

# Whitestone Hebrew Centre Bulletin

12-45 Clintonville St. Whitestone, NY 11357



## שלום

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Volume XXXIV No. 3

March 2024

Adar I — Adar II 5784

## CELEBRATE PURIM AT WHC

*Megilla Reading*

*Saturday, March 23rd -- 7:50 PM*



### President's Message



It does not seem possible that as I write this we'll be celebrating Purim in just a few weeks. It is certainly among the more favored Yom Tovs in the Jewish world and I wanted to share some personal observations. If, to the outside world, Chanukah is an analogue to Christmas (more because of calendar proximity and gift giving than anything else), Purim is looked on as our version of, and hybrid cross between Halloween and Mardi Gras - superficially with its costume parades, gifts of Shalach Manos and the commandment to drink until one can't tell the difference between "Cursed is Haman" and "Blessed is Mordechai". We all know the basic story line. How Queen Esther, counseled and aided by her Uncle Mordechai, subverted the evil plot devised by the villain Haman to destroy the Jews of Persia in the name of King

Ahasuerus. The Book is unusual in that not only doesn't it contain the Name of G-d, but there is virtually no reference to Our Creator. Much has been written on this - the popular take being that G-d works in ways unknown to us, outwardly appearing as chance or coincidence. When the Book of Esther is publicly read, and we've exhausted ourselves stomping and shouting to blot out the mention of the villain's name, there is still the matter of the narrative in the final few chapters. The Jews of Persia were allowed to defend themselves against Haman's planned holocaust - still in play by the original and irreversible order of the King. In chapter 9 we read of the province's Jews organizing and arming themselves to fight for their lives, killing over 75 thousand of



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## FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY



As I write this piece, Israel has been at war for 142 days, there are 134 hostages still thought to be in Gaza, 579 soldiers have been killed, close to 300,000 reserve soldiers have been activated and more than 217,000 Israelis are still displaced from their homes. No one needs to be reminded what a horrible situation Israel is in and I hope that Israel's predicament is never far from any of our minds. As part of the fixed liturgy in our siddur, Observant Jews pray many times daily for peace.

As I have said before, the hardest part about writing or speaking may be deciding what not to write or speak about. The politics both in Israel and in the U.S. affecting Israel are things that I continue to follow closely but will not write about, as my role is to unite and not divide. I would ask that those to whom Israel's safety and wellbeing is important contact their congresspersons and urge continued support for Israel. It is no secret that opponents of Israel are gaining strength in various areas of the U.S. and therefore our representatives need our backing to counter such opposition.

As your Rabbi/teacher, I would like to write briefly about two of the major controversies stressing the society in Israel and its sought-after unity. One is the dilemma of the hostages and at what cost should Israel effect their return. The other is the perennial issue of Chareidim (Ultra-orthodox) not serving in the Israeli army, at least not in great numbers. Understandably there is tremendous pressure on the Israeli government to do everything and anything to secure the hostages' release. Yet, I hope

that no one would think that this "everything and anything" would include all the Jews evacuating the middle east and Israel ceasing to exist as a nation. Everyone has a price that they will not pay. [For those who support Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu, someone on the Israeli left was asked if he would support the return of all the hostages on the condition that Netanyahu would stay in power (indefinitely?) and this person hesitated to respond.] What I do want to present is that Jewish Law has much to say about both of these issues. One of the enjoyable aspects of our Judaism 101 class on Monday evenings is that we can discuss these issues, along with any others that are brought up. For deeper halachic exploration, one can join our Sunday morning Talmud classes. Already in the book of [Genesis 14:13](#) we are taught that the nephew of Abraham was taken hostage in a war and that Abraham went to war to free him. Some point out that it is of interest that Abraham did not engage in negotiations, though I would not claim this is halachic proof to the present situation. The question of ransom for hostages followed Jews throughout our entire history and is specifically addressed in a mishna in the Talmudic Tractate of [Gittin page 45a](#), which teaches that hostages should not be ransomed for more than their worth for the sake of Tikkun Olam. The Talmud proposes two reasons for this prohibition: the financial burden of a community and the incentive for further kidnappings. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, one of the greatest Rabbis of the time was imprisoned leading to a great controversy over paying a [ransom](#). A similar controversy took place when a head of a prominent Yeshiva in Brooklyn was taken hostage during a

