Westchester Reform Temple

WRTimes

WINTER 2026-2027

Hineini - Answering the Call











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Hineini - Answering the Call

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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.

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Rabbi Blake's Message

Dear WRT Family,

As we head into the winter months, I share with you the remarks I delivered to the congregation on Kol Nidre. I hope they will remind us that even when the sun is low on the horizon and daylight hard to find, our faith brings us so much beauty, hope, and--above all--love. With wishes for a happy secular new year! ***(Transcript of Rabbi Blake's Kol Nidre 5787 Sermon from September 20, 2026.)***

What Are We Doing Here?

I can tell from the sheepish look how the conversation is going to go even before the office door closes behind us. "I really don't know why I'm here, rabbi," it begins. "I'm not religious." "And I don't believe in God."

I answer: "Now that that's out of the way, what brings you here?"

I imagine some of you feel something like this every time this season rolls around. Maybe you think to yourself, "Why do I do this? I don't even believe in organized religion."

But, here we are.

So now that that's out of the way, can we talk about what brings us here?

This is a love letter to all of us who are wondering what we're doing here. (And, no worries, I love all of you who aren't wondering, too.) But for all the wonderers and the wanderers: come in, get comfortable. Maybe you don't believe in God. Or organized religion. Or even disorganized religion. Or maybe you don't know what you believe. You're not alone. Trust me. Just look around.

And let me be bolder still: you're in luck. Because while Judaism is religious, it is really so much more than what modern people usually mean when they say "religion."

Tonight, on the holiest night of the year, let's come up with a better way of understanding what we're doing here.

What are we doing here?

In the narrowest sense, we're here for Kol Nidre. I know people – you probably do too – who become dues-paying members of a synagogue for this one service, this one prayer.

Kol Nidre actually argues against Judaism as a religion. If Judaism were just a religion, you'd expect a prayer to headline the holiest night of the year; if a belief system, a creed, a profession of faith.

But Kol Nidre isn't a prayer. For starters, there's no Baruch Ata Adonai – no mention of God at all. It's not in Hebrew. It's in Aramaic, the ancient Jewish vernacular – the language of commerce and contracts – and, fittingly, Kol Nidre is a dry legal instrument that annuls vows.

Kol Nidre first appears in the literature as a formula for invalidating vows taken over the past year. In the 9th Century, Natronai Gaon, head of the Rabbinic Academy of Sura in Babylonia, condemned it as a dangerous legal practice. An entire congregation cannot have its vows collectively annulled this way, he argued; such matters must be weighed case by case. His successor Amram Gaon called the recitation of Kol Nidre a minhag shtut, a "foolish custom." For centuries, authority after authority agreed.

Then something happened. In 12th Century France, some of the greatest legal minds of the age declined to condemn and instead repaired the text, changing it from past tense to future, so that Kol Nidre preemptively releases vows made between this Yom Kippur and the next. They gave technical explanations, but I suspect the real reason: they knew the people would never give it up.

Kol Nidre also created an optics problem for us: Gentile onlookers concluded that a Jew's oath couldn't be trusted, a pretext Christian communities used to force Jews to swear special oaths in court. This, despite the fact that Kol Nidre only ever could annul vows between people and God. It could never cancel a promise owed to another person — no debt, no contract, no obligation, no injury.

In 1839, Samson Raphael Hirsch, father of Modern Orthodoxy, abolished Kol Nidre from his first congregation but it reentered

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the service not long after. Our Movement originally cut the text of Kol Nidre from the machzor, but, and this is truly astonishing, the melody stayed: the Union Prayer Book kept a service called Kol Nidre in which the ancient chant was played on the organ, the words gone, the tune untouchable. Gates of Repentance eventually restored the full text because the people wanted it back.

The real story of Kol Nidre is this: the authorities opposed it for a thousand years – restricting it, revising it, removing it. But the Jewish people refused to give it up. They packed the synagogue for it. They named the holiest night of the year after it. And they did so, manifestly, not because of its content, but because of the melody and the moment, the experience of standing together as a People as the sun sets, with the Torah scrolls brought forth from the Holy Ark and the ancient chant rising from the depths.

What begins its strange and strangely durable life as a dusty legal technicality ends up, instead, as a magnificent window into the genius of Judaism. Kol Nidre teaches us that Judaism is not merely a religion, but a civilization – in which the common folk may ultimately prevail over even the greatest Rabbis who ever lived. Not a belief system, but a conversation – one in which every voice adds its unique Torah to the treasure-house of accumulated Jewish wisdom. Not a faith, but an invitation to awe – to feel the sacred within the dross of our frail and fleeting existence.

A civilization.

A conversation.

An invitation.

Three answers, I think, to the question we carried in here tonight: What are we doing here?

So another question. Have you ever heard of a game called Methodist Geography?

No, because, that's not a thing.

Methodists are united by creed and church. Methodism is a religion. Methodists don't play Methodist Geography.

Judaism, in contrast, is a civilization. Other religious traditions have rich cultures and communities, of course. But Jewish belonging has a particular thickness to it: we are united by peoplehood, a shared sense that a fellow Jew is mishpoche, family. Jewish Geography is our favorite pastime. Someone who wants to know what synagogue you belong to is most likely not trying to size up your theology. It's about the people. Especially now that even Jalen Brunson's got game.

Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, architect of Reconstructionist Judaism, built his entire body of teaching on exactly this idea in his 1934 book, *Judaism as a Civilization*: Toward a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life.

Rather than work within the traditional conception — God revealed the Torah to Moses at Sinai and gave it to the People of Israel — Kaplan inverted the flowchart: Judaism begins with the People of Israel, who wrote the Torah to capture their experience of the Divine, and to express the claims that experience makes on our lives.

