

# Whitestone Hebrew Centre Bulletin

12-45 Clintonville St. Whitestone, NY 11357



## שלום

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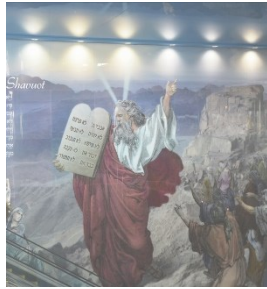
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Volume XXXII No. 7

May — June 2023

Iyar — Tammuz 5783

### Schedule of Shavuot Services



Thursday, May 25<sup>th</sup> — 7:00 PM

Friday, May 26<sup>th</sup> — 9:30 AM & 7:00 PM

Saturday, May 27<sup>th</sup> — (Yizkor) 9:30 A.M.

*Tikkun Leil Shavuot — Study and Discussion  
Following first night services — May 25<sup>th</sup>  
Blintzes and cheesecake will be served!*





### President's Message

As I write this, we are preparing to observe one of the most important Holidays on the Hebrew calendar, Shavuot, commemorating the Giving of The Law to Moses on Mt Sinai. This year the festival begins nightfall Thursday, May 25, and ends Saturday evening, May 27. It's been some time since I regularly pestered our members in the role of "Shul Cop", but can't resist using this platform to take the opportunity promoting something readily available here at the WHC, yet taken advantage of by too few of our congregants – Torah Study. We don't need to look any further than the Shema: where we recite daily

the words "You shall teach them diligently to your children" -- (directing us to transmit Torah to the next generation)... "And you shall speak of them (words of Torah) while you sit at home, while you walk on the way, when you go to bed and when you get up" -- which directs us to study the Torah ourselves. This need to devote ourselves to knowing the Torah is repeatedly stressed throughout the Bible. Our history demonstrates that the moment study of Torah is neglected, assimilation of the Jewish people into its surroundings accelerates. For the most part,

*(Continued on page 6)*



	<b>Congregation Meeting</b> Tuesday, May 30th -- 7:30 PM	
	<b>Board of Trustees Meeting</b> Tuesday, June 27th -- 7:30 PM	



### WHC Bulletin Staff

Rabbi Steven Axelman,  
Editor  
Sharon Samet  
Patricia Smolker

WHITESTONE  
HEBREW CENTRE  
12-45 Clintonville St.  
Whitestone, NY 11357  
718-767-1500

Email:  
Whitestonehebrewcentre  
@gmail.com

Website:  
whitestonehebrewcenter.org



Sunday June 18th

### WHC ADMINISTRATION

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President - Bruce Berenson  
Vice-President - Ellis Rosenblatt  
Corresponding/Recording Secretary -  
Ron Kohn  
Sisterhood President -  
Naomi Gukowsky

Rabbi Steven Axelman  
rabbiaxelman@outlook.com  
718-208-5059



## Overview of Shavuot

by Rabbi Axelman



Shavuot begins this year on Thursday night, May 25th and continues until nightfall on May 27th. Though it is one of the Three Festivals repeatedly mentioned in the Torah, it seems to be the least known. It is no less important than Sukkot and Pesach--all three were pilgrimage festivals during which everyone living in Israel used to go to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Perhaps it is overlooked because according to the original Torah commandment, Shavuot only lasts one day, though the custom for the last two thousand years or so is to add an extra day to each Jewish Holiday when living in the diaspora. And there is far less preparation in anticipation of Shavuot--no cleaning the house, preparing a *Seder*, building a *Sukkah* or buying an *Etrog* and *Lulav* set. For Shavuot all we need to do is to make blintzes and buy or bake cheese cake. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to mention why Shavuot is indeed an important and relevant holiday. How exactly Shavuot became connected with the Revelation and the receiving of the Torah on Mount Sinai is the subject of much discussion, but our liturgy in the *Amida* and in the *Kiddush* describes Shavuot as "*Z'man Matan Torateinu*", the time of the giving of our Torah. Personally, I have difficulty with the concept that Judaism can be separated from or exist without the Torah. Whether we are comfortable with the concept or not, the blessing we all make when we are honored with an aliyah, reads "who chose us from

amongst the nations and gave us the Torah". Either following or rebelling against the Torah could easily be said to define the entire historical existence of the Jewish People.