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# SISTERHOOD

## Sisterhood President's Message

Sisterhood wishes everyone a Happy and Healthy Purim. Please place your orders for Shalach Manot. (See the enclosed flyer for details.) 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. Sisterhood prays that there should be peace around the world and in Israel.

Naomi Gukowsky  
Sisterhood President

## **Prayer Book Fund - December 2023**

Inscribed Prayer Book in memory of Doris Shankman

- Sisterhood WHC  
- Evelyn Apter

In memory of Doris Shankman

- Patricia Smolker



## January and February

### Happy Birthdays

Benjamin Mandel	Frank Smith
Faye Mandel	Jared Young
Mark Safran	

## March Happy Birthdays

Evelyn Apter	Gloria Keller
Jill Dee	Ronald Kohn
Naomi Gukowsky	Ellis Rosenblatt
Danielle Hoffmann	Joshua Samet

\*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.

## Condolences

To the family of Doris Shankman on her loss

To Barry Parker and family  
on the loss of Barbara (Uydess) Parker

**המקום ינחם אתכם  
בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים**

May their memory be a blessing

## **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

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.



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



### Why Israel Excels in Technology – Plus, 10 Groundbreaking Israeli Inventions

Jan 28, 2024

[Israel National News](#)



Israel is a small country in terms of geographical size. But that doesn't stop it from being a powerhouse when it comes to economic and global policy matters. Besides having the 3rd-largest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP, Israel is also a STEM powerhouse and hosts a highly developed tech environment.

Why Israel Has Risen to the Top of the Tech Pinnacle

The modern Jewish State was only born in 1948, and that's impressive considering how advanced Israel's technology is. This rise can be attributed to a variety of factors - cultural, historical, and geopolitical. There are a significant number of startups in Israel that are propelling it forward to the heights of tech. Over 6000 startups are driving the tech ecosystem in Israel, with a high density of innovative industries. With a thriving tech ecosystem comes an attractive tech environment. Thus, Israeli firms can attract VCs, angel investors, and government-funded programs. The military plays a big part in the advancement of Israeli tech. Collaborations with civilian companies and research institutions such as Ben Gurion University have led to the development of cutting-edge tech. Besides these, Israel's mandatory military service grows the discipline of the youthful population. Service is equal to Israel's commitment to protect its borders, and this is why Israel's military has a highly innovative culture.

Let's explore 10 of the best inventions out of Israel.

1. The Up and Ride is a stand-up wheelchair developed by Dr. Amit Gulfer that allows its users to stand up without external help.
2. The Flying Fruit Picker is an autonomous flying robot designed to pick fruit from trees. The drones use suction arms to gently twist and pluck ripe fruits
3. The KIRO app can carry out a wide range of tasks, contributing to the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of

diseases. However, one of its most prominent use cases is in the use of AI to diagnose heart failure, providing early detection.

4. Alice (Aviation): This 9-seater passenger plane with an all-electric-powered propulsion has been designed to provide a game-changing approach to aviation.

5. Reap Technology's Miracle D Printer erases and reprints on printed pages.

6. Skylark 3 Hybrid is a portable drone and the most advanced of this weapon set. It is an advanced, covertly operated UAS that can arrive covertly at the area of mission and operate in silent mode. It also provides live video feeds to battalion commanders and can be used to search terrorist tunnels and underground installations.

7. The Jaguar is an autonomous and unmanned remote-controlled armed robot designed for deployment on Israel's borders. The Jaguar is equipped with AI-controlled turrets, sensors, cameras, and the capability to carry injured soldiers.

