

# wrtimes

Westchester Reform Temple

WINTER 2025-2026

## And You Shall Love...





**WESTCHESTER REFORM TEMPLE**  
Phone: 914-723-7727 / Fax: 914-723-5946  
receptionist@wrtemple.org  
255 Mamaroneck Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583

**JEWISH LEARNING LAB (JLL)**  
Phone: 914-723-5224  
jlladmin@wrtemple.org

**EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER (ECC)**  
Phone: 914-723-5493  
ecc@wrtemple.org

# And You Shall Love...

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### Cover Photos:

Howard and Wendy Berk  
daughter's wedding.  
Chelsea Berk to Jake Taub,  
FreeBirds Trip to Montreal,  
ECC Chanukah and snow fun

Westchester Reform Temple is committed to the value of inclusion, and strives to make worship and programming fully accessible. Our building and *bima* are wheelchair accessible, and the sanctuary is equipped with assistive listening devices and large-print prayer books. ASL interpretation is available for any worship service upon request, and remote viewing of most services is available via webcasting from our website. If you need any additional accommodations to participate in a temple program, please contact Cantor Amanda Kleinman.

WJCS [Westchester Jewish Community Services]: Through the Partners in Caring Program, WRT is able to offer the support of an onsite Social Worker from WJCS, as well as offer social services to congregants in need.

UJA-Federation of NY: We are grateful for a special grant to enable and empower WRT to be the most inclusive congregation we can be. UJA-Federation also facilitates our partnership with the Jewish Deaf Resource Center, to provide ASL interpretation on demand at services and WRT programs.

URJ [Union for Reform Judaism]: Our Reform Movement's synagogue arm; WRT is a proud member of the URJ and celebrates the leadership of URJ President, WRT Rabbi Emeritus Rick Jacobs.

HUC-JIR [Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion]: WRT supports the HUC-JIR, the official training ground for Reform Jewish professionals.

### CLERGY

**Jonathan E. Blake, Senior Rabbi**  
Rabbi.Blake@wrtemple.org

**Amanda Kleinman, Senior Cantor**  
Cantor.Kleinman@wrtemple.org

**Leah Citrin, Associate Rabbi & Jewish Learning Lab Director**  
Rabbi.Citrin@wrtemple.org

**Isaac Sonett-Assor, Assistant Cantor**  
Cantor.Sonett-Assor@wrtemple.org

**Alissa Platcow, Assistant Rabbi**  
Rabbi.Platcow@wrtemple.org

**Mia Fram Davidson, Adjunct Cantor**  
Cantor.Davidson@wrtemple.org

**Richard J. Jacobs, Rabbi Emeritus**

### PROFESSIONAL / ADMIN. STAFF

**Laura Rosen Apostolou, Philanthropy Director**  
723-7727 / Laura.Apostolou@wrtemple.org

**Bree Candee, Special Events & Catering Manager**  
723-7727 / Bree.Candee@wrtemple.org

**Marcie Epstein, Accounting and Payroll Manager**  
723-7727 / Marcie.Epstein@wrtemple.org

**Danielle Feigenbaum, Director of Communications**  
723-7727 / Danielle.Feigenbaum@wrtemple.org

**Ruth Fuster, Receptionist**  
723-7727 / Ruth.Fuster@wrtemple.org

**Eli Kornreich, Executive Director**  
723-7727 / Eli.Kornreich@wrtemple.org

**Evelyn Lugo, Receptionist**  
723-7727 / Evelyn.Lugo@wrtemple.org

**Derek Oscarson, Web & Graphic Designer**  
468-0523 / Derek.Oscarson@wrtemple.org

**Nattalie Rodriguez, Administrative Assistant**  
723-7727 / Nattalie.Rodriguez@wrtemple.org

**Amy Rossberg, Director of Congregant Relations  
and Pastoral Care**  
468-0522 / Amy.Rossberg@wrtemple.org

**Suzanne Saperstein, Exec. Assistant to Clergy  
and B'nei Mitzvah Coordinator**  
468-0524 / Suzanne.Saperstein@wrtemple.org

**Sharon Stiefel, Director of Social Impact and  
Community Engagement**  
723-7727 / Sharon.Stiefel@wrtemple.org

**Andrew Yanchyshyn, Audio-Visual Production Manager**  
723-7727 / Andrew.Yanchyshyn@wrtemple.org

**Linda Zarra, Bookkeeper**  
723-2391 / Linda.Zarra@wrtemple.org

### JLL STAFF 914-723-5224

**Leah Citrin, Associate Rabbi & Jewish Learning Lab Director**  
Rabbi.Citrin@wrtemple.org

**Daniella Kamis-Brown, JLL Assistant Director**  
Daniella.KamisBrown@wrtemple.org

**Nancy Abraham, Lead Hebrew Educator and Learning  
Differences Specialist** Nancy.Abraham@wrtemple.org

**Ruth Fuster, Receptionist**  
723-7727 / Ruth.Fuster@wrtemple.org

### ECC STAFF 914-723-5493

**Rebecca Roseman, Director of Early Childhood Center**  
Rebecca.Roseman@wrtemple.org

**Jennifer Brauntuch, Associate Director of ECC**  
Jen.Brauntuch@wrtemple.org

**Ellen Rosenberg, ECC Administrative Assistant**  
Ellen.Rosenberg@wrtemple.org



# Rabbi Blake's Message

## Transcript of Rabbi Blake's Sermon from September 23, 2025.

*We reprint here Rabbi Blake's sermon from Rosh Ha-Shanah morning. With gratitude for the return of hostages, we continue to pray for peace to prevail in Israel. At the same time, Jewish people continue to face perils and prejudice. These words remind us of our collective Jewish strength to face these uncertain times.*

Lately, I feel like the old Jewish waiter at the delicatessen, approaching his table of regulars and asking: "Is anything OK?"

Many of you recall the euphoria of June 1967, when Israel's lightning victory in the Six-Day War restored every significant Jewish holy site to Israeli control — a triumph greeted with something very much like religious ecstasy, even by the non-religious.

*"When I see Israel today... I see a country of Abrahams and Sarahs, and I am so proud to call them our family."*

Today, Jewish euphoria has evaporated, replaced by Jewish dysphoria.

Despite Israel's stunning military successes against Hezbollah and Iran's Islamic Regime, and the collapse of Syria's Assad regime, Jews worldwide are not okay.

Our hostages languish, starving and tortured in Hamas's tunnels. The grinding war and human suffering in Gaza, the mental and physical toll on Israeli soldiers, Hamas's refusal to surrender, and the global unpopularity of Israel's government all weigh heavily on us.

Add to this the horrifying rise in antisemitism, including the firebombing of Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro's home on the night of Pesach and murder sprees targeting Jews in Washington, DC and Boulder, Colorado — not for any connection to Israel, but because they are Jews. As if this weren't enough, the prospect of a New York City mayoral candidate who espouses anti-Israel rhetoric leads one to conclude: Everything is not okay.

In Hebrew, "Okay" is *b'seder*, meaning "in order," like a Passover Seder: everything in its right place, with a cohesive narrative: "They tried to kill us; we won; let's eat." It's even said—though this may be more folklore than etymology — that the word "copacetic" derives from the Hebrew *ha-kol b'seder*, "everything's okay."

Today, *ha-kol lo b'seder*. Everything is not okay. As if in the blink of an

eye, we've awakened to a world turned upside down. Our ancestors warned it could happen but it seemed inconceivable. Jews, once valued for our contributions to Western society, now feel like a despised minority. Israel, once a heroic David, is cast as the Goliath of the Middle East.

This nosedive from euphoria to dysphoria feels acute for older generations. Gen-Z Jews and younger, it should be noted, have never known a world that admired Israel, and so they may be more inured to Jewish dysphoria — a fact that only contributes to Jewish dysphoria!

However young or old, the question for each of us, on this first day of a new year, is: How to be a Jew, today?

I was speaking this summer with Helene Gray, Past President of WRT, whose perspective runs through the story of her mother, Celia Kener, a Shoah survivor hidden in a barn by a righteous Polish Catholic woman during the Holocaust. Last month, I stood under the chuppah with Celia's grandson, Helene's son Sam, and his bride, Betsy — a miraculous coda to a miraculous story.