The word, Shavuot, literally means weeks, a reference to its being celebrated on the fiftieth day (seven complete weeks having gone by) after the second night of Passover. How is Shavuot celebrated (other than the cheese cake thing)? We read the Ten Commandments from the Torah on the first day. Prior to beginning the Torah Reading, a beautiful and esoteric poem, *Akdamut*, is read, which describes the relationship between God, the Torah and the Jews over the years. And for many centuries, at least some have stayed up all night studying Torah, a practice usually referred to as *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*. According to one *midrash*, the Jews slept through the night preceding the giving of the Torah and needed to be awakened. Since most of us have trouble sleeping in anticipation of major events the next morning, this was considered a lack of enthusiasm. Compensating for this failing is one of the reasons given for staying up all night studying on Shavuot.

Some read a fixed text of study compiled specifically for this night, which covers several verses from every portion of the Five Books of the Torah, the book of Ruth, parts of the *Mishna* (Oral Torah) and readings from the *Zohar* (the original book of *Kabbala*). Many have a custom of studying any area of the Torah that interests them. Chag Samayach!

# SISTERHOOD

## Sisterhood President's Message

Sisterhood wishes everyone a Happy Mother's Day, a Happy Father's Day and a Happy, Healthy and Safe summer. Please do a mitzvah and call our senior members to ask if they need anything or just to chat for a while. Hearing a friendly voice will lift their spirits.

Naomi Gukowsky  
Sisterhood President

## Making Contributions

For many years Sisterhood has offered the service of sending cards from all those who wish to acknowledge both Simchas and Condolences. The response from the recipients is most heart warming. The following funds are available:

Simcha Fund .....	\$10
Chai Fund.....	\$18
Prayer Book Fund .....	\$10
Inscribed Prayer Books .....	\$25

The recipient receives an acknowledgement of the contribution and it is printed in the monthly Bulletin, so all can share the feelings expressed. To place orders, call Patricia Smolker at (718) 746-7068.

Checks for the above funds should be made payable to "Sisterhood of WHC".

## May Happy Birthdays



Binny Axelman	Kathryn Safran
Melvin Mesnick	Zachary Skow

## June Happy Birthdays

Kayla Berenson	Alex Ratner
Max Berenson	Ashley Samet
Juliana Hakim	Yechezkel Yamen

\*Editor's note: If your birthday should be listed on this page and is not, please call the office at (718) 767-1500 and give us your date of birth. Thank you.



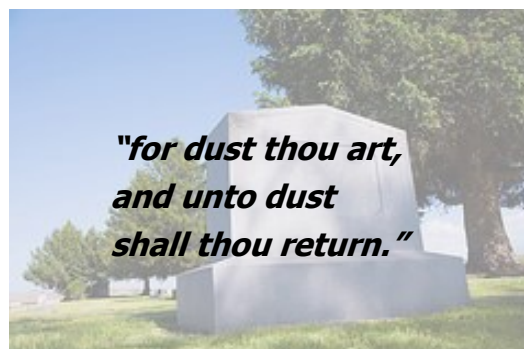
## WHC BULLETIN BY EMAIL!



If you would like to receive a copy of the bulletin by email, in addition to the printed version, please send your email address to [rabbiaxelman@outlook.com](mailto:rabbiaxelman@outlook.com) and let us know. The email version appears in color and will reach you several days before the hard copy. Thank you!