8. The Iron Beam is the world's most advanced laser defense system, designed for deployment on air, sea, and land. It has successfully been used in combat against mortars, rockets, anti-tank missiles, and UAVs.

9. Watergen (Environmental)

Watergen is an Israeli company that produces innovative Atmospheric Water Generator (AWG) systems. The patented technology produces high-quality drinking water out of air for people everywhere.

10. Pegasus (Surveillance)

Though one of the most controversial Israeli inventions, Pegasus is also a groundbreaking tech in the domain of surveillance. Pegasus can turn any phone into a surveillance device. That would allow it to access the phone's location, camera, and microphone without the phone's owner ever knowing it. The software is nearly impossible to detect.

### Researchers find new way to make animal antibodies safe for humans

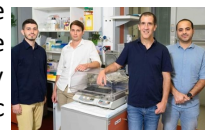
February 6, 2024

[Jpost.com](#)

Researchers at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot have developed an algorithm that offers a much faster and cheaper way of adapting animal antibodies to make them safe for humans – instead of basing them on blood serum extracted from immunized horses and guinea pigs that was used to protect people against diphtheria. Replacing an antibody's animal segments with human ones is laborious, time-consuming, and costly; not only that, it can make an antibody less effective or even entirely useless. Now, in a study

published in the prestigious journal Nature Biomedical Engineering under the title "Computational optimization of antibody humanness and stability by systematic energy-based ranking," the researchers have taken a different approach. "The results were extraordinary. Without any additional adjustments to the proposed designs, the humanized antibodies functioned just as

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## PURIM LAWS AND CUSTOMS

Purim 5784 begins on the evening of Saturday, March 23rd and ends at dark the next evening. (As Purim begins on Saturday night, the traditional fast of Taanit Esther, usually observed the day before Purim, cannot be observed on its regular date, which is Shabbat, when it is forbidden to fast. Taanit Esther is therefore observed this year on Thursday, March 21st.) Though sometimes thought of as a "minor holiday", because one is allowed to do work on that day unlike Shabbat and "major holidays", Purim celebrates the Jewish people being saved from total annihilation throughout the Persian empire. These events, described in the Megillat Esther, which we read publicly on Purim, took place some time between the 6th and 4th centuries B.C.E. (there are sources for several different time periods) before the Jews were allowed to return to Israel from exile and re-build the Temple. Considering how we appropriately mourn the various times in Jewish history when the Jewish people were subjected to slaughter and genocide, I often think that the celebration of avoiding such a catastrophe should be more deeply felt.

### Purim is celebrated with four Mitzvot and several customs

(all of which should be performed on the day of Purim)

as prescribed in the [Megilla](#), which per tradition was written by Mordechai and Esther, both of whom were prophets.

- (1) **Reading of the Megilla**, preferably with a minyan in a synagogue, on both the evening and the day of Purim.



- (2) **Shalach Manot** (or *Mishloach Manot*): sending gifts of food to a friend. This Mitzvah is fulfilled by delivering two ready-to-eat food items, each requiring a different *Bracha* (blessing) before eating, to at least one person. For example, an orange and an apple are both fruit, the blessing before eating them is the same and therefore this does not fulfill the Mitzvah. Luckily, chocolate has a different blessing. Always a good thing to send along with the fruit! Same with wine or liquor.



- (3) **Matanot La'evyonim** (gifts to the poor): this Mitzvah is more important than *Shalach Manot* but unfortunately often receives less attention. This mitzvah is fulfilled by giving monetary charity to at least two poor people. This is often accomplished collectively by giving money beforehand or on Purim to the Rabbi (or anyone so designated) who will turn the money over to poor people.



