

Whitestone Hebrew Centre Bulletin

12-45 Clintonville St. Whitestone, NY 11357



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

שנה טובה!

5783

תשפ"ג



שלום

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Volume XXXII No. 1

September 2022

Elul 5782 — Tishrei 5783

Schedule of High Holiday Services

S'LICHOT

Saturday Night September 17th — Service 11:00 PM

ROSH HASHANAH

First Night - Sunday September 25th - 6:00 PM

First Day - Monday September 26th - 9:30 AM & 6:00 PM

Second Day - Tuesday September 27th - 9:30 AM

Tashlich (weather permitting) - Tuesday September 27th - 5:30 PM



YOM KIPPUR

Kol Nidrei - Tuesday October 4th - 6:00 PM

Yom Kippur Day (Yizkor) - Wednesday October 5th - 9:30 AM



Schedule of Sukkot Services

First Night - Sunday October 9th - 7:00 PM

First Day - Monday October 10th - 9:30 AM & 7:00 PM

Second Day - Tuesday October 11th - 9:30 AM



Shemini Atzeret

Sunday October 16th - 7:00 PM

Monday October 17th (Yizkor) - 9:30 AM

Simchat Torah

Monday October 17th - 7:00 PM

Tuesday October 18th - 9:30 AM





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Vice-President - Ellis Rosenblatt
Corresponding/Recording Secretary -
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Sisterhood President -
Naomi Gukowsky

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President's Message

My Dear Friends and Fellow Congregants, Welcome back from the summer and I hope you enjoyed these past months in Safety and Good Health. In my article preceding last year's High Holiday Season - I of course had no idea what personal trials awaited me soon after what I had believed would be a return to normal following our Simchas Torah Services. Everything was downscaled somewhat because of Covid and its restrictions (either personal or societally enforced) but I believe we all felt optimism that some corner had been turned. As mentioned on the short cover blurb this past June issue - I was diagnosed with and began treatment for Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma late last September. Other than that, I haven't publicly referenced my medical journey. Thankful to say it seems the medical interventions have completed, and I've already (cautiously) begun my return to the Real World. Every individual's journey is personal, and I have no special insight in dealing with life's challenges. If I could share anything in the way of lessons learned, it would be the importance of Faith, and Perspective--on the surface the two not seemingly intertwined. Regarding Faith - the last year magnified for me a new appreciation for the words we speak every day of the week in our Prayers (especially thanks to the informed direction of our Rabbi Axelman). We, as humans, don't always pray with laser focus or intent, often speaking mechanically without paying attention. In fact, the words in our liturgy - if you look carefully, address most of what (G-d Forbid) can attack our health, happiness, prosperity, etc. When so

(Continued on page 5)

FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY

As we welcome people back from this summer and we mark the beginning of a new Jewish new year, I am proud to say that we have been open for the entire year and on almost every weekend we have a minyan for services. We remain a place for people to pray together as well as to socialize at our Friday night oneg and Shabbat morning kiddush, thanks to the commitment and hard work of our Rebbetzin.

I particularly want to welcome back our beloved president Bruce Berenson after his very trying year. I am sure I speak for everyone in wishing him a complete and total recovery

Though we have continued to zoom all services throughout this year, that will be reconsidered after the holidays, given that most of the world is going back to normal as per Jewish law, other than when no other choice is available for a community, it is definitely best to avoid the use of electronics on Shabbos. For those still unable to attend services in person, God does not hold anyone to account who cannot perform any mitzvah, not by fault of their own.

With or without Covid, the High Holidays are once again just around the corner, beginning with Selichos Services on Saturday night, September 17th and followed by Rosh Hashana on Sunday evening September 25th.

As last year's Jewish holidays commenced quite early on the secular calendar, this year's holidays start quite late. This is because the Jewish year is adjusted 7 times every 19 years, by adding one month

(Continued on page 4)

SISTERHOOD

Sisterhood President’s Message

As we get ready for all the upcoming holidays, Sisterhood wishes everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year. 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

Prayer Book Fund - July 2022

Inscribed Prayer Book in memory of Aaron Safran
- Sisterhood WHC

In memory of Aaron Safran
- Evelyn Apter
- Patricia Smolker

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”.



