

# Whitestone Hebrew Centre Bulletin

12-45 Clintonville St. Whitestone, NY 11357



## שלום

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Volume XXX No. 9

May 2021

Iyar — Sivan 5781

### Schedule of Shavuot Services



Sunday, May 16<sup>th</sup> — 6:45 PM

Monday, May 17<sup>th</sup> — 9:30 AM & 6:45 PM

Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup> — (Yizkor) 9:30 A.M.

*Tikkun Leil Shavuot — Study and Discussion  
Following first night services — May 16<sup>th</sup>*

### President's Message

In the Jewish World - one thing people often say to you during many an occasion is "you should only have nachas, no more tsuris". Interestingly – this is said whether the event is a cause for celebration, mourning or any great shift in life's circumstances.

At times the distance between nachas and tsuris can be the proverbial handbreadth. My mother had a stroke a month ago - Thank G-d she is slowly making gradual improvement in the Rehab Facility. And just last week, my daughter, Jenna, gave birth to our first grandchild (a boy). The duality got me to think about a theme that is present throughout Scripture. How often we've heard the Rabbi quote Ecclesiastes, often at funerals and memorial services, describing a divinely chosen purpose for everything we experience in our lives. The familiar lines - A time to be born, a

time to die; A time to weep, a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance, etc. offer a comforting reminder that although humans have mastered a great deal during our brief time on this world, there will always be things beyond our control. G-d is The One who creates each moment.

In the Torah - from the very beginning of B'reshit, dichotomy is one of the essential ingredients of Creation - between light and darkness, holy and profane, clean and unclean, permitted and forbidden. It is this separation that makes establishment of the world possible.

I've said more times than I can remember – in speeches and in articles that we have a hundred reasons to thank HaShem every day for all the blessings He has given us, obvious or hidden. We must learn to accept and adjust to

*(Continued on page 6)*

### Congregation Meeting

Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup> — 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



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Rabbi Steven Axelman

haxelman@gmail.com

718-208-5059



## Overview of Shavuot

by Rabbi Axelman



Shavuot begins this year on Sunday night, May 16th and continues until nightfall on May 18th. 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 Message

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.



Sunday May 9th

## 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".

## Condolences

To Joshua Friedman and family  
on the loss of Barbara Friedman

המקום ינחם אתכם  
בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

May her memory be a blessing

## April Happy Birthdays



Alu Axelman	Patricia Smolker
Ivy Chait	Danielle Yamen
Hannah Kohn	Jori Young
Barbara Parker	

## May Happy Birthdays

Binny Axelman	Kathryn Safran
Martina Osdoby	Zachary Skow
Melvin Mesnick	

## Prayer Book Fund - April 2021

Inscribed Prayer Book in memory of Barbara Friedman

-- Sisterhood WHC

\*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.



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



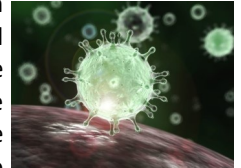
### Breakthrough nasal spray capable of eliminating 99.9% of viral particles

March 22, 2021

[i24NEWS](https://www.i24news.com)

An Israeli production factory is currently manufacturing a nasal spray, capable of removing almost 100 percent of viral particles, particularly crucial as the world battles the coronavirus pandemic. "The product we have developed, which kills viruses in the upper nasal pathways, will be delivered via a nasal spray bottle that contains a month's supply for an individual," said Dr Gilly Regev, the Israeli CEO and co-founder of SaNoTize. "We hope that our nasal spray

will now save the lives of many people in countries waiting for the vaccine," said the biochemist, co-founder of the company SaNoTize which developed the antidote in Canada, according to The Times of Israel. "It will be accessible to everyone and can be used in prevention to protect against any respiratory viral infection," she added.



### Israeli Tumor-Freezing Technology Approved in US

April 5, 2021

[unitedwithisrael.org](https://unitedwithisrael.org)



The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) gave marketing approval to ProSense as part of the FDA's Breakthrough Devices Program that fast-tracks new devices to the market. Based in Caesarea, north of Tel Aviv, and with offices

in America, IceCure Medical developed a system that uses liquid nitrogen-based technology to freeze tumors so they can be removed without the need for surgery. ProSense, which can be used for several types of cancer, was proven effective and much less intrusive for removing breast cancer growths.