- (4) **Seudat Purim**: having a festive meal on the day of Purim. This custom has been neglected in many communities, but is alive and well in many places in Israel as well as in the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox communities in N.Y. and elsewhere. The Mitzvah of getting drunk "until one does not know the difference between Haman and Mordechai" during this meal, cited in the Talmud, has been interpreted literally and has also been interpreted as drinking more than one is accustomed to and going to sleep.



- (5) Among the other customs of Purim are making noise when Haman's name is mentioned during the reading of the megilla, eating Hamantashen and wearing masks or costumes.



### President's Message

(Continued from page 1)

their enemies. This is unusual in that as a people we tend not celebrate such things so publicly and joyously, and I would hesitate before suggesting a parallel with the current troubles in the Holy Land. But, that our brethren are fighting those who

would destroy all Jews everywhere given the opportunity does, to me seem to suggest G-d is served when we do what is necessary in defense of His Chosen People. Whatever your own views, I wish you Chag Purim Sameach!



## Thank you for Donations -- December thru February 2024

### Yahrzeit

David Abramoff  
Eli Albagli  
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Sandy Westen  
Sharon Zucker Goldberg

### General Donations

#### For kiddush in honor of Dorothy Schneider's birthday

Melodie Schneider & Lonny Kline

#### For kiddush in honor of Egon Mermelstein 's Birthday

Curtis & Allison Faver

**In Memory of Barbara Parker**  
Ellis Rosenblatt

**Rabbi's Discretionary Fund in memory of Doris Shankman**  
Ellis Rosenblatt



### 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 [haxelman@gmail.com](mailto:haxelman@gmail.com) and let us know. The email version appears in color and will reach you several days before the hard copy. Thank you!

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## SCHEDULE OF WHC CLASSES

(led by Rabbi Axelman)

**Sundays @ Time TBA -- Talmud Class**

**Mondays @ 7:00 PM -- Judaism 101**

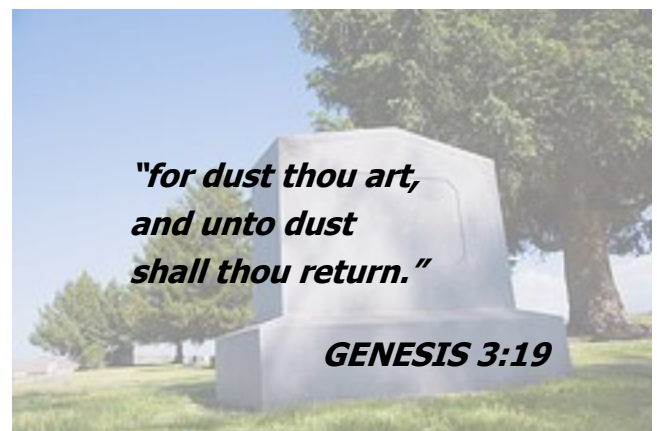
**Explore Your Questions**



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

## 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**



## I Stand with Israel



(Continued from page 4)

effectively as the mouse's original." "This is the first time that a method has shown such broad success in this critical biomedical engineering problem. It is quite likely to become a key element in accelerating the transition from therapeutic

candidate molecules to real-world drugs." The new approach to humanizing antibodies might be applied to other issues in therapeutic antibody engineering.

## From the Rabbi's Study

(Continued from page 2)

[hijacking](#) in 1970. Though I have no more definitive answers than anyone else in the complicated manner of ransom for captives, I want to let everyone know that Jewish law has dealt with and continues to deal with this issue. As part of our being Jewish, we have the right and perhaps the responsibility, to acquaint ourselves with what our thousands of years old corpus of law has to share with us. In the interest of brevity, I also invite all to join us in a class discussion of drafting of those

involved in full-time Torah study, contrasting a [Talmudic dictum](#) that Avraham the patriarch was punished for drafting Torah scholars, with a Mishna in Tractate Sotah 44b, which seemingly states that for certain battles, everyone must participate. Please join us in our classes to learn more about these and many other relevant halachic issues.



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