



Congregation Beth El

A seasonal, egalitarian synagogue affiliated with the Conservative Movement

Founded in 1947

32 Gorton Avenue • Old thColony Beach • Old Lyme, CT • 06371

website: www.synagogueoldlyme.org

Kislev/Tevet 5786

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President

Lisa Semel
917-913-9722
lisasemel@gmail.com

VP Membership

Lucy Blatter
beachshulmembership@gmail.com

Treasurer

Rick Hyne
richard.hyne@gmail.com

Recording Secretary

Andrea Fenton
fentonland2@gmail.com

Corresponding Secretary/ Newsletter/Ritual Chair

Sharon Waxenbaum
shanaaviv@gmail.com

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*z"l May their memory be for a blessing



Shalom Congregation Beth El Family and Friends,

Though our calendar is quiet right now, the all-volunteer CBE Board of Trustees is hard at work, planning for next summer. We're excited to welcome new board members who are serving alongside our seasoned leaders. Please keep an eye out for programming updates in future newsletters!

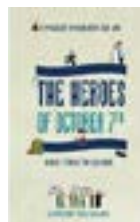
Wishing you and your families a bright, joyful Chanukah!

Am Yisrael Chai!

Lisa

The Heroes Of October 7th: Heroic Stories for Children

[to be read together with a grownup]



In the wake of October 7th, Hadassa Ben Ari, an Israeli writer and mother of seven, looked around her home and asked herself how she would explain the horrific events of the day to her young children. Israeli experts in childhood education and psychology were appearing in papers and on television saying not to discuss the attacks with young kids.

This didn't sit well with with Ben Ari. After all, she reasoned, Jewish children already know about the more difficult parts of Jewish history. For example, they are taught about Pharaoh, who ordered the drowning of all Israelite baby boys and enslaved the Jewish people for hundreds of years. They know about Haman, who tried to have all the Jewish people killed.

Ben Ari decided that the way to approach these stories was by focusing on individuals. "I want my children to have heroes beyond Spider Man and Captain America," she explained. "I believe the true heroism can be found in the little moments, and that we raise our own heroes by validating upstanders (as opposed to bystanders) and small acts of kindness, teaching our children about making choices in difficult moments." **continued on p12...**

Chag Chanukah Same'ach

& Happy, Healthy 2026!





Pam & Lenny Grossman - In memory of Michael Herman (Lenny's childhood best friend for over 70 years).

Ruth Spitz and Sharon Waxenbaum - In memory of our father, Donald Wiener, at the time of his *yahrzeit*.



Chanukah Reflections

"Chanukah is the ultimate grassroots holiday. It celebrates the persistence and daring of a handful of guerrilla fighters, whose victory led to the downfall of the mighty [Syrian-] Greek army and the triumph of good over evil. Although Judaism values taking action against injustice, the real power of Chanukah lies in its quietness.

Our modern day celebrations of Chanukah focus primarily on oil. This means, on the most basic level, eight days of deep-frying everything we can. But oil teaches us something much more profound as well. External pressure brings out the most refined and clarified essence of the olive, raising it to a level far beyond natural expectations. From a hard, bitter fruit comes a liquid that can illuminate an entire room!

This transformation gets little fanfare. We see no reason to make a fuss over something so normal. But the quiet shift from olive to oil is actually the essence of Chanukah. In the times of the Maccabees, many Jews were seduced by the aesthetic temptations of Greek culture. The external pressure to conform was overwhelming. The Maccabee brothers, however, used that pressure as an opportunity to fiercely assert the inner essence. Driven by a burning focus on true values, every other consideration became irrelevant. Their society was the olive press, their response, the oil.

Although the military victory was indeed a miracle, the war would have not been won without the brothers' uncompromising commitment to truth. The story of Chanukah hinges on the silent strength it took to maintain their identity against such extraordinary odds.

The light of Chanukah cuts through history, linking souls together. The message is the same: Remember who you are. Once we ignite that blazing consciousness, we can push away a world of darkness." Miriam Katz

Milestones & Mazal Tovs

Deborah & Ira Feigenbaum celebrated the birth of grandson, Asaf Elan Levine, born on August 26, 2026. Asaf is welcomed by proud parents, Tamar & Jason Levine, and siblings, Orli, Ayal and Gila.



Shabbat & Chanukah Candle Lighting Times



Shabbat	Friday	Dec 5	5:11 pm
Shabbat	Friday	Dec 12	5:13 pm
Chanukah 1 st	Sunday	Dec 14	sunset
Chanukah 2 nd	Monday	Dec 15	sunset
Chanukah 3 rd	Tuesday	Dec 16	sunset
Chanukah 4 th	Wednesday	Dec 17	sunset
Chanukah 5 th	Thursday	Dec 18	sunset
Chanukah 6 th	Friday	Dec 19	before Shabbat candles
Shabbat	Friday		5:15 pm
Chanukah 7 th	Saturday	Dec 20	after 6:11 pm
Chanukah 8 th	Sunday	Dec 21	sunset
Shabbat	Friday	Dec 26	5:15 pm

Each night, a new candle is added on the right side as you face the *chanukiah*. On the first night, place the candle on the far right.

The newest candle is lit first. So...adding candles goes from right to left and lighting candles goes from left to right!