September Happy Birthdays

Lazer Axelman	Liliya Berezovsky
Jenna Berenson	Judi Glass

***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.

THANK YOU

To Mark and Kathryn Safran
for their very generous donation to Sisterhood.

Prayer for the Sick

If you would like a name mentioned in the weekly Prayer for the Sick, please email the name of the sick person and the name of that person’s mother (if available) to the Rabbi, at rabbiaxelman@outlook.com. If you do not have access to email, please leave a message on the WHC office voice mail. There are names on our list for a very long time and we have no way of knowing who are still in need of prayers.
Thank you.



Rabbi Axelman

Condolences

To the Mandel family
on the loss of Ben’s brother, Israel

To the family of Arthur Isman on his loss

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

May their memories be a blessing

FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY

(Continued from page 2)

before Pesach so that Pesach can always come out in the spring. (For further explanation see page 7)

Though Selichot services are usually held the Saturday night before Rosh Hashanah, since the custom is to say these prayers every morning for at least four days before Rosh Hashana, this year these prayers will be said one week earlier, Saturday night, September 17th. (Unbeknownst to many, the Selichot services held in most synagogues on a Saturday night are not a one-time event but rather the beginning of a daily service ending only the day before Yom Kippur. Sefardic Jews begin reciting daily Selichot services at the beginning of the Jewish month of Elul, this year on August 28th and continue until Yom Kippur. This corresponds to the 40 days that Moses spent on Mount Sinai pleading with God to replace the Two Tablets on which the Ten Commandments had been inscribed, which Moses had shattered upon witnessing the Jews worshipping the Golden Calf immediately on his descent from the mountain.

(For those jealous of Sefardic Jews (possibly) being able to eat rice on Pesach, bear this in mind.)

For many, this season evokes memories of apples dipped in honey, the sound of the shofar, family meals; for me, the memories are mostly of upside-down cake. But, is that really all there is to it? To me and hopefully millions of other Jews, there has to be a bit more about God and Judaism to make these holidays meaningful (and worth all the preparation). Traditional Judaism sees this period as a time of reflection and repentance, culminating in Yom Kippur, the day on which all our sins are forgiven, though the conditions for this to happen are too complicated for a bulletin article. This year Yom Kippur begins the evening of Tuesday October 4th and concludes at dark the next night. Please note that the evening of Yom Kippur on which we recite Kol Nidrei is the only time of the year that a tallit is worn by the congregation at night. There was a time not too long ago that almost every Jew would attend services on Yom Kippur; sadly, this is no longer true. But as I have said in the past, the only guarantee I can make is that if you do not attend services, you will not be inspired by them!

At the very minimum, I believe we all need to use this time period for reflection over what it means for us to be Jewish. Other than the fact that we were born that way (or converted), what makes us Jewish? What do we do or refrain from doing because we are Jewish? For those who see the expression of their Judaism in charity, helping and being kind to others, there is no question that those things are a great part of what a Jew is or should be. But honestly, they are a great part of what any human being should be, are they not?

So, what is a Jew?

As the answer to this question literally takes up thousands of pages, if not more, I would just like to quote from the book of Deuteronomy 10:12--21 (Parshat Eikev), translation from JTS: And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God demand of you? Only this: to revere the Lord your God, to walk only in His paths, to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. Keeping the Lord's commandments and laws, which I enjoin upon you today, for your good...

Within this sentence lie an acceptance of the yoke of all God's commandments, those between man and man and those between man and God. Though in no way does attendance at our Monday evening Judaism 101 class fulfill these commandments, it is a great place to start for those wishing to know more about their obligations as a Jew and even to debate what they do or do not believe in. We continue to hold this class every Monday evening at 7:00 on zoom, with some possible changes during the upcoming Holiday period.

Several days after Yom Kippur we begin the holiday of Succot, this year on the evening of Sunday October 9th. From Sunday evening until dark on Tuesday the 11th are the first two days of what is technically a seven-day holiday. These two days and the two



and Simchat Torah, from sundown on Sunday, October 16th through October 18th, are Holy Days, with the restrictions on activity that they bring per Jewish Law. In between these first two days and last two days are five days known as Chol Hamoed, which unbeknownst to many, are halachically closer to Holidays than to weekdays. In many places, especially in Israel, people wear "Shabbos-clothes" the entire time, eat festive meals daily and take off work. For the first eight of the nine-day holiday all meals are to be eaten in a Succah and many Jews still sleep inside the Succah.



