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# The Jewish WORLD

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the greater Jewish community: Northeastern New York, Vermont, Western Massachusetts.

## Real estate fair

ARKMAN  
 (JTA)

may enjoin the Israeli government in the West Bank, but that hasn't been trying to pick up where the leave off.

2003. That has forced settlers and their supporters to find private funding, and they must be succeeding: The Jewish population there is growing significantly faster than in Israel proper.

Binyanei Bar Amana, a contractor based in Jerusalem's Ramat Eshkol neighborhood, urged those attending the real-estate fair to spend tens of thousands of dollars on homes that could be rented out at a cost to Jewish settlers in the disputed

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## United Federation

April 6 through May 1. The Schenectady Jewish Community Center, starting May 5 and continuing through the month, then will display the posters.

The Federation's Community Relations Council arranged for the exhibit with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Poster topics show the role of the Zionist Movement prior to the establishment of the State of Israel: the land, the Maccabi Games, transportation, the shuks, and more.

For information about the anniversary, call Debbie Brookfield at 783-7800, ext. 235, or Shelly Shapiro at ext. 235.

## seeks director

the spectrum of Jewish educational the commitment and tenacity of a supplemental Jewish high school is



Rabbi Linda Motzkin of Temple Sinai is crafting the final letter of the megillah (Scroll of Esther) that she wrote for the congregation in memory of her mother, Evelyn Herszkorn Motzkin. The siyyum (completion ceremony) was held after havdalah Saturday evening, March 3.

## Temple Sinai rabbi completes scribing megillah of Esther

SARATOGA SPRINGS—A feature of Purim at Temple Sinai this year was the presentation of a completed megillah—a biblical book of Esther—by Rabbi Linda Motzkin, co-spiritual leader with her husband, Rabbi Jonathan Rubenstein.

Rabbi Motzkin completed her 2 1/2 year project, scribing the final letters Saturday night and presenting the scroll to the congregation for the annual evening and daytime readings. She utilized the required feather quill and parchment for

the sacred scroll, after learning the skills of sofrim, traditional Hebrew scribes.

### Complete Tie-in

"Scribal arts draws together so many different strands in my life: my interest in Hebrew language, in art and calligraphy, in Jewish religious life, and in spiritual practice," Rabbi Motzkin said.

The role of a scribe is to make handwritten copies not only of the scroll of Esther but also of **sifrei Torah** (the scrolls that contain the first five books of the Bible), as well as other sacred texts. A scribe also makes repairs and restorations to such texts. Scribal work requires enormous patience and commitment, as well as knowledge acquired only through lengthy

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and rigorous training.

Hundreds of laws apply to the writing of sacred Hebrew texts. These laws govern every aspect of the scribal process, including the precise formation of each letter, the alignment and spacing of the text, the requirements for the materials used, and the statements the scribe utters to sanctify the work. A finished work cannot contain any mistakes.

To minimize error, a scribe is not permitted to write from memory; each letter is copied from an existing text. Any mistake must be corrected by carefully scraping the ink from the parchment and rewriting. Mistakes made in writing the name of God cannot be corrected and result in the loss of an entire panel of parchment.

## A Man's World

According to most traditional interpretations, the position of scribe has been reserved for men. In the summer of 2003, Rabbi Motzkin, who is also the author of

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ence runs March 11-13; Cheney speaks March 12.

Leaders of both parties in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate also will speak.

It will also will be the first speech to AIPAC by Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) in her capacity as House speaker.

several Hebrew language textbooks, attended a workshop on Hebrew scribal arts taught by a liberal male scribe. She remembers, "It was as if a light had suddenly been turned on, illuminating an opportunity that had never before been available to me. I felt that I had been preparing to become a scribe for decades, without realizing it."

While Rabbi Motzkin has been studying scribal arts and working on the scroll of Esther, she has also developed a keen interest in making the necessary materials of the craft. During the past three years she has learned how to make parchment from deerskins (plentiful around her home, near the Adirondack Mountains) and has built two hide-stretching frames in her garage.

Members of the community have assisted with processing the parchment, formulating the special ink used for scribal texts, and obtaining the quills used as writing implements. She is excited about the possibility of using materials of her own making in her next scribal project.

Of her immersion in the scribal arts, Rabbi Motzkin says, "This is a sacred aspect of our tradition. It adds an extra dimension to my own spiritual practice as well as to my role as a rabbi and teacher in the Jewish community."