rd cup olive oil.
- 4, In a small bowl beat three eggs and add to the mixture.
- 5, Add 1 tablespoon salt.
- 6, Add 2 cups unbleached white flour and mix well.
- 7, Keep adding flour until the dough is too stiff to mix in a bowl (up to 8 cups).
- 8, Turn onto counter and knead with additional flour until dough is no longer sticky.
- 9, Place in a greased bowl and let rise about an hour or until doubled in size.
- 10, Punch down the dough and divide into 3 parts, roll out and braid.
- 11, Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let the loaves rise about 1/2 hour or until doubled in size.
- 12, Brush with beaten egg, sprinkle with sesame or poppy seeds if desired, and bake for 25 to 35 minutes in a 350 degree pre-heated oven.

**Jeff Klein** of Saratoga Springs is a professional writer and computer geek. You can see more of his work at [www.preciseprose.com](http://www.preciseprose.com).