So yes, we're a religious civilization, but religion is only one piece of our identity. What makes Judaism Judaism also comes from our shared languages and culture, our folkways and our food-ways; our ethics and our arguments; our Nobel prizes and our genetic disorders; our pride when a fellow Jew succeeds and our shame when a fellow Jew does something disgraceful; our sense of shared history and shared destiny; our neuroses and psychic fixations; our music, literature, and art; and our humor – especially the inside jokes. Ordering pastrami on white bread with mayonnaise at the deli may be kosher, but it sure isn't Jewish.

I think if we all related to Judaism as a civilization, we'd have a lot less Jewish guilt, a lot less "I'm not a good Jew," and a lot more comfort and joy in Jewish settings. No one in this room is "less Jewish" for what you do or do not believe.

Judaism-as-civilization also rebuts the argument that we can divorce Judaism from Israel. If Judaism were just a religion, sure – one could be Jewish with no connection to Israel whatsoever. But we're more than what we pray or believe: we are an Am, a people, the collective expression of just under sixteen million Jews, nearly half of whom live in Israel – a civilization within the civilization. Our civilization has carried the land in its history and memory for three thousand years: in our calendar and customs, our poetry and yearning.

Israel is not the whole of Judaism, of course. But neither can we tell the story of Judaism while pretending that Israel is irrelevant to our peoplehood.

You may fall in and out of love with Israel. You may be proud of Israel, worry over Israel, kvell over Israel, weep for Israel, argue about Israel at the break-fast tomorrow. Go ahead, it's okay. Because in the Jewish civilization, arguing is not the opposite of belonging; it is often a form of belonging.

And that takes us to our second insight: that Judaism is a conversation – one in which every voice adds its unique Torah.

Kol Nidre itself, you will recall, is Exhibit A: the people defied their Rabbis and kept it right where they wanted it.

You came here tonight to be part of that conversation – a conversation about, well, everything. The Talmud is a conversation spanning centuries, among hundreds upon hundreds of rabbis who lived lands and generations apart: a great unfolding of arguments, as dense as kugel, as layered as baklava, as deep as the profoundest questions of philosophy, cosmology, psychology, law and life.

"Judaism," my friend and rabbi Larry Hoffman likes to say, "is a conversation in a register that does justice to the human condition."

I was thinking about that line this summer as I walked through Auschwitz with Cantor Kleinman, fifty members of our WRT family, and four educators: two Israeli and two Polish. Judaism is a conversation in a register that does justice to the human condition.

Here we stood, on a late June day in the heat wave blanketing Europe, in that most inhuman place, where the Nazis murdered a million of our people, and a hundred thousand others – Poles, Roma, Sinti, Soviet prisoners of war – either through a slow death of forced labor, disease, and starvation at Auschwitz, or a terrifyingly abrupt end in the gas chambers and crematoria of Birkenau just up the road. And I thought about what Judaism had to say to us who came to bear witness.

For some who entered the camps, piety – the specifically religious part of Judaism – sustained them. I thought of Eli Sharabi, an Israeli abducted by Hamas on October 7th, whose 491 days in captivity in the foul tunnels of Gaza inform his memoir, *Hostage*. When I interviewed him on this bimah last December, he told us that – never having thought of himself as religious – he and his fellow captives drew strength from making kiddush on Friday nights with what little water their captors provided.

His story reminds us that ritual and prayer can hold the hearts and souls of the suffering when all other words fail or fall away.

The moment came for Cantor Kleinman and me to lead a short service of memorial. Standing, sweltering, seeking the meager shade of a cattle car preserved in the vast expanse of the extermination camp, we found ourselves craving and creating ritual. The moment needed our attention. It needed Kaddish. It needed a melody older than our grief.

It did not need many words, and I did not have many. What I had was this:

Judaism didn't come into the world to make us more observant, or make us more fervent believers. Judaism came into the world to help us become more fully human. More human, so that we could see the brokenness and be the repair, so that we could stand in the darkness and be a light.

Hillel gave us six words that Auschwitz turned into a commandment: Bamakom she-ein anashim, hishtadel lihyot ish. "In a place where no one is a human being, strive to be human" (Pirkei Avot, 2:5).

Auschwitz tells us, with unbearable force, why Jewish safety and sovereignty matter, why the world needs Israel. Yet just as much Auschwitz teaches, with terrible clarity, why the world needs Judaism: a conversation that insists on the sacredness of every human life.

As the world becomes, day by day, more inhuman, can we be a force for this humanizing holiness? Can we once again live inside that conversation that does justice to the human condition? That is the real work of this day.

I'll let you in on a secret. Getting to that conversation requires that we first stop talking long enough to pay attention: to notice, in silence, the person in front of us, the lives surrounding us, the world holding us.

Which brings us to the third answer.

Judaism is, above all, an invitation to awe. And I want you to hear it from one of its greatest proponents. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel fled Warsaw just weeks before the Nazi invasion, rescued by the President of Hebrew Union College, our seminary. His mother and three of his sisters were not saved. This man, an ember plucked from the flames, is the one who spent the rest of his life teaching that the ground note of Jewish existence is amazement.

For Heschel, amazement isn't a reaction to the unusual; it's the baseline posture Judaism invites us to adopt toward all of existence, the mundane no less than the magnificent.

Awe is what we feel gazing out from the mountaintop. But it's also there in a perfect scoop of gelato. In the look from your loved one that means something only the two of you know. In waking up after a good night's sleep. In the sound of your grandchild's laughter. For Heschel, the capacity "to experience commonplace deeds as spiritual adventures" is "one of the goals of the Jewish way of living" (*God in Search of Man*, 1955, p. 49).

If you are capable of being astonished, you are already on the starting line of a Jewish life. Everything else flows from awe: the ability to see another human being not as an object to be exploited but as an image of the holy; the willingness to live in covenant with creation, as partners in mending a broken world; the bravery to show up amidst that brokenness and still carry ourselves with gratitude for the mystery and majesty of it all.

