

Whitestone Hebrew Centre Bulletin

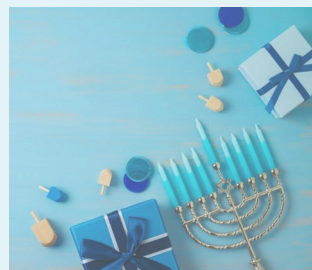
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שלום

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Volume XXXIII No. 2

Nov. - Dec. 2023

Kislev — Tevet 5784



President's Message

Thanksgiving - Jewish Style



The Jewish People have for a long time lived in America with the conceptual intertwining of Chanukah and Christmas. This year we celebrate the beginning of the Festival of Lights around midway between Thanksgiving and that other widely observed day at the end of December. As we Jews along with the rest of the country occupy ourselves (on November 23) with the tradition of giving thanks for G-d's many blessings, we are already beginning preparations (mentally, spiritually and maybe even physically) for our celebration that begins with lighting the first candle commemorating the Hebrew victory over the Seleucids - a miracle in itself nearly equal to the oil component of the story.

I think the (maybe not so) secular Thanksgiving complements Chanukah in that it provides yet another reminder of how much we owe Hashem.

The Puritans had been persecuted so harshly in England, they imagined themselves as the modern analog to Jews (John Winthrop even made that point prior to their journey to the New World), and made their own exodus. The Atlantic Ocean became their Red Sea. They saw the Plymouth Colony as their Promised Land. No wonder so many places in New England bear biblical names: Salem, Bethel, Canaan, Sharon, etc.

When the Pilgrims looked for a way of celebrating their freedom and their entry into a new land, they took the idea of the harvest – along with the idea of freedom and combined the two. Thanksgiving can be looked at as an American Sukkot and an American Pesach (a Seder of Freedom if you will) combined.

Throughout its history, many Americans have read the Bible, and see our story resonating with their own.

And why not? The Story of The Jews is that of migration, exile and return. Abraham leaving Ur. Jacob leaving the Land of Canaan, and then returning, Moses leading The People out of Egypt to the Promised Land. It is the Israelites entering the land – a Golden Age followed by exile to Babylon, coming back only to be exiled again centuries later by the Romans – on and on.

This is how Thanksgiving became a “Jewish” holiday

I wish you Hashem's blessings for Health, Strength and Prosperity in these difficult times.

Chanukah Sameach
Bruce Berenson





WHC Bulletin Staff

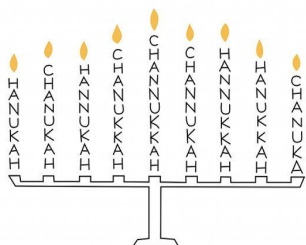
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The definitive spelling!



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FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY



Chanuka begins this year with sunset on Thursday, December 7th and ends with nightfall on Friday, December 15th. 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 "Shehechyanu", 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 and Healthy Thanksgiving and a joyful Chanuka. On Sunday, November 19 at 3:00 PM at Queensborough Performing Arts Center (QPAC), Sisterhood had a Theatre Party. We saw "Tenors Unlimited". The shows at QPAC are wonderful and we hope you will attend these entertaining shows. Look for details of more Theatre Parties in future bulletins. Let's all pray for peace in Israel, Ukraine, our country and throughout the world.

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

THANK YOU

I want to thank everyone who called, sent cards or visited me while I was sitting shiva for my brother, Leonard Factor.

Lilian Gradofsky

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 Lilian Gradofsky and family
on the loss of her brother, Leonard Factor

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

May his memory be a blessing

Chai Fund - September 2023

It's hard to say, Rebbetzin Sharon, you outdid yourself, because you always outdo yourself. Thank you for all you do.

The Smith Family

Who speaks softly, but carries a big tallis? Rabbi Axelman, of course. Thank you Rabbi for all the work and sacrifice you put into making your congregants' holiday so special.

Frank and Shirley Smith

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.

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".



