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11 Facts About the Month of Tevet Every Jew Should Know

1. Tevet Is in the Winter

The 10th month on the Jewish calendar, Tevet occurs in the wintertime. In fact, the entire winter season is sometimes called *tekufat* (season of) *Tevet* in Jewish tradition.

2. Tevet Always Has 29 Days



The two months preceding Tevet (Cheshvan and Kislev) can each have either 29 or 30 days, depending on the year. From Tevet and onward, things are simple. Tevet has 29 and Shevat has 30, establishing a pattern of alternating months that continues for the rest of the year.

3. Chanukah Bleeds into Tevet



An ice menorah in New York

Chanukah begins on 25 Kislev and continues for 8 days. This means that the final

few days of Chanukah extend into Tevet, an otherwise dreary and ordinary month. In the event that the first day of Tevet is on Shabbat, this Shabbat is one of the few times when three Torah scrolls are removed from the ark during morning services.

The Torah portion of the week (Mikeitz) is read from one scroll, the Rosh Chodesh reading is read from the second, the Chanukah portion is read from the third.

The Grace After Meals for that Shabbat (which includes additions for Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and Chanukah) is also the longest of the year.

4. Esther Was Taken to the Palace

In the book of Esther we read that Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus' palace "in the 10th month, which is the month of Tevet."

The Talmud explains that the month of Tevet was a particularly opportune time, since the cold causes "the body to take pleasure from the body [of another]."

continued on next page



IFR NEWSLETTER TEAM

Rabbi Barbara Aiello

Rabbi Frank
Tamburello

Rabbi "shosh"
Suzanne H Carter, D.Div.

11 Facts About the Month of Tevet Every Jew Should Know



5. The Siege of Jerusalem Began

Even before it got the name Tevet, when it was known simply as the tenth month, this was a significant time in Jewish history: “In the 10th month, on the 10th of the month, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylonia, came he and his entire army against Jerusalem, and encamped against it, and they built siege works around it.”³

6. The 10th Day of the Month Is a Fast Day

The book of Zechariah tells us that four fast days will become days of “joy and gladness and good festivals” in the era of Moshiach, including “the fast of the 10th,” a reference to the 10th day of Tevet (the 10th month). On this day Jewish people mourn the destruction of Jerusalem, the result of the siege which began on that day. From daybreak to nightfall no food or drink is consumed, and extra prayers are recited.

7. Two Other Tragic Events Happened

Tradition tells us that the fast of 10 Tevet commemorates two other tragic events. On the 8th of Tevet, at the behest of Ptolemy of Egypt, the Torah was translated into Greek, marking a sharp decline of Jewish spirituality, the Torah now perceived as just another book of wisdom in Ptolemy’s great library.

The 9th of Tevet is the *yahrtzeit* of Ezra the Scribe, the spiritual leader of the Jews who returned to the Land of Israel from Babylonia and rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem. The death of this great leader, who left an indelible mark on Jewish life and observance, was deeply mourned. Yet a single fast was declared for all three events, so that the month would not be full of sadness and mourning.



A section of an ancient Greek rendering of the Book of Esther.

8. Agents Were Not Dispatched from Jerusalem

In Temple times, at the start of every Jewish month that contained a holiday, agents were dispatched from Jerusalem to notify the Jewish people in every community of when the month had begun, so that they would know when to observe the holiday. But no runners were sent out at the start of Tevet. Since the fast would one day be abolished, it was not considered binding at that time, and did not warrant special notification.⁴

9. Tevet Is Babylonian

The name “Tevet” was adopted by the Jewish people during the Babylonian exile.⁵ It is believed to connote “sinking” or “immersing.” This is possibly related to the fact that the heavy winter rainfall turns much of the Middle East into a muddy swamp at this time of year.



11 Facts About the Month of Tevet Every Jew Should Know



10. The Mazal of Tevet Is the Goat

Every Jewish month is associated with the zodiac symbol which is dominant at that time. The symbol of Tevet is the *gedi* (goat, Capricorn).

Capricorn could be considered to be a good month since Capricorn in Hebrew is גדי (Gedi), which contains the letters גד (Gad) which means, "good luck". However, in reality, Capricorns do not rely on their good fortune and instead they believe only in their own hard work. Many of them have the tendency to be pessimists and develop anxieties until sometimes clinical care is needed.

The birth story of the tribe of Gad in Genesis, tells us that when Gad was born, Leah (Jacob's wife), called him Ba-Gad בא-גד which means, the luck has arrived, because Jacob had another son). However, in the biblical text the letter – א Alef, that symbolizes the Creator's Light is missing, and it is written בגד (meaning, betrayal).

This lack of Divine Light, is the reason why people of the sign of Capricorn are constantly looking for this lost א Alef, lost Light, and this is why they feel lack and anxiety so often. This is why they are constantly in search of what they've lost or they feel that something is missing.

11. The 5th of Tevet Is Special in Chabad

The 5th day of Tevet is marked with celebrations in Chabad, as it is the date when a U.S. federal judge ruled that the extensive library left by the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, of righteous memory, belonged to the community, recognizing the extraordinary nature of a rebbe as a communal figure.

The 24th day of Tevet is also significant in Chabad. It is the anniversary of the passing of the Alter Rebbe, the first Chabad rebbe, in 1812.



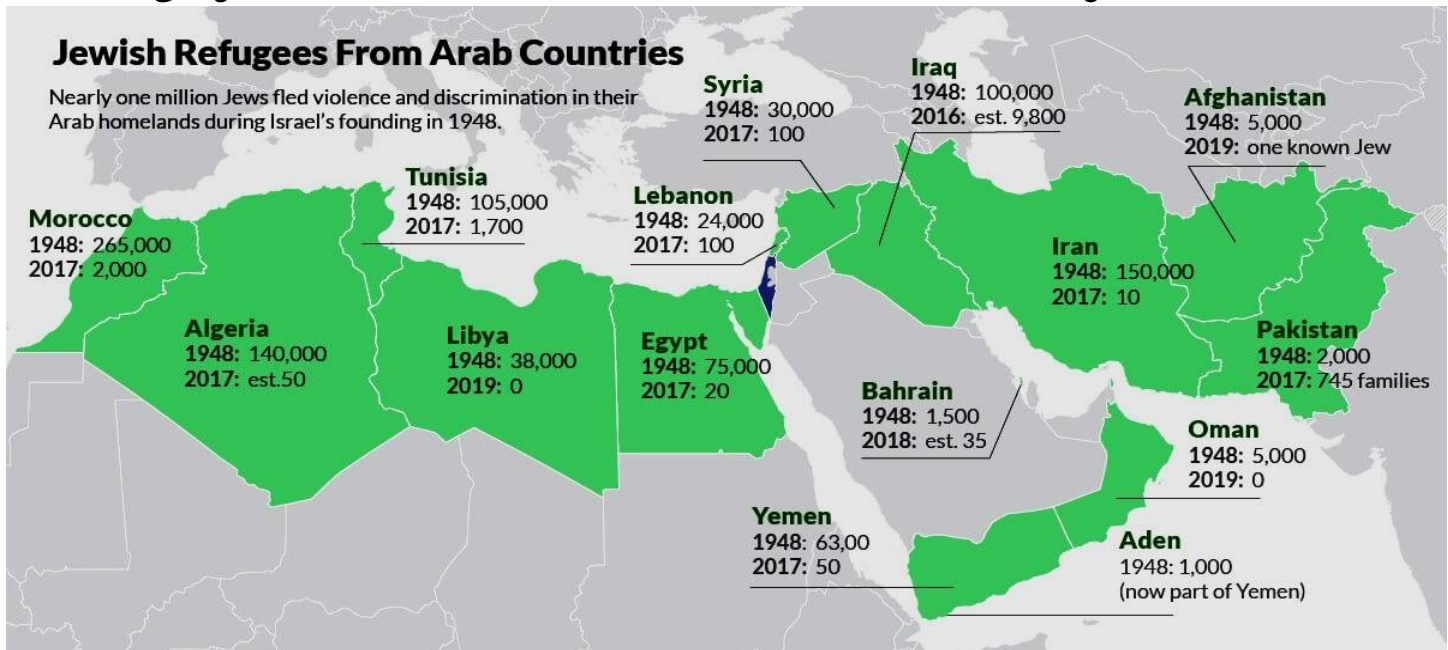
The Author:

Rabbi Menachem Posner serves as managing editor at Chabad.org, the world's largest Jewish informational website. He has been writing, researching, and editing for Chabad.org since 2006, when he received his rabbinic degree from Central Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim Lubavitch. He lives in Chicago, Ill., with his family.