Reflecting on the astonishing ups and downs of Jewish history, Helene and I agreed: There's a lot more 'oy' than joy these days. Things are not *b'seder*.

"But," she noted, "it's not like we're the first Jews to face hard times. I think we can do this."

Because we are Jews, and we do hard things.

I am not addressing my remarks to, or about, Israel's leaders. I am not demanding what governments — Israel's or America's or any other's — should or should not do. I'm speaking to us, this one congregation, whose Jewish values shape how we view Israel, Gaza, antisemitism, ourselves, and this painful inflection point in Jewish history. My message is for us, the Jewish People, especially those who call WRT home.

Like generations before us who stared into the abyss, we must refuse to let this moment in Jewish history define us as victims. Judaism has always affirmed our capacity to change the course of our lives even when the course of Jewish history plunges into darkness. Because, more than the "Chosen People," we Jews are a Choosing People, charged with choosing to affirm the possibility of a better tomorrow even when today looks very much *lo b'seder*.

It's like what Professor Michael Cohen, head of the Jewish Studies department at Tulane, always says: You know what it's called when Jews almost die off or get exterminated, but don't?

Living. Thriving.

So today, we'll explore how we go on living and thriving and doing hard things, drawing on Jewish courage through the figure of the First Jew, Abraham, role model for Jewish courage in a world gone

wrong. Abraham's story, as told through Torah and Midrash, offers a master class in courage, showing how Abraham surmounted ten trials, culminating in the Akedah, the binding of Isaac.

Among these tests, the Rabbis listed Abraham's confrontation with the polytheism of his homeland, leaving home forever to follow the One God of Jewish destiny.

Their promised land offered Abraham and Sarah little respite; they faced famine and forced displacement. At one point Abraham got tangled up in a military campaign of four kings against five (in case you thought that the Middle East got screwed up only recently). In the course of this war, Abraham's nephew was abducted.

Nor was Abraham's domestic life a walk in the park. Time and again, fate dashed Abraham and Sarah's dreams of raising children. The Rabbis include among Abraham's trials the expulsion of the maidservant Hagar from the

thought he knew about the world no longer made sense.

Bowing down before statues of wood and stone seemed to Abraham the height of religious hypocrisy. He took an ax and smashed them to smithereens, leaving the largest one intact, into whose stony fingers he placed the handle. When his father saw his idol shop in ruins he demanded to know who did this.

Abraham pointed to the last statue standing — the one with the ax in its hand — and said: "That guy." Terach raged back: "You know they have no power!"<sup>3</sup>

And Abraham, I like to imagine, said: "Gotcha, Dad." But this comeuppance also severed his connection to the old ways; it meant that Abraham had to leave. The Torah then refers to him as Ivri<sup>4</sup>, a Hebrew word that means, "to cross over to the other side," which the Rabbis interpreted to mean that the whole world was on one side while he was on the other," in an ideological sense: Abraham against the world.<sup>5</sup>

So when many now propose, to cheers and plaudits, that we have no legitimate claim to our ancestral land because others also lay claim to it; that elite academia now rewrites history to portray Jewish refugees as "settler-colonizers" and colors a complex civilizational confrontation between jihadism and democracy as "white supremacy versus indigenism"; when media fixate on Gaza while marginalizing the suffering in Darfur, Ukraine, or Yemen, we must summon Abraham's iconoclastic courage, and say:

I am a Jew, and Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people. And, whatever else happens in this awful war — may it end speedily — Israel will remain the Jewish State after it's over.

This may not play well in mixed company. You may face demands to defend a war over which you have no decision-making authority. You may endure accusations of "playing the antisemitism card," when we know it's not a game and we're not playing.

*"To be a Jew today is to summon the courage to stand against the world and refuse to bow down before the idols of our time."*

household, together with their son Ishmael. Only in extremely advanced age did Sarah finally, improbably, conceive.

Oh, and I didn't even mention that as soon as Isaac is born, God introduces this interesting new practice called a bris.<sup>1</sup>

So, yes, you could say that the life and times of the Very First Jews were lo b'seder. And yet we all learn and grow and evolve more from our trials and tribulations than from when things are kol b'seder.

Drawing on his trials, let's consider three facets of Abraham's courage, each applicable today.

First, we will consider Abraham the Iconoclast.

Abraham's journey begins when he leaves his home in Ur Kasdim, Mesopotamia, when God summoned him, Lech-Lecha, "go forth," which literally means, "go unto yourself."<sup>2</sup>

Abraham was to undertake a journey not only of geography but also of spirituality, a journey of the soul. In so doing, he discovered that everything he

To be a Jew today is to summon the courage to stand against the world and refuse to bow down before the idols of our time. To be a Jew today requires Abraham's iconoclastic courage — to resist the idols of today: simplistic narratives published as morality plays, opinion posturing as fact, slogans that reduce complex realities to soundbites.

That Judaism places questions, not answers, at the heart of the Seder says much about our religious priorities. Deepen the conversation. Probe for truth. Let questions yield more questions.

And our countercultural nature, our willingness to sail against prevailing winds, has always come at a cost.

When, two thousand years ago, we were told: "Worship our messiah," the Jew said: "We will wait." When told: "Bow before our prophet," the Jew said: "Our Prophets told us to hold fast to Torah, a Tree of Life." When told, again and again: "You have no home among us," we sought new homes in new lands, and, at last, returned to the land of Abraham and Sarah.

What can I say? Welcome to being a Jew. We do hard things.

And so we turn again to Abraham, his trials and his courage, especially as Rescuer of his kin.

In a macabre foreshadowing of our present moment, the Torah reports that Abraham more than once risked his life in order to extricate family members taken hostage.

In the war of four kings against five, Abraham's nephew Lot was abducted.<sup>6</sup> Lot was what we might call in Yiddish a nebach, a shlemazel, a person whose only luck was bad luck. And yet Abraham took up arms to deliver him from danger.

Years later it happened again to Lot (nebach!), this time in Sodom<sup>7</sup>, and again, Abraham showed up to rescue him.

We Jews don't give up on our hostages. For 718 days we have demanded their release. I can think of no holier use of this pulpit and this first day of a new year than to ask each of us to join in demanding their return, without which this war cannot end.



On your way out of the sanctuary, please consider taking a yellow pin and wearing it until the last hostage comes home. Drawing attention to the plight of our captives is one small, meaningful act of Abrahamic courage that will remind the world why Israel went to war in the first place.

And this takes us to the third model of courage exemplified by Abraham: Protester. Aggrieved by the sin and corruption of Sodom and Gomorrah, God intends to annihilate the cities, reducing them to rubble. Once again Abraham responds not with complacency but with courage, even before the very God with whom he has just sealed a covenant of loyalty:

“How dare You do such a thing, to bring death upon the innocent as well as the guilty, to treat innocent and guilty the same. How dare You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justice?”<sup>8</sup>

Abraham’s courage transforms outrage into an ethical axiom: that even in a world on fire, justice still matters.

Argument, dispute, debate, protest: if you’ve ever met our People, you know these predilections run deep and strong among the Jews. Judaism not only sanctions but sanctifies argument and protest, when done for the sake of justice.

But Abraham’s protest was rooted in his prior courage as an Iconoclast and Rescuer. He had “skin in the game,” sacrificing again and again for his faith and his people before demanding justice for others. Abraham’s challenge to God is rooted in deep love and loyalty, not melodramatic moralizing.

With this in mind, consider Uri Feinberg, a close friend to Kelly and me and a friend to many here at WRT, having guided several congregational

trips to Israel, including our solidarity mission after October 7th.

Throughout the war, even with no tourist groups to take around, Uri has been my guide, helping shape my perspectives on the war through his unique lens: that of a Reform Jewish Zionist educator married to Meryl, and abba to three daughters, two in the IDF reserves (having served in Iron Dome units) and his youngest presently serving in an infantry combat unit.