It would be difficult to mention anything about Israel without referring back to and commenting on the horrific events of October 7th, a date that will live in infamy, not only in Israel but (hopefully) all around the world. As of this writing, the final tally of those butchered to death on that date is around 1200. Some bodies were so mutilated and/or abused that they have still not been identified. Approximately 240 hostages are still being held by Hamas, presumably somewhere in Gaza. As a Rabbi, with historical and present-day knowledge of Israel's politics and goings-on, as someone who has listened to countless hours of Israeli TV and radio since that day, it is not easy to comment on what happened without discussing "politics", a subject on which many Jews disagree. Added to what happened and continues to happen in Israel and Gaza are the numerous antisemitic incidents (including one death in Los Angeles) and not-so-peaceful protests that have taken place all around the globe and in the United States. In response to this, the NYPD has been on heightened alert and has paid many visits to the WHC to check on our welfare (see picture page 7). It is commonly "known" that there are five stages of grief. Wearing my LCSW hat, I can share that these have always been misunderstood and misapplied, but for our purposes what is important is what many grief experts call the sixth step, i.e., "meaning". Finding meaning in loss may likely be the most important stage of healing. In the field of grief, they speak of asking not "why", but "what". Asking why God allowed something to happen rarely brings peace and serenity. Asking what someone can do following tragedy allows for more healthily moving on. Many comment on the fact that the Hebrew word for "why", which transliterates to "lamah", can also be read "lih-mah", meaning "for what". What, if anything, good has resulted from that horrific day? As known to many, Israeli society had been ripped into pieces for many months over so-called "judicial reform", something I personally was strongly in favor of, but which became extremely political in Israel and even American politicians mixed into from their overseas perches. Israel was racked by not-so-peaceful demonstrations for months. The animosity shown between those for and against these reforms was almost unprecedented. This animosity overflowed into historical resentments between secular Israelis and the more religiously observant Israelis, culminating in the Supreme Court ruling against the permissibility of a partition between men and women at an outside [Ne'ilah service](#) in [Tel Aviv](#) at the end of Yom Kippur and another Supreme Court case about celebrating "*hakafot shniyot*", (a second round of dancing for Simchat Torah, held on the same night as Simchat Torah outside of Israel), which in Israel is already post-Sukkot altogether. These *hakafot shniyot* often include live music and

are quite joyful. This year they could not take place because by their appointed time, the murders had already taken place earlier that same day and Israelis were called up en masse for active military duty. Within hours of the massacre, the long-sought "*achdut*" or unity between Israelis appeared. What had been resentment and animosity turned almost immediately into forgetting all that separated Israelis one from another. Signs saying "*yachad n'natzeiach*", (together we will achieve victory) sprang out everywhere and those words were on everyone's lips. A government which had taken five elections to form, which was under constant attack from those not included in the governing coalition, formed into a "unity government", wherein other members of the Knesset were brought into a broader coalition government. (For a somewhat better understanding of the workings of the Israeli Knesset and government, Monday's Judaism 101 Class can be a good start.) Though it is too early to know if this unity among Israelis will survive for long once this war is over and though it is tragic that it took such a tragedy to re-find this unity, it is more than welcome. Further, acts of charity and "chessed" (good deeds), on the part of Israelis and Jews all over the world, have flourished exponentially. The giving of money, the on-the-ground aid provided to soldiers who at times lacked equipment, the provisions for the tens of thousands of Israelis who were displaced in both the north and south of Israel, and many other acts of kindness are far too numerous to even begin to list. The Whitestone Hebrew Centre itself made a donation to an organization with boots on the ground, with the money being put to use within less than 24 hours. We can and should only pray for an expeditious and victorious end to this round of war with those who (as in many other generations) seek our destruction, even as we continue to provide whatever help we can to Jews in Israel. (Anyone seeking to make a donation for soldiers, bereaved or displaced families, etc., may consult the Rabbi.) Oseh shalom bimromav, hu yaaseh shalom, aleinu v'al kol Yisrael v'imru Amein. (One of many songs celebrating this unity can be found at this [URL](#) on youtube.)





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



Scientists Create Model of Early Human Embryo Without Egg or Sperm

Amy Furr September 7, 2023

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



Scientists in Israel have grown a model of an early human embryo without using a human egg or sperm. One researcher claims it offers a glimpse into the earliest days of pregnancy. The complete model was grown without sperm, eggs, or a woman's womb, 9News reported Thursday. The team of researchers at the Weizmann Institute of Science created the model with stem cells outside the womb. It is a project the article said is "paving the way for advances in fertility and transplants," adding that the research was published Wednesday in the journal *Nature* under the title "Complete

human day 14 post-implantation embryo models from naïve ES cells." The synthetic embryo model reportedly has every element of a 14-day-old human embryo, such as the placenta, yolk sac, and chorionic sac. The team's leader, Professor Jacob Hanna, explained there is not much information available about an early embryo because it is difficult to study due to ethical and technical reasons. However, he said, "Our stem cell-derived human embryo model offers an ethical and accessible way of peering into this box. It closely mimics the development of a real human embryo, particularly the emergence of its exquisitely fine architecture," he added.