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History of Jews In The Middle East and North Africa



For over 2,500 years, Jews in substantial numbers resided in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf region. Long before Christianity and Muslims even existed. Map shows number of Jews left in “Arab “ lands in 1948 prior to their expulsions in retaliation of the formation of the State of Israel, and left today.

Following the Muslim conquest of the region, under Islamic rule, Jews were considered second-class citizens but were, for a period of time, permitted limited religious, educational, professional and business opportunities.

This changed in the 20th century, as witnessed by a wide-spread pattern of persecution and the mass violations of the human rights of Jewish minorities in many Arab countries. Official decrees and legislation enacted by Arab regimes denied human and civil rights to Jews, expropriated their property, stripped them of their citizenship, and other means of livelihood.

Following the Israeli-Arab war of Independence in 1948, Jews were forced to leave their homes and flee to Israel.

In Israel all of them were naturalized and become citizens of the new re-born state. The result – from an estimated 1,000,000 Jews resident in North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf region at the turn of the century, today less than 4,500 Jews remain in Arab countries.



History of Jews In Tunisia

Tunisia has a long Jewish history - Jews were present in North Africa before the arrival of Islam or Christianity.

In good times they prospered and in hard times they bore the brunt of discrimination, but now they are at risk of extinction. Of 100,000 before the creation of Israel in 1948, only about 1,500 are left.



The history of the Jews in Tunisia extends nearly two thousand years to the Punic era. The Jewish community in Tunisia is no doubt older and grew up following successive waves of immigration and proselytism before its development was hampered by anti-Jewish measures in the Byzantine Empire. The community formerly used its own dialect of Arabic.

After the Muslim conquest of Tunisia, Tunisian Judaism went through periods of relative freedom or even cultural apogee to times of more marked discrimination.

The arrival of Jews expelled from the Iberian peninsula, often through Livorno, greatly altered the country. Its economic, social and cultural situation has improved markedly with the advent of the French protectorate before being compromised during the Second World War, with the occupation of the country by the Axis.

The creation of Israel in 1948 provoked a widespread anti-Zionist reaction in the Arab world, to which was added nationalist agitation, nationalization of enterprises, Arabization of education and part of the administration.

Jews left Tunisia en masse from the 1950s onwards because of the problems raised and the hostile climate created by the Bizerte crisis in 1961 and the Six-Day War in 1967.

The Jewish population of Tunisia, estimated at about 105,000 individuals in 1948, numbered around 1,000 individuals as of 2019. These Jews lived mainly in Tunis, with communities present in Djerba.

The Jewish diaspora of Tunisia is divided between Israel and France, where it has preserved its community identity through its traditions, mostly dependent on Sephardic law and customs, but retaining its own specific characteristics.

Djerbian Judaism in particular, considered to be more faithful to tradition because it remained outside the sphere of influence of the modernist currents, plays a dominant role.

The vast majority of Tunisian Jews have relocated to Israel and have switched to using Hebrew as their home language.

Tunisian Jews living in France typically use French as their first language, while the few still left in Tunisia tend to use either French or Judeo-Tunisian Arabic in their everyday lives.

Pictured: Synagogue in Djerba



History of Jews In Egypt from 1948 to present

Egyptian Jewish Population

1948: 75,000 | 2020: <101

Between June and November 1948, bombs set off in the Jewish Quarter of Cairo killed more than 70 Jews and wounded nearly 200. In 1956, the Egyptian government used the Sinai Campaign as a pretext for expelling almost 25,000 Egyptian Jews and confiscating their property. Approximately 1,000 more Jews were sent to prisons and detention camps.

On November 23, 1956, a proclamation signed by the Minister of Religious Affairs, and read aloud in mosques throughout Egypt, declared that “all Jews are Zionists and enemies of the state,” and promised that they would be soon expelled. Thousands of Jews were ordered to leave the country. They were allowed to take only one suitcase and a small sum of cash and forced to sign declarations “donating” their property to the Egyptian government. Foreign observers reported that members of Jewish families were taken hostage, apparently to insure that those forced to leave did not speak out against the Egyptian government.

When war broke out in 1967, Jewish homes and property were confiscated. Egypt’s attitude toward Jews at that time was reflected in its treatment of former Nazis. Hundreds were allowed to take up residence in Egypt and given positions in the government. The head of the Gestapo in occupied Poland, Leopold Gleim (who had been sentenced to death in absentia), controlled the Egyptian secret police.

In 1979, the Egyptian Jewish community became the first in the Arab world to establish official contact with Israel. Israel now has an embassy in Cairo and a consulate general in Alexandria.

At present, the few remaining Jews are free to practice Judaism without any restrictions or harassment. Shaar Hashamayim is the only functioning synagogue in Cairo. Of the many synagogues in Alexandria only the Eliahu Hanabi is open for worship.

Anti-Semitism in the Egyptian press is found primarily, but not exclusively, in the nonofficial press of the opposition parties. The Government has condemned anti-Semitism and advised journalists and cartoonists to avoid anti-Semitism. There have been no anti-Semitic incidents in recent years directed at the tiny Jewish community. In September 2000 construction began on a highway-bridge through the ancient Basatin Jewish cemetery in Cairo. Cooperation and funding were provided by the Egyptian Ministry of Housing and an American ultra-Orthodox Jewish Athra Kadisha group. The plans will not harm any tombs and it will honor Jewish law concerning cemeteries.

Anti-Semitism is rampant in the government-controlled press and increased in late 2000 and 2001 following the outbreak of violence in Israel and the territories. In April 2001, columnist Ahmed Ragheb lamented Hitler’s failure to finish the job of annihilating the Jews.

In May 2001, an article in *Al-Akhbar* attacked Europeans and Americans for believing in the false Holocaust.⁶ On March 18, 2004, ‘Bad al-Ahab ‘Adams, deputy director of *Al Jumhuriya*, accused the Jews of the terrorist attack in Madrid on March 11 as well as of the September 11, 2001 attacks.⁷

A positive development was the announcement that a Cairo synagogue built in 1934, which had been closed because so few Jews remain in Egypt, would be reopened in July 2005. The head of Cairo’s Jewish community, Carmen Weinstein, and Israel’s ambassador to Egypt, Shalom Cohen, arranged to reopen the synagogue, which the Israeli Embassy will help to maintain.⁸

On October 30, 2007, the Sha’ar Hashamayim synagogue in Cairo was rededicated by the city’s small Jewish community. Many guests from Egypt and around the world attended the event which celebrated the synagogue’s 100-year anniversary and the completion of recent renovations that occurred with assistance from the Egyptian government.⁹

History of Jews In Egypt from 1948 to present

In March 2013, Egyptian security agencies banned an Egyptian film about the Arab nation's once-thriving Jewish community, called "The Jews of Egypt," just a day before it was due to open in cinemas. Producer Haytham el-Khamissy said no reason had been given for the ban, which recalls the worst excesses of the famously censorial regime of former dictator Hosni Mubarak. The film is based on testimony from researchers, political figures and exiled Egyptian Jews, and presents a harmonious vision of early 20th century multicultural Egypt and asks "how did the Jews of Egypt turn in the eyes of Egyptians from partners in the same country to enemies?"¹⁰

As of 2013, the Jewish community in Egypt numbers only a few dozen and is quickly fading into extinction. In May 2013, the Egyptian government announced that it would be canceling its annual \$14,000 stipend to the Jewish community which has been part of the state budget since 1988. The stipend had been used to pay for renovations to the Bassatine cemetery, the second-oldest Jewish cemetery in the world behind only The Mount of Olives cemetery in Jerusalem. The funds also helped to pay for security.¹¹

In December 2014, an Egyptian court placed a ban on a yearly festival that attracts hundreds of Jewish individuals from all over the Middle East. The annual festival celebrates the birth of Abu Hatzira, a legendary Moroccan Rabbi revered for his kindness and known for performing miracles. Abu Hatzira was also the grandfather of famous Kabbalist known as "the Baba Sali".

The festival was banned by an Egyptian court because the celebration involves the consumption of alcoholic beverages, dancing, and casual intermingling of the sexes.

The celebration takes place at Abu Hatzira's tomb and as part of the ruling the court also ordered that the tomb be taken off Egypt's list of antiquities, cultural sites, and monuments lists.

The festival was called off in 2012 due to security concerns surrounding the Arab Spring.¹² Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi appointed an ambassador to Israel in June 2015, following a significant three year lapse in diplomatic relations between the countries.¹³

Former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi recalled the previous ambassador to Israel in 2012 in protest of Israeli treatment of Palestinians in Gaza. The Israeli embassy in Egypt was re-opened on September 9, 2015, after a closure due to security concerns during the Egyptian revolution that began in January 2011.