## Whitestone Hebrew Centre Congregational Cemetery

**Burial Plots Available**  
**New Montefiore Cemetery**  
**Pinelawn, Long Island**  
**Contact: Ronald Kohn**  
**Cemetery Committee Chair**  
**at WHC (718) 767-1500**





## Summer Fast Days

by Rabbi Axelman

During the summer, two fast-days are observed by traditional Jews, Shiva Asar B'Tammuz (17<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Tamuz) and Tisha B'av (9<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Av). The following is based on articles on [Chabad.org](http://Chabad.org) and [Aish.com](http://Aish.com).

### Shiva Asar B'Tammuz



The 17th of Tammuz, which this year falls on Thursday the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, is the first of four fast-days mentioned in the Prophets. This day marks the start of a three-week mourning period for the destruction of Jerusalem and the two Holy Temples. The fast also commemorates five tragic events that occurred on this date, according to our tradition:

- 1) Moses broke the tablets when he saw the Jewish people worshipping the Golden Calf. 
- 2) During the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, the Jews were forced to cease offering the daily sacrifices due to the lack of sheep.
- 3) Apostomos burned the holy Torah.
- 4) An idol was placed in the Holy Temple.
- 5) The walls of Jerusalem were breached by the Romans, in 69 CE, after a lengthy siege. The Jerusalem Talmud maintains that this is also the date when Babylonians breached the walls of Jerusalem on their way to destroying the first Temple. 

On this fast day, healthy adults—bar- or bat-mitzvah age and older—abstain from eating or drinking between dawn and nightfall. There are also some modifications to the daily prayers services.

### Tisha B'Av

Tisha B'Av, which this year begins on Wednesday evening, July 26<sup>th</sup> and ends at nightfall on Thursday July 27<sup>th</sup>, is the saddest day on the Jewish calendar. It is the culmination of the Three Weeks, which began on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, a period of time during which gradually intensifying mourning customs and rituals are observed by traditional Jews. During these three weeks, weddings are not celebrated and live music is forbidden. During the first nine days of the month of Av, people refrain from eating meat and drinking wine (other than on Shabbat), as well as bathing for pleasure (e.g., swimming) and certain other pleasurable activities. Like Shiva Asar B'Tammuz, Tisha B'av also commemorates five tragic events that occurred on this date according to our tradition.

- 1) During the time of Moses, (1312 BCE) the Jews in the desert accepted the slanderous report of the 10 Spies, and the decree was issued forbidding them from entering the Land of Israel. 
- 2) The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians (586 or 423 BCE), led by Nebuchadnezzar. 100,000 Jews were slaughtered and millions more exiled. 
- 3) The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans (70 CE), led by Titus. Some two million Jews died, and another one million were exiled.
- 4) The Bar Kochba revolt was crushed by the Roman Emperor Hadrian (135 CE). The city of Beitar – the Jews' last stand against the Romans – was captured and liquidated. Over 100,000 Jews were slaughtered.
- 5) The Temple area and its surroundings were plowed under by the Roman general Turnus Rufus. Jerusalem was rebuilt as a pagan city – renamed Aelia Capitolina – and access was forbidden to Jews.

Later on in our history, many more tragedies happened on this day, including the 1290 expulsion of England's Jews and the 1492 banishment of all Jews from Spain.

Tisha B'av is the only fast-day that, like Yom Kippur, begins at sunset the night before. Also, like on Yom Kippur, leather shoes are not worn and there is a custom to sit low to the floor (as during Shiva) until after prayer services the morning of Tisha B'av. The custom is not to greet people in the customary manner the entire day. Services are usually conducted with dimmed lights and in the morning Tallis and Tefillin are not worn during services, but they are donned during the afternoon services instead.







