

Whitestone Hebrew Centre Bulletin

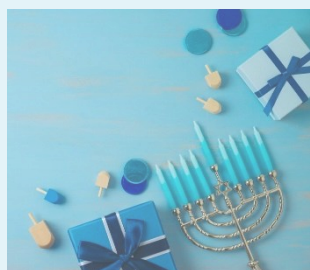
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שלום

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December 2025

Kislev — Tevet 5786

President's Message



In our Jewish year of 5786, Chanukah comes to an end on the secular month/day of December 22, two days before one of the most significant days on the Christian calendar. It's at this time of year our non-Jewish friends explore - as evidenced by the plethora of TV melodramas (the Hallmark Channel has a seemingly endless binge-fest on the topic) the search for the true meaning of their holiday season. In these dramatizations the plot generally boils down to the realization that it's the positive relationships and interactions with our fellow human beings that really count and that which is material and temporal can never bring us that same level of fulfillment (spiritual or otherwise). I may be oversimplifying the above - but that's because my topic is parallel, an exploration into the true meaning of Chanukah. Let me briefly digress to say I lost count of how many have asked me if the real spelling is Chanukah, Channukah, Hanukah, Hanukkah and so on (the Oxford English Dictionary states 24 different spellings). My (mostly) patient answer is along the lines of "however you like, as it's a Hebrew word - you can only misspell it in Hebrew". In truth the correct Hebrew spelling is crucial because of its translation as "dedication", referring to the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem by the Maccabees after it was reclaimed

from the Seleucid (Syrian-Greek) Empire in the 2nd century BCE. What we were taught in Hebrew school was mostly centered on the miracle based portion of the rededication - a single day's worth of oil in the Temple's menorah burning for eight days. I'll take it for granted that actually happened but there's so much more to the story we don't focus on - the similarities in cruelty of the Greek King Antiochus to Egypt's Pharaoh, his desire to be worshipped as a god with his supporters attempting to force the Hebrews to make sacrilegious offerings to the King and other Greek deities, the defeat of a massive collection of armies by the much smaller Hebrew forces led by Judah Maccabee, finally culminating in conquest of Jerusalem and rededication of the Temple in 164 BCE. Here we learn the twin concepts of religious freedom (the Maccabees' struggle for the right to practice one's faith without oppression), coupled with hope and perseverance (in spite of overwhelming odds, the Jewish people preserved their culture and identity). Really, I can imagine the Chanukah story resonating with other peoples and cultures when considering its theme of rededication, speaking to the universal human need to rebuild after destruction, whether in Israel, or anywhere else affected by conflict. Chag Urim sameach (Happy Festival of Lights)



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FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY



Chanuka begins this year with sunset on Sunday, December 14th and ends with nightfall on Monday, December 22nd. Chanuka is the only Jewish holiday that continues from one Jewish month to the next, beginning on the 25th day of Kislev and continuing into the month of Tevet. According to the Talmud, Chanukah commemorates the miracle that occurred when, after being victorious in war against the Greeks, the Jews found only enough ritually pure oil in the Temple to light the Menorah for one day, but miraculously the Menorah burned for eight days, until more oil was found or processed.

On the weeknights of Chanuka, it is best to light the candles 20 minutes or so after sunset and they should remain lit for at least 30 minutes. However, on Shabbat it is forbidden to light the candles after sunset. The proper procedure, therefore, is to light the Chanukah candles before lighting Shabbat candles at the proper time. The candles should remain lit for approximately 90 minutes. On Saturday night, the candles should NOT be lit until dark, approximately 40 minutes after sundown.

The prevalent custom is to light the Menorah in a window that faces the street. Each night we add one candle, the first night, 1, the second night, 2, etc. The *shamash* (the extra candle) is lit because it

is forbidden to derive benefit from the candles of Chanuka; we can only derive benefit from the light provided by the *shamash*.

On the first night we recite three blessings (B'rachot) that are found in the Siddur/prayer book, including "Shehechiyanu", the blessing we recite the first time we observe any Mitzvah. On subsequent nights we recite only two blessings. It is customary for everyone in the house to light their own Menorah. After lighting the Menorah, "Haneirot Hallalu" and "Maoz Tzur" are sung.