I recently sent Uri a little message over WhatsApp, wishing him a Shabbat of “hope and reflection,” to which he shot back — in a classic Israeli way:

Not sure about hope and reflection. More like anger and action. We seem to be going to each and every protest, march and rally. [Uri has referred to the last hundred Saturday evenings on the streets of Tel Aviv as his “weekly date night with Meryl.”] We go for the hostages for sure, but also, along with watching our daughters, nephews and children of friends in uniform heading out to another round of reserves, [each protest] is another space that... remind[s us] of who we really are, what we stand for as Israelis, and why we haven’t given up on our country.

Their protest, especially with children in the IDF, is the opposite of a “luxury belief.” It’s a courageous stand with real stakes. Unlike most protests abroad, which target Israel, their protests are with Israel, grounded in love and commitment.

Dr. Micha Goodman, in his latest book *The Eighth Day*<sup>9</sup>, urges us to look not at Israel from the “top down,” the high perch from where political leadership operates, but “from the bottom up.”<sup>10</sup>

From a “bottom up” vantage point, we can observe a remarkable grassroots society — reservists, volunteers, and ordinary citizens — filled with love, altruism, courage, and, even — despite it all — a strange kind of unity: the insistence that Israel matters, that for Israelis, as for Abraham and Sarah, there is no other home, no other land to go back to.

This Israel, bruised but not broken, embodies the courage of Abraham: the courage of iconoclasm, not to be cowed by her critics. The courage of rescue, not to give up on her hostages. The courage of protest, not to let her leaders define or diminish her people’s spirit.

When I see Israel today, looking not at the headlines, not at the Knesset, but at the grassroots, I see a country of Abrahams and Sarahs, and I am so proud to call them our family.

May God bless the brave — the iconoclasts, the rescuers, and the righteous protesters, one and all.

And may God grant us the courage in this new year to do the hard things, because that’s who we are, and that’s how we prevail.

- 1 See Genesis, Chapters 12-21. It’s great reading!
- 2 This line of interpretation is common in Kabbalistic and Chasidic thought. See, for example, *Sfat Emet, Lech-Lecha*.
- 3 Midrash Bereshit Rabbah, 38:12.
- 4 Genesis 14:13.
- 5 Midrash Bereshit Rabbah, 42:8.
- 6 See Genesis Chapter 14, and 14:12 specifically.
- 7 See Genesis Chapter 19.
- 8 Genesis 18:25.
- 9 The book is called *נימשה סויה* in Hebrew. It’s not yet published in English translation.
- 10 You can also hear Goodman’s perspective in an interview with Daniel Gordis on his Substack and podcast, “Israel from the Inside,” August 7th, 2025.

## SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR ANNUAL CELEBRATION Thursday, April 30, 2026

Join us for an unforgettable evening as we come together to celebrate and support our extraordinary WRT community. This annual event is a wonderful way to honor our shared values, connect with fellow members, and ensure a vibrant future for our congregation.



# Avodah: Worship and Spirituality

## Pre-Negs at WRT

**Friday, December 5 and Friday, January 16, 5:30 pm**

Join us for a special “Pre-Neg” as we share food and drink and connect with each other before Services. Make our experiment a success as we envision new ways to enrich our Shabbat experience at WRT. All are welcome.

## Kabbalat Shabbat

**Fridays, 6:15 pm**

Our Friday evening Shabbat service features the rituals, melodies and warmth of our congregation. The service includes a sermon or presentation by one of our rabbis, cantors or special guests.

Participate alongside fellow congregants in-person, or join us on any of our live-streaming platforms:

WRT Livestream - [www.wrtemple.org/live-stream/](http://www.wrtemple.org/live-stream/)

WRT Facebook - [www.facebook.com/WestchesterReformTemple/](https://www.facebook.com/WestchesterReformTemple/)

WRT YouTube - [www.youtube.com/user/WRTempleNY](https://www.youtube.com/user/WRTempleNY)

Please check the calendar, our weekly email updates and website for any changes due to special programming or holiday weekends.

## Lab Shabbat

**Fridays, December 12, January 23 and February 27, 5:30 - 7:00 pm**

An opportunity to welcome Shabbat with a family-friendly service followed by a delicious and different dinner each time. Designed for families with children in Kindergarten through fifth grade, each Lab Shabbat will include participation by a particular grade to showcase their JLL learnings.

## Tot Shabbat

**December 5 and January 9, 5:30 - 6:30 pm**

Experience the joy of Shabbat with children, parents, grandparents, siblings, and friends. Designed for families with children of preschool age and younger, Tot Shabbat starts with songs and stories led by our clergy, followed by a family-friendly dinner. Children must be accompanied by an adult for this service (no drop-offs).

## Torah Study

**Saturdays, 9:00 - 11:00 am**

Join us every Saturday morning as we gather for a brief service, nosh, and lively discussion of our weekly Torah portion. Our service is clergy led and features moments of gratitude, healing and remembrance. Following some snacking and schmoozing, we come back together for engaging Torah study. All are welcome and no experience is necessary.

## Sharing Shabbat

**Saturdays, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm, during the JLL year\***

Our engaging, musical Shabbat service for children in Grades K-6 and their families is open to the congregation and community. This weekly service is led by our clergy, and followed by engaging learning and conversation organized by cohort – a special JLL curricular experience for the children, and time for the adults to concurrently study, share stories, and ask questions together with a member of the clergy team. All are welcome! (September - May)\*



# Services and Events



## Community Chanukah Candle Lighting & Celebration

**Friday, December 19**

**5:30 - 6:15 pm**

**followed by Shabbat Services**

*(in-person at WRT)*

Join the clergy and our WRT families as we light our outdoor menorah, sing songs and enjoy some treats.

Performances by the youth and adult choir will make the evening festive.

## Shabbat Shirah with Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or and Boaz Dorot

**Friday, January 30, 6:15 pm**

Celebrate the Shabbat of Song, named for the joyous song the Israelites sang as they crossed the sea from slavery into freedom. Our Shabbat worship and learning will feature special guests from Israel, Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or and Boaz Dorot. With their beautiful compositions inspired by the sounds of their Israeli upbringing along with their liturgical expertise, Shani and Boaz's soulful voices and melodies will lift our spirits, just as Miriam with her timbrel.

Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or is the first to be ordained as a Reform



Cantor in Israel. She and Boaz Dorot are the co-founders of the Nigunim Ensemble, a pioneering Israeli ensemble that creates, arranges, and performs sacred music. Shani aspires to establish a thriving liberal cantorate in Israel: one that is authentic and relevant to the multi-cultural climate of Israeli society and fluent in the musical treasures of Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jewish traditions.

# Save the Dates!

## ADULT PURIM CELEBRATION

**Monday, March 2, 2026**

**6:00 - 9:00 pm**

**wrt** Westchester Reform Temple

For questions, contact 914-723-7727

## WRT IN POLAND

Heritage, Memory, and Celebration

**June 25 - July 2, 2026**

**Led by Rabbi Jonathan Blake and Cantor Amanda Kleinman**

# Talmud Torah: Adult Education



Rabbi Jonathan Blake



Cantor Amanda Kleinman



Rabbi Alissa Platcow



Jane Roberts

## What's God Got to Do with It? Developing a Personal Theology with Rabbi Jan D. Katzew, Ph.D.

**Four Thursdays in January:**

**January 8, January 15,**

**January 22, January 29**

**10:15 - 11:45 am (Zoom)**



Join master teacher (and Rabbi Blake's mentor and friend) Rabbi Jan D. Katzew, Ph.D., for four probing sessions about God, Jewish belief, and about developing a personal

theology: our own understanding of the Divine. This interactive class, taught over zoom, will introduce us to key concepts from ancient and modern Jewish thought, and prompt us to interrogate our own beliefs and misconceptions.

Rabbi Jan D. Katzew, Ph.D., served as Professor of Education at Hebrew Union College. Prior to his faculty role in training the next generation of Jewish leaders, Rabbi Katzew served as head of Education for the Reform Movement. He is a former congregant of WRT who is enjoying retirement on Cape Cod.

## Adult B'nai Mitzvah - It's Never Too Late!

**January - May, 2026**

Have you ever dreamed of standing on the bimah to read from the Torah, lead our community in prayer, or deepen

your connection to Jewish learning? Our Adult B'nai Mitzvah program invites you to embark on a transformative journey of study, reflection, and celebration. Together, we'll explore Hebrew, liturgy, Jewish history, and Torah study in a supportive community of fellow learners.