On September 9, 2011, angry and violent protestors descended upon the Israeli embassy in Egypt, forcing the Diplomats and other officials inside to evacuate immediately. The embassy remained vacant for four years. Director-General of Israel's Foreign Ministry, Dore Gold, stated at the re-opening ceremony on September 9, 2015, that, "Egypt will always be the biggest and most important state in the region. This event taking place in Cairo is also the beginning of something new."¹⁴

For the first time since the State of Israel's creation in 1948, Egyptian representatives at the United Nations voted in Israel's favor, in October 2015. Egypt was one of 117 countries who voted in favor of Israel joining the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space Affairs. The Egyptian representative refused to comment before or after the vote.¹⁵

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History of Jews In Egypt from 1948 to present

At the January 7, 2019, inauguration of the Cathedral of the Nativity, the largest church in the region, and the Al-Fattah Al-Aleem Mosque, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar said Islam obliged Muslims to safeguard houses of worship for Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

In addition, according to the penal code, using religion to promote extremist thought with the aim of inciting strife, demeaning or denigrating Islam, Christianity, or Judaism, and harming national unity carries penalties ranging from six months' to five years' imprisonment.^[16]

According to a 2009 report by the Anti-Defamation League, anti-semitic^[53] and anti-Israel sentiments continued to run high. Israel and Zionism were frequently associated with conspiracy theories of subverting and weakening the state.^[54] Nevertheless, the Egyptian government began renovating an old dilapidated synagogue that year in what was once a Jewish neighborhood in Old Cairo.

Zahi Hawass, general secretary of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, said: "If you don't restore the Jewish synagogues, you lose part of your history."^[55]

The Jewish population continued to dwindle. In 2007, an estimated 200 Jews lived in Egypt,^[56] less than 40 in 2014,^{[54][57]} but by 2017 this dropped to 18: 6 in Cairo, 12 in Alexandria.

In 2018, the estimated Jewish population was 10.^[58] In April 2021, one of the last members of the community, Albert Arie, died aged 90; he had converted to Islam, married an Egyptian Muslim woman, and was buried as a Muslim.^[59]

One of the four remaining Jews in Egypt, Reb Yosef Ben-Gaon of Alexandria, died in November 2021.^[60]

In March 2022, part of the Jews of Cairo archives were confiscated by the Egyptian government.^[61] As of December 2022, there are only 3 Egyptian Jews living in Egypt, all women, of whom the youngest Magda Haroun (born 1952) is the community leader,^[62] who is an anti-

Zionist^{[63][64][65][66]} and married to a Catholic. Her two daughters are not living in Egypt.^{[67][68]} Her sister Nadia, the former deputy leader of the community and one of its youngest remaining members, died in 2014.^{[69][70]}

In 2020, the Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue in Alexandria was restored, and in April 2022, restoration work began on the Ben Ezra Synagogue, as part of government efforts to resurrect Egypt's dwindling Jewish heritage.^[71]

Compiled from Jewish Virtual Library and Wikipedia



Alexandria Egypt Jewish Choir Rabbin Moshe Cohen at Samuel Menashe synagogue.

Jewish girls from Alexandria in 1955 for their Confirmation service, a ritual similar to a Bat Mitzvah

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Meet Your NEW IFR Colleagues: Rabbi Jonathan Akiva Devlin



ברוך ה'בא

Rabbi Jonathan Akiva Devlin

Rav Akiva has been a part time spiritual leader of *Lev Chadash which*, at times, has been both a congregation and a chavurah, located in the High Desert of California.

Akiva is employed as a full time Hospice Chaplain serving families of all faith traditions.

Concurrent with his ten years as a Hospice Chaplain, Rav Akiva has served as an adjunct professor of Psychology for nine years.

He has an extensive history in counseling, psychotherapy, and college teaching dating back to 1981.

Rav Akiva has always been a spiritual seeker. His search has taken him from *Yeshiva Shevet Yehuda High School* in Brooklyn, New York, where he studied under Rabbi S. Zalman Schneerson (Z"l), and was honored to have met The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson (Z"l).

He still feels The Rebbe's penetrating gaze, seeing into one's *neschama*; even one-on-one eye contact in an auditorium filled with a thousand men! This had a tremendous impact on Akiva, and has taken him the better part of his life to appreciate the many dimensions of that experience.

In spite of having been in the presence of such luminaries, or perhaps because of it, Akiva's spiritual search continued, taking him through Western Hermeticism, Astrology, Parapsychology, Jungian, and Transpersonal Psychology.

In fact, it was his deep interest and involvement in religion and metaphysics which led him to pursue graduate studies in Psychology.

Akiva has consistently sought spiritual meaning, even in the most mundane. Perhaps this is his personal expression of *Chassidus*.

Love of Life and all people characterize Akiva's spiritual and practical role in the world.

Throughout his life he has always been sensitive to the suffering of his fellow beings, and has sought to help people find the means to alleviate it.

continued on the following page

Rabbi Jonathan Akiva Devlin

While he feels the impact of wider global issues, his life has focused on individuals and his commitment to working for *Tikkun Olam* one person at a time.

After this very circuitous path, Akiva began rabbinical studies in 1999 and was granted *s'micha* in 2002. "I feel very fortunate," Akiva says, "to have found my teacher and *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi David Roller, without whom I couldn't have achieved my lifelong goal of the rabbinic, and with whom I have so much in common." Since then he has balanced the secular and the spiritual; helping people hear *Kol Yisroel* in the most unexpected places. "I feel a deep and living connection with generations past, and the lives and teachings of all my *Rabbanim*, past and present. I seek to embody their light in every human interaction."

Rav Akiva wearing his new IFR lapel pin



Chaplain Eugene Yitzhak Search



ברוך הבא

Chaplain Eugene Search, M.Div., M.A.J.S. M.S., P.C.C. is the clinical coordinator for the St. Luke's University Health Network's spiritual care department. Chaplain Search is also a co-director of the network's crisis response team, and actively involved in several network-wide committees, including Emergency Management, Bioethics, Council of Cancer, and Gift of Life. Eugene is a member of the Reform Jewish congregation Keneseth Israel of Allentown, PA and a professional member of NAJC - Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains. He is a graduate of LTSP in Philadelphia, and Neumann University's Pastoral Care & Counseling program, and has a Master of Arts in Jewish Studies from Gratz College. The IFR welcomed Chaplain Search as an IFR associate member for the duration of his rabbinic studies with the Rabbinical Seminary International. **(RSI).**

Selections from Siddur Sha'ar Zahav in times of trouble

AMIDAH FOR TIKKUN OLAM

by Marge Piercy

In silence,
On our feet we speak to You.
We rise to speak,
A web of bodies like notes of music.

Bless what brought us through
the sea and fire; we are caught
in history like the whales in polar ice.
Yet you have taught us to push
against the walls,

to reach out and pull each other
along,
to strive to find the way through
if there is no way around, to go on.
To utter ourselves with every breath
against the constriction of fear,

to know ourselves as the body born
from Abraham and Sarah, born out of
rock and desert.
We reach back through two hundred
arches of hips

long dust,
carrying their memories inside us
to live again in our life.
Isaac and Rebecca,
Rachel, Jacob, Leah.
We say words shaped
by ancient use like steps worn in
rock.



SIDDUR SHA'AR ZAHAV was created in 2009, it speaks directly to experiences which are not found in other published siddurim includes prayers for being single, contemplations for nonbelievers, and blessings for coming out of dark places.

It engages traditional Jewish liturgy and goes beyond. It is also a complete LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) and egalitarian Jewish prayer book. It is for those who are learning prayers and those who are deeply knowledgeable.

Selections from Siddur Sha'ar Zahav in times of trouble**WE NEED ONE ANOTHER***by George E. Odell*

We need one another when we mourn
and seek comfort.

We need one another when we are in
trouble and need help.

We need one another when we could
accomplish some great purpose,
But we cannot do this alone.

We need one another in our defeats,
when with encouragement we might
strive again;
And in the hour of our success, when
we seek someone to share our joy.

We need one another when we come
to die,
That gentle hands may prepare us for
the journey.

All our lives we are in need, and oth-
ers are in need of us.

We best live when we bring to others
our comfort and our solace.

**Prayer in Uncomfortable Times**

IFR Member Rabbi Eli Mallon, M.Ed.,
LCSW "Adon Olam" tells us: *"B'ya'do afkid
ruchi" I place my soul in God's 'Hand' or
'Power'. Here's a prayer to aide in that.*



God, Care-giver of us all,
I'm having a hard time today.
You can solve any problem.
You know everything I want and need.
You want the best for me and for all of
us.

Please do what You know is best.
I accept whatever You choose to do..
I don't have to understand it.
I put everything in Your hands;
I give all my concerns to You,
then, let them go
and forget about them
for today.

On the loss of friends

Ponder for a long time whether you shall admit a given person to your friendship," Seneca counseled in considering true and false friendship, "but when you have decided to admit them, welcome them with all your heart and soul."