PLEASE DO NOT MAIL

donations or other correspondence

to our street address:

32 Gorton Avenue, Old Lyme

especially over the winter months!

Donations to CBE by check should be made out to Congregation Beth El and mailed to:

**Rick Hyne 19 Danielle Drive,
Wayne, New Jersey 07470**

Chanukah: Practical Questions & Answers

When are the Chanukah lights to be lit?

The Talmud says the proper time for kindling the lights is "from the time the sun sets." Defining what is meant by this varies according to whom you ask. Since there is no prohibition against kindling lights on the holiday itself, the exact minute of candlelighting is not especially important. If you are not able to light after sunset, it is permissible to light before sunset, but only if the candles themselves will last the half hour after sunset. If you forget to light at the proper time, lights may be kindled any time during the evening.



How long must the Chanukah lights burn?

The requirement is that the candles burn "until the time that people cease to walk about in the street." Before the advent of street lights, people did not usually walk about long after nightfall, as it was somewhat dangerous to do so. Since the practice of people was to be in their homes within one-half hour of nightfall, and the primary *mitzvah* is to "publicize the miracle," the practice of displaying the Chanukah lights was designed for pedestrian traffic. Therefore, the rabbis decided that Chanukah lights should last 30 minutes after three stars appear in the sky.

Where is the chanukiah placed?

The Talmud specifies: "One should place the Chanukah lamp by the door of the house, on the outside, within a handbreadth of the door, so that it is on the left side of a person entering the house, the *mezzuzah* on the right and the *chanukiah* on the left. If one resides in an upper story, the lamp should be placed in a window overlooking the public domain. In times of danger, one may place the *chanukiah* inside the house, on the table..." *Shabbat 21b*



Today, many people place their *chanukiah* in a window facing the street to "publicize the miracle." Other families interpret the need to "publicize" to refer to your own family and they create a lighting center somewhere in the home.

Is there any requirement that a woman or man is to light the chanukiah?

Women and men are equally obligated to kindle *chanukiah* lights.

May children light their own chanukiah?



Yes. In fact, if children have made their own *chanukiah*, encourage them to use it. However, the adult(s) in the family may not transfer their obligation to light an *chanukiah* for themselves.

May I read by the light of the chanukiah?

No. Unlike *Shabbat* candles, the *chanukiah* lights are not to be used for any purpose other than to publicize the miracle of *Chanukah*.

Is it true that no work should be done while the chanukiah lights are burning?

Yes. Attention should be focused on the lights, singing songs and playing *dreidel*!



Can an electric menorah be used as a chanukiah?

According to nearly all authorities, an electrified *menorah* may not be used to fulfill the *mitzvah* of kindling the Chanukah lights. While electric bulbs give off light, the filaments are not considered a "flame." A mandatory amount of "fuel" must be available when the lights are kindled. An electric *menorah* depends on continuous generation of power to remain lit. Since the law governing the *chanukiah* is "kindling constitutes the performance of the *mitzvah*," turning on an electric light would not fulfill the commandment. However, an electric *chanukiah* is a safe option for a windowsill!

When Shabbat candles are lit, the custom is to cover your view of the lights while saying the blessings. Why don't we do the same when lighting the chanukiah?

The usual practice of Jewish ritual is to say the blessing first, followed by the act itself. For example, we recite *HaMotzi*, then eat the *challah*. But on *Shabbat*, once we say the blessing, it is *Shabbat* and we cannot light a fire. That's why the rabbis developed the strategy of kindling the lights before saying the blessing. On *Chanukah*, this isn't necessary and so we recite the blessings, then kindle the candles.



Speaking of Shabbat, when are Chanukah lights lit on Friday evening?

With the prohibition against lighting fire on *Shabbat*, Chanukah candles are lit immediately before *Shabbat* candles.

What about lighting the chanukiah on Saturday night?

Chanukah lights are lit after *Havdalah*. This guards against the possibility of violating *Shabbat* by lighting a fire. *Havdalah* marks the separation between the sacred time of the Sabbath and the ordinary time of the work week, physically demonstrated by the lighting of the *Havdalah* candle. Chanukah candles are lit immediately after the conclusion of the *Havdalah* service.

Must I light the chanukiah if I see it lit in the synagogue?

Many synagogues hold a *chanukiah* lighting ceremony, but this does not release you from lighting at home.



Hillel vs Shammai

Or why we add another candle each night...

The basic *mitzvah* of *Chanukah* is to celebrate "the miracle that happened" by lighting the *chanukiah* for eight days. However, there is a dispute in the Talmud (a record of rabbinic debates) between Rabbi Shammai and Rabbi Hillel as to whether to increase the number of candles each day from one to eight, or to start with eight and remove a candle each day for eight days. Although today we follow the *halachha* (Jewish religious laws) according to Hillel, who argued that we add a candle each day, it is worthwhile to take a look at the dispute between *Beit Shammai*, School of Shammai, and *Beit Hillel*, School of Hillel, for insights into this holiday.

The story of *Chanukah* demonstrates the victory of light over darkness. Things that are evil we call darkness. Darkness is the absence of light. It is possible to combat evil in the world by fighting whatever is wrong. It is possible to create such a tremendous light so that the darkness just fades away. The question lies in what strategy is most successful, to burn away and destroy evil, or to create a greater light so that the darkness just vanishes?