Whether you missed the opportunity as a child, are rediscovering your Jewish identity, or became a Jew by choice, this experience will strengthen your connection to Judaism and to one another. This program will begin in January, 2026 and will culminate in a B'nai Mitzvah service in May, 2027.

Please contact Rabbi Platcow at [rabbi.platcow@wrtemple.org](mailto:rabbi.platcow@wrtemple.org). We cannot wait to see you hold, teach and chant Torah!

## Rosh Chodesh 5786 led by Cantor Amanda Kleinman

**Tuesdays, December 16,**

**January 20 and February 24**

**11:30 am (at WRT)**

Join Cantor Kleinman and a diverse group of women for a monthly, midday infusion of study and sharing as we mark each new month on the Hebrew calendar. We will come together as a community to celebrate happy occasions and to hold space for one another in times of challenge or healing. We are studying Rabbi Angela Buchdahl's book, *Heart of a Stranger*.

# Community

## Meditation Lab

**Fridays, 11:00 - 11:45 am**

**(CJL Livingroom)**

Many of us are aware that mindfulness and meditation have become increasingly present in people's lives as a set of tools to navigate stress, increase calmness and clarity, and to promote joy. Our Meditation Lab is led by Norm Goldstein. Norm utilizes his 25 years of training and experience in mindfulness meditation to support temple members to explore Jewish meditative techniques.

## Chair Yoga Series at WRT

**Thursdays, 2:00 pm**

**(in-person)**

We invite you to come and try this series to nurture your body and soul. RSVP via email to [receptionist@wrtemple.org](mailto:receptionist@wrtemple.org) or call the temple office at 914-723-7727.

## Evening Book Group

**Tuesdays, 7:30 - 9:00 pm**

**December 16 (via zoom)**

**January 20 (via zoom)**

**February 17 (via zoom)**

Interested in joining the evening book group? The group meets on a Tuesday evening of each month at WRT for review and discussion about the month's selected title. For more information, please contact Marcia Goldfinger at [marcia.goldfinger@gmail.com](mailto:marcia.goldfinger@gmail.com)

## Bereavement Group

**January 14, 21, 28, February 4,  
11, 11:30 am (at WRT)**

These support groups are for those in mourning over a loss, and to help find comfort and process feelings of loss through caring discussion and in sacred Jewish context. Led by Jane Sevin, LMFT (Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist from Westchester Jewish Community Services) and Cantor Laura Stein, LMSW, a social worker specializing in spiritual care.





# President's Message

## Steven Masket

Greetings to you all!

Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, is soon upon us. For our family, the holiday affords us an opportunity to reflect on our son Alex's spirit and determination.

When our children were young, we hoped that lighting our menorah could be a family affair. But Alex's autism initially made that impossible. It turns out that Alex, among his many other challenges, was terrified of the flames. How would we bring him into the fold? So began a multi-year initiative to engage Alex in this meaningful ritual.

Each year, over the eight days, we would take one step forward towards our goal.

First, we had him enter the room and "light" a cloth menorah using "candles" attached with Velcro, after which he would run from the room. Over the next couple of years, he became comfortable staying in the room at a distance, observing. One year we worked on him keeping a yarmulka on his head. The next year Elaine, Will and I would sing the blessings, and Alex would finish each blessing with a strong "Amen!" The following year we started reciting the blessings over the candles in Hebrew before singing them, trying to teach them to Alex. We ultimately got to the point that when we prompted Alex with the first word, he recited the entire first blessing in Hebrew and then said "Amen." He also learned to recite the other blessings, as well. One year, to our surprise, Alex took the shamash and started lighting the other candles!



Now, as we celebrate Hannukah, Alex proudly lights all the candles (in the proper order) and recites the blessings in Hebrew. We are together, with Alex in charge, just as we dreamed many years before. As Elaine and I kvell, we are grateful for his boundless desire to shine his own light.

As much as we needed to teach Alex to get to this point, he was teaching us, as well. And the lesson is one that is important for our community at WRT: we need to meet people where they are. As you celebrate your own lights, come see what WRT has to offer you, where you are. After all, WRT is a place for all of us, and for each of us.

From my family to yours, Happy Hanukkah.

Steven Masket, WRT President

### OFFICERS

**President**  
Steven Masket

**Vice Presidents**  
Jodi Barrow  
Jeff Gelles  
Lori Gertzog  
Andrew Levine  
Jon Mark

**Treasurer**  
Michael Gorelick

**Secretary**  
Adam Hellegers

**Trustees**  
Daniel Bernstein  
Allison Block  
Emily Cohn  
Mallorie Corcoran  
Erica Crisses  
Howard Elman  
Francine Frydman  
Drew Kramer  
Noah Kroloff  
Michael Leibert  
Jeffrey Mutterperl  
Nicole Risener  
Cynthia Samwick  
Eric Scheffler  
Jonathan Siegel  
Mara Steiner  
Brooke Vaupen  
Jessica Weiland  
Mauri Zemachson  
Jessica Zweifach

**President,  
Women of Reform Judaism**  
Sarah Kagan

**President,  
Men of Reform Judaism**  
Robert Meyerson

**ECC Co-Chair**  
Jessica Weiland

# Women of Reform Judaism

Come and connect: heart “lev” בל, soul “neshema” הנשמה, Gut, in Yiddish, your “kishkes” הגשק. We have so many languages, each evocative in a different way. Through WRJ, we hope to connect deeply, on all levels—by spending time together. This winter we invite you to cook, eat, schmooze and shop!

– Sarah Kagan, President WRJ@WRT



**WRT/WRJ PRESENTS:**

## Holiday Boutique

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup>**  
**WESTCHESTER REFORM TEMPLE**  
**255 MAMARONECK ROAD**  
*11am - 4pm Free Admission*

**SPECIALTY GIFTS & MERCHANDISE:**

|                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 4 FASHIONS          | RED GEMS              |
| A2Z LOUNGEWEAR      | ROADIE COUTURE        |
| ARLENE'S BOUTIQUE   | RESIN BAR STUDIO      |
| THE CHINTZ GIRAFFE  | SERVETT UP            |
| DESIGNS THAT DONATE | SHAYE ISABEL          |
| ERRY SHOP           | STRANDS BY STACY      |
| EXCESSORIZE         | TABLECLOTHDIRECT NY   |
| HELEN GURNEY GLASS  | TOUCHSTONE CRYSTAL    |
| ILYSE'S PIECES      | VENICE MURANO DESIGNS |
| LUXE BOUTIQUE       | WONNAFUL              |
| MITTEN MAVEN        | WRT JUDAICA SHOP      |

## WRJ Hanukkah Party: Annual Donut Tasting Contest!

**Wednesday, December 3**  
**8:00 - 9:45 pm**

WRJ invites the entire congregation to join us for our third annual Hanukkah Party. Our donut tasting contest is back and better than ever! This year, we will again feature the musical talents of Cantor Kleinman who will lead us in singing some of our Hanukkah favorites as well as lighting the menorah. Don't like donuts? No problem. We will also have fruit, cheese, and wine!

## Holiday Boutique

**Monday, December 8**  
**11:00 am - 4:00 pm**

Come to WRT for all of your holiday shopping! So many new vendors and all your favorites, don't miss it

## Challah Make, Braid, Bake and Take!

**Thursday, January 29**

## Pre-Service Oneg Brisket "Bake-off"

**Friday, January 30**

WRJ hosts a Pre-Service Oneg: a communal Shabbat Dinner featuring a



**President**  
 Sarah Kagan

**Communications and Media Officer**  
 Caryn Pitchon

**Vice President for Membership**  
 Alena Markley

**Secretary**  
 Rachel Berk

**Vice President for Programs and Events**  
 Allison Weinberg

**Treasurer**  
 Alice Gorelick

**Vice President for Community Connections**  
 Drew Kramer

Brisket "Bake-off" and Challah plus other favorites. Let the best brisket be tasted! We invite you to cook yours (if you have one)! Family, friends and guests, come and eat zissen! B'teavon!

## SAVE THE DATE: WRJ Women's Seder

**Tuesday, March 17**

With interfaith clergy, guests and friends.