We stand at every moment, in this too-short life, in a world where heart-stopping beauty and heart-rending pain intersect. Judaism invites us to stop, regularly, to answer the world with the only response it deserves: our awe.

These are, after all, Days of Awe, Yamim Nora'im. Our tradition named them after an experience, not a belief. No one will leave this sanctuary having signed a creed. Everyone can leave having felt something true: what forty generations have felt when the melody of Kol Nidre begins.

We would – if we stopped and took notice – make not just these ten days in September, but every day after, days of awe, lowercase. Let the way we see and treat each human being, each image of the Divine, be our living and breathing Judaism. Let our conversation do justice to the human condition and our deeds give honor to the civilization of the Jewish people. And even when no one else is acting like a human being, let our Judaism remind us to strive to be as human as we can be.

So the next time you find yourself at my door, and you feel the old disclaimer coming on – "I'm not religious, but..." – just come into my office. Because now you know: that was never the question. You are a cherished part of a civilization. You are an essential voice in the conversation. You are invited tonight, and every day you draw breath, to live in awe.

And that is what we're doing here.

G'mar Chatimah Tovah.

The real story of Kol Nidre is this: the authorities opposed it for a thousand years – restricting it, revising it, removing it. But the Jewish people refused to give it up.

Cantor Kleinman's Message

Cantor Amanda Kleinman



WRT has long held inclusion as a core value of our community. In the early 2000s, our lay leader, Susan Wiener, *z"l*, together with a core of dedicated volunteers, spearheaded the creation of our Inclusion Task Force with the goal of ensuring full inclusion of congregants with disabilities in temple life. In the ensuing years, the Inclusion Task Force led our congregation through groundbreaking work in accessibility, education, and advocacy, helping us achieve recognition in 2015 as a Disabilities Inclusion Exemplar Congregation by the Union for Reform Judaism.

Around that time, at a meeting of the Inclusion Task Force, a member of the task force, who had a young child with a physical disability, asked, "If this is such an inclusive community, then why don't the other children in the neighborhood ever invite my child to play basketball with them?" It was a painful reminder that, as challenging as it can be to implement systemic change, effecting cultural change can prove even more difficult. No matter what progress we have achieved, and no matter what systems, policies, and programs we've implemented, creating a true culture of inclusion, an environment in which every member of our community feels a genuine sense of belonging, requires consistent, ongoing work and reevaluation.

To that end, I am proud to share that through a special grant from WRT's Rabbi Richard J. Jacobs and Susan K. Freedman Fund for Innovation in Jewish Life, WRT has engaged Matan, a Jewish nonprofit dedicated to providing education and training to Jewish organizations around best practices in the inclusion of people with disabilities, to partner with us over the course of the next year. As part of our participation in Matan's Inclusion Community Assessment, Planning and Strategy (CAPS) program, we will undergo a comprehensive assessment of our synagogue's practices, from our educational programs and communications, to our physical accessibility and programmatic offerings. Matan's staff will conduct dozens of interviews with members of our congregation and staff and will conduct a multi-day site visit to observe our community and tour the synagogue. Following their conversations and observations, Matan will provide us with a report and a set of recommendations to help guide the next phase of our work. I am deeply grateful to partner with the lay chair of this initiative, Jessica Zweifach. If you have any questions, or if you would like to offer input or share your own experiences, please reach out to us.

Susan Wiener used to boil down her philosophy of inclusion to three words: "Inclusion is participation." As a member of the Inclusion Task Force reminded us over a decade ago when she shared her child's experience, the ostensible simplicity of our shared goal belies the challenge of making it a reality. We look forward to engaging together in this process as we continue the sacred work of making our beloved spiritual home a true place of belonging, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, "a house of prayer for all people."

Cantor Amanda Kleinman

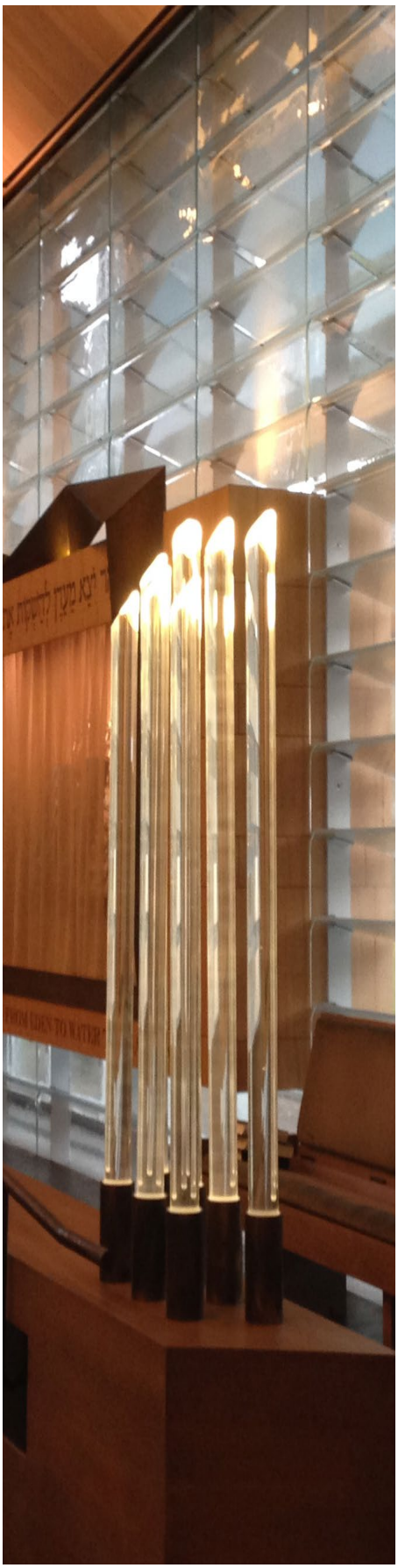
Save the Date

Cantor in the Kitch: *A Persian Feast*

Monday, March 22, 2027 at 7:00 pm

Set the table for an unforgettable evening of Persian flavors, music, megillah and storytelling!