To lose a friend who has earned such wholehearted admission into your soul is one of life's most devastating sorrows.

Whatever shape the loss takes be it death, distance, the various desertions of loyalty and love that hollow out the heart.

It is one of life's most devastating sorrows. It is also one of life's most absolute inevitabilities, we will each lose a beloved friend at one point or another, to one cause or another.

Bit by bit... it comes over us that we shall never again hear the laughter of our friend, that this one garden is forever locked against us.

And at that moment begins our true mourning, which, though it may not be rending, is yet a little bitter. For nothing, in truth, can replace that companion.

Old friends cannot be created out of hand. Nothing can match the treasure of common memories, of trials endured together, of quarrels and reconciliations and generous emotions.

It is idle, having planted an acorn in the morning, to expect that afternoon to sit in the shade of the oak.

So life goes on. For years we plant the seed, we feel ourselves rich; and then come other years when time does its work and our plantation is made sparse and thin. One by one, our comrades slip away, deprive us of their shade.

All people have the stars... but they are not the same things for different people.

For some, who are travelers, the stars are guides.

For others they are no more than little lights in the sky.

For others, who are scholars, they are problems. For businessmen they were wealth.

But all these stars are silent. You — and you alone — will have the stars as no one else has them...

In some of the stars your friends will be living. In one of them they shall be laughing.

And so it will be as if all the stars were laughing, when you look at the sky at night...

And when your sorrow is comforted (time soothes all sorrows) you will be content to have known them.

You will always be their friend.

You will want to laugh with them.

You will sometimes open your window, and so for that pleasure... your friends will be properly astonished to see you laughing as you look up at the sky!

In 2018 /5779 our **IFRNEWS TEAM** interviewed IFR member rabbis in the North - South - East and West we asked them to share their rabbinic joys and challenges.

Life can change dramatically in five years and we have caught up with a couple of them as a REDUX to see if their joys and challenges have changed these past 5 years.

continued next page

THEN: North South East West - IFR Members Share Rabbinic Joys and Challenges**NORTH*****Rabbi Monte Sugarman z”l***

Saratoga Springs, NY

Ordained RSI 1999

(20 years in the rabbinate)

Works at Ohr Chadash –
Synagogue Without Walls

“B’nei Mitzvah ceremonies are my thing. I teach over the internet and travel with my Torah. I’ll do whatever I can to bring kids to a love of Judaism.”

For Rabbi Monte Sugarman Jewish joy comes in many forms. With B’nei Mitzvah ceremonies as his specialty, Rabbi Sugarman and his traveling Torah find no obstacle too great to keep him for serving unaffiliated Jews both in the US and internationally as well.

“I’ve served families in Wyoming, Texas and Columbia ... the country!” says Rabbi Sugarman who not only offers basic Hebrew lessons but works hard to

share Torah stories, anecdotes and examples of Jewish ethics that will foster a connection to Judaism for teens who may not have had a formal Jewish experience. Well known in upstate New York, Rabbi Sugarman serves elderly Jews in nursing homes and helps when needed at the several synagogues in the area, including Synagogue Beth Joseph, a European style synagogue organized in Tupper Lake, NY in 1905 and frequented by Albert Einstein.

In addition working with student rabbis through the Jewish Spiritual Leaders Institute (JSLI) and teaching and conducting Shabbaton services, allow Rabbi Sugarman to actively support the need for modern, pluralistic rabbis who can embrace Jewish diversity and serve Jews from a variety of backgrounds.

Incorporating music as an essential element of the worship service, Rabbi Sugarman enjoys congregational work that includes playing guitar and singing.

When asked about challenges facing rabbis in 2019, Rabbi Sugarman points to the need to fill the Jewish education gap by creating synagogue services, lessons and holiday experiences that are relevant for parents and their children. “Jews need to be with Jews,” he says.

Rabbi Sugarman feels that today there is a great need to foster a love for Israel and to that end he actively promotes Birthright Israel as an important option for developing Jewish identity.

NOW: 5 Years Later - Rabbi Monte Sugarman's z"l Legacy

NORTH: Saratoga Springs, NY

IFR Member Rabbi Monte Sugarman

February 28, 1951 - October 23, 2021



Teach us oh G-d how to appreciate our lives whilst we still have them, for whether our lives are long or short it is always much too soon...

Rabbi Monte was a long term member of the IFR and served on the IFR Board as membership chair. Born in Brooklyn on 2/28/51 and raised in Jericho, NY, he attended Queens College and Tel Aviv University (BA in History), Antioch New England (MA in Counseling Psychology with emphasis on Marriage and Family Therapy) and Rabbinical Seminary International.

Beloved as a spiritual leader, for over 22 years he led rites of passage services locally and internationally through Synagogue Without Walls - Or Chadash in Saratoga Springs, NY. As an independent modern Rabbi, he served all branches of Jewish orientation, unaffiliated Jews and all people with the intent of bringing Judaism and spirituality to diverse people, places and situations. When he started working as a chaplain for St. Peter's Health Partners, he served at St. Mary's Hospital in Troy, NY and spent the last 15 years at Schuyler Ridge, Clifton Park, NY, supporting families through life transitions, ceremonies and

musical performances. He led with a personal touch and genuine heart. His ecumenical outlook immersed him with leaders and people of all religions fostering conversations of connectedness.

He was an accomplished guitarist embedding music in everything he did and interested in playing all genres of music.

He had a passion for classical guitar and continued this study throughout his life. Known as a gentle, loving soul, he was blessed with a loving family, wife, children and grandchildren.

In addition he was committed to life as a Jew and to supporting Israel, studying the Torah portion every week and the Zohar. Traveling to Jerusalem was one of his favorite things to do.

Now Monte's wife Rabbi Anna Sugarman continues the Sugarmans' legacy in the IFR.

Monte's last photo for the IFR wearing his IFR lapel pin in 2021.



THEN: North South East West - IFR Members Share Rabbinic Joys and Challenges**EAST****Rabbi Jill Hausman**

New York, NY

Ordained RSI 2004 (14 years in the rabbinate)

Works at Congregation Esrath Israel (The Actors' Temple)

"I'm a trainer, a teacher, an officiant and a care-giver... I wear a lot of hats!"

Whether it's teaching converts, preparing students to become Bar or Bat Mitzvah, conducting a healing service or officiating at a Jewish-Muslim wedding ceremony, Rabbi Jill Hausman embraces each event with dedication and abounding joy.

As a sought-after officiant for Jewish and Jewish Interfaith weddings, it is a joy for Rabbi Hausman to work with diverse cultures and incorporate these themes within the wedding ceremony. Rabbi Hausman recalls, "When I first approached the Sufi

(Muslim) Imam, he felt we should conduct back-to-back separate ceremonies. After we got to know each other, he agreed to an integrated ceremony. The couple was thrilled and so was I."

Rabbi Hausman goes on to say that following her husband's cardiac episode ten years ago she now serves as his care-giver – an event that has brought her to a greater understanding of the spiritual healing process. "I've learned so much about meditation," she says, "and how to be open to what the human mind is capable of." As rabbi of Manhattan's Actors' Temple, a synagogue that traces its name to the era when Sophie Tucker and her friends worshipped there in the 1920's and 30's, Rabbi Hausman notes that the Temple began because in those days actors were not welcome in "polite society." Today Rabbi Hausman incorporates meditation and healing into her interactive and participatory services as a way of bringing joy and sharing to the Shabbat experience.

"Rabbis face great challenges in the coming years," says Rabbi Hausman who serves on the Bet Din and the Board of Directors of the Rabbinical Seminary International, and who emphasizes that the relationship between a rabbi and her/his synagogue board always is and will continue to be a delicate one.

In addition, The Actors' Temple has accepted the challenges that those with mental illness bring to the synagogue community by working with Fountain House, a program that helps integrate a person with mental illness into the faith community.

It is a challenge to create what Rabbi Hausman calls the "welcoming climate" in our synagogues. She says that it is not enough for our synagogues to say that they are accepting – congregants must *feel* accepted as well.

NOW: 5 Years Later - Rabbinic Joys and Challenges**EAST - New York, NY****IFR Member Rabbi Jill Hausman****NOW 19 years in the Rabbinate**

My life has changed quite a bit in five years. My husband, of 46 years of marriage, passed away at the end of 2021, after more than 13 years of illness, so I'm not a caregiver anymore, unless my grandchildren stay with me for the weekend, which is a joy.

Zoom has transformed my synagogue services, which are either hybrid, consisting of in-person and Zoom services, or on Saturday mornings, Zoom only. Some of my teaching is now Zoom-only, and I find the intimacy of Zoom to be a blessing for services especially. The hybrid services are more of a challenge, and learning to be my own tech person goes with the territory.