# Men of Reform Judaism



## Blood Drive at WRT

**January 11**

## American Jewish Heritage

**February 11, March 11, and March 18, (via Zoom)**

## Save the Date! MRJ Seder

**Thursday, March 26**



**President**  
 Bob Meyerson

**Treasurer**  
 Lee Goldsmith

**Vice Presidents**  
 Joe Levine  
 Mark Lewis  
 Bob Rosenbaum  
 Michael Simberkoff  
 Jeff Simon  
 Eugene Weissman

**Secretary**  
 Michael Grant

**Board Members**  
 Jay Landau  
 Fred Price



# FreeBirds

## Sunday Sing Along Happy Hour with the Cantors

**Sunday, December 7**

**5:00 - 6:30 pm (at WRT)**

Join the Cantors and Leonard Bernstein's daughter Jamie Bernstein, have some drinks and light bites. Bring a friend, meet new friends, enjoy music, memories and reflections from Leonard Bernstein's life. Any questions? Contact Lori.gertzog@gmail.com

## Game Night

**SAVE THE DATE: Thursday, May 14, 7:00 - 10:00 pm**

Come with your friends for a fun evening playing Mahjongg, Canasta or Bridge! Any questions? Contact Iris+Audrey: irg.green@gmail.com or drey52555@aol.com

## Winter Film Series, Sponsored by Free Birds: The Jewish Mother in Cinema

**Sundays, December 14, January 11, and January 25, 2:00 - 5:00 pm (at WRT)**

Join our Rabbis and our community as we continue our winter tradition of screening films of Jewish interest, followed by probing conversation. This winter's series will explore the character of the Jewish mother in cinema, unpacking both the stereotypes and the subversive messages depicted on screen. Refreshments served. Any questions? Contact Lori.gertzog@gmail.com

### December 14: *Goodbye, Columbus* (1969)



Based on the groundbreaking novella by Philip Roth (1959), *Goodbye, Columbus* introduces us to many of the stereotypical associations with Jewish mothers.

How did these register at the time?  
How do we understand them today?

### January 11: *Image of Victory* (2021)



During the 1948 War of Independence, young radio operator Mira Ben-Ari (Joy Rieger) heroically defends her kibbutz, leaving behind a toddler son. This Israeli film

offers a rare heroic depiction of a Jewish mother as warrior and patriot, subverting stereotypes.

### January 25: *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (2021)



Directed by and starring Natalie Portman, and based on the epic memoir by celebrated Israeli author Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness* grapples with a mother (Gilat Bennett)'s quiet despair at the time of Israel's birth as a nation.

## WRT Author Series

### Marjorie and Morgan Miller, z"l, Miller Scholar in Residence Jeremy Eichler

**Thursday, January 8, 7:00 - 9:00 pm**



Come join the Cantors for a presentation and conversation with acclaimed music critic and cultural historian Jeremy Eichler, author of *Time's Echo*, winner of three National Jewish Book Awards including 2023 Book of the Year. Mr. Eichler, our Marjorie and Morgan, z"l, Miller Scholar-in-Residence for 2026, will present on how cultural memory is preserved and transmitted through music, with a focus on the masterpieces produced in the wake of the Holocaust.

**Friday, January 9, 6:15 - 7:30 pm**

Join us for a special Kabbalat Shabbat in anticipation of International Holocaust Remembrance Day featuring music of memory. Our Scholar-in-Residence offers the *D'var Torah*.

### Getting Personal About Menopause: A Panel Discussion with Lauren A. Tetenbaum

**Thursday, February 26, 7:30 pm**



Come join Cantor Amanda Kleinman with WRT author Lauren A. Tetenbaum, Dr. Susan Klugman, and other experts, as they explore the practical realities of perimenopause and menopause - including mental and physical health, careers, and relationships - through a Jewish lens. In her new book, *Millennial Menopause*, Ms. Tetenbaum tackles the stigma and mysteries surrounding menopause, offering millennial women a relatable, research-backed guide to navigating midlife hormonal changes. This event is linked to WRT's Repro Shabbat, during Kabbalat Shabbat on February 13, 2026, honoring the Jewish value of reproductive freedom, at which we will honor the panel and host committee for this event.

### Rabbi Angela Buchdahl in Conversation with Rabbi Jonathan E. Blake

**Wednesday, April 15, 7:00 pm**



Join us as we welcome home Rabbi Angela Buchdahl for a special conversation with Rabbi Blake about her new book, *Heart of a Stranger*. Rabbi Buchdahl's moving memoir tells the story of her journey from feeling like an outsider to becoming one of the most admired religious leaders in the world. The first Asian American to be ordained as a rabbi, Rabbi Buchdahl was born in Korea and raised in Tacoma, Washington, the daughter of a Korean Buddhist mother and a Jewish American father. Profoundly spiritual from a young age, she first felt the call to become a rabbi at just sixteen. Despite facing naysayers and moments of self-doubt, she remained steadfast—eventually earning ordination from both rabbinical and cantorial school and rising to lead New York's Central Synagogue, one of the nation's most prominent congregations.



# WERE YOU



Talk with Freed Hostages



MRJ Cre8 Day



Caring Community Luncheon



MRJ Cre8 Day



Spirits In the Sukkah



Israeli Artist, Zoya Cherkaskey, Speaks at WRT



Caring Community Luncheon



# THERE?



Israeli Symphony String Trio



S'lichot Concert with Becky Mann



Sukkot Block Party



FreeBirds in Montreal



Caring Community Luncheon



Muffin Monday with Family Mitzvah Corps



Caring Community Luncheon





# Justice, justice, we shall pursue!

**Sharon Stiefel**

*Director of Social Impact and Community Engagement*

As you read this Winter WRTimes, we find ourselves in the darkest part of the year—not only physically, but for many, metaphorically as well. Like so many in our community, I have felt as though I've been holding my breath since October 7, 2023. While there is deep relief in knowing that no living hostages remain in Gaza, I cannot help but feel that I have not yet exhaled. We remain surrounded by darkness: the rise of antisemitism, the uncertainty of Israel's security, and the deep polarization within our own country. I hope that as we each light our chanukkah this year, its flames bring some light into the darkness—yet I worry that even nine candles burning together may not feel like enough light to drive the darkness away.

For the past three years, children and adults have gathered at WRT's Mitzvah Fair—aptly named Bring More Light Into This World—to connect with local agencies, learn about social action opportunities, and participate in hands-on projects that make a difference. This year, more than ever, it feels vital to focus on the tangible good we can bring to others and to our community. That is why, instead of one day of light, WRT will host a Mitzvah Week, from January 11 through January 19, 2026.

Throughout the week, we'll offer volunteer opportunities both at WRT and with partner organizations in our local community. The week will

culminate on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—a national day of service and volunteerism. As Dr. King reminded us, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that."



**ANNUAL TEMPLE TAG SALE**

**SUNDAY, APRIL 12**

**1:00 - 4:00 pm**

**AT WRT**



#### **Volunteer with:**

- Grassroots Grocery
- HOPE Community Services
- Meals on Main Street
- Midnight Run

#### **Participate at WRT:**

- MRJ Blood Drive | January 11
- LiveOnNY | January 11
- Celebratory Pre-Neg | January 16
- Midnight Run Sorting Party | January 17

*and much more...*

**Start  
signing  
up  
here:**



**To volunteer to help plan  
Mitzvah Week, email Sharon at  
[sharon.stiefel@wrtemple.org](mailto:sharon.stiefel@wrtemple.org)**





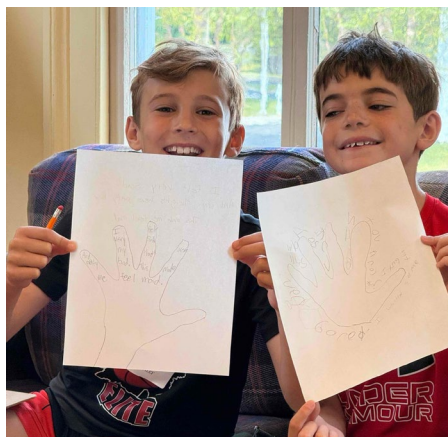
# Jewish Learning Lab (JLL)

**Rabbi Leah Citrin**

*Associate Rabbi & Jewish Learning Lab Director*

With the High Holidays behind us, JLL students explored Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Simchat Torah! Our talented teaching team led our students through the joy of a new year, the opportunity to reflect and set intentions for the year ahead, and appreciate the permanent structures from which we are fortunate enough to benefit.