### Life-Saving Israeli Tech Can Diagnose Skin Cancer Immediately

April 18, 2021

[unitedwithisrael.org](https://unitedwithisrael.org)

Israeli scientists at Tel Aviv University have developed a new optical technology that will enable an automatic and immediate melanoma diagnosis, saving many patients' lives. This innovative technology, which is based on special optical fibers, can distinguish between a benign lesion on the skin and a malignant one, using a non-invasive, immediate, and automatic process in real-time. The technology can also distinguish between types of skin cancer, such as melanoma, a life-threatening type of cancer, and malignancies that are not as dangerous. The diagnosis is rapid, non-invasive, and causes no pain to the patient. Professor Katzir said that in the case of melanoma, immediate diagnosis can save lives. He explained

that currently when a suspicious lesion is found on the skin, during a routine examination, it is removed in a minor surgical procedure and sent to a laboratory for testing. A pathologist diagnoses the lesion and determines whether it is melanoma.

In most cases where melanoma is discovered early, when it is still superficial and less than one-millimeter-thick, it is removed and the patient recovers. Late diagnosis, when the melanoma is more than one-millimeter-thick, significantly reduces the chances of recovery and is life-threatening.



### New Israeli research may pave the way for drugs that "turn off the hunger switch" in the human brain with minimal side effects

April 15, 2021

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



A receptor in the brain, melanocortin 4 (MC4), is known to control the urge to eat. It has been dubbed the "hunger switch." A genetically inherited malfunction with this receptor is believed to be the most common cause of obesity that is triggered by a single gene mutation, impacting an estimated 5 percent of early-onset childhood obesity. Now, researchers at the Weizmann

Institute of Science have conducted research that they say could bring about easy manipulation of the receptor among people with such a mutation. They say it could even be used to help people who don't have a genetic condition that directly impacts the MC4 in their efforts to lose weight, by treating the receptor as an "override" switch. When "turned off," they say, it could suppress regular hunger.

(continued on next page)





Mazel tov  
to WHC President,  
Bruce Berenson and his wife, Lee  
on the birth of their grandson,  
William Allen — Ephraim Yisrael



**Memorial Day -- May 31st**

### Israeli Scientists Use Umbilical Cord Blood To Improve Autistic Children's Cognitive And Social Skills

April 2021

[thejewishvoice.com](http://thejewishvoice.com)



A team of Israeli scientists is endeavoring to use umbilical cord blood to effect changes and improvements in the lives of autistic children. To mark World Autism Awareness Day which fell last Friday, the team published some of its findings and called on mothers to collect and save the blood as it could be used to treat their children at a later stage. The treatments are based on a protocol which was developed by the Duke University Medical Center involving a one-time infusion to patients of some of their own cord blood cells which were taken from their

umbilical cord at birth. Dr. Omer Bar Yosef, a clinical and research neurobiologist at Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer, told the Jerusalem Post that he has so far treated 25 children with autism as part of a Phase II trial and hopes to treat up to 60 children in this phase of the trial. The team has seen encouraging results in a number of different areas, including communication and social and emotional responsiveness. "We don't know 100% why it is working," Israeli said. "There is a unique type of stem cell in the cord blood. These cells make their way through the blood to the brain, and we think they promote the growth of new synapses in the brain."

### First woman chosen to lead an orthodox community in Israel

April 28, 2021

[worldisraelnews.com](http://worldisraelnews.com)

An Orthodox Jewish community in Israel has become the first to appoint a female rabbi as head of a synagogue, Ynet reported Tuesday. The "Shirat HaTamar" congregation in the town of Efrat, in the Gush Etzion bloc south of Jerusalem, chose Rabbanit Shira Mirvis as their spiritual leader. She will also provide guidance in "halakha" – Jewish rabbinic law. Mirvis, 40, was approved by an overwhelming majority of the community members and will officially be inaugurated in her position next month after graduating from the Halachic Leadership Institute of the Ohr Torah Stone network of Jewish educational institutions established by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin. The program is described as the most comprehensive track for Torah studies for women and the equivalent of rabbinical certification studies for men. While still a rabbinical student,

Mirvis had already served as head of a Beit Midrash – a school associated with a seminary or synagogue for intensive Torah study – as well as with the community burial society.

Mirvis is also a partner in a blog about religious studies and hosts a popular Torah-centered podcast. Efrat's 13,000 residents are mostly Modern Orthodox who emphasize Jewish learning and religious practice but also do national service. The city is known for its many residents who are involved in Israel's high-tech sector.