Join Cantor Leslie Niren for a celebration of Persian Jewish culture through food, song, and shared traditions. Discover the rich history of Jews in Iran, explore the vibrant flavors and culinary traditions passed down through generations, enjoy a live cooking demonstration and savor a beautifully curated tasting of Persian dishes. An evening of delicious food, rich traditions, and meaningful connection! More details and registration coming soon!



Avodah: Worship and Spirituality

Kabbalat Shabbat

Fridays at 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/
WRT Facebook - www.facebook.com/WestchesterReformTemple/
WRT YouTube - www.youtube.com/user/WRTempleNY

Please check the calendar, our weekly email updates and website for any changes due to special programming such as Lab Shabbat.

Lab Shabbat

Friday, December 11, January 29, March 5, 5:30 – 6:45 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

Friday, January 8, February 26, April 2, May 14, 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.

Shabbat B'Yachad

Saturday, December 5, January 23, March 6, March 27, June 5



Join us for the inaugural year of our new intergenerational Shabbat morning initiative, Shabbat B'yachad (Shabbat together). The morning will begin with a participatory musical Shabbat morning service led by our clergy. Following the service, we'll enjoy a community oneg and then a study for adults, taught by a member of our clergy team or a visiting scholar. A separate youth program, led by members of our JLL team, will take place during the study.

Services and Events

Celebrate Chanukah with Cantor In The Kitch! Food. Music. Community.

Wednesday, December 2 at 7:00 pm



Celebrate Chanukah with Cantor Leslie Niren and special guest Rachel Simons, founder of Seed + Mill and author of *SESAME*. Enjoy a Chanukah-inspired catered buffet dinner featuring recipes from *SESAME* alongside creative twists on beloved Chanukah classics. The evening will also feature live cooking, music, storytelling, and plenty of opportunities to connect.
Sponsored by the WRJ and FreeBirds.

Chanukah at WRT! Chanukah Pre-Neg & Kabbalat Shabbat Service

Friday, December 4 at 5:30 pm



Come celebrate the first night of Chanukah at WRT with a special pre-neg with Chanukah treats! Performances by the youth and adult choir at services will make the evening festive.



Chanukah Shabbat B'Yachad

Saturday, December 5 at 9:00 am

Milk and Cookies

Thursday, December 8, 4:00 - 4:45 pm

All young children and their families are invited for "Milk and Cookies with the Cantor." Together we will light the Chanukiah, say the Chanukah blessings and sing Chanukah songs all while enjoying oreo cookies and milk. Children (and adults) are welcome to come in their pajamas.

Community Candle Lighting

Friday, December 11 at 5:00 pm

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

Shabbat Shirah with Special Guest Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or

Friday, January 22 at 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 a special guest from Israel, Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or.

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.

Shabbat B'Yachad with Special Guest Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or

Saturday, January 23 at 9:00 am

Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or will be with us for this Shabbat B'Yachad that will be full of songs in honor of Shabbat Shira.

Special Kabbalat Shabbat Service Honoring Cantor Merkel, *z"l*

Friday, February 26 at 6:15 pm



This February marks the 20th yahrzeit of Cantor Stephen Merkel, *z"l*, WRT's beloved Senior Cantor from 1988-2007. In addition to being an inimitable interpreter of Jewish music, Cantor Merkel was a lifelong "Yiddishist" who shared the beauty of Yiddish music, language, and culture with our community. Please join us for a special Shabbat service featuring our cantors and volunteer choir to honor Cantor Merkel's legacy through music and reflection.



Talmud Torah: Adult Education


Rabbi Jonathan Blake


Cantor Amanda Kleinman


Rabbi Alissa Platcow


Jane Roberts

Antisemitism, Antizionism & How We Meet This Moment

Three Thursdays: December 3, 10 & 17, 10:15 – 11:45 am. *In person, live-streamed, and recorded.*

The world's oldest hatred keeps learning new languages. In three sessions, Rabbi Blake traces antisemitism through its primary sources: the anti-Jewish polemics embedded in ancient scripture, the blood libels and expulsions of medieval Christendom, the racial pseudoscience of the Nazis, and the strange afterlife of Nazi and Soviet propaganda in today's antizionism. Along the way, we will face the hard questions. When does criticism of Israel cross a line, and who gets to draw it? Why does this hatred mutate and persist? And what does this moment ask of us, as Jews and as a community? Come for the history. Leave equipped to meet the moment.

Rosh Chodesh 5787 Led by Cantor Amanda Kleinman

Tuesdays, December 8, January 26, March 9 at 11:30 am *(at WRT)*

Join Cantor Kleinman and a diverse group of women for a monthly, midday infusion of study and sharing. We will be reading *As a Jew* by Sarah Hurwitz. We will also ground ourselves in Jewish time with a short study around the Jewish calendar at each session. We will come together as a community to celebrate happy occasions, and to hold space for one another in times of challenge or healing.

Advanced Hebrew Bible Class: A Study Of Tanach Led by Jane Roberts

Wednesdays, 10:00 – 11:30 am *(via Zoom)*

Students must have knowledge of Torah, Hebrew roots and basic Hebrew vocabulary, and a familiarity with the Siddur. For more information about sign-up and fees, please contact Jane Roberts at janerteach@aol.com.