With a break in holidays until Chanukah at the end of December, our students continue to explore lots of different topics ranging from Torah stories to Hebrew to Shabbat and more!



## Calendar Dates:

**Friday, December 12**  
Lab Shabbat

**Sunday, December 14**  
Family T'filah

**Wednesday, December 24 –  
Thursday, January 1**  
JLL Offices Closed

**Saturday, December 20 –  
Monday, January 5**  
NO JLL CLASSES (Winter Break)

**Friday, January 23**  
Lab Shabbat

**Friday–Saturday, February 6–7**  
6th Grade Shabbaton

**Saturday, February 14 – Sunday,  
February 22**  
NO JLL CLASSES (February Break)

**Friday, February 27**  
Lab Shabbat

## purimpalooza

**Saturday, February 28**  
**11:00 am - 1:00 pm**

Celebrate Purim with the whole family!  
Games, bouncy houses, crafts, treats and so much more.



# Early Childhood Center (ECC)



One of the many things that sets our ECC students' educational experience apart is our robust specials program. Our daily curriculum is supplemented with programming: music, movement, nature, and meditation. This year, we were fortunate to be awarded a Jacobs-Freedman grant that allowed us to launch a new special program for our two, three, and four-year old students.

Wee Play Language Hebrew program is a Philadelphia-based language class that expanded to Westchester County for the 2025-2026 school year. We are the first early childhood center in the area to benefit from their unique, play-based language program that is built upon a core 200 Hebrew words and expressions. Every other week, our children learn Hebrew effortlessly through an immersive, play-based experience with unique materials that are relevant to the week's lesson.

Children learn colors in Hebrew by playing with their own personal set

of matchbox cars. Sukkot is taught using magnetic whiteboards and a set of materials that reinforce previously taught words, while also guiding children through the explanation of the holiday. Each lesson employs a 100% hands-on approach, allowing children to speak and understand Hebrew in a fun, sensory-rich, and completely interactive way.

Our new program is successfully exposing children to and fostering a love of the Hebrew language. WRT's youngest children are being enriched by a program that will set the tone for their Hebrew experience for years to come. Especially given the landscape of today's world, we are thrilled to offer a program that encourages our children to be proud of the language that is central to both Jewish heritage and modern Israeli identity.

To learn more about our ECC programs, please contact us at 914-723-5493.



**Rebecca Roseman**  
ECC Director

**Jennifer Brauntuch**  
ECC Associate Director





# Upcoming ECC Events

## Tot Shabbat

**Fridays: December 5, January 9,  
March 13, April 10, May 29**  
**5:30 – 6:30 pm**

Experience the joy of Shabbat with children, parents, grandparents, siblings and friends. Designed for families with young children and led by WRT clergy.

## EAT, SLEEP, POOP Parenting Mini Series:

**"SLEEP" Tuesday, February 3, 2026**

**"POOP" Thursday, April 23, 2026**

**7:15 – 8:30 pm**

WRT Clergy and ECC faculty invite you to join us for one or both of the final parenting speaker series sessions. Enjoy light bites, wine and expert speakers in these three important toddler/early childhood parenting topics. This event is designed for parents/guardians of young children.

## ECC Enrollment for the 2026-2027 School Year

**Registration opened to the public on November 3 and will be ongoing.**



## Chanukah Celebration: Milk and Cookies with the Cantors

**Thursday, December 18**  
**4:00 – 4:45 pm**

This festive event includes story time, milk, cookies and Chanukah songs.

## Purim Palooza

**Saturday, February 28**  
**11:00 am – 1:00 pm**

Come in costume and enjoy carnival games and noshes!

## ECC Cocktail Party

**Thursday, March 12**

An evening event held at WRT for existing and incoming ECC Parents. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres are served. This social gathering offers new families the opportunity to come and meet existing ECC families in a fun and festive setting.

## STEAM Extravaganza

**Thursday, March 19, 4:00 – 5:30 pm**

Join us for this fun afternoon where ECC children can explore teacher-led booths experimenting with various scientific, technological, engineering, art and math experiences. Pizza dinner to follow.

## Virtual Trip to Israel

**Wednesday, April 22**

ECC students partake in a virtual trip to Israel. It is so much fun traveling on our ECC Airplane, visiting the shuk, planting flowers, fishing in Eilat and so much more! This event is led by WRT clergy and ECC staff.

## New Family Welcome

**Thursday, May 14, 5:30 – 6:30 pm**

Families who are new to our school are invited to meet one another over pizza and dessert. Tours of the ECC are given and children get a first glimpse of their new school.



## Truck Day

**Wednesday, May 20**

All ECC children have an opportunity to view and explore trucks during their ECC school day. Trucks that often visit us are: a fire engine, a police car, a garbage truck, a backhoe, an ambulance, a mail truck and the ever popular ice-cream truck!



# Mazal Tov!

## Births

### Abby and Rich Fay

on the birth of their daughter Sienna Harper Fay

### Mara and Brandon Steiner

on the birth of their grandsons James Patrick and Charles Jack Steiner  
and to the parents Nikki Haven and Crosby Steiner

### Toby Milstein-Schulman and Judah Schulman

on the birth of their son Seymour Henry Milstein-Schulman

### Elise and Noel Flagg

on the birth of their granddaughter Olivia Paige Grebe  
and to the parents Lindsay and Alexander Grebe

### Anne Meltzer and Fred Wang

on the birth of their granddaughter Romi Austin Levey  
and to the parents Rachel Wang Levey and Mark Levey

### Amy and David Levere

on the birth of their grandson Adam Eli Courtney-Levere  
and to the parents Jocelyn Courtney and Jeffrey Levere

### Brittany and Ben Rosenbaum

on the birth of their son Ryan Chase Rosenbaum

### Sarah and Stewart Kagan

on the birth of their grandson Zachary Bruce Winograd  
and to the parents Joan Kagan and Max Winograd

### Kristin and Gary Friedman

on the birth of their granddaughter Liora Friedman Hersh  
and to the parents Sarah Friedman Hersh and Nathan Hersh

### Madeleine Feldman-Albert and David Albert

on the birth of their grandson Cooper Theo Jennings  
and to the parents Ariel and Spencer Jennings

### Neera Chatterjee and Daniel Charnoff

on the birth of their son Nathan Mohan Charnoff

### Maggie and David Gilberg

on the birth of their son Grayson M. Gilberg

### Nancy and David Michaels

on the birth of their grandson Asher Jack Michaels  
and to the parents Sara and BJ Michaels

### Carol and Larry Wolfe

on the birth of their grandson Jonah Matan Koprivec  
and to the parents Sarah Wolfe and Janez Koprivec

### Barbara and Bennett Josselson

on the birth of their granddaughter Sophia Poppy Josselson  
and to the parents Brittany Glassberg and David Josselson

### Iris and Fred Green

on the birth of their grandson Jasper Sterling Jenis  
and to the parents Arielle Green Jenis and Zack Jenis

### Beth Ehrich Berkeley and Alan Berkeley

on the birth of their grandson Kai Ehrich Kourakos Schwartz  
and to the parents Ellen Kourakos and Eric Schwartz

### Lori and Gary Gertzog

on the birth of their granddaughter Georgia Rae Kestenbaum  
and to the parents Allison and Matthew Kestenbaum

## Engagements

### Susan Horn Parisi and George Parisi

on the engagement of their daughter Julie to Evan Jacobson

### Randi Goldmann and Martin Forman

on the engagement of their son Jake Forman to Hope Barkley  
and of their son Max Forman to Marisa Hutton