The day immediately following Succot (or the 8th day if we look at the entire 9 days as one holiday) is known as Sh'mini Atzeret. On that day, Jews around the world say a special prayer that rain should fall in the proper time and amounts, as this is the beginning of the rainy season in Israel. The final day is known as Simchat Torah. Both the evening before and the day of, Jews around the world celebrate the end of the annual cycle of reading the Torah each Shabbat and beginning anew with singing, dancing and joy.

With best wishes for a Happy and Healthy New Year to all!

UPSHERIN



On Sunday, September 4th, Sharon and I were blessed to be present at the upsherin of my 3-year-old grandson, Dani. An upsherin, or *chalaka* in modern Hebrew, is simply the first haircut of a boy who has not had his hair cut until either turning three years old (on the Jewish Calendar) or on Lag Ba'omer during the year he turns three.

The earliest written reference to this custom seems to be traced back to the great Kabbalist of the 16th century, known as the Arizal, about whom it was written that he took his small son to Miron and cut his hair there, per the "known custom". Miron is the city in northern Israel in which the great Kabbalist and reputed author of the Zohar, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, is buried.

Seemingly, around or before that time, there was a custom to cut a child's hair for the first time at the grave of Shmuel Hanavi (Samuel the Prophet), slightly north of Jerusalem. Later Rabbis in the 18th century wrote that there was a custom in the Land of Israel to make a simcha when cutting a boy's hair for the first time, as by leaving the "pei-yos", they are fulfilling the mitzvah to not shave the "corners of the head", as commanded in Leviticus 19:27. As part of the custom, many would give a donation in gold or silver corresponding to the weight of the hair that was cut. Though originally the custom seems to have been followed only by Sefardic and Chassidic Jews, who tend to follow kabbalistic customs, over the last few decades the custom has spread to other Jewish communities as well, including in some Conservative and Reform circles.

Following the haircut, my grandson was presented with a yarmulke and a pair of tzitzis, also known as a *Tallis Katan*. Several days later Dani was introduced to the aleph-bet by a teacher in the Yeshiva for elementary grades that he will someday

attend, with an old custom of sweetening the study of Torah by licking honey off of Hebrew letters (in his case, with a lollipop). May God bless my family, along with all our families, with only yiddishe nachas and family simchas!



Rabbi Axelman

President's Message

(Continued from page 2)

examined, spiritual remedies will present themselves. This is what enables a person to weather such times. Although my days as "Shul Cop" have ended (I've come to believe a person must do as their conscience dictates) I will say that Faith can be a powerful defense against depression and negativity – an extra muscle, if you like. However (as I have said often) – like any other muscle it must be exercised regularly to stay strong and be of use when needed. And it is our beloved Synagogue that serves as gymnasium for that purpose. After the loss of our firstborn, Alana (18 years ago this past August), I had thought myself the uncrowned champion when it came to perspective on what was important as opposed to trifles. At that time, and for a long time afterwards it seemed a legitimate thought. To a large extent it probably still rings true for myself and my family. But, because life goes on, in this world we need to deal with all kinds of issues just getting through an average day, and we ultimately tend not to maintain that same detection meter of equivalency. Simply - I had another lesson to learn. In my case, perspective was reinforced and returned to me

largely by remembering that when making "ordinary" life choices, going to Plan B was not the crisis you (and some of those around you) might make it out to be. In all the trips to doctors' offices, test and treatment facilities (as well as several hospital stays), I gained even more appreciation of perspective seeing how much longer the road to recuperation was for many of my fellow patients. In fact, I came to consider myself blessed for being given the time and strength to endure throughout. As I mentioned – these are my observations only and my hope is some of them will resonate for you as well. I do want to thank everyone for the cards, donations, prayers and good wishes for my recovery – it meant a great deal and along with Faith, factored in the healing process. I'm eagerly looking forward to joining everyone at Shul for our High Holiday services (and hope you will continue to pray with us regularly thereafter). I wish you all a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous 5783.