Israeli Doctors Save Man's Life with AI

Ran Reznik September 4, 2023

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

Innovative artificial intelligence-based technology recently saved the life of a patient at the Galilee Medical Center in Nahariya. A resident of the city, the 50-year-old patient had arrived for a routine CT scan after complaining of strong headaches for an extended period, and after its completion, left. The results usually take one to two weeks to arrive, but in this case, an alert by the AI-based program warned that he might have intracranial bleeding, prompting doctors to call the man—who was still near the hospital—to return swiftly. He was operated on in an emergency procedure that saved his

life. The AI-based program, called Viz.ai, leverages advanced, FDA-cleared algorithms to analyze medical imaging data, like CT scans, providing real-time insights and automated assessments to accelerate diagnosis and treatment. Galilee Medical Center's Dr. Dan Paz, who participated in the development of the program, lauded its life-saving abilities, saying that "without it, the patient would have probably come to us too late."



'Righteous' Cowboys from Montana, Arkansas Arrive in Holy Land to 'Serve Israel' in Tough Times

Joshua Klein - November 8, 2023

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



A crew of ten American cowboys and farmers have travelled to the Jewish state to "serve Israel in any way we can during the hard time in the struggle against Hamas." The group of American Christian cowboys from Arkansas and Montana have become popular in Israel after volunteering to assist the Jewish state by aiding farmers facing

a labor shortage since October 7. The heroic cowboys, who arrived late Monday evening, funded their own trips, motivated by their religious connection to Israel and biblical beliefs. The "righteous" cowboys continue to receive a hero's reception by Israel's residents and supporters. "Thank you, guys. Y'all are heroes," wrote Israeli public speaker Emanuel Miller.



Thank you for Donations -- September—November 2023

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 Sheldon Glass

Happy New Year to the Congregation
 Sidney Rothstein

High Holiday Donation
 Jeffrey Wolkin

In appreciation of the Whitestone Hebrew Centre
 Dennis and Jonathan Grossman

For Shabbat Kiddush

**In honor of the baby naming of
 their granddaughter, Anna Paige**

**In honor of the baby naming of
 their granddaughter, Sunny Reese**

Bruce and Lee Berenson

Mark and Cheryl Rubin

In appreciation for their honors on Simchat Torah

For the 50th Yahrzeit of her father, Joseph Splain

Ellis Rosenblatt and Joseph Wolkin

Michele Splain

In honor of all the wonderful things Sharon Samet does for everyone and for being a special human being

Melvin Mesnick

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.

March for Israel in Washington, D.C. November 14th, 2023

By Joseph Wolkin



The Stand With Israel rally in Washington, D.C. was the biggest showing of Jewish pride I have ever seen. Stars of Davids were out, people were proud to wear their kipot, and you couldn't walk 5 feet without seeing someone waving an Israeli flag. Jews from every sect were in DC, and it was beautiful. It's not the first pro-Israel rally since Oct. 7. My company, UJA-Federation of New York, has organized several rallies in Manhattan and on Long Island. The strong showing of Jewish pride during a time of rising

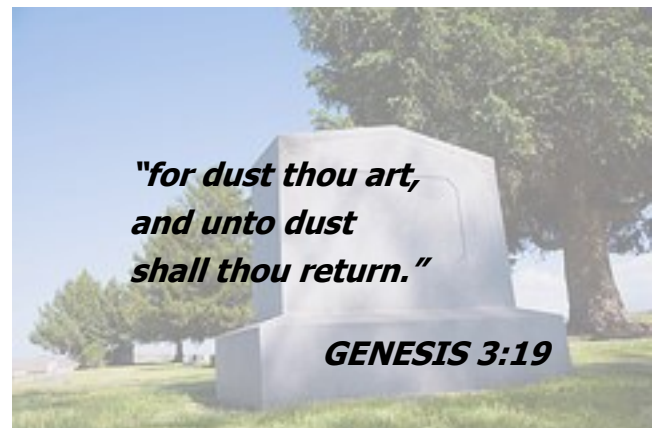
antisemitism is remarkable. We are proud of who we are. We are united as a people in a time of need. The donations have poured in to dozens of organizations to help Israelis, and our amazing shul is one of many to do so. The chants of עם ישראל חי (Am Yisrael Chai)—the nation of Israel lives -- are ones that everyone needs to know. While there are those who are spewing antisemitic rhetoric that we know all too well, we must come together and show that "never again" truly means never again.



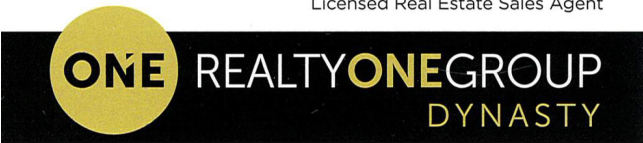
WHC thanks the NYPD and the 109th precinct for their many visits to our site since October 7th

Whitestone Hebrew Centre Congregational Cemetery

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 Contact: Ronald Kohn
 Cemetery Committee Chair
 at WHC (718) 767-1500**



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