Recent positive news generated by Israel, of which we can all be proud.  
(Articles below are excerpts of originals only)



### Israel's Population almost 10 Million, No Longer a Small Country

April 25, 2023

[jpost.com](https://www.jpost.com)



As Israel becomes a medium-sized country in population, GDP and growth, there are ramifications for the region and Israel's place in the world. Israel's population growth means that the population is now nearing 10 million and estimates show by 2030 there will be another million people in the country. This is mostly due to relatively high birth rates. On the eve of Independence Day, the population is reported at 9.7 million, of which 7.1 million are Jews. Israel's population grows every year and as it grows the number of children born every year increases as well. Today it is around 183,000 people born a year, and there are also people who make Aliyah to the

country or people who may return from abroad. Today if we look around the region, while many countries have larger populations, many of them face challenges that Israel does not face. Israel has one of the largest GDPs in the region, outpaced by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran, but similar to the UAE and Egypt. Its GDP per capita is also among the highest and like the population, is growing. Of the almost 200 UN member states, Israel sits about in the middle in terms of population. The fertility rate, population growth rate and average age of the population in Israel also mark the country as not only growing faster than many other countries but also having a population that is relatively wealthy for a high growth rate like this.

### Israel Rated Best Summer Vacation Destination Worldwide

May 5, 2023

[jpost.com](https://www.jpost.com)

A recent article from Club Med named Israel, specifically Jerusalem, the best destination for a sunny summer vacation worldwide. Israel topped the list with an overall score of 74 out of 100 due to the fact that it enjoys an average of zero rainy days in the summer. Summer also happens to be when Israel has the most daylight hours, with an average of 12 each day compared to only 9 hours of sunlight per day in the fall. Israelis, on the other hand, are not interested in staying home

for the summer, unless they can go to Eilat. The southernmost city in Israel, Eilat offers a vast array of recreational activities for tourists to enjoy, as well as classic sunny Mediterranean beaches. It is the second most popular destination worldwide for Israelis and it is the only local city that made Booking.com's list of the top 10 most sought-after holiday destinations among Israeli tourists.



### Israel Launches First Hydrogen Fuel Station

May 9, 2023

[jpost.com](https://www.jpost.com)



Israel's first hydrogen fuel station opened for activity in Sonol Yagur near the Haifa Bay on Monday, putting Israel among the ranks of leading countries in the world that are seeking to replace combustion engines with hydrogen-based fuel cell technology. The newly installed dispenser allows customers to refill compatible vehicles with hydrogen, much like filling up with gasoline or diesel. This is a potentially significant advantage over electric vehicles, which require lengthy charging times. For the past six years, the Sonol Group

has been researching hydrogen and working with leading companies such as Linde and H2Mobility, who are responsible for establishing hundreds of hydrogen stations in Europe. They plan to use their experience to open more stations in Israel in the future, depending on the development of the hydrogen vehicle industry. "Israel is a pioneer in developing hydrogen technologies," Elbaz said. "We have some very bright and interesting ideas that are getting noticed worldwide. As a result, we see investments coming in."

### Israeli Researchers Develop Drought-Resistant Tomato

April 27, 2023

[WorldIsraelNews.com](https://www.worldisraelnews.com)

Tomato varieties that require less water and produce a high yield, even in extreme drought conditions, have been developed by researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The researchers identified interactions between two regions of

the tomato genome that resulted in a 20% to 50% increase in the overall yield under irrigated conditions, as well as in droughts.



## The Book of Numbers—The Importance of One

By Rabbi Axelman



This past Shabbos we were scheduled to read the Torah Portion of Bamidbar, the first portion in the fourth book of the Torah, known as Numbers in English.

Unfortunately, we were short of a minyan by one person and were therefore unable to have a Torah service. While perusing the portion and the commentary of Rashi, it occurred to me that this was somewhat ironic. The portion begins with God's command to (again) count the Jews, each one individually. Rashi comments that when things are precious to us, we tend to count them repeatedly. Such does God do with us, his children. But another lesson of the count is that each individual makes a big difference. We may be a nation, a group, an ethnicity or whatever, but none of that lessens in

any way the importance of each individual. This is strongly driven into awareness when short one person for a minyan. Each person, when considering whether to attend Shabbat services, forgets how integral the presence of one more person is. The second idea that came to mind was how often I hear, when speaking to people about or at funerals, is the complaint of "where was God?". Well, there is no human alive that at some point in their life did not have parents, so everyone can relate to this simple idea. If we do not call or pay any attention to our parents for years (decades?) at a time, do we really expect them to pick up the phone when we finally call and then to automatically fulfill our requests? Should our relationship with Our Father in heaven be that much different?