## Thoughts on the horrific tragedy in Meron on Lag Ba'omer 2021

By Rabbi Axelman

Very early on the morning of Friday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, on the day known and celebrated as Lag Ba'omer, the worst peacetime tragedy in Israeli history took place in the small town of Meron in Israel's Galilee. As of this writing, 45 people were killed during an annual celebration, among them 9 Americans. Two families lost two children each. The scope of the loss is obviously beyond words. The recriminations and assignment of blame between the attendees, the police, the various Cabinet Ministries, etc. are only beginning. From a religious standpoint, so many thoughts pass through people's minds. For those who do not believe in God, or his involvement in human affairs, or who, like [Rabbi Kushner](#), deny God's omnipotence, there are plenty of human causes for this tragedy, starting with the political struggles that led to allowing 100,000 people to gather in this small place (this is actually far fewer than in many previous years), whether or not there were barricades in the way of the steadily moving crowd, etc. For those like me who believe in God's omnipotence, the question of "why do bad things happen to good people" once again comes to the fore. For this question, I have many answers that may or may not satisfy others. Parenthetically, I am considering this as a discussion topic for our planned evening of learning on the first night of Shavuot, so that people can voice their own thoughts. One need only look into the book of Leviticus ([Chapter 10](#)) to read of horrific tragedies occurring in the middle of religious celebrations, such as the sons of Aaron the High Priest losing their lives on the day the Mishkan (Holy Tabernacle) was first dedicated. Likewise, in the book of Samuel ([II Samuel, Chap. 6, verse 7](#)) a tragedy occurs on a day of religious celebration. A look at the commentary of Rashi early in the book of Genesis ([6:13](#)) informs us that under the

wrong circumstances, tragedy can result in the loss of even innocent lives. In a few very short words, I believe that there were so many predictable human causes to this tragedy, (whoever's fault they were) that the question is not so much "how did God let this happen?" as "how far will God go to save humans from their own negligence and irresponsibility?". Very sadly, I would say that if indeed God is not pleased with what he sees in this world, or not pleased enough to intervene in such situations, anyone following the recent news just within the small ultra-orthodox circles in Israel needn't wonder. I do not mean to impugn any particular individual or group, nor to I deign to know why God does or does not do things that we would agree with. But when the most elite [Yeshiva](#) in Israel, [Ponevezh](#) in B'nei Brak, is the scene of physical fights during prayer services, including throwing shenders (lecterns) at fellow students and throwing objects at and pulling the beards of Rabbis in the yeshiva; when just a few hours before the horrific tragedy, Israeli police are roughly handling several of the ultra-orthodox celebrants (deservedly or not, I have no proof either way) and are responded to by being called [Nazis](#), I hope that we can all agree that even without looking further into the shortcomings of the Jewish world, all is not right. As I have said many times, as outlined in the megilla of Eicha that we read on Tisha B'av, we accept responsibility for tragedies that befall us as a people and realize that we need to improve in some way. May our hearts and prayers be with the bereaved families and people of Israel (and those local to us) who lost loved ones on Friday morning and let us search our own souls and minds for ways that we can be better human beings and Jews. In the words of Isaiah ([25:8](#)) may God bring an end to death and wipe the tears from all faces, Amen.

### President's Message

*(Continued from page 1)*

the ebb and flow of His design. The reality is, God is in control, and it's only through Him that we accomplish anything at all! It is the mixture of joy and sorrow (nachas and tsuris if you like), and all the shading in between that makes life what is. The expression "it is what it is" makes the most sense when God is included (and placed centrally) into the equation.

B'Shalom  
Bruce



### 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, has hyperlinks and will reach you several days before the hard copy. Thank you!