The weddings part of my life has undergone a similarly large change, as many young people wish to be married by their friends and not by clergy. I have enjoyed the opportunity for spiritual growth that the pandemic brought to us, and I'm still excited by continual spiritual learning, so that I can be out ahead of my congregants, leading them in new ways of thinking, to find joy in life and to discover their own paths toward the Divine.



Rabbi Jill Hausman - The Actors Temple NYC.



THEN: North South East West - IFR Members Share Rabbinic Joys and Challenges



WEST

Rabbi Dr. J. Adele Plotkin

Chino Valley, AZ

Ordained RSI 2013 (5 years in the rabbinate)

Works at Beit Torah Jewish Congregation

“We don’t have an “edifice” complex!

***The “building” I’m interested in is
building respect for Jews!”***

For years Rabbi Adele Plotkin has had the rabbinate in her heart. Beginning in 1995 with her service to the Chevrah Kadisha and continuing through her work with nursing home and hospitalized patients, Rabbi Plotkin realized her dream to become a rabbi. Now as spiritual leader of Beit Torah Congregation, Rabbi Plotkin has added those she terms “disenfranchised Jews” to the community she serves.

“There are Jews in interfaith and non-traditional families and it is my joy to be there for them,” says Rabbi Plotkin who con-

nects with her congregants with weekly D’vei Torah via e-mail and snail mail and sees no need for a formal synagogue building to get the job done. “We do Shabbat in private homes,” says Rabbi Plotkin who is enthusiastic about how the community has come together for education and support. Hospital and home visits occupy Rabbi Plotkin’s rabbinical day as she garners great satisfaction serving the elderly, the ill and those who face long term recovery or permanent disability – “Those who need me most.”

In fact Rabbi Plotkin recalls an unusual message from a Jewish woman who was presented with a ghoulish artifact reminiscent of World War II. Disturbed by its Holocaust overtones, the woman asked for Rabbi Plotkin’s help. “I took the request seriously,” she says, “And we created an appropriate ceremony. My job is not to qualify the need but to be there for those who need me.”

Rabbi Plotkin feels strongly that 2019 should be a year for restoring respect for Judaism not only around the world but in communities large and small.

“I teach by example and do what’s in front of me,” she says. “My main goal is to be of service.”

Let the Light Grow Chanukah 5779

Adele Jay

Little candles added one by one

Let the light grow stronger like the sun,

Brighter and brighter for all week long,

Filled with love and almost joyous song.

Yes, we were all saved but at what price?

Our freedom to worship is quite nice...

Yet then we denied that to others,

Leading to Herod and false brothers...

Still at this moment we can rejoice

O'er the principle of freedom's voice,

If only we can keep in view

That all deserve these freedoms too.

THEN: North South East West - IFR Members Share Rabbinic Joys and Challenges**WEST****Rabbi Lewis (Buz) Bogage**

Denver, Colorado

Ordained Hebrew Union College (OH) 1962
(56 years in the rabbinate)

Worked as a Pulpit Rabbi – Currently a

Lecturer, Rabbi, Teacher and Mentor

“Isaiah said it best; it is our duty to hope.”

For Rabbi Buz Bogage it is hope and joy that characterize his lifetime of service to Jews all over the US. Rabbi Bogage’s rabbinic journey began in Mc Alester, Oklahoma more than half a century ago and continued with his leading High Holy Day services in a synagogue in Trinidad, Colorado just last September. “The synagogue in Trinidad was built and has functioned continuously since 1889 with only minor repairs and changes,” says Rabbi Bogage who notes that this historic shul is centrally located at the juncture of four states, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah and Idaho, and it remains just as it

was 129 years ago. “There were Jews in the Old West 300 years ago,” says Rabbi Bogage who reminds us that the virtues of community, consistency and connection that characterize the synagogue in Trinidad, Colorado apply to Rabbi Bogage’s approach to Judaism and from which he has derived great joy over the years. Whether it’s working alongside Rabbi Jamie Korngold, Colorado’s Adventure Rabbi, lecturing on the Kabbalah at Naropa, the only certified Buddhist University in the US, establishing Jewish camping experiences for the Reform movement or sharing duties with Rabbi Joseph Gelberman (z”l) in the development of the Rabbinical Seminary International, Rabbi Bogage represents the cutting edge in Jewish innovation.

What needs to happen as we rabbis move ahead? Rabbi Bogage believes that outreach and “inreach” to Jews between the ages of 35 and 55 years of age is essential to the health of our religion. He feels that synagogues are not conducive to “bouncing around,” and instead we rabbis might consider focusing on meditative silence and silent prayer. “In this noisy world we have become uncomfortable with silence and introspection.

Many are uncomfortable with prayer so understanding the history of our prayers and blessings would be an enormous help,” says Rabbi Bogage who also suggests that “Coffee Shop Judaism,” where elders and young people can gather with their rabbi for discussion and sharing would bring more Jews back to Jewish life.

Rabbi Bogage recalls his early days with Rabbi Gelberman when they worked to combine teaching and learning experiences with Jewish ethics and values in order to create grounded individuals.

“If the pollsters are right and anti-semitism is on the rise, we rabbis need this approach today.”

NOW: 5 Years Later - Rabbinic Joys and Challenges**WEST: Chino Valley, AZ****IFR Member Rabbi Adele Plotkin****NOW 10 years in the Rabbinate**

NOW? R' Plotkin still leads Congregation Beit Torah, **NOW** she writes weekly parashot in poetry form.

NOW together with Rabbi Buz Bogage she conducts Erev Shabbat Services on Zoom with their cyberzoom congregation. R' Plotkin writes... My 'dream' was to be a cantor..that did not work out and apparently for the better given what I now can do, since the disenfranchised I reach out to tend to be elderly or infirm, it won't surprise you that we have lost something like eight from our ranks this year. Just learned about another, that makes two this month. I seem to be in perpetual educating mode for the folk around here. As part of our interfaith council, I constantly need to remind others of what is and is not religious

discrimination. For instance in our annual 'Giving Thanks' program, we are supposed to have presentations showing how different groups give thanks. It has become more of a proselytizing event for some [backsliding from where we were before a slew of new members came in]. So the group decided to take corrective action during our last meeting after I and the other Rabbi members voiced concerns. Home visits are less frequent now. In person get-togethers rare. Lots of discussion now on the middle east chaos...

NOW? FROM WEST TO NORTH:
Boston IFR Member Rabbi Lewis
"Buz" Bogage NOW 61 years in the Rabbinate

Rabbi Buz Bogage left Denver and is living closer to his family in the Boston area.



Rabbi Buz continues to conduct ZOOM services for High Holy Days and on Erev Shabbat together with Rabbi Adele Plotkin and cantorial soloist Pauline. IFR Rabbis

and their Zoomagogues have been hosting Friday evening Kabbalat Shabbat services for quite sometime throughout Covid 19 pandemic and even now. It seems that very few attend in-house Shul, these Zoom- rabbis keep it going from coast to coast in the USA and Europe as well. In June 2023 Rabbi Buz Bogage celebrated his 88th birthday & 61 years in the rabbinate.

Kol Hakavod!

May You Live Until 120 - By Zalman Goldstein

Every second of life, from the moment of conception until the completion of one's years in this world, is a gift from G-d. It is a gift that must not be squandered. Indeed every single day, Jews ask G-d in prayer that one's life be filled with days that are meaningful, healthy, and truly complete in the eyes of G-d.

It is common among Jews to wish another to live "until 120." This is because the Torah tells us that "Moses was 120 years old when he died" (Deuteronomy 34:7), and his life was deemed perfect and complete. Other leaders who lived until the age of 120, include Hillel, Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai, Rabbi Akivah, and Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi. Each were giants in their time.

Judaism urges that one never tire of life. Instead, one must look forward to each additional year with anticipation, excitement, and determination to make the most of every opportunity at every stage of life. Once again, look at Moses.

He grew up a prince in the house of Pharaoh. Yet G-d did not tell him to take the Children of Israel out of Egypt until he was 80!

Guarding One's Life

It is a positive commandment for every Jew to live as long as possible, as the Torah states, "Preserve yourself and your soul diligently"

(Deuteronomy 4:9). The practical inference is that one must strive to live and one may not allow one's health to deteriorate or deliberately injure the body.

According to the Torah, a person who has fallen ill must actively seek the best medical help for his or her condition; one cannot simply rely on a miracle. At the same time, one should pray and petition G-d for a complete and speedy recovery.

A Healing Partnership

Healing ultimately comes from G-d. But for reasons best known to Him, G-d has determined that we typically have to draw His healing down through an expert or intermediary. Indeed, our sages taught that the entire field of medical science and its many practitioners are but vessels for G-d's blessings in this world.