A flame has two distinct properties. It can burn and it can illuminate. In combating evil in the world, do we destroy it, do we burn it or do we illuminate the teachings of Torah, creating a greater light in the world to dissipate the darkness? This is the nature of the dispute between

Shammai and Hillel. Both methods are valid, but what is to be learned from what happened during *Chanukah*?

Shammai and Hillel both agree the purpose of kindling the *chanukiah* candles is to rekindle in ourselves the light of the triumph over darkness. They also agree that the number of candles should be different each night to signify that each day of the miracle is unique. But the uniqueness can be expressed either by adding or subtracting a candle each day. Shammai teaches that when we fight evil in the world, we are steadily wiping out its influence on us. Thus, he believes we should light the *chanukiah* in the same way, by starting with eight and reducing the number of candles each night. In this way, the burning quality of the flame symbolizes the diminishing effect that the negative forces of the world (or of the pagan Greeks of that time) have on us.

Hillel sees the battle against evil in the world, not as a confrontation, but rather as an important reason to raise ourselves spiritually and live according to Torah principles. Hillel believed the more successful method of wiping out darkness is by increasing the illumination, the teachings of the Torah, not by burning away evil, but rather by increasing our light as a "Torah nation." For this reason, we increase the number of candles each night to remind ourselves of our responsibility as Jews to steadily increase the light of Torah knowledge and understanding in the world, banishing the darkness of evil by becoming "a light unto the nations." Thanks to ou.org website

Congregation Beth El Recycles!

Start the winter with a little spring-cleaning!



CBE is collecting gently used paperback and hardcover books, CDs and puzzles (with all the pieces!) to be donated for sale at our Ice Cream Socials/Bookfairs.



Please contact Ruth Spitz at rspz123@yahoo.com or Sharon Waxenbaum at shanaaviv@gmail.com in May.



Congregation Beth El has Cards for Every Occasion!

You can acknowledge a loss or happy occasion such as a graduation, anniversary, birthday or wedding with a card from CBE! If you make a contribution to the synagogue, **Carol Bojarski** will send one for you! Call her at 860-508-3635 or email her at cbojo9@hotmail.com.



We also have cards with a picture of the synagogue on the front and plenty of room for your message inside! Purchase a packet of cards and you will have one on hand!



Congregation Beth El's

Tree of Life

Thank you for your donation of a leaf:

In honor of Ellen & Scott Bobrow, children Austin and Sarah, grandchildren Jackson, Brayden and Arleigh. With love, Lisa Semel & Jonathan Guthart.

If you are looking for a meaningful way to remember a loved one, or to commemorate a happy event, mark the occasion by adding a leaf or stone to our CBE Tree of Life! Please speak with **Mindy Jason** at **860-559-7557** or email her at **mindysjason@gmail.com** to arrange the wording and to place your order.



Project Re-Connect

Congregation Beth El would like to re-establish connections with former members of our synagogue community, regardless of where they now live.

We maintain a database of emails, phone numbers and addresses of current and former members. If you know of people who might like to receive our newsletter and announcements and, perhaps, participate in a Zoom service, please send their names and email addresses to **Lucy Blatter** at:

beachshulmembership@gmail.com



Get your weekly guide to the fun and fascinating sports news and conversations happening in the Jewish world. Sign up to stay in the know and keep up with the best Jewish sports stories of the week.

Know a sports fan who should read this newsletter? Tell them to subscribe: **<https://www.jta.org/sign-up-for-the-jewish-sport-report>**

The TRUE Miracle of Chanukah

#1. The Maccabees were willing to light the Temple menorah with that one container of oil, even though they thought it would not burn more than one day.

#2. There were probably people who said:

- "Why light a flame that is going to burn out?"
- "Wait until we have enough oil."
- "Wait until conditions are better."

#3. Sometimes it's hard to start something when you can't be sure you'll succeed. You might think:

- "Why bother?"
- "I'll never be able to finish."
- "I'll never figure it out."

#4. YET...the Maccabees cleaned the Temple, removed the idols, took the opportunity they had and lit the menorah anyway!

#5. *Chanukah* is the story of the fight for religious freedom.

#6. *Chanukah* shows us that the Jewish people have always had the strength to:

- live without guarantees of success
- seize the opportunities available at the moment

#7. The modern State of Israel is considered a miracle. There were those who said:

- "Wait until your army is stronger."
- "Wait until conditions are better."

But a group of people looked to the example of the Maccabees and had the courage to "light the flame."

#8. SO...when you look at the little flames dancing on your *chanukiah* this holiday, take a moment to consider how the Maccabees must have felt when they poured that single container of oil into their *menorah* and kindled the flame.



A *menorah*, which has only 7 candleholders, was the lamp used in the Temple in Jerusalem. It is now used as an emblem of the State of Israel. A *chanukiah*, however, has 9 candlesticks, one for each night of *Chanukah* and an extra *shamash*, servant candle, used to light the others.

Chanukah is not the traditional time for gift-giving on the Jewish calendar

Purim, with its *mishloach manot*, sending of food and presents, is historically the holiday of gift exchanges. Yet, due to the commercialization taking place in December, gift-giving has become a major part of the *Chanukah* celebration.