## Thank you for Donations -- March and April 2021

### Yahrzeit

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#### Kiddush celebrating a Siyum on Pesachim

Ronald Kohn

#### Kiddush in memory of Hannah Axelman

Phyllis Oppenheim

#### In appreciation for Shabbat across America meals

Jeffrey Young & Judi Glass

### Donations to Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

#### Mazel Tov to Bruce and Lee Berenson on the birth of their grandson

Ellis Rosenblatt

#### Mazel Tov to Bruce and Lee Berenson on the birth of their grandson

Sharon Samet



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**SHARON J. SAMET**  
LICENSED REAL ESTATE AGENT  
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Office **718-747-7747**  
Fax **718-747-7748**  
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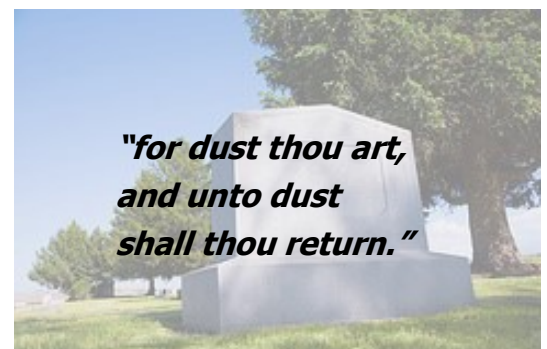
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**JAMES A. CAPPA**  
Attorney - At - Law42-40 Bell Blvd.  
Suite 206  
Bayside, NY 11361**Benjamin Moore**  
Whitestone Hardware **Whitestone Hardware**12-48 150th Street  
Whitestone, NY 11357  
Phone: 718-767-9546  
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**New Montefiore Cemetery**  
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**Cemetery Committee Chair**  
**at WHC (718) 767-1500****SCHEDULE OF WHC CLASSES**

(led by Rabbi Axelman)

**Mondays @7:00 PM -- Judaism 101 Explore Your Questions**Please check our website for updated days and times of classes.  
Currently classes are being streamed on zoom and not being held in person.



## To be (vaccinated) or not to be (vaccinated) — The other side of the issue

*The opinions below do not represent the view of the Whitestone Hebrew Centre, its administration or the Rabbi. They are being shared here to urge people to see that even those with whom they vehemently disagree have educated opinions and science on their side and that this issue should not cause an “us vs. them” attitude in the Jewish community as so many other issues do. We recommend reading (at least) all the articles referenced below before coming to any conclusions.*

Adapted from: [What's Behind Vaccine Hysteria? - American Thinker](#)

By Sally Zelikovsky



If you are reluctant to get the COVID vaccine and beginning to feel overrun by forces pressuring you to get vaccinated, you aren't alone and you aren't crazy. There's a reason you feel the way you do. You are being manipulated. We are being bombarded with commercials

pushing us to be socially responsible. Medical professionals, celebrities, and folks in our communities admonish us not to shirk our civic duty. Suddenly, the vaccine is the only way to normalcy. Friends and family openly brag about their vaccinations and gasp in astonishment when they find out you haven't decided or, worse, that you will not get it. Doctors who inquire also give that disapproving look. Adding to the pile-on, we are now besieged with “incentive” programs offered by public-private partnerships that essentially divide us into the vaxxed and the unvaxxed... and it's becoming downright creepy.

First, the simple “get jabbed, get a gift” incentives. Following a similar program in [Connecticut](#), New Jersey's governor launched the “[Shot and a Beer](#)” program where those who get vaccinated in May get a free beer at participating breweries upon presentation of a “vaccination card.” He's also promoting a “Grateful for the Shot” program that whisks churchgoers away from religious services to vaccination sites. Jersey Shore nightclub [D'Jais](#) is hosting a vaccination clinic that will give patrons a Summer 2021 VIP Card. The vaccinated are very important people who must be publicly acknowledged. West Virginia [Governor Jim Justice](#) is probably using tax dollars to give \$100 savings bonds to anyone between 16 and 35 who gets vaccinated. The incentives then intensify with the lure of special treatment. Cuomo [teamed up with the Yankees](#) to offer free tickets to fans who get vaccinated at the stadium. Same for the Mets. And, to protect the vaxxed from the unvaxxed, they will be seated separately -- even though the vaxxed can't catch COVID from the unvaxxed. If you don't understand that, then the entire field of immunology is turned on its head and...the Sun revolves around the Earth. This all has the odious markings of a two-tiered society where the vaxxed get special treatment. Will they get preferred seating while the unvaxxed languish in the nosebleed section? Don't be surprised if the mollified masses -- vaxxed, privileged, and enamored by their own civic virtue boo pictures of the unvaxxed as they appear on the jumbotron. Oblivious to how

vile this sounds, Cuomo said, “if you're vaccinated that's one category, you're unvaccinated, that's another category.” You, to the right. The rest, to the left. The goal? To shame anyone who opts out into submission.