The practice of medicine is so important that the *Code of Jewish Law* states, "the physician's right to heal is a religious duty." In essence, the doctor "partners" with G-d in restoring health, and his part of the partnership is solely the restoration of the person's health.

May You Live Until 120 - By Zalman Goldstein



The actual fate of the person is left to G-d and the Heavenly Court. Therefore, doctors cannot say that so-and-so only has a number of months to live, nor should a person accept such a prediction.

Practical Steps to Healing

Drawn from the advice of our sages: Find a good doctor and follow his instructions. Dispel any thoughts about illness. Think only healthy thoughts. Strengthen your confidence in the Healer of All Flesh that He will heal you in whatever way He sees fit. And increase your study of the esoteric parts of Torah.

Spirituality and Healing

In seeking a cure, a person should work on both material and spiritual aspects. The material aspect includes finding the best medical help and following the treatments prescribed. But there are a number of things that one can do spiritually to improve the situation.

For example, the prayers of an ill person can be very effective, and thus one should never despair. Even if to all mortal eyes there appears to be no hope, nothing is impossible for G-d.

In addition to prayer, one should increase his or her study of Torah, and performance of mitzvot. This may include giving additional charity, taking on a new mitzva observance, and so on. Some request a *Tzaddik* (great Torah sage; righteous person) bless them or pray on their behalf, for we are taught that the prayers of a *Tzaddik* are readily accepted by G-d.

The Kabbalah of Illness

As mentioned above, the Torah states, "Preserve yourself and your soul diligently" (Deuteronomy 4:9). This indicates that one must take care of the soul just as one must look after one's physical well-being, otherwise the Torah would have simply stated "preserve yourself."

Kabbalah teaches that illness comes when the passageways through which the soul radiates are "clogged." Clear the blockage, explains Kabbalah, and the illness will disappear. *Teshuva*, meaning return and repentance, can help in this regard. For this reason, Jewish Law states that when one is ill, one should check his ways.

If a person's thought, speech and deed are not all that they could be, the person should feel regret over the past and resolve to do better in the future. The person should take on specific deeds that demonstrate one's resolve to improve his or her conduct.

May You Live Until 120 - By Zalman Goldstein



Indeed, there are countless stories linking the kosher status of one's Tefillin and Mezuzot to the physical state of those around them.

For example, a young man was having serious trouble with his heart and his doctors were very concerned. They felt that the defect was so severe that it was untreatable. At a friend's suggestion, he had the Mezuzot in house inspected by a scribe. The scribe found that the word "*Lev*," Hebrew for "heart," was missing from the text.

The family replaced the Mezuzah with a kosher one and the young man was completely cured, leaving the doctors astonished.

Not always is the connection between the physical ailment and the spiritual dimension so clear.

Sometimes it remains hidden from us, which is why people seek the advice of a Tzaddik, in addition to one's doctor, during a time of illness, often the Tzaddik can identify the spiritual source of a physical problem and suggest ways to rectify the situation.

Upon Recovery

When one recovers from a serious illness, his thoughts and prayers should immediately turn to thanking G-d. Many people begin to observe a mitzva they have not yet performed before, or commit to improving a certain aspect of their spiritual life, as a way of thanking G-d for giving them more days with which to fulfill their soul's mission, and to make the world a better place.

Some have the custom to make a *Seudat Hoda-ah*, a meal of thanksgiving. During this festive meal, the host and guests share Torah thoughts and words designed to inspire those present to further their Torah observance.

Many also give *Tzedaka* (charity) to a worthy cause or needy person to express one's gratitude to G-d. Men recite the thanksgiving blessing of *Hagomel* at the conclusion of the reading of the Torah in the synagogue.

Excerpt from **THE AUTHOR**: Zalman Goldstein
The Jewish Learning Group creates plain language how-to guides on Jewish law and custom, traditional prayer texts with transliteration and instruction, and educational audio and video guides. Their innovative products help people attain the rudimentary knowledge and confidence needed to build, lead, and further their Jewish observance at a comfortable and gradual pace. © Copyright, all rights reserved. If you enjoyed this article, we encourage you to distribute it further, provided that you comply with Chabad.org's [copyright policy](#)



Why Say “Chazak” After Finishing a Book of Torah? By Yehuda Shurpin

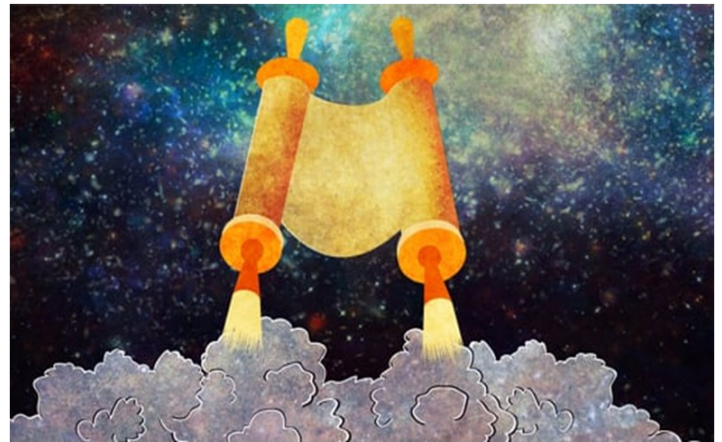
The custom in Ashkenazic communities is that at the conclusion of each of the Five Books of Moses, the congregation stands and calls out “*Chazak, chazak, venitchazek!*” (“Be strong, be strong, and we will be strong!”), and then the one reading the Torah repeats that phrase. In most Sephardic congregations the custom is to say “*Chazak ubaruch*” (“Be strong and blessed!”) at the conclusion of every *aliyah* to the Torah.

It Began With G-d and Joshua

In the beginning of the book of Joshua, G-d encourages Joshua by telling him, “But you must be very strong and resolute (*chazak ve’ematz*) to observe faithfully all the teaching that My servant Moses enjoined upon you . . .

Let not this book of Torah cease from your lips, but recite it day and night, so that you may observe faithfully all that is written in it. Since Scripture uses the term “this book of Torah,” the Midrash understands that Joshua was actually holding the Torah scroll, and when he completed it, G-d told him “*Chazak*.”

This is why the custom developed to say “*Chazak*” to one who finishes reading the Torah.⁴



Finished What?

Thus, the Sephardic communities say “*Chazak*” every time one finishes reading a part of the Torah. The custom further developed to where the congregants tell the person who was called to the Torah, or anyone who led the congregation in prayer or recited *kaddish*, “*Chazak ubaruch*” (“Be strong and blessed”), and the person responds “*Chizku v’imtzu*” (“Be strengthened and heartened”). On the other hand, as mentioned above, Ashkenazic communities say “*Chazak*” only when they finish reading an entire book of the Torah.⁵(Additionally, the widespread Ashkenazic custom is to actually say “*Chazak venitchazek*,” an expression from the book of Samuel, instead of “*Chazak ve’ematz*,” which is the wording in Joshua. Although these two phrases are very similar in meaning, there is a key difference, which we will get to later.) Now, what does strength have to do with Torah?

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IFR NEWS Tevet 5784

Why Say “Chazak” After Finishing a Book of Torah?

Strength to Do More

The Talmud tells us that one of the things that is in constant need of “bolstering” and improvement is Torah study.⁷ Thus, we say “*Chazak*” to strengthen ourselves in Torah study.

It’s crucial to review the Torah we’ve learned so as not to forget it. This is why, after finishing a portion of the Talmud, we say “*Hadran alach*,” “I will return to you.” Similarly, when we finish a book of Torah, we say “*Chazak*,” in other words, “We should have the strength to review what we learned.”

Likewise, when a person does a mitzvah, we say “*Yasher koach*” (“More power to you”), meaning, “Just as you did this mitzvah, may it be G-d’s will that you do many more mitzvahs!”

Elixir of Life

Depending on how it is spelled, the Hebrew word *sam* can mean both “put” and “potion.” Thus, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said in the Talmud:

What is the meaning of the verse “And this is the Torah that Moses put [*sam*] before the children of Israel”?

If one is deserving and learns Torah with the proper intentions, the Torah becomes a potion [*sam*] of life for him. If one is not deserving, the Torah becomes a potion of death for him.

We therefore say “*Chazak*,” expressing our wish that the Torah learned should be an elixir of life.

Chazak Three Times

Some have the custom to say the word *chazak* (חזק) three times, because it has the numerical value of 115, and $115 \times 3 = 345$, which is the numerical value of “Moses” (משה), the receiver of the Torah. Yet the common custom is to say “*Chazak, chazak, venitchazek*” (“[Be] strong, [be] strong, and we will be strong”).