Most gifts have a short life span and might end up forgotten on a shelf. Below are some interesting alternatives to the materialistic side of *Chanukah* to get you started.



- 1st night:** Big gift night - parents give to children
- 2nd night:** Parent night - children give to parents
- 3rd night:** Grandparent night - give to grandparents
- 4th night:** Jewish game night - check out Amazon/synagogue gift shop or play hide the *dreidel* & find it with "hot or cold" hints
- 5th night:** *Mitzvah* night - make coupons to do a nice thing for other family members
- 6th night:** Giving night - give a gift to a charity with children's gifts matched by parents
- 7th night:** Memory night - assemble a family photo album or make a holiday craft
- 8th night:** Movie night - buy/rent a Jewish DVD

CBE offers Venmo!

Congregation Beth El

@Congregation-BethEl

venmo



Get Fit While Exploring Israel

Dr. Kerry Bar-Cohn has been a chiropractor and health advocate for over 20 years. She is excited to cheer you on by making exercise a regular part of your life while exploring Israel together.

A fitness enthusiast and graduate of New York City's High School of Performing Arts, Bar-Cohn has combined her talents to create **Walking Israel**, a virtual exercise program geared toward Jewish women.

Available on YouTube, subscribers receive three weekly workout videos. Each video features a split screen, with half the screen featuring Bar-Cohn



demonstrating an exercise routine and the other half showing a walking tour through Israeli neighborhoods and sights, such as Tel Aviv graffiti, a public art crawl or a visit to the Kfar Hess Parrot Farm. Her videos occasionally traverse more somber sights, including a tour of the CarWall,

a memorial consisting of a pile of burnt vehicles removed from area devastated by the Hamas attacks of October 7th, especially the Nova music festival.

"I wanted to find a creative outlet to express joy about Israel. This allows me to combine my love for fitness and Israel."

Walking Israel gives you 15-minute guided exercise routines three times a week, along with a weekly personal accountability check-in from Bar-Cohn to keep you motivated! The subscription price is \$50/month and includes three videos per week, plus a weekly check-in. Go to:

<https://walkingisraelclub.com> for more information.

Hadassah Magazine with thanks to Jenny Powers.



An American *dreidel* uses a *shin*/ש for the phrase "*Nes Gadol Haya Sham*," a great miracle happened there." An Israeli *dreidel* uses a *pey*/פ for the phrase "*Nes Gadol Haya Po*," a great miracle happened here, meaning in Israel, instead of elsewhere, referring to the rededication of the Temple and the miracle of the oil.



Chanukah Blessings



1. Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu l'hadlik ner shel Chanukah.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who makes us holy with your commandments, commanding us to kindle (light) the Chanukah lights.

2. Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, she-asah nisim la-avoteinu (v'imoteinu) bayamim haheim bazman hazeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who performed wondrous deeds for our ancestors (fathers and mothers) in those ancient days at this season.

3. Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

Blessings #1 and #2 are recited each night of *Chanukah*. **Blessings #3** is only recited on the first night. Why? *Shehecheyanu* is a blessing of firsts (see below).

The Shehecheyanu is a blessing that expresses gratitude for new or special experiences. It is mentioned in the *Mishnah* (oral tradition of Jewish law) as a blessing over obtaining a new home or vessels and is mentioned in the Talmud (commentary on Jewish law, customs and culture) in several places. Usually recited in addition to a regular blessing, the *Shehecheyanu* is said whenever we do something for the first time that year.

For example, it can be recited upon eating a seasonal fruit or performing certain *mitzvot*, such as hearing the *shofar*, lighting *Chanukah* candles or shaking a *lulav* and *etrog*. It is also recited at the start of almost every holiday.

Additionally, the *Shehecheyanu* can be recited for non-*mitzvot* occasions, such as seeing an old friend or acquiring a new home, household items or clothing. Some people choose to use the blessing for other special occasions in their lives.



Due to the war with Iran, the Maccabiah 2025 was postponed until the summer of 2026, with over 8,000 athletes from approximately 55 countries expected to compete in 45 sports.

The Maccabiah Games are an international Jewish athletic competition, often called the "Jewish Olympics." They are held in Israel for top Jewish athletes from around the world and are a major sporting event. Additionally, the JCC Maccabi Games are a separate, smaller-scale version for Jewish teens, organized by Jewish Community Centers, and held in different cities in the United States and sometimes in Israel.

Under the slogan "More Than Ever," Maccabiah 2026 will highlight the power of unity and the importance

of strengthening the bond between Jewish communities worldwide and the State of Israel today, more than ever.

Maccabiah 2026 will collaborate with the IDF (Israeli Defense Force) Disabled Veterans Organization, integrating its members as workers, volunteers and participants in ceremonies and official events. In addition, Paralympic athletes will compete in sports, such as swimming, tennis, table tennis, wheelchair basketball and hand cycling. As part of a collaboration with the Nova Tribe Community and other organizations, survivors of the October 7th attacks and their families will also be involved in various roles during the Games.

The postponement is the second in a row for the games, held every four years. The 2021 games were held in 2022 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

CBE's August 31st Ice Cream Social



Once again, the weather cooperated for our "All You Can Eat Until It's All Gone" final Ice Cream Social of the season, held on Sunday of Labor Day Weekend.