In New York City, De Blasio announced free admission to those who get vaccinated under the blue whale at the Museum of Natural History and added: “We're gonna be looking to do incentives just like that to give people great opportunities when they get vaccinated.” Will discounts and freebies give way to tax breaks, elevated status in society, preferences in college admissions, jobs, and government contracts? Will the unvaccinated have to sit at the back of the bus and drink from different water fountains?

New York already has the Excelsior Pass that provides digital proof of vaccination; Chicago has plans for a “vax pass” that provides access to concerts and other events. Washington's governor Jay Inslee just “released guidance on [non-vaccinated-only](#) sections, so [there will be] vaccination segregation, at outdoor stadiums, at graduation ceremonies for schools, even your church.”

From my vantage point, the “vaccine hesitant” are very analytical, very calm, and very patient. They are not anti-vaxxers by any stretch but want to make an informed, data-driven decision, weigh the costs and benefits, and do what they deem best for themselves and their families. They are willing to wait for more information about long-term effects before plunging the needle into their arms. The hysteria is coming from individuals in positions of power who appear to be ignoring the science and are acting highly irrational. They don't seem to grasp what the unvaccinated understand: the vaccines do not have FDA approval but only Emergency Use Authorization which allows unapproved vaccines to be used in public health emergencies. While manufacturers still had to conduct all three phases of clinical trials and present compelling evidence of safety and effectiveness before the FDA would issue the EUA, the normal approval process would take longer and yield more information about the long-term side effects of this radically new and potentially paradigm shifting mRNA technology.

Once those most at risk have been vaccinated and deaths and hospitalizations of our most vulnerable decline, and the virus is on the wane, should we be vaccinating the entire population without a thorough understanding of the long-term side effects? Is the current Administration turning the entire country into a massive clinical phase trial? The younger and healthier the individual, the more rational it is for that person

(continued on next page)

**To be (vaccinated) or not to be (vaccinated) — The other side of the issue**

(continued)

to say: "The risk of dying or suffering grave consequences from a COVID infection are known and they are low. Taking the vaccine presents many unknowns." Hysterical people are scrambling to figure out how to get the hesitant to capitulate. This heavy push is making people wary: if it's so obvious that this vaccine is the answer, why are you trying so hard to convince us with all of these incentives?

Perhaps University of Pennsylvania behavioral economics expert [David Asch](#), MD, MBA, can explain. He studies how people make health decisions. As opposed to utilizing incentives (beer and tickets) or rules (mandated vaccines to

attend school), people can be cajoled into getting the vaccine using a variety of techniques that are lighter touches than either rules or incentives. They're from behavioral economics, they're a gentle form of paternalism -- and yet they're very powerful. There's something called 'social norming.' As much as we like to think that we make our own decisions, the truth is that one of the most motivating factors for humans is doing what we think everyone else is doing. Paternalism presumes the target is stupid and easily controlled. Paternalism is very powerful, but not at all gentle and we should resist it with all of our might. The messaging is designed to tug at our

For further reading (these are a sampling of many articles presenting another side of this issue):

[The Liberals Who Can't Quit Lockdown - The Atlantic](#)

[Liberal activist Naomi Wolf warns that vaccine passports will spell the end of individual freedom](#)

[CDC: As many people have died from Covid-19 vaccines as ALL vaccines in last 20 years COMBINED](#)

[Former FDA chief says now is the time to begin lifting mask mandates: 'As aggressively as we put them in'](#)

[The Statistical Secrets of Covid-19 Vaccines](#)

[Free the Vaccinated From Covid Restrictions](#)

[Why I Haven't Gotten The Shot \(Yet?\) by Derek Hunter](#)

[Dr. Zelenko — I have many patients suffering from 'Vaccine Regret'...](#)

[World-Renowned Microbiologist Dr. Bhakdi Issues Dire Warning: Do NOT Get The Jab!](#)

[Leading Vaccine Researcher Tells You What's In The Covid Vaccine & Why It's LETHAL — 3%](#)

[Reporting system shows more than 330,000 adverse events following COVID vaccines](#)

[COVID vaccine killing huge numbers, warns leading doctor](#)

[Vaccination Shamers, Please Check Yourselfs](#)

[THE CORONA SCANDAL - 'probably the greatest crime against humanity ever committed'](#)

[Is use of COVID vaccines unethical 'human experimentation'?](#)

[Suspensions grow that Pfizer's COVID vaccine nanoparticles trigger rare allergic reactions](#)