Adult B'nei Mitzvah Service and Celebration

Saturday, May 1, 2027, 10:00 am

There is no perfect moment to begin. Life's demands never disappear, but Torah invites us to make room for learning anyway. Over the past year, ten members of our community have done exactly that, studying with Rabbi Alissa Platcow to become B'nei Mitzvah. They have devoted countless hours to learning Hebrew, exploring Jewish tradition, and deepening their prayer practice.

Join us on Shabbat morning, May 1, as they ascend to the Torah, lead us in prayer, read from our sacred text, and share their own words of Torah. ***We can't wait to celebrate with you!***

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 or call the temple office at 914-723-7727.

Evening Book Group

Tuesdays, 7:30 – 9:00 pm
December 15 *(at WRT)*
January 19 *(via zoom)*
February 16 *(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 Eve Landau at elal2922@gmail.com



President's Message

Steven Masket

As Hanukkah approaches, I revel in the joy of sharing this holiday with my son, Alex, as he lights the candles. For our family, that small thing is a big thing, emblematic of the journey we have been on together. The lights of Hanukkah draw us together and are another ritual and symbol that call out for us to respond "Hineni."

Being an inclusive community has always been important to WRT and this year we are reexamining how we respond to the call. Matan, a non-profit devoted to enhancing disability inclusion in Jewish communities is working with us to conduct an assessment of our practices and our needs, focused on all aspects of congregational life. I invite all who want to share their thoughts and experiences to participate in the effort.

Matan will work to understand and identify the context, needs, goals, and challenges to inclusion that currently exist within our WRT community. The outcome will be prioritized recommendations and an implementation plan to move from aspiration to action, with measurable steps. We are excited to be working with Matan. This initiative is being funded by a grant from WRT's Rabbi Jacobs & Susan Freedman Fund for Innovation in Jewish Life.

We had our first Pre-Neg of the year at the end of October. It was a wonderful opportunity for us to meet many of our newest members and for them to meet each other before Friday night services. We will have more such opportunities throughout the year, some before services and sometimes after services. Please watch the weekly e-blast for upcoming dates. No RSVP is needed.

We also had our first Shabbat B'Yachad (Shabbat Together) at the end of October. Shabbat B'Yachad is our new congregational morning service combining prayer, music, Torah, learning, conversation, and a community bagel brunch. We hope you will join us and share your thoughts about the experience as we continue to explore the ways that we can build community together. Mark your calendars for all of the upcoming Shabbat B'Yachad dates- December 5, 2026, and in 2027, January 23, March 6, March 27 & June 5.

Whether you want to be nurtured or to nurture others; or whether you need to feed your brain, feed your soul, or feed others: WRT is calling out to you to engage.

Through spiritual exploration, learning, social action, Israel, or simply participating in the life of our congregational community, WRT encourages you to gather, act, and be inspired.

The Festival of Lights reminds us of the importance of community at WRT. As we contemplate the implications of the recent close elections both here and in Israel, let us be a community that builds bridges of understanding through learning, listening, caring and praying together.



Steven Masket, WRT President

OFFICERS

President
Steven Masket

Vice Presidents
Jeff Gelles
Lori Gertzog
Adam Hellegers
Jon Mark
Nicole Risener

Treasurer
Michael Gorelick

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Andrew Levine

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Jodi Barrow
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Allison Block
Emily Cohn
Mallorie Corcoran
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Howard Elman
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Michael Leibert
Jeffrey Mutterperl
Cynthia Samwick
Eric Scheffler
Jonathan Siegel
Mara Steiner
Brooke Vaupen
Jessica Weiland
Mauri Zemachson
Jessica Zweifach

President, Women of Reform Judaism
Sarah Kagan

Co-Presidents, Men of Reform Judaism
Robert Meyerson
Michael Simberkoff

ECC Co-Chair
Jessica Weiland

FreeBirds

FreeBirds Winter Film Series | *Hineni: Answering the Call*

When God calls to Abraham, to Moses, to young Samuel, the answer is a single Hebrew word: Hineni, "Here I am." It promises presence, not certainty. This winter, FreeBirds will sponsor three films about people who hear a call in a critical moment and must decide, quickly and imperfectly, how to answer. Join Rabbi Blake for screenings and conversation on three Sunday afternoons, 2–5 pm at WRT. Refreshments provided; open to all.

Footnote (Israel, 2011)

Sunday, January 10, 2027 at 2:00 pm



Two Talmud scholars, a father and son, have spent their lives as rivals in the same Jerusalem department. When the Israel Prize is announced, a clerical error forces the son to choose between the truth and his father's long-awaited moment of recognition. Joseph Cedar's sly, Oscar-nominated comedy asks what we owe the people we love when honesty and loyalty point in opposite directions. In Hebrew with English subtitles.

Who Will Write Our History (2018)

Sunday, January 24, 2027 at 2:00 pm



In the Warsaw Ghetto, historian Emanuel Ringelblum and a secret band of writers, teachers and rabbis answered catastrophe with pen and paper, assembling an archive of Jewish life and buried it so the world would one day know the truth. Roberta Grossman's documentary tells the story of the Oyneg Shabes and asks: when you cannot stop the darkness, how do you bear witness to it?

FreeBirds
Westchester Reform Temple

Safe Room (2026)

Sunday, January 31, 2027 at 2:00 pm



On October 7, 2023, Dr. Gedalya Fendel opened his home and safe room to strangers fleeing the attack: grandparents, a pregnant couple, and two children whose parents had been murdered. Over one harrowing day, they became a family. Following the screening, Emmy-winning director Haley Geffen joins us for a conversation about the film and the people at its heart.

This special screening of Safe Room is made possible through the generosity of our congregants Andy and Joan Frankle.

SAVE THE DATE!