Various possible origins are cited for the custom of playing dreidel on Chanukah, including that the Jews, when prohibited from studying Torah, would pretend to be gambling with a dreidel when caught by the Greeks. The letters on the dreidel: *Nun, Gimmel, Heh, and Shin* stand for "*Nes Gadol Haya Sham*" or a great miracle happened there, referring to Israel.

Another widespread custom is to eat latkes, as they are fried in oil, to commemorate the miracle that happened with oil. In Israel today, they eat "sufganiyot", jelly donuts, instead.

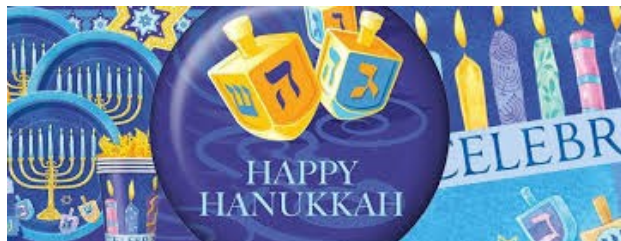
Wishing you all a Chanukah Samayach—a happy and healthy Chanukah!

For lyrics (Hebrew, English and Transliterated) and audio of the Brachot and Ma'oz Tzur, please visit our website at www.whitestonehebrewcenter.org/chanuka.

SISTERHOOD

Sisterhood President's Message

Sisterhood wishes everyone a Happy, Healthy and Joyful Chanukah. 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.



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

Chai Fund - September 2025

The Whitestone Hebrew Centre has hit a home run. We have drafted not one, but two heavy hitters. Thank you Rabbi Axelman for wearing all of your hats, including your yarmulke, for the High Holiday services. A challenging job most successfully undertaken. Thank you to Rebbitzin Sharon for being the hard working cement in our shul building, that holds things together and always with a smile. Wonderful job! Kudos to both of you!

The Smith Family

Oct. — Dec. Happy Birthdays



Bruce Berenson	Sharon Samet
Meryl Hoffmann	Shirley Smith
Egon Mermelstein	Tricia Smith

*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.

SCHEDULE OF WHC CLASSES

(led by Rabbi Axelman)

Sundays @ Time TBA -- Talmud Class

Mondays @ 7:00 PM -- Judaism 101

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



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".



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



Israeli breakthrough could make paralysis reversible

November 23, 2025

www.inn-co-il



Every year, up to half a million people worldwide suffer spinal cord injuries that lead to paralysis, often a life-changing and irreversible condition. But in Israel, scientists are on the verge of changing that narrative. At the cutting-

edge biotech company Matricelf, a team of researchers is engineering new spinal cord tissue from a patient's own cells, a groundbreaking step that could soon allow people confined to wheelchairs to walk again.

Inside Matricelf's lab, scientists extract fatty tissue and blood samples from patients to create personalized neural tissue, which is then used to replace damaged sections of the spinal cord. "We generate stem cells from the patient's tissue," says Dr. Tamar, a senior researcher. "The fatty tissue provides the scaffolding material that allows the cells to form functional neural networks." The technology, developed by Prof. Tal Dvir of Tel Aviv University's Sagol Center for Regenerative

Biotechnology, has already been successfully tested on paralyzed rats, which were able to walk and run within days of treatment. Israel's Ministry of Health has now granted preliminary approval for "compassionate use" clinical trials on eight Israeli patients. Using advanced tissue and genetic engineering, the team has managed to recreate a functional spinal network that mimics the natural structure of the spinal cord. Under the microscope, the engineered tissues appear "happy to connect with one another," says Tamar, describing how they exchange electrical signals much like a healthy spinal cord. The research carries special urgency in Israel, where thousands of soldiers and reservists have been injured or paralyzed during the war against Hamas. The initial trials will focus on patients with localized spinal injuries, cases where the damage is clear and measurable. If successful, this innovation could revolutionize rehabilitation medicine and bring hope to millions. As one researcher put it, "We're not just repairing tissue, we're restoring lives."