Todah rabah, thank you very much to all our volunteers who shopped and schlepped, set up and cleaned up, collected money and free sundae coupons from July and August's Old Colony Beach Association's Sandcastle contests. And *yasher koach* to our Programming Chair, Jacob Samuels, for all of his support!





Sfenj

Moroccan Doughnut

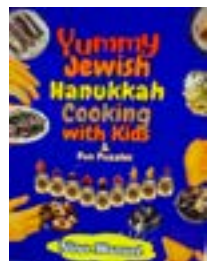
Sfenj, a Moroccan donut, are a hallmark of the country's *Chanukah* cuisine and they're a lot easier to make than conventional *sufganiyot*, filled donuts. Fried and then covered in honey or sugar, they are irresistible.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 tsp yeast
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 4 cups flour
- 1 cup warm water
- oil for frying

Instructions:

1. In a mixing bowl, mix the flour, yeast and salt, then add the water. Mix well until smooth. Cover your dough and let it rest for 3-4 hours until it rises.
2. Heat enough oil to deep-fry the sfenj. The oil should be very hot and, if possible, your frying pan should be placed on a slight incline.
3. Dip your hands in water, then pull the dough into a round about the size of a tennis ball. Stretch the dough to make a hole in the middle. Repeat process with remaining dough.
4. Place each ball in the oil on the tilted side, with less oil. When it begins to darken, push it to the side with more oil and fry until golden brown. Place on paper towels, then sprinkle with powdered or granulated sugar, or drizzle honey.



Yummy Jewish Hanukkah Cooking with Kids

by Nina Manuel

Kids will cook their way through 72 recipes, 9 per night for 8 nights. Designed for ages 8-12, these pages will bring the holiday's magic to your kitchen through food, storytelling and light-filled memories. From crispy, golden latkes and sweet *sufganiot* to creative global dishes inspired from Jewish communities around the world, each recipe connects kids to the miracle and the holiday in a fun way.



Chocolate & Cream Cheese Blintzes

Jewish comfort food and chocolate are a match made in heaven.

Ingredients for blintzes:

- 2 medium eggs
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 3 Tbl whole milk
- 1 Tbl melted, unsalted butter
- 1 Tbl granulated sugar
- sunflower or other neutral oil for frying

Ingredients for filling:

- 1 generous cup of cream cheese
- 4 Tbl granulated sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 8 tsp hazelnut spread

Instructions:

1. To make the blintzes, place all ingredients, except oil, in bowl and whisk together until smooth and combined.
2. Heat a little sunflower oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Once it's very hot, pour 1/8 of the batter into the hot pan so that a thin layer covers the entire surface of the pan. After about a minute, when the mixture dries and a thin crepe is formed, use a spatula to turn it over and brown for 30 seconds. Repeat the process to make a total of 8 blintzes.
3. For the stuffing, place the cream cheese, sugar and vanilla together in a bowl and mix well. Using a spoon, add a little of the cream cheese mixture to the center of each blintz. Next to that, add a teaspoonful of hazelnut spread. Fold both sides of each blintz over the stuffing, then carefully roll up from one open/unfolded side to the other to enclose the filling and make a rolled up parcel.
4. Melt the butter in a clean frying pan over medium heat, add the blintzes in batches, then sear about a minute on each side until golden. Serve hot.



www.synagogueoldlyme.org

CBE has a website!

The Jewish History of Margarine

The spread we love to hate, but just can't quit.

"With butter, everything is better," said Julia Child. With all due respect to the French chef, for many Jews, margarine reigns supreme. While this love affair with the spread stems in part from Jewish dietary laws forbidding the mixing of meat and dairy, this enthusiasm for margarine transcends religious requirements.

Why? For some, it's a sense of nostalgia. A tub of margarine may have been a fixture in the refrigerator growing up. For others, as the post-World War II generations of Americans became increasingly reliant on processed food, diet-conscious margarine was advertised as the "healthier" alternative, and replaced butter in many households. Paving the way for this change was Jewish food scientist and entrepreneur Charles Louis Fleischmann.

Invented in 1869 by French chemist Hippolyte Mège-Mouriés, margarine (originally called oleomargarine), is an emulsion of water in fat produced by refining vegetable oil. It was first patented in the United States in 1871. Demand for this butter substitute was immediately high, not only because margarine was cheaper, but also because its quality was more uniform compared to butter. Despite the fact that some found margarine's pale white color unappetizing, (it would only be tinted yellow later to appeal to consumer preferences), 126 million pounds of margarine had been sold in the United States by 1902.

The dairy lobby responded by challenging the supposed health benefits of margarine, first via public relations campaigns and then through legislation. In 1884, New York outlawed margarine, but the ban was quickly overturned in the state Court of Appeals, which found the initial ruling unconstitutional for unfairly stifling competition. Other states passed strict regulations regarding margarine, most notably Wisconsin, where it was illegal for restaurants and food service businesses to substitute margarine for butter. The Oleomargarine Act, signed by President Grover Cleveland in 1886, outlined that margarine could only be sold if it was packaged and labeled in such a way as to readily distinguish it from butter for the consumer. Although several states subsequently instituted additional heavy taxes on margarine, (the majority of which were repealed

by the 1950s), it remained competitive. Eventually it edged out butter during the the Great Depression when its comparatively lower price tag was a boon to struggling Americans. A major player through this saturated fat story was Jewish immigrant, Charles Louis Fleischmann.