Cantor's Happy Hour
Sunday, March 7, 2027

"Jews Who Rock" with Rabbi Jeff Salkin
March 18 & 25, 2027

Trip to Charleston with Rabbi Blake
April 2–5, 2027

Game Night
Thursday, May 20, 2027 at 7:00 pm



Caring Community

WE CARE: Caring Community Update

The Caring Community recently presented a three-part series to provide support to the caregivers among us: Caring Up, Down, and In: A Three-Part Series for Caregivers. Topics included: Memory Care: Supporting Loved Ones Facing Cognitive Change, Spiritual Resources for Caregivers, and The Sandwich Generation: Balancing Care for Others and Yourself.

If you are navigating any of these life challenges, the Caring Community can provide you with resources from the Alzheimer's Association, Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS), and White Plains Hospital's Caregiver Support Program.

Did you know that WJCS's social workers are available to our congregants through its Partners in Caring Program? Partners in Caring collaborates with area synagogues to further WJCS's commitment to serving the mental health, social, and educational needs of the Jewish community.

To arrange sessions with a WJCS licensed social worker, please contact: Jane Slevin, LMFT, Director of Pathways to Care, 914-761-0600 x2143; jslevin@wjcs.com. Feel free to contact Amy Rossberg at the temple with questions about our WJCS partnership.

L'Chaim, to Us!

L'Chaim, to Us! brings WRT seniors together for coffee and conversation. Each session explores a meaningful theme, such as the chapters that have shaped our lives, the traditions we cherish, gratitude, family, and friendship.

There are no lectures or expectations, just shared stories, good company, laughter, and the opportunity to learn from one another. To join us, please contact Cynthia at Cynthia.Samwick@gmail.com. We would love to see you!

Women of Reform Judaism

Celebrate Chanukah with Cantor In The Kitch! Food. Music. Community.

Wednesday, December 2 at 7:00 pm

Celebrate Chanukah with Cantor Leslie Niren and special guest Rachel Simons, founder of Seed + Mill and author of *SESAME*. Enjoy a Chanukah-inspired catered buffet dinner featuring recipes from *SESAME* alongside creative twists on beloved Chanukah classics. The evening will also feature live cooking, music, storytelling, and plenty of opportunities to connect. *Sponsored by the WRJ and FreeBirds*

WRJ Presents: Sacred Health

Friday, December 4 at 9:00 am



We'll hear from Senior Cantor Amanda Kleinman, local surrogacy lawyer Alexis Cirel, reproductive endocrinologist Dr. Anate Brauer, and Allison Tombros Korman, founder of The Red Tent Fund, which supports access to abortion. This will be an incredibly meaningful event all about fertility, family planning, maternal mental health, peri/menopause, the right to choose, and navigating antisemitism while advocating for access to reproductive health care.

Get Baked with Jake Cohen

Thursday, January 14 at 7:00 pm



WRJ is bringing nice Jewish boy Jake Cohen to WRT, and we're making a whole night of it. *The New York Times* bestselling author of *Jew-ish* and *I Could Nosh* and star of A&E's *Jake Makes It Easy* joins us for challah baking, delicious food, wine, music, and dancing. Come hungry for a spectacular grazing table featuring recipes from Jake's cookbooks, then learn his secrets to beautiful challah and discover the spiritual meaning behind this beloved Jewish tradition.

Expect plenty of laughter, noshing, and schmoozing, with a DJ to keep us dancing. Bring your cookbooks for Jake to sign and your favorite people for a night of Jewish joy you won't want to miss.
$95 WRT members | $118 non-WRT members

SAVE THE DATE!

WRJ Women's Seder

Tuesday, April 13, 2027 at 6:30 pm

WRJ WOMEN OF REFORM JUDAISM at Westchester Reform Temple

President
Sarah Kagan

Vice President for Membership
Alena Markley

Vice President for Programs and Events
Allison Weinberg

Vice President for Community Connections
Drew Kramer

Communications and Media Officer
Caryn Pitchon

Secretary
Rachel Berk

Treasurer
Alice Gorelick

Immediate Past President
Frances Scheffler Siegel





Men of Reform Judaism

American Jewish Series with Professor Joellen Zollman

Wednesday Evenings March 24, March 31 and April 7, 2027
(via Zoom)

Westchester Knicks at the County Center

Date to be announced.

WRT/MRJ Blood Drive

Date to be announced.





MRJ
MEN OF REFORM JUDAISM
Westchester Reform Temple

Co-President
Bob Meyerson
Michael Simberkoff

Vice Presidents
Joe Levine
Mark Lewis
Jeff Simon
Eugene Weissman

Treasurer
Lee Goldsmith

Secretary
Michael Grant

Board Member
Jay Landau

SAVE THE DATE!

A World of Passover Celebration

Tuesday, April 6, 2027 at 6:00 pm

Welcome to New Members!

We would like to extend a hearty welcome to new members who have joined as of October 31:

Bari Weiss & Daniel Ayeroff
Sarah & David Benedek
Randi & Andrew Berdon
Lisa & Josh Berman
Alex de Winter & Andrew Blum
Randi Camhi
Elizabeth & Alexander Cherner
Sheila & Thomas Cooperman
Olivia & Benjamin Davis
Lizzie & David Drew
Alexandra & Brian Edelman
Lorie Erlich
Nicole & Max Epelbaum
Jaclyn Rosenberg & Chris Fitzpatrick
Karyn & John Geringer
Rebecca & Nicholas Ginsberg
Erin & Alexander Gitlin
Shoshana & Daniel Glaser
Vanessa & Justin Glick
Jennifer & Michael Gliedman
Kelly & Jason Goldberg
Helyn Golstein & John Ferebee
Ronnie Goldstein
Tiah & Chris Gotfredson
Abby & Brendan Hoffman
Lara Dunn & Howard Jaslow
Caitlin Kelley & Jeff Kaplan
Rebecca & Harrison Kashkin
Lindsey Schnitt & Jordan Katz
Samantha & Jordan Kennedy
Julie & Robert Kivell
Debi & Mark Klein
Betsy & Mark Kleinman
Alyssa Rapp & Adam Krause
Samantha & Ori Kravel
Sonya Kreizman
Veronica & Jake Lader
JulieAnn & Adam Lamm
Lori & Richard Landgarten
Charlotte & Jed Lenzner
Amy & Dan Leventhal
Eve & Alan Litt
Amanda & Marc Lomasky
Michelle & Jamie Magid
Julie & Gabriel Marcus
Emily & Woody Mawhinney
Sandy & Mark Mayo
Shawn Donovan & Daniel Mazori
Laurie & Larry Medvinsky
Nicole & Michael Moser
Tricia Alcamo & John Mutterperl
Ali & Andrew Pauker
Heather Landau & Daniel Pfeffer
Elizabeth Plotkin
Mia & Mitchell Rosenberg
Mallory & Ethan Ross
Iris & Erik Rudman
Tracy Liebman & Andrew Shapiro
Reana & Adam Shaw
Rachel & Tyler Schultz
Meredith & Zach Sheinberg
Evie & Fred Shvetz
Sarah & Joshua Siber
Jessica & James Smith
Jessie & Max Shnaper
Becky Diamond & Jamie Stecher
Tara & Jason Sussman
Sara & Lucas Tesoriero
Sammi & Reid Title
Alexandra & Mario Tuchman
Ellen & Shaun Varga
Lindsay & Jordan Zaken
Nicole & Colin Zelicof
Suzanne & Michael Ziegelbaum

WERE YOU


Spirits in the Sukkah


Caring Community Luncheon


Caring Community Luncheon


ECC First Day


WRJ Ushpizot Luncheon


Sukkot Block Party



ECC First Day

THERE?



Spirits in the Sukkah



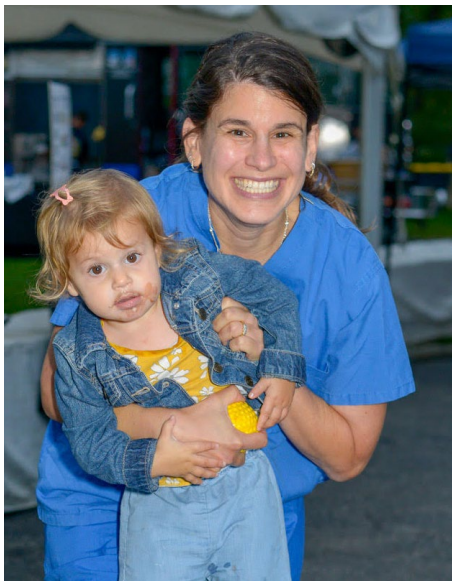
Oren Neiman Trio



Caring Community Luncheon



WRJ Ushpizot Luncheon



Sukkot Block Party



ECC First Day



MRJ Art Shamsky

Early Childhood Center (ECC)



Rebecca Roseman
ECC Director

Jennifer Brauntuch
ECC Associate Director

The Magic of Shabbat Through a Child's Eyes

Every Friday morning, there is a moment in our ECC that we look forward to all week.

The children begin to gather, and somehow, they know. They know it is Friday. They know it is Shabbat. Some children are already singing the familiar melodies as they walk toward the Sanctuary. Others excitedly look for their friends or hold the hand of their teacher as they make their way inside. And when the music begins, we love watching their faces light up as they realize, I know this one.

It is in these little moments that we are reminded just how powerful Shabbat can be through the eyes of a young child.

Every Friday at Westchester Reform Temple's Early Childhood Center, our children make their way into the Sanctuary to celebrate Shabbat with our incredible synagogue clergy. For our youngest learners, this weekly experience is about so much more than learning prayers. It is about creating memories, building community, and beginning to develop a love for Judaism that we hope will stay with them throughout their lives.

Our 2-year-olds celebrate Shabbat on their own, creating a smaller and more intimate experience. Being together in a small group allows them to learn the routines, blessings, and traditions at their own pace—and gives every child the opportunity to be right up close to the bimah. They begin to recognize the rhythm of the service and the familiar sounds of the prayers. At two years old, they may not understand every word, but they are learning something just as important: This is ours. This is something we do together.

Our 3- and 4-year-olds celebrate together in the Sanctuary each week. And because we celebrate Shabbat every Friday, the children truly begin to know the routine. They recognize the prayers and anticipate the songs. They know when to stand and when to sit. They sing familiar melodies with confidence, sometimes louder than the adults around them! What may begin as simply following along eventually becomes participation—and then, in many cases, genuine excitement and ownership.

There is something especially powerful about hearing a Sanctuary filled with young voices singing prayers that have been sung by Jewish children and families for generations.

And then there is the family connection.

Each week, one child from every class is invited to be the Shabbat Child. Their family joins us to celebrate Shabbat both in the Sanctuary and in the classroom. For our children, seeing their parents, grandparents, or other loved ones participate in this special tradition makes the experience even more meaningful. They see that Shabbat isn't simply something that happens at school. It is something that belongs to their family, their synagogue, and their Jewish community.

These moments may seem small—a child singing a familiar prayer, proudly standing beside their family, or recognizing the words of a blessing—but they are laying the foundation for something much bigger.

Jewish identity is built over time and through experience. It grows through the songs we sing, the rituals we repeat,



Upcoming ECC Events

the people with whom we celebrate, and the feelings of belonging that accompany those experiences. When a young child learns that Friday means Shabbat, that Shabbat means gathering together, and that these beautiful prayers and melodies are part of who we are, we are helping to establish a lifelong connection to Judaism.

As adults, we sometimes think about Jewish education in terms of what children need to learn—the prayers they should know, the traditions they should understand, the holidays they should recognize. But young children teach us that Jewish identity begins somewhere much simpler.

It begins with a feeling.