First spine surgery of its kind in the world

Emily Frances November 04, 2025

www.i24news.tv

A 60-year-old man who had lung cancer with metastasis to the spine arrived at the emergency room at Assuta Ashdod Public Hospital last week, in immediate danger of paralysis. For the first time in the world, it was decided to perform minimally invasive surgery to fix the spine, using carbon screws and rods - a blue-and-white development by the Israeli startup company CarboFix. During the surgery, which was performed through tiny incisions of only about 1 cm, eight screws and carbon rods were inserted into the patient's back, and at the same time the tumor that was pressing on the spinal cord was excised. The patient was back on his feet the very next day, and two days later he was discharged home, and he is now expected to begin radiation and chemotherapy treatments within about two weeks - instead of waiting months, as was previously customary for surgeries of this type. The innovation in the operation does not lie in the surgical technique itself, but in the innovative material used for fixation. The technique of inserting screws into the spine through tiny incisions has been

known for about 30 years, but until now it was based solely on metals. The carbon material, with its complex physical properties, has until now been considered unsuitable for this type of application. Now, following the development of CarboFix, the possibility of combining the minimal method with carbon implants has opened up. Carbon implants have particularly notable advantages for cancer patients: they do not interfere with MRI scans, and allow precise targeting of radiation without endangering healthy tissue. Thanks to the rapid recovery that minimally invasive surgery allows, patients can begin oncological treatment quickly - without life-threatening delays. "This is Israeli pride and a true medical revolution," they said at the hospital. "Today we are changing the treatment of a single patient, tomorrow it will change the way the whole world deals with spinal cancer."





Israeli Doctors Pioneer Donor-Free Artificial Cornea: A Glimpse of Messianic Healing

November 4, 2024

<https://israel365news.com>



REHOVOT – In a medical first for Israel, surgeons at Kaplan Medical Center implanted a donor-free artificial cornea last Thursday, restoring sight to a patient who had suffered through three failed transplants. The EndoArt device, invented by Israeli cornea surgeon Dr. Ofer Daphna and developed by EyeYon Medical, marks a turning point for the more than 13 million people worldwide waiting for corneal transplants that may never come. The patient had exhausted every conventional option. Severe corneal edema had left him with failing vision and mounting pain. Each previous transplant had been rejected. Another attempt with donor tissue carried risks too high to justify. The ultra-thin synthetic implant became his last chance to see again. "This is a genuine breakthrough offering hope to patients awaiting corneal transplants, especially those who have exhausted all other options," said Professor Arie Marcovich, Head of the Ophthalmology Department at Kaplan Medical Center. "The new implant developed by EyeYon Medical offers him and many others the opportunity to see again without the need for a human donor cornea. This is particularly important in Israel, where waiting lists for corneal transplants can extend for months or even years." Israel has become a global leader in medical innovation, producing breakthroughs that save lives far beyond its borders. From cancer treatments to surgical techniques, Israeli ingenuity addresses critical health challenges with solutions that combine scientific excellence and practical application. The EndoArt implant is the latest example of how a small nation continues to reshape modern

medicine. The restoration of sight to the blind is a humanitarian triumph, but it is also a sign explicitly connected to the messianic age. When describing the era of redemption, the prophet Isaiah declares: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped" (Isaiah 35:5). The verse offers no metaphor, no allegory. The blind will see. The deaf will hear. Physical ailments that have plagued humanity will be eliminated. Isaiah reinforces this promise elsewhere: "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness" (Isaiah 29:18). The messianic age will bring literal, physical healing to those who have been denied their senses. The restoration of sight is not symbolic—it is concrete, medical, and complete. The implications extend beyond individual healing. Isaiah 42:7 describes the Messiah's mission as bringing "the prisoners out of the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." In our time, a total of 168 hostages were returned alive after being held in captivity in Gaza, held in literal darkness by Hamas. The last living hostages were restored to the light and to freedom just three weeks ago. The restoration of sight and the release of captives are intertwined in prophetic literature—both represent liberation from bondage, whether physical or spiritual. Israel's role in bringing healing to the nations is not accidental. The medical breakthroughs emerging from this land demonstrate a unique convergence of scientific excellence and biblical destiny. As the world waits for the ultimate redemption, these advances serve as tangible signs that the promises made thousands of years ago remain relevant, urgent, and within reach.