The word *chazak* alone literally means “strong,” and can refer to the past, while *ve’nitchazek* refers to the future. Thus, we are expressing our wish that this strength carry into the future.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe notes that although in the book of Joshua it says “*Chazak ve’ematz*,” “Be strong and resolute” (which has two expressions of strength), the common custom is to say “*Chazak, chazak, venitchazek*” (which has three expressions of strength).

Why? Because in Jewish law, doing something three times is considered an established pattern with legal strength.

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Why Say “Chazak” After Finishing a Book of Torah?

Who Says Chazak?

In some communities, the custom is that the one who is called up to the Torah does not say “Chazak.”

One of the reasons given is that it does not make sense that he is blessing himself with strength.

However, the common custom is to say “Chazak, chazak, venitchazek,” which means “And **we** will be strong” (as opposed to) “Chazak ve’ematz,”

“**You** must be very strong and resolute”, implying that the entire congregation is included.

Thus, the common custom ¹⁹ including in the Chabad practice is that the one called up to the Torah also says “Chazak, chazak, **venitchazek!**”

חֶזֶק חֶזֶק וְנִתְחַזַּק



By Yehuda Shurpin

A noted scholar and researcher, Rabbi Yehuda Shurpin serves as content editor at Chabad.org, and writes the popular weekly [Ask Rabbi Y column](#). Rabbi Shurpin is the rabbi of the Chabad Shul in St. Louis Park, Minn., where he resides with his wife, Ester, and their children. © Copyright, all rights reserved. If you enjoyed this article, we encourage you to distribute it further, provided that you comply with Chabad.org's [copyright policy](#).



Several people gather on the bimah at Temple Sinai, Oakland, for an aliyah to the Torah. (Photo: Linda Burnett, all rights reserved.)



IFR Mission Statement

The IFR is a professional organization of rabbis united by a commitment to Jewish tradition and a desire to facilitate the Jewish spiritual growth and life cycle needs of all.

IFR provides a progressive, pluralistic forum, linking member rabbis in a spirit of friendship and a sense of community.

IFR provides support for members in their professional endeavors and offers continuing education. IFR encourages professional relationships with rabbis and other rabbinic organizations.

UNHIDING THE MENORAH AT HARVARD YARD

by **Dovid Margolin**



Every night of Chanukah for the past 24 years, a large menorah has been kindled on Harvard Yard, Harvard University's iconic green. And every night of Chanukah for the past 24 years, once the music and celebration is over and the lights have burnt out, that menorah is packed up and hidden away.

This telling detail was shared by Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi, director of Harvard Chabad and the Jackie and Omri Dahan Harvard Jewish Chaplain, on Wednesday evening, Dec. 13, when Harvard's Jewish community gathered again among the criss-crossing paths of Harvard Yard to light their menorah. Though it is kindled every night, on this evening, the eyes of millions were upon them.

It was the seventh night of Chanukah, and the Jews of Harvard were joined by university President Claudine Gay. At Harvard's menorah-lighting just a night earlier, Professor Steven Pinker, who is Jewish, had been viciously attacked as he shared personal stories of his family's survival of the Kishinev pogroms and the Holocaust.

Addressing Gay, Zarchi recalled her previously iterated promise to have the Jewish community's back. "We didn't feel it last night," the rabbi said. "There was no one watching over us.

And there's yet been no voice condemning what happened." Gay, of course, was one of three university presidents whose testimony before Congress a week earlier regarding the acceptability of calls for genocide against Jews on campus left much to be desired—to put it mildly. Whether threats against Jews were deemed harassment "depends on the context," Gay insisted, her answer guiding a national spotlight on the reality Jews face in the world of the academy and in the nearly 400-year-old school, in particular.

"Friends, we are gathered at a moment when the eyes of the world are upon us," Zarchi acknowledged to the crowd, including the president. "Everybody's looking at Harvard now, and it pains me to say, sadly, that Jew-hate and antisemitism is thriving on campus."

It is no secret that Jews have been made to feel unwelcome on university campuses throughout the United States. With enlightened Harvard emerging as a paragon of this benighted development, the imagery of the Ivy League school's Jewish community being forced to hide their menorah was a particularly powerful one.

"The university, since that first Chanukah, would not allow us to keep this menorah here overnight because there is fear that it'll be vandalized," said Zarchi, who together with his wife, Elkie, established Chabad-Lubavitch of Cambridge, Mass., in 1997.

"Think about that. We're trying to fix the world, the future leaders of the world, [and] on our campus, in the shadow of Widener Library, we in the Jewish community are instructed ... 'Don't leave [the menorah] out overnight, because there will be criminal activity ... and it won't look good.'"

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UNHIDING THE MENORAH AT HARVARD YARD

Silence by Faculty and Fellow Chaplains

Zarchi spoke of Jewish faculty and students being harassed, afraid to appear as identifiably Jewish on campus.

He spoke of how, after hosting a screening of IDF footage of the Hamas terror organization's war crimes in Israel, Harvard police called to advise him to hire security to protect his family and students.

He recounted the silence not only of Harvard's faculty but his fellow university chaplains, none of whom could muster the strength to condemn a genocidal attack on the Jewish people.

But the evening was not about anger, it was about hope—and a prayer for action. Action is central to the story and message of Chanukah. Chanukah recalls the victory, 2,100 years ago, of a militarily weak but spiritually strong Jewish people who liberated the Land of Israel from a ruthless enemy.

Their military victory culminated with the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem and the kindling of its menorah, which had been desecrated by the enemy.

The Jewish people have celebrated these miraculous events ever since by lighting a menorah, whose light and warmth fills their homes, spreading outward to the streets outside.

Illuminating the world cannot be done with words alone, for it is “necessary to take tangible action,” the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, once wrote of Chanukah.

This is “exemplified by kindling a physical light, using a wick and oil or the like—indeed, this is how the Mitzvah is actually carried out.” This is a fundamental requirement of Chanukah: That the light of the me-

norah be physically visible to everyone in the home. “We’re hopeful, we’re very hopeful,” Zarchi said. “But we know hope alone is not enough.”

Change comes when scholars stop using their knowledge and intellect to justify twisted, horrific actions. When they gain the courage to not just walk by and remain silent amid calls for the death of Jews, but speak out with vigor. “That’s the story of Chanukah,”

Chabad.org’s Tzvi Freeman recently wrote. “It is a redemption of Athens as much as it is of Jerusalem. It is about restoring the inner light so that the outer light can function in full health once again.”

Zarchi’s message to President Gay, Harvard, and all who look up to the institution and what it represents, was simple yet profound: We’ll know something’s changed when Harvard’s menorah can remain standing for the duration of Chanukah. When its light permeates the hearts and minds of the men and women who fill its halls of knowledge, and through them, the world.



On the seventh night of Chanukah, the Jews of Harvard were joined by university President Claudine Gay.

Author: Dovid Margolin is a senior editor at Chabad.org, writing on social policy, Jewish life and Jewish history, with a particular interest in Russian Jewry. His work has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Commentary*, *Mosaic* and *Tablet*.

Yom Kippur Sermon delivered on 10 Tishrei 5784 by Rabbi David Degani

Long time IFR member Rabbi David Degani rabbi and spiritual leader of Congregation Shirat Shalom in Boca Raton Florida. Rabbi David Degani is a sabar born and raised in Tel Aviv, he is an IDF Veteran of the Yom Kippur War which began on October 6, 1973. Rabbi Degani has lived in the United States since 1974, he and his wife Lee have two adult children and three grandchildren.

Rabbi Degani writes:

This sermon was delivered on Yom Kippur 5784 just twelve days before the cease fire breach and savage attack and the murders of 1200 Israelis committed and filmed by Hamas in Israel on October 7, 2023, I am enclosing an excerpt from that sermon.

Yom Kippur Sermon - September 26, 2023

The Jewish people did not learn from the first destruction of the Temple in the 5th century BCE and fell to the same trap of politically brotherly hate some five centuries later in the year 70 CE when facing the brunt of the Roman Empire. Unfortunately severe social and political turmoil is now plaguing our beloved state of Israel.

There are some very crucial, unsolved old legal, social and religious issues, going back to the creation of the State of Israel that are now coming to a boiling point and are tearing Israelis into bitter rival groups motivated by profound discontent. Unfortunately, a lot of that discontent is pure political rivalry.

History repeats itself, and this is tearing apart the social fabric of Israel. It would jeopardize any country wouldn't it? In fact, it puts in jeopardy the very safety and security of Israel, making Israel vulnerable to its enemies.

Did we learn anything from our History? A few months ago a large group of American Rabbis and Jewish leaders of their communities signed a letter, a declaration which totally sided with one side of the bitter rival Israeli society segments. The letter delineated their fierce objections to certain Israeli government policies.