It is the feeling of hearing a familiar melody and knowing the words.

It is the feeling of standing beside your friends in the Sanctuary.

It is the feeling of seeing your teacher smile as you sing.

It is the feeling of holding your parent's hand during a blessing.

It is the feeling of knowing that you belong.

Our hope is that these Friday mornings become part of the fabric of our children's childhoods. That years from now, they will hear a familiar Shabbat melody and be transported back to their preschool days—to the Sanctuary at Westchester Reform Temple, to their teachers and friends, and to the joy of singing together.

And perhaps that is the true magic of Shabbat through a child's eyes.

It doesn't have to be complicated. It is a familiar song. A beautiful blessing. A Friday gathering. A child's hand held by a parent or teacher. A room filled with children's voices.

These are the moments that become memories.

And these are the moments that help our children fall in love—with Judaism, with prayer, with song, and with the joy of being part of a Jewish community.



Tot Shabbats:

Fridays: January 8, February 26, April 2, May 14, 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.

ECC Enrollment for the 2027-2028 school year

Limited spaces are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Chanukah Celebration – *Milk and Cookies with the Cantors:*

Tuesday, December 8, 4:00 - 4:45 pm

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

ECC Cocktail Party

Thursday, March 11, 7:30 - 10:00 pm

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 18, 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.

Purim Palooza

Sunday, March 21, 3:00 - 5:00 pm

Come in costume and enjoy carnival games and noshes!

Virtual Trip to Israel:

Wednesday, May 12

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.

Truck Day

Wednesday, May 19

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!

New Family Welcome

Thursday, May 20, 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.



Jewish Learning Lab (JLL)

Rabbi Leah Citrin

Associate Rabbi & Jewish Learning Lab Director

Rededication at the Jewish Learning Lab

Chanukah means "dedication," and this season at JLL, we're celebrating what we've dedicated ourselves to: learning, community, and creating together. We'll mark the holiday on December 11 at Lab Shabbat, with our 3rd graders helping to lead us. Our 2nd graders will take their turn on January 29. And on February 5 and 6, our 6th graders and their parents will gather together for the Shabbaton, where community is built and the b'nei mitzvah process is explored. In between, our 3rd and 4th graders will gather for their much-loved Tu B'Shvat seder, celebrating the New Year of the Trees with fruit, and song.

Our hands-on family projects, made possible by The Rabbi Richard J. Jacobs and Susan K. Freedman Fund for Innovation in Jewish Life, are off to a wonderful start. Our 1st graders created leaves for a Tree of Life Torah installation that we will dedicate at some point this winter. Our Kindergarteners have since had their own turn at the table with guest artist Yael Frankel Jaffe. The joy in those rooms, with grown-ups and kids shoulder to shoulder with clay, has been a delight to witness (see the photos!). Next up are our 5th graders, who will explore their Hebrew/Jewish names through clay on December 13 and 15. Our 2nd graders are still to come, so stay tuned.

Behind the scenes, our educators are rededicating themselves, too. On December 13 and again on February 28, our teaching team will continue their work with consultant Dr. Tim Verduin to deepen our understanding of student behavior and strengthen how we support every learner. And thanks to the Class Parent Committee, sign-ups for classroom projects and events are now open for the whole year. Whether you can join us for one morning of creating or help behind the scenes, we'd love to have you. We hope you'll find a way to be part of what we're building.

Lab Shabbat

Fridays: December 11, January 29, 5:30 - 7:00 pm

December 11 with Chanukah Celebration and 3rd Grade Participation
January 29 with 2nd Grade Participation
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.





Other Dates:

December

December 6
Family T'filah (9 am - 9:30 am)

December 11
Lab Shabbat

December 13 and December 15
Parent/Child Ceramics project in 5th grade

December 19- January 3
NO JLL (Winter Break)

January

January 10
Family T'filah (9 am - 9:30 am)

January 29
Lab Shabbat

February

February 5- February 6
6th Grade Shabbaton

February 7
Family T'filah

February 13- February 21
NO JLL (February Break)



Mazal Tov!

Births

Amy and Ray Cooper
on the birth of their grandson Simon Isaac Silfen and to the parents Jordana Cooper Silfen and David Silfen

Jackie Cutler
on the birth of her grandson Cooper Grange Cutler
and to the parents Jillian and Conrad Cutler

Ellen and Michael Hefter
on the birth of their grandson Drew Bennett Hefter
and to the parents Risa and Steven Hefter

Laura and Scott Rog
on the birth of their daughter Lila Pearl Rog

Cynthia and Marc Samwick
on the birth of their grandson Levi Asher Samwick and to the parents Sammy and Jason Samwick

Alana and William Segel
on the birth of their son Parker Lee Segel

Meredith and Zach Sheinberg
Celia and Larry Brown
on the birth of their son/grandson Cooper Eli Sheinberg

Engagements

Anne and Mark Ellman
on the engagement of their son Matty Ellman to Lacey Goodman

Jill Kotler and Josh Frankel
on the engagement of their son Griffin Frankel to Sean Patrick Ryan

Anne Marie and Jeff Haber
on the engagement of their son Danny Haber to Alex Weyerhaeuser

Sheree and Marc Holliday
on the engagement of their daughter Danielle Holliday to Kurt Rodrigues

Alisa and Kenneth Kaplan
on the engagement of their son Austin Kaplan to Alyssa Frantz

Debbie and Jeff Radov
on the engagement of their daughter Joanna Radov to Owen Sherwood

Jessica and Josh Raskin
on the engagement of their daughter Danielle Raskin to Erik Ortiz

Suzanne Seiden and Kevin Thurm
on the engagement of their son Jason Thurm to Dara Liebeskind

Marriages

Allison and Richard Beitler
on the marriage of their son Brian to Katie Trimm

Jackie