L'Shana Tova
Bruce



Thank you for Donations -- Summer 2022

Yahrzeit

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Clara Wiesler

General Donations

For feeling welcome at WHC

Ivy Firouztale

Donation to WHC

WHC Sisterhood

In honor of

Chezi and Joseph serving as Gabbais

Arthur Isman

**Kiddush in honor of their daughter,
Courtney's, upcoming wedding**

Mark and Cheryl Rubin

Thank you to WHC for Shiva Minyan

Mark Safran

**Kiddush in memory of
Selma and Bernie Rubinstein**

Dr. Shira Rubinstein & Eric Schechtman

Contributions to special Kiddush and Plaque in memory of Arthur Isman

Johnny Grossman
Ellis Rosenblatt

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.

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SHOFAR AT HOME

The Torah states: "And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation, you shall do no customary work, for you it is a day of blowing the shofar." The penultimate mitzvah of Rosh Hashanah is to hear the sounding of the shofar. We know that some members of our congregation, for various reasons, are unable to attend services in person and participate in this important observance. Therefore, Bruce Berenson and Ronald Kohn would like the honor and privilege of coming to your home on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, Monday, September 26th, and sounding the shofar for you and your families. This would occur approximately 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

If you would like to be included, please contact either one of us directly or the shul office. May you be inscribed for a year of health.



B'Shalom, Bruce and Ron

Why is there an extra month in the Jewish Calendar this past year?

It all relates to the way we Jews traditionally look at the calendar year and months vs. the way the Christian world does. (The Muslim calendar seems to have more in common with the Jewish one, but I claim no expertise in that area.)

Unlike the Gregorian/secular calendar which is based on the solar year, the Jewish month is based on the lunar cycle. Twelve months on the lunar cycle, based on the moon circling the earth every 29.5 days, add up to 354 days, eleven fewer than the regular year. (For the astronomers among us who know that the moon orbits the earth every 27.3 days, I refer you to <https://tinyurl.com/yad4rjtk> for a brief explanation of



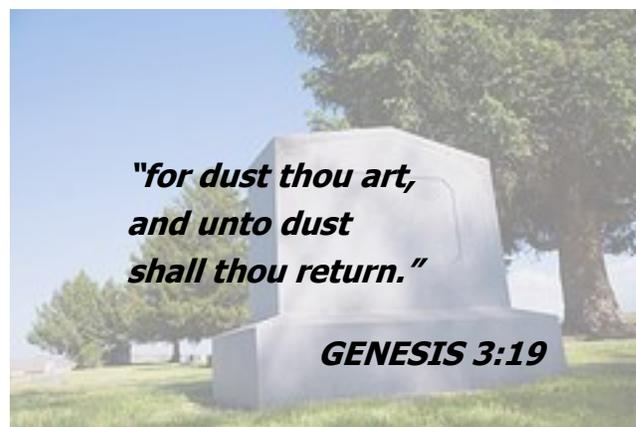
Sidereal Period versus Synodic Period.) Without an adjustment to the Jewish calendar, every year each Jewish holiday would fall eleven days earlier on the secular calendar. Eventually Rosh Hashana would fall in the middle of summer and Pesach would

fall in the winter. Since the Torah specifically states that Pesach is the holiday of the spring, the Jewish calendar makes that happen by periodically adding a second Adar to the Jewish Calendar. In every cycle of nineteen years, there are seven leap years. Every nineteen years the two calendars coincide either exactly or one day apart and then the cycle starts again. Practically speaking, since most of my life I celebrated both my Jewish and secular birthdays, eighteen out of every nineteen years I had two birthdays per year, e.g. my English birthday is August 22nd but my Jewish birthday in 2022 was not until September 2nd.

For the purposes of most people, this extra month affects the dates of yahrzeits and Bar-Mitzvahs. For example, if someone dies in a non-leap year in the month of Adar, there is a dispute over when to observe that yahrzeit in a leap year. (Some do have a custom to light a candle in both Adars.)

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Burial Plots Available
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Contact: Ronald Kohn
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