In World First: Israel Begins Pumping Desalinated Water Into Kinneret Preparing for Pre-Messiah Drought

Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz October 3, 2025

<https://israel365news.com>

In a global first, Israel has begun fully pumping desalinated water from the Mediterranean Sea into the Kinneret, also known as the Sea of Galilee, marking the full-scale launch of a project hailed as a safeguard for the country's long-term water security. The initiative, dubbed the "Reverse Carrier," reverses the direction of Israel's original National Water Carrier, which for decades transported water from the Kinneret southward. Now, desalinated seawater is traveling the same route in the opposite direction—flowing from coastal desalination plants to replenish Israel's only freshwater lake. The project will allow the maximum streaming of 120 million cubic meters of water back into the Kinneret. Today, some 585 million cubic meters of water per year are desalinated in the State of Israel. Upon

completion, most drinking water supplied to Israel's residents will come from desalinated seawater. Seawater desalination is the most reliable source for enriching the water supply, as seawater is available in unlimited quantities and involves no dependency on climate or political factors. While desalination is not new, what makes the Reverse Carrier unique is the concept of channeling desalinated water back into nature, rather than only using it for urban and agricultural supply. "We view nature not only as a supplier of water but also as a consumer of water," Lifshitz explained.





Thank you for Donations -- September — November 2025

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In honor of all that Rebbetzin Sharon does for WHC

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In honor of the birth of their grandson, Levi Thomas Pagan

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In honor of Liliya's birthday

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For honors on Simchat Torah

Liliya Berezovsky & Ellis Rosenblatt

In honor of naming their grandson, Levi Thomas Pagan

Mark & Cheryl Rubin

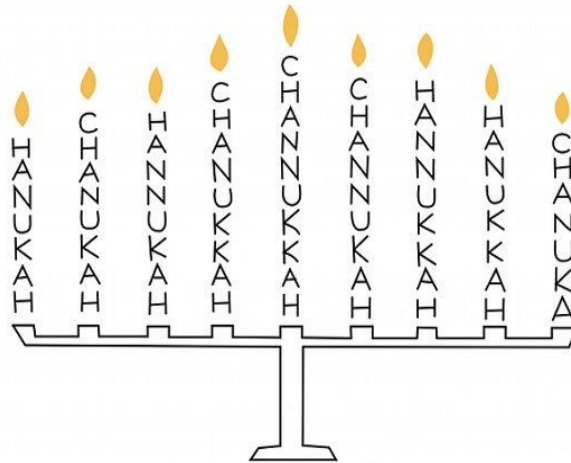
WHC Classes—what are you missing?



For those who do not attend the Judaism 101 Class at WHC, it presents a rare opportunity to ask any question about any topic related to Judaism or Israel, with no prior knowledge needed or expected. In our recent classes we

have discussed anti-semitism, including: when did it first appear, what are its origins within the Torah, what are its historical and current causes, what are its present day manifestations, and more. We also had a discussion of an issue that is again on the front burner in Israel—that of drafting the ultra-Orthodox (Chareidim) into the army. This

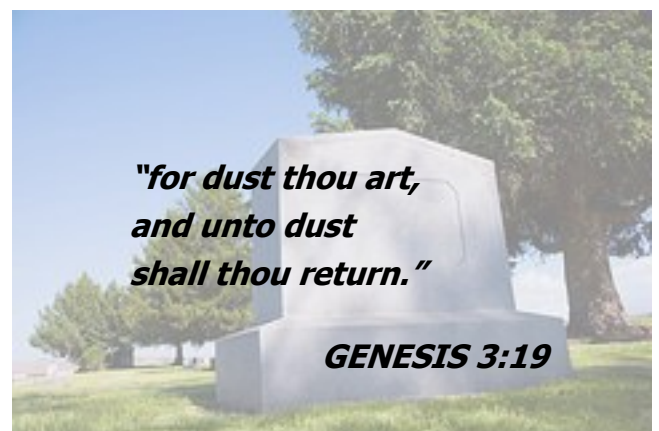
issue requires knowledge of some modern Jewish history and Zionist history, gaining familiarity with the various religious and secular groups in Israel, as well as with its political system (no constitution, coalition government always subject to collapse, an over-involved judicial system and more). This class continues to be held on zoom, providing the maximum amount of convenience in attending. We look forward to a growing attendance—everyone is welcome!



The definitive spelling!

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Cemetery Committee Chair
at WHC (718) 767-1500



*"for dust thou art,
 and unto dust
 shall thou return."*

GENESIS 3:19

Sharon Samet
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