The signatory to the letter declared that they absolutely will refuse to allow representatives of the democratically elected Israeli government officials to speak at their synagogues since they did not agree with their policies.

What the signatories to the letter did was to enhance the severe social turmoil and extreme social tear plaguing Israel.

They demonstrated their inability to exchange ideas respectfully and with tolerance for other opinions, because of what they falsely see as undemocratic policies. This shows a lack of integrity for a fair and honest exchange of opinions. We in the United States call it, freedom of speech - a very important American and Jewish value.

Those Jewish past and present tumultuous events are a good lesson for us to take to heart and we should see it as a security warning.

But are we learning the importance of freedom of speech and respect for other's opinions? Maybe we all can do better.

Today, would be a good time to appreciate who we are in the land of the free. If we need to improve, let's have the courage to do so. For me, I am praying that I have the patience and respect for all diverse opinions as well as any social phenomenon that seems strange to me or with which I disagree.

Excerpt of Yom Kippur Sermon 10 Tishrei 5784 - Rabbi David Degani

I am not a prophet.

I flunked prophet school so I became a Rabbi... Besides, it is said in the Mishna "since the destruction of the Temple prophecy was given to fools".

I did however warn (albeit gently) that the bitter political in-fighting and hate both in Israel and around the Jewish world contribute to another disaster in less- than-ready-for-war Israel.

More than 300 American Rabbis poured proverbial gasoline on that social/political fire with their petition refusing to even listen to the opinions of democratically elected Israeli government representatives.

Did I mention freedom of speech?

Foolish petition ? No!

Disastrous act is more like it.

In their contribution to a very severe socio-political strife in Israel they indirectly (or directly) encouraged some key military personnel to refuse to participate in an on-going military training because of opposing political views.

This included fighter pilots and intelligence gathering personnel among others. That of course encouraged Hamas attack on a correctly perceived as militarily unprepared Israel.

At the time of writing of this, about 18 hours into the attack, there are thousands of men, women and children wounded, many are in a very serious condition, over 900 hundred souls are dead, and 100 plus hostages who were dragged to Gaza, these numbers surely will climb.

So the Jewish history book is open and another chapter is now being written. For our political strife among brothers we are continuing to pay a heavy price and still haven't learned.



1. Palestinians /Hamas take control of an Israeli tank after breaching the Gaza fence from Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, October 7, 2023 2. The carnage in the kibbutzim, towns and Nova Music Festival begins 3. Gaza discharges rockets into Israel October 7, 2023.



IFR Schmooze and NEWS



The IFR Lapel Pin was minted in 2020 in solid brass with an antique brass finish and black enamel. The pin is one inch across, and is available for IFR Members \$65.00 USD ships free with Priority Mail in the continental USA, shipping rates are applied outside of the USA.



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Yizkor/Yahrzeits 2024 - 5784

Stanley Ivan Whiteman: Tevet 22
Rose Smilovici Fischel: Shevat 22
Ellen Louise Carter: Shevat 23

מזל טוב

Ari Whiteman 50th Birthday 25 Kislev 5784



Ya'akov Ben Efraim-Fishel
Moshe Ben Etel

For a man:

מי שברך אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב, משה ואהרן דוד
ושלמה, הוא יברך את (name) בן (mother's name), בעבור
ש (name) בן (father's name) יתן פלי נדר לצדקה בעבורו, שבת
היא מלועוק ורפואה קרובה לבוא, ונאמר אמן:

For a woman:

מי שברך אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב, משה ואהרן דוד
ושלמה, הוא יברך את (name) בת (mother's name), בעבור
ש (name) בן (father's name) יתן פלי נדר לצדקה בעבורה, שבת
היא מלועוק ורפואה קרובה לבוא, ונאמר אמן:

Ravenous Ravens

Ina Garten's Jewish Brisket



**Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring
Jewish holiday Eats and Treats**

Vegetable Lasagna with Pesto Cream Sauce

1 - 6-7 lb. fresh brisket

Make a rub of:

2 teaspoons kosher salt

2 teaspoons pepper

4 minced garlic cloves

2 teaspoons dried oregano leaves

Place brisket in large roasting pan,
spread rub over top and cover with:

1 lb. peeled carrots, cut in chunks

8 stalks celery, cut in 2" chunks

6 yellow onions, sliced

6 fresh or dried bay leaves

Pour 1 can (46 oz) good quality tomato
juice over brisket.

Cover brisket with parchment paper,
and then aluminum foil over parch-
ment. Make sure aluminum foil
tightly seals pan.

Bake at 350 degrees 4 hours.

1 tablespoon olive oil

4 cups peeled, diced eggplant

1 green bell pepper, seeded and diced

1/2 cup diced onion

2 garlic cloves minced

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 - 15 oz. container ricotta

8 oz. shredded mozzarella

2 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

2 cups milk

1/2 cup prepared basil pesto

1 - 16 oz pkg. prepared lasagna noodles

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Heat oil in skil-
let add eggplant, onion, bell pepper and gar-
lic and cook for 5 minutes. Add oregano and
cook additional minute until oregano is fra-
grant.

Meanwhile, melt butter in medium saucepan
over medium heat. Whisk in the flour and
cook for 2-3 minutes, until mixture is
blended and smooth. Whisk in the milk and
simmer for 3 minutes, or until mixture
thickens. Whisk in pesto until blended.

Pour a small amount (about 1/2 cup) of pe-
sto cream sauce into the bottom of a lasagna
pan making an even layer. Top with a single
layer of noodles and then spread 1/2 of the
ricotta/vegetable mixture over the noodles.
Top with a second layer of noodles.

Pour 1 cup of the cream sauce over the top.
Add the remaining ricotta/vegetable mixture
and a final layer of noodles. Pour the re-
maining cream sauce over the top.

Cover with foil and bake 30 minutes.
Uncover and bake for 15-20 minutes more,
until top is golden brown.
Serves 4-6.



Ravenous Ravens

Quick Pasta with Zucchini and Oregano



Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring
Jewish holiday Eats and Treats

Sautéed Wild Mushrooms and Swiss Chard

Cook 8 oz. orecchiette (ear-shaped pasta) according to package directions, adding 2 cups chopped zucchini for the last 30 seconds of cooking.

Drain and transfer to a large bowl. Add two tablespoons olive oil and 2 teaspoons each dried oregano and dried minced garlic and toss to combine.

Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper.



Heat one tablespoon olive oil in large skillet over medium heat. Add 2-3 minced garlic cloves and cook for 1 minute.

Add 4 cups sliced shiitake mushrooms and cook for 3 minutes, or until the mushrooms soften and release their juice.

Add 6 cups chopped Swiss chard leaves and 2 tablespoons water, and cook for 5 minutes, or until the Swiss chard wilts.

Uncover and cook for 1 minute, or until the liquid evaporates. Season to taste with salt and pepper.



Ravenous Ravens

Swedish Beet Salad



**Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring
Jewish holiday Eats and Treats**

**The Chanukah Sufganiot Craze during
war TRENDING in Israel - Over the Top!**

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup plain greek yogurt
- 1 TBSP apple cider vinegar
- 1 TBSP sugar
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- 1 jar canned beets
- 1 honey crisp apple
- 1/4 red onion diced small

Instructions

In a small cup, mix together the greek yogurt, apple cider vinegar, sugar, and salt and pepper. Drain and rinse the beets.

Chop the beets, apple and onion and add to a medium bowl.

Add the dressing and toss to coat. Place in the fridge while you finish cooking dinner (for about 20 minutes) and stir before you serve.



Ravenous Ravens

Spiced Up Lamb Chops



Ingredients

- 2 kilo/4 lbs lamb chops
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg (fresh)
- 1 teaspoon cracked black pepper
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- 2 tsp lemon juice
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley, for garnish

Instructions

Mix together all the spices and rub into the meat, massaging generously. Leave to marinate 1 hour or overnight.

Cook on mangal or grill over a low heat for 2-3 minutes each side, then bump up to a hot fire at the end for a crispy brown exterior. Garnish with chopped parsley.

Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring
Jewish holiday Eats and Treats

Israeli style Chicken Shawarma

Ingredients

Chicken – boneless, skinless thighs as its juicier than breast. however chicken breast and tenderloin both work great.

Lemon juice – Fresh!

Olive oil – For a touch of flavor

Garlic - chopped fine

Spices – salt, pepper, cumin, coriander cardamom, cayenne pepper, paprika

Instructions

Mix all ingredients with oil and lemon juice in a marinade, in zip lock bag, cup up chicken and place in bag - store in refrigerator 12 - 24 hours.

Cook chicken either on the stove or on the grill It will get a great crust on it from the spices, let chicken rest three minutes.

Serve Shawarma on plate with rice and salads on the side, with pita bread a big dollop of Chumus or Yogurt Sauce.





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