### Amy and Ray Cooper

on the engagement of their son Justin to Kyle Bergman

### Catherine Ravaux-Black and Jordan Black

on the engagement of their daughter Elise Koko Black to Michael Berl

## Marriages

### Jacqueline Cutler

on the marriage of her son Conrad to Jillian Reiner

### Iris and Howard Burkat

on the marriage of their son Oliver to Kate DeSalvo

### Jill and Howard Fife

on the marriage of their son Sam to Jesse Drucker

### Dorothy Matza

on the marriage of her son Scott to Jessica Hirschberg

### Hillary and Todd Emmerman

on the marriage of their daughter Alexandra to Joshua Pascal

### Gloria Goldstein

on the marriage of her granddaughter Rebecca Goldstein to Nick Nigro

### Margie Miller

on the marriage of her granddaughter Lindsay Miller to Mitch Goldenberg

## B'nei Mitzvah

### Beth and Adam Lazarus

on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Logan

### Emily and Ben Cohn

on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Bryce

### Jeannie and Brian Rosenthal

on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Charlie

### Sali and Michael Rakower

on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Jacob

### Courtney Allen and Jeff Allen

on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Sloane

### Leslie and Jeremy Perelman

on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Cooper

### Rebecca and Mathew Kirschner

on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Ella

### Lauren and Scott Rubino

on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Ethan

### Leah and David Dembitzer

on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Sloan



**Jackie and Bryan Bellack**  
on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Juliet

**Shauna and Jonathan Friedman**  
on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Daniel

**Jennifer and Adam Galeon**  
on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Camryn

**Rachel and Jonathan Schmerin**  
on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Alexandra

**Denise Josephs**  
on the death of her father Richard Weinberger

**Victoria Landau**  
on the death of her sister Alexandra Richmond

**Susan Landsberg**  
on the death of her father Herbert Stanley Rubin

**Eileen Ruston Meyers**  
on the death of her father Henry Ruston

**Rebecca Kirschner**  
on the death of her grandmother Lee Lobelson

## Condolences

**Gregg Merksamer and Harold Merksamer**  
on the death of their mother Geraldine Merksamer

**Shuling Hsieh-Smith**  
on the death of her father Hsieh Chow Zong

**Bruce Rader and Harriet Rader**  
on the death of his wife/her daughter-in-law Ivie Rader

**Sanford Miller**  
on the death of his father Norman Miller

**Jordan Wechsler**  
on the death of his father Robert Wechsler

**Marcie Wechsler**  
on the death of her mother Beth Dubrow

**Amy Breyer**  
on the death of her father Emanuel Goodman

**David Frydman**  
on the death of his mother Miriam Frydman

**Ellen Rabina**  
on the death of her mother Adelle Zimbel

**Bruce Zenkel**  
on the death of his sister Judith Fox

**Lawrence Ochs, Jacqueline Ochs, and Carol Ochs**  
on the death of their mother Susan Ochs Phillips

**Kristin Friedman**  
on the death of her mother Laurace James

**Arline Gardner**  
on the death of her stepson Kenneth Gardner

**Linda Shapiro**  
on the death of her husband Mel "Shep" Shapiro

The congregation of WRT mourns  
the death of our member  
**Geraldine Merksamer**  
and extends sympathy to her bereaved family

The congregation of WRT mourns  
the death of our member  
**Ivie Rader**  
and extends sympathy to her bereaved family

The congregation of WRT mourns  
the death of our member  
**Susan Ochs Phillips**  
and extends sympathy to her bereaved family

The congregation of WRT mourns  
the death of our member  
**Mel "Shep" Shapiro**  
and extends sympathy to his bereaved family



### WRT Cemetery Plots

In recent years, space in local Jewish cemeteries has become increasingly limited. However, Westchester Reform Temple still has burial plots available for members of the congregation at Mt. Eden Cemetery in Hawthorne, NY, just a 20-minute drive from Scarsdale. Our inventory, in units of 8-grave and 4-grave plots for families, 2-grave plots for couples, and single graves for individuals, is priced lower than that available commercially in our area. Consider securing your burial site for peace of mind for yourselves and your families.

### Memorial Wall Plaques

Jewish tradition provides many meaningful ways to perpetuate the memory of our dear ones: lighting yahrzeit candles, reciting Kaddish, and giving charity. Among those traditions at WRT is the placing of a stone on a memorial wall near the plaque that bears the name of a relative.

If you would like more information about purchasing a cemetery plot or a memorial plaque, contact Amy Rossberg, Director of Congregant Relations and Pastoral Care, at 914-468-0522 or email [Amy.Rossberg@wrtemple.org](mailto:Amy.Rossberg@wrtemple.org).



### Make a Donation to Support Israel

The Rabbis' Discretionary Fund of WRT is currently supporting critical organizations that are addressing humanitarian needs, support for Israel's soldiers, and traumatized communities throughout Israel. To make a donation to the Rabbis' Discretionary Fund, go to <https://bit.ly/wrtfunds>.

# WRT Inspirations

Dear Friends,

Philanthropy is an integral part of WRT's culture and an important part of Jewish tradition. The generosity of our community plays a significant role in strengthening our congregation and enables us to create a spirited community for learning, social action, and prayer.

We invite you to support WRT in a way that is most meaningful to you—whether through the Inspired Giving Annual Fund, the Spring Celebration, the Legacy Circle, or one of our special funds. We hope you will join our philanthropic efforts. Every gift—your gift—makes a difference.

If you have any questions about giving to WRT, would like to make a gift, and/or wish to join our volunteer work on behalf of the temple, please contact Laura Rosen Apostolou, Philanthropy Director at 914-723-7727 ext. 8128 or [laura.apostolou@wrtemple.org](mailto:laura.apostolou@wrtemple.org).

We are deeply grateful for the support of our community. With deep appreciation and many thanks:

*WRT Philanthropy Committee Co-Chairs:*  
Alex Crisses, Nicole Risener

*WRT Philanthropy Committee:*  
Beth Alschuler, Bryar Bernard, Dan Bernstein, Sheryl Spivack Braun, Randi Culang, and Sydney Solomon

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## Celebrating Friendship and Community: The Journey of Iris Green and Audrey Weinberg



Fifteen years ago, a serendipitous invitation brought Iris Green and Audrey Weinberg together on the Events Committee at WRT. Though they were acquaintances at the time, it was their shared passion for community and creativity that blossomed into a friendship.

Their collaborative journey began with the exhilarating fundraiser, WRT's Dancing With the Stars in 2010, launching a partnership that would bring joy and excitement to our congregation through various events. As co-chairs, Iris and Audrey spearheaded memorable gatherings such as WRT's Got Talent, Peace-Love-Party at WRT, where a full Motown band filled the bimah and had the whole congregation rocking out. Each event was designed to break the mold and create a unique experience within our synagogue walls, infused with

different themes and the energy of our vibrant community.

To enhance involvement and inclusivity, they established committees for each event, bringing together members of all ages to brainstorm ideas and strengthen our bonds. Their approach not only raised essential funds for WRT but also nurtured a spirit of fun and connection.

After the isolating times of COVID-19, Iris and Audrey felt a strong calling to reconnect our community. They launched the annual Game Night and Bingo Night, re-igniting the joy of gathering and celebrating together. These events serve as a reminder of the resilience of our community spirit and the importance of camaraderie.

Through it all, Iris and Audrey have developed a special friendship that exemplifies the ideal partnership—they are the perfect balance of yin and yang, each complementing the other's strengths. Their bond of friendship inspires us all to come together as a community.



### Your Legacy. WRT's Future. Secure WRT's future with a planned gift.

When you include WRT in your estate plans—through a bequest or other planned gift—you create a lasting legacy for your spiritual home. Your support ensures that our vibrant Jewish community will continue to pray, educate, celebrate, and comfort for generations to come. By informing us of your planned gift, you will become a member of the Legacy Circle—a community of devoted congregants who share a belief in WRT's long-term vision and vitality. If this opportunity resonates with you, we would be honored to speak with you (and your advisor, if helpful) to craft a legacy gift that reflects your values and strengthens WRT's future.

**Together, we will build a legacy of Jewish life and learning for WRT!** To learn more, please visit [wrtemple.org/give/legacy-circle/](http://wrtemple.org/give/legacy-circle/) or call Laura Rosen Apostolou at 914-723-7727, ext. 8128.



# Contributions

Contributions received July 1 – October 31, 2025.