Fleischmann (whose name ironically translates to "meat man" in German) first set his sights on upgrading bread, not butter. In the 1860s, Fleischmann, whose father was a distiller, traveled from Austria to the United States with, according to legend, a vial of baker's yeast in his vest pocket in order to improve what he considered the lackluster quality of American bread. After successfully debuting their product at the 1876 Centennial Exposition, Fleischmann and his brother Maximillian founded their namesake yeast company. Over the next few decades, Fleischmann's Yeast rose to become a household name, its popularity bolstered by intense advertising



in the 1930s touting their yeast as the cure for "intestinal fatigue," constipation and acne. In 1943, Fleischmann's introduced the first active dry yeast, securing their place in the market as a necessary staple for the home baker.

Following the merger of Fleischmann's Yeast with Standard Brands in 1929, Fleischmann tried his hand at creating his own version of margarine by aerating vegetable oil and chopping it into blocks. In the 1960s, Fleischmann's introduced its margarine as "the perfect bread topper," which was hailed by nutritionists at the time as a "polyunsaturated weapon against excessive serum cholesterol." Other innovations and variants were later developed, including an "extra light" version (1990) and "Fat-Free Buttery Squeeze" container (1994).

Although butter is more popular again for many Jews, there is still room for margarine. In addition to the nostalgia factor, some find that this sunny yellow pseudo-fat imparts its own distinct, irreplaceable flavor. Christopher Brugler, aka "The Challah King" of Beverly Hills, insists on using margarine, not butter, in his challah recipe. Many kugel recipes also explicitly include margarine as an acceptable fat option. Tradition and nostalgia, it seems, beats health and litigation.

I Have a Little Dreidel...



In Yiddish it's dreidel, in Hebrew it's sivivon. Here's one way to play:

1. Everyone starts with 18 pennies (or nuts, buttons, at OCB it's seashells, etc.)
2. Each player puts one object in the middle (aka the pot.)
3. The dreidel is spun by one player at a time.
4. Whether the player wins or loses depends on which face of the dreidel is up when it falls:
 - נ Nun means "nisht" or "nothing." The player does nothing.
 - ג Gimmel means "gantz" or "all." The player takes everything in the pot.
 - ה Hey means "halb" or "half." The player takes half the pot.
 - ש Shin means "shtel" or "put in." The player adds one object to the pot.
5. When only one object is left in the pot, every player adds one.
6. When an odd number of objects are in the pot, the player rolling Hey takes half plus one.
7. If the pot empties, each player should ante up again so the game may continue.

Variation: Assign a point value to each letter.

The first person or team to reach 72 wins!

נ Nun	=	0
ג Gimmel	=	10
ה Hey	=	5
ש Shin	=	-5



Useful Chanukah Vocab

Al Hanissim - (al ha-**nee**-seem) A prayer added to the *Amidah* during *Chanukah*.

Chag Orim Sameach - (khag ooreem sa-**may**-ach) A greeting meaning Happy Festival of Lights.

Chanukah Gelt - *Gelt* is the Yiddish word for money. Today *Chanukah gelt* refers to the foil covered chocolate coins popular during the holiday.

Chanukah - (**khah**-nuh-kuh) Also spelled *Hanukkah*, this the Hebrew word for rededication. It is also known as the Festival of Lights, an eight day holiday commemorating the Maccabees recapturing the Temple in Jerusalem from the Greeks.

Chanukiah - (khah-noo-**kee**-yah) This word literally means *Chanukah* lamp. More commonly referred to as a *menorah*, it contains nine candle holders one for each night of the holiday and one for the *shamash*.

Dreidel - (**dray** dull) Also spelled dreydel, a spinning top with four sides, each marked with a different

Hebrew letter and each indicating a different play in the *dreidel* game.

Hallel - (**hal**-leil) A portion of the Book of Psalms read on *Chanukah*.

Kislev - (**kiss**-lev) Chanukah falls on the the 9th of the Hebrew month of Kislev.

Maccabees - (mak-ah-bees) A member or follower of the Jewish leader, Judah Maccabee.

Menorah - (men-**oh**-rah) A candelabra used in Jewish worship.

Nes Gadol Haya Sham - (ness gadole high-yah shahm) Meaning "a great miracle happened there." Israeli *dreidels* replace the word "sham" with "po" which changes the meaning to "a great miracle happened here."

Sevivon - (**suh**-**vee**-**vohn**) The Hebrew word for dreidel.

Shamash - (shah-**mahsh**) Literally "the helper," the candle on the *chanukiah* that is used to light the other candles.

Suganiyot - (soof-gahn-ee-**yoht**) Doughnuts, usually jelly-filled, that are fried in oil and eaten on *Chanukah*.



The Heroes Of October 7th: Heroic Stories for Children

[to be read together with a grownup]

Edited by Hadassa Ben Ari
graphics/illustration by Tehila Ben Hama

...continued from front page

The Heroes of October 7th is a project that emerged immediately after the horrific attacks in Israel on *Shabbat Simchat Torah*, October 7, 2023. This collection of stories shines light on the indomitable physical and emotional strength amongst Israelis - individuals from all ages, backgrounds and ethnicities - who used their own skills and talents to help and inspire others on that day and ever since.

Readers will meet the chess player-turned-commander, who strategically led his unit to safety; the rescue teams who treated the wounded under fire, saving thousands of lives; the 85-year-old Ninja Granny who survived captivity; the dedicated school principal who sent inspiring messages to his students on his break from combat; the teenage social media influencer who began to use her platform to show the world what was really happening in Israel; and many other average, yet remarkable, Israeli citizens.

"Our children already know stories from the Holocaust," pointed out Ben Ari. And the truth was that every aspect of Israeli society was already surrounded by the aftershocks of October 7th. There was no hiding the reality from her children. There was only curating it for them.

Her hope is that this collection of stories will model for a new generation of Jewish children what a hero actually looks like and implant in them the confidence that, should the need arise they, too, can be heroic.

[Profits from this book will be donated to "Brothers for Life" (*Achim Le'Chaim*), a non-profit organization whose aim is to aid injured IDF soldiers.]

Hadassah Magazine 2025/Thanks to Talia Liben Yarmush



Queen Esther

By John Irving

In his 16th novel, the multi-award-winning author, John Irving, returns to the Maine orphanage where his best-selling novel, *The Cider House Rules*, took place. His latest novel sensitively reflects on Jewish history, identity and antisemitism.

Irving's characters are complex and memorable and Esther, his latest protagonist, is no different. A Jewish immigrant from Vienna, she is orphaned soon after her arrival to the United States. From Maine, the setting shifts to Vienna, then Mandatory Palestine, where she plays an important backstage role in the building of the state and then, finally, 1980s Jerusalem.

Irving, who is not Jewish, wanted his Esther to be "the embodiment of the biblical Esther. That Esther is someone who hides herself well until it's time to come out. I wanted my Esther to be that kind of abiding, but secret, presence. If anyone has a reason to be Esther, it's this child whose life has been shaped by antisemitism."



Best Kids' Hanukkah Jokes Ever!

By Highlights

"Knock, knock. Who's there? Noah. Noah who? Noah good Hanukkah joke?" begins this collection of over 500 jokes, puns and riddles that will provide young comedians with a trove of new material to recite over the family table while enjoying latkes. Despite the many *Chanukah*-centric chapters, with titles such as "Menorah Mania," "Latke Laughs" and "Maccabee Mirth," the book also includes clusters of "Tu B'shevat Tee-Hees," "Shavuyot Sillies" and plenty more for year-round entertainment.



Twinkle, Twinkle, Hanukkah

By Talia Benamy/Illus by Aura Lewis

"Brightly, brightly, candles shine. The *shamash* lights them in a line." Set to the familiar rhythm of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, this delightful board book reveals the joys of *Chanukah*. The vibrant illustrations capture children lighting the *chanukiah*, spinning *dreidels*, savoring *latkes* and *sufganiyot*, and celebrating with song and dance. The playful rhymes turn the story into a cheerful sing-a-long read.

Is Lab-Grown Meat Kosher?

Lab-grown meat, also known as cultivated meat or cultured meat, is an alternative meat product grown from cultured animal cells that are bred in a laboratory. This creates a food that is molecularly identical to normal meat but didn't grow inside an animal. Advocates believe it provides a functional alternative to natural meat that is more environmentally friendly and ethically sound, since it avoids the need to raise and slaughter an animal.

From the perspective of Jewish law, lab-grown meat poses several novel questions, most obviously, is it kosher? The short answer is yes, but the details are a bit more complex.

Cultivated meat is produced from cells harvested from an animal that are then replicated under controlled laboratory conditions. Once the cells have reached a certain size, they are harvested, blended with additives and sold to consumers. The process requires no farmland, no animals and no slaughtering. Many believe cultivated meat will help satisfy growing global demand for animal protein in a more environmentally sustainable way, since it eliminates the need for vast tracts of land to be given over to meat production, and the ethically and ecologically problematic practice of raising animals in confined feeding facilities. It also addresses ethical concerns about the treatment of animals in industrial-scale meat production. Is It Kosher? In a word, yes, but the specifics matter.

For one, the animal from which the cells are harvested must be a kosher animal. The next consideration is the method of extracting the cells from which the cultivated meat will be grown. The most common method is taking them from a living animal. Some Jewish law authorities believe this makes the final product unkosher because Jewish law bars eating meat that is taken from a living animal.

The Orthodox Union (OU), the largest kosher meat supervising agency in the world, has taken this position, but other authorities disagree and believe it is acceptable for four reasons: 1. The quantity of cultured cells is tiny. 2. The original cells are present in only trace amounts in the final product. 3. The descendent cells are grown outside the animal's body. 4. The final eaten

cells may be sufficiently transformed in the course of production as to render them distinct from the originals.

In 2023, the OU gave its first kosher certification for cultured meat to an Israeli startup that solved the extraction problem by culturing cells from a fertilized chicken egg. Since eggs are kosher, the resulting meat is considered kosher. Another Israeli company, Aleph Farms, produces beef cultured from a fertilized cow egg and is pursuing kosher certification.

The other question posed by synthetic meat is whether Jewish law considers it actual meat. This matters for Jews who observe laws about not eating meat and dairy products together. If Jewish law doesn't consider cultivated beef to be meat, then it should be permitted to eat it with cheese.

Rabbis are divided on this question. In 2022, the Israeli daily, *Israel Hayom*, reported that a handful of Israeli rabbis had ruled that since fertilized chicken eggs and pre-embryonic cow cells are not considered meat, the meat products derived from them in a laboratory should not be considered meat either. As



a result, there's no reason why they shouldn't be eaten with dairy.

Israeli Chief Rabbi David Lau also endorsed this position, ruling that meat produced by Aleph Farms is pareve, neither meat nor dairy, and can therefore be eaten with dairy products. However Lau introduced an

important caveat, determining that this is so only if the product is not marketed as "meat" and is not made to look and taste like regular meat. Lau's qualifications are rooted in the concern for *marit ayin*, a rabbinic principle which calls for one to avoid doing something even if it's only the appearance of violating the law.

American rabbis have taken a more stringent view of this question. The OU has determined that cultured meat should be considered meat, as did a Conservative movement's 2017 paper, which cited both *marit ayin* and the fear that kosher consumers might grow confused and wind up mixing actual meat with dairy. It also argued that in cases of doubt regarding a biblical prohibition (the ban on eating dairy and meat together derives directly from the Bible), the practice is to take a stringent approach. As of 2024, a small number of producers have been approved for commercial sale in the U.S., but the product is not yet widely available.

Jewish Mourning Rituals

A couple of years ago, amid a personal crisis, someone introduced me to Emily McDowell's line of empathy cards. McDowell has created a company devoted to making cards for the relationships we actually have, not the ones we wish we had. Her mission: help people connect when they don't know what to say. So, if you are looking for a card that says, "I wish I could take away your pain, or at least take away the people who compare it to the time their hamster died," she's got you covered.

Her witty take on the awkward moments of sadness and grief ring true, but I am not sure they answer the question so many of us ask: What do I say?

What do I say to someone who has lost their spouse suddenly, and far too young? What do I say to someone who just buried a child? What do I say to someone whose parents no longer live in this world? What do I say when I see them on the street, at school pick-up, in the grocery store? And even more urgently, what do I say when I show up at their house for shiva?

On one level, there is an easy answer to that question. There are traditional phrases one says in a house of mourning. The first: "*Hamakom yinachem etchem b'toch she-ar avelei Tzion v'Yerushalayim*, May God comfort you amongst all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." Or, if that feels like a mouthful, there's the shorter (and perhaps more hopeful): "*Chaim aruchim*, May you have a long life." And in Sephardic households, you might hear someone say: "*Min ha-shamayim tenachumu*, May you be comforted from Heaven."

Yet, even with these phrases easily at hand, Judaism understands loss and mourning, especially in its early days, as murky and convoluted. Our tradition understands that it takes time to ease back into daily routines, to begin to look and feel and act like ourselves again.

The roadmap of Jewish grief is marked in increments. The hours or days before the burial comprise a liminal phase called *aninut*, when you are not your normal self, but you are not yet a mourner. There is *shloshim*, the 30 days after a loved one is buried, which offers mere glimpses of normalcy. There is *shanah*, traditionally

reserved for those mourning a parent, an entire year, during which bereaved people get closer and closer to the lives they led before their loss (though some activities, like attending a wedding, party, or concert, remain forbidden). Perhaps more than anything else, there is *shiva*.

In the world in which I grew up, *shiva* often felt oddly festive. There was food and drink and there were some nods to traditional behaviors (the occasional covered mirror, the low stools provided by the funeral home). Visitors told stories, often poignant ones and funny ones, about the deceased; these vignettes were gifts of memory to those who were in deepest mourning.

All of this changed the first time I went to a very traditional *shiva* for a classmate, then in his early 20s, whose mother had just died. Walking into that home was like nothing I had ever experienced before. Rather than the hubbub of small talk, of offering refreshments, of those stories

being told or performed, there was silence. The mourners sat on those low stools; visitors sat beside them without talking. The focus was on the mourner, not the deli platters. I felt as if I had landed on some alien Jewish planet.

Tradition teaches that comforters, those who come to the *shiva* house, are not permitted to say a word until the mourners themselves open the conversation. Sometimes, there

are no words. Sometimes, nothing that you can say, as heartfelt as it might be, is what a mourner needs to hear. Sometimes, the most powerful thing that we can do is bear witness to someone's pain, to hold in our presence their silence.

Grief ebbs and it flows. It can be melancholic and profound, it can be raucous and inappropriate, but whatever it is, it belongs to the mourner. It is the bereaved who can tell you if and what they need to share, or when they want to cry or laugh. If the mourner is too stunned to even form a coherent sentence, that's OK, too. Your job, our job, is to be with them where they need to be. Not to coax, not to lead, just to be there.

(Based on an article written by Rabbi Sari Laufer, Director of Congregational Engagement at Stephen Wise Temple in Los Angeles.)





Congregation Beth El

A seasonal, egalitarian synagogue affiliated with the Conservative Movement

32 Gorton Avenue ♦ Old Colony Beach ♦ Old Lyme, CT ♦ 06371

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