### Memorial Day -- May 29th



Throughout my years at the Whitestone Hebrew Centre, it has been my honor to represent our Jewish community at the Memorial Day Ceremony and Parade sponsored by the JWV, VFW and the American Legion, held at the Whitestone Memorial Field at 149th and 15th Drive at 11:00 a.m. For those who are able, I encourage attending this event, at which we can all take a few moments to honor those who gave up their lives in defense of our country and our freedoms.

Rabbi Axelman

### President's Message

*(Continued from page 1)*

every Jewish community in history that did not emphasize the teaching and study of Torah as a priority gradually disappeared from the scene. As the world's first book-based religion, Judaism gained the flexibility to move the focus from sacred land to sacred text, making it portable. Had it not, it is unlikely we would have survived the fate of exile. Its very portability is what raised Judaism to a universal religion. God's presence was no longer restricted to a single sanctuary. Through the portal of Torah, Jews could access God everywhere. It is the bridge that connects the Jew and God, across which they interact and communicate, and by means of which God fulfills the Covenant with His people to sustain and protect them. So it's no surprise that Torah study is so central with us. Our prayer books are filled with petitions to God to help us understand His Torah. When we learn Torah (which, by the way, includes not only the Five Books of Moses, but Talmud, Psalms, Prophets, Proverbs and a veritable universe of Scripture), we are not studying an abstract and arcane text of the ancient world. We are studying the way God wants us to

live on this earth. We are in fact engaged in discovering the essence of Judaism and so, the essence of ourselves. If Torah study is among the most important of our commandments - providing means for others to study Torah is only slightly less important. We are fortunate in having a first-rate scholar in our Rabbi Axelman to guide and illuminate the commandments, words and writing that have sustained our People over the Millennia. There's no better place to begin than our Judaism 101 classes given (online) Monday evenings at 7:00. Bring all of your questions, doubts and observations. Visit the Shul website - the Rabbi has linked an astounding treasure trove of information on the practice and philosophy of what it means to be a Jew and our unique place in the World. Take advantage of what can be gained as an involved member of the Whitestone Hebrew Centre. Have a great summer and See You in Shul!

B'Shalom  
Bruce Berenson



## Thank you for Donations -- April and May 2023

### Yahrzeit

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### General Donations

**Shabbat Kiddush  
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Joseph Wolkin

**Shabbat Kiddush  
in memory of David Friedman**

Joshua Friedman

**Torah Cover in memory of Aaron and Shirley Safran**

Sharon Samet

## SCHEDULE OF WHC CLASSES

(led by Rabbi Axelman)

**Talmud Class — Sundays @ Time TBA**

**Judaism 101 — Explore Your Questions — Mondays @ 7:00 PM**



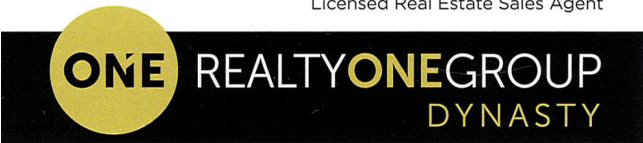
Please check our website for updated days and times of classes.  
Currently classes are being streamed on zoom and not being held in person.

**See attached flyer for information on the  
Whitestone Hebrew Center's  
Summer Yiddish Film Festival**

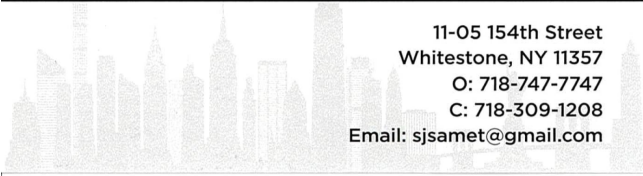


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