The Temple gratefully acknowledges the following contributions:

## SUPPORTING ALL THE PILLARS OF OUR COMMUNITY

### Fund for the Generations

**Melissa Cates and Roger Claman**  
in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

### Inspired Giving

#### Guardian

**Audrey and Richard Steuer**

#### Visionary

**Randy and Gerald Blitstein**

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in honor of the fallen IDF soldiers and those murdered during the Oct 7 war, and in appreciation of the WRT Staff

**Debbie and Steven Prince**

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#### Sustainer

**Karen and Edward Friedman**

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#### Innovator

**Beth Ehrich Berkeley and Alan Berkeley**

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**Cindy and Tod Johnson**

**Stephanie Blank and Jay Musoff**

**Phyllis and Brad Perkins**

**Elaine and Ira Rosenstein**

# Giving Opportunities at Westchester Reform Temple

## SUPPORTING ALL THE PILLARS OF OUR COMMUNITY

- **Inspired Giving (Annual Fund)** – This is WRT's annual campaign and supports all events and activities throughout the year. Gifts to this fund support our general operating budget.
- **Security Fund** – This fund enables us to support the many security needs of WRT, including equipment, resources, ongoing training and support for the law enforcement professionals who make up our security team at WRT.
- **The Rabbi Richard J. Jacobs and Susan K. Freedman Fund for Innovation in Jewish Life** – Supports initiatives to live the lessons and traditions of Judaism, to learn and think deeply, to repair our world, to stand steadfastly with Israel, and to care for one another and the world around us.
- **Rabbi Jack and Priscilla Stern Fund for the Generations** – WRT's Endowment Fund

## AVODAH – SPIRITUALITY

- **Rabbis' Discretionary Fund** – Supports needy individuals, organizations and worthy projects
- **Cantors' Discretionary Music Fund** – Sustains and enhances WRT's music programs, and supports worthy causes at WRT and in the wider community.
- **Jewish Music and Spirituality Fund** – Supports special initiatives in music and worship, including guest artists and concert programs.

## TALMUD TORAH – LEARNING

- **Bauman Scholar Fund** – Encourages, recognizes and celebrates the Jewish learning and identity formation of WRT's most academically inclined students, as exhibited by the fearless learning of Sam Bauman of blessed memory.
- **Morgan & Marjorie Miller Scholar-in-Residence Fund** – Supports the annual Scholar-in-Residence program.
- **Norman L. Blumstein Memorial Fund** – Helps children attend Jewish camps and programs.
- **Vivienne Sulds Memorial Fund** – Supports special lectures and adult education programs.
- **Och Family Educational Fund** – Supports need-based financial assistance on JLL and ECC tuition for our students.
- **The Eslyn Fund** – To encourage, promote and support educational travel to Israel for the youth of WRT.

## TIKKUN OLAM – REPAIRING THE WORLD

- **Food & Housing Insecurity Fund** – Assists those who lack access to food and shelter in Westchester County.
- **Social Impact & Community Engagement Fund** – to support the work of social justice and social action at WRT and engaging our community.

## CHAVURAH – COMMUNITY

- **Caring Community Fund** – Dedicated to Ann R. Miller Support for the ill or bereaved.

To make a contribution or download a pdf form, go to [www.wrtemple.org](http://www.wrtemple.org), click on the GIVE tab to access MAKE A DONATION or visit <https://www.wrtemple.org/give/make-a-donation/>

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**Nancy Friedlander and John Hosken,**  
in honor of Rabbi Alissa Platow's installation

**Karen and William Frommer**  
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in memory of Ivie Rader, wife of Bruce Rader  
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## AVODAH - SPIRITUALITY

### **Rabbis' Discretionary Fund**

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in honor of the marriage of her daughter  
Rachel Kourakos to Frederick Hendriksen  
and in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

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**Ruth and Andrew Suzman**  
**Jacqueline and Arthur Walker**  
in memory of Ivie Rader, wife of Bruce Rader  
and daughter-in-law of Harriet Rader

**Harriet Rader**  
in memory of her daughter-in-law Ivie Rader  
and in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

**Mady Feldman-Albert and David Albert**  
in honor of the marriage of their son Harrison  
Jennings to Andrea Biel  
and in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

**Friends of Sanford Miller**  
**Valerie and Stephen Glicker**  
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in memory of Norman Miller, father of Sandy Miller

**Nancy Segal and Richard Liebman**  
in honor of the *aufruf* and marriage of their  
daughter Abbey Liebman to Joshua Garay  
and in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

**Tricia Alcamo and John Mutterperl**  
in honor of their marriage  
and in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

**Nancy and Donald Mutterperl**  
in honor of their son John's marriage to Tricia  
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**Harriet Rader**  
in honor of Roxene Sloate's birthday

**Lori and Gary Gertzog**  
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**Jacqueline Walker**  
in honor of her husband Arthur Walker's 100th  
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in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

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in memory of his sister Judith Fox  
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**Bernice and Richard Hoffman**  
in memory of Adelle Zimbel, mother of Ellen  
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**Wendy and Gary Simon**  
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and in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

**Eugenia Edwards and Family**  
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**Barbara and George Sommerfeld**  
in honor of Rabbi Alissa Platow's installation

**Judy and Barry Lass**  
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**Kristin and Gary Friedman**  
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nd in appreciation of Rabbi Blake



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in honor of Mary and Jim Blum and family for  
all of their recent simchas

**Helene and Richard Gray**

in honor of the marriage of their son Samuel to  
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and in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

**Rosalyn and Ronald Binday****Betty Lappin****Harriet Rothkopf****Letty and Michael Tanchum****Cantors' Discretionary Fund****Fran Scheffler-Siegel and Steve Siegel**

in memory of Elaine Paris, mother of Jason Paris

**Stephie Miller**

in memory of her husband Bill Miller  
and in appreciation of Cantor Kleinman

**Bob Meyerson**

in memory of his brother-in-law James Pearlman  
and in appreciation of Cantor Sonett-Assor

**Bennett and Barbara Josselson**

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and in appreciation of Cantor Sonett-Assor

**Pam Frankel-Stein and Jon Stein**

in memory of his father Jeffrey Stein  
and in appreciation of Cantor Kleinman

**Gillian and Peter Rittmaster**

in memory of her father Robert Goldsmith  
and in appreciation of Cantor Kleinman

**Ellen Rabina and Marcy Vogel**

in memory of their mother Adelle Zimbel  
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**Linda Shapiro**

in memory of her husband Shep Shapiro  
and in appreciation of Cantor Sonett-Assor

**Kristin and Gary Friedman**

in memory of her mother Laurace James  
and in appreciation of Cantor Sonett-Assor

**Myrna and Bob Getz**

in memory of Steven Getz, brother of Elise  
Flagg and Helene Getz

**Jewish Music and Spirituality Fund****Sandy and Paul Schiffman**

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**TALMUD TORAH - LEARNING****Early Childhood Center Fund****Kathy and Andrew Litton****Norman L. Blumstein Youth Scholarship Fund****Ellen and Bill Blumstein****Morgan and Marjorie Miller Scholar in Residence Fund****Flo Sinsheimer**

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**Fran Scheffler-Siegel and Steve Siegel**

in memory of Ivie Rader, wife of Bruce Rader  
and daughter-in-law of Harriet Rader

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in appreciation of WRT clergy

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in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

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**Social Impact and Community Engagement Fund****Nancy Friedlander and John Hosken**

in honor of Rabbi Alissa Platcow's installation

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**CHAVURAH - COMMUNITY****Caring Community Fund****Carole Mitchel Lotus****Marion Stern**

in appreciation of Chair Yoga

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in honor of the marriage of their daughter  
Abbey Liebman to Joshua Garay  
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**Rachel Miller and Kent Becker**

in memory of her parents Ann and Bill Miller

**Charles and Cliff Brandeis**

in memory of their parents Renee and Eric  
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and in appreciation of Amy Rossberg and  
Mikayla Samolsky

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in memory of Miriam Frydman, mother of  
David Frydman  
and Herbert Stanley Rubin, father of Susan  
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**Pam Heukerott**

in appreciation of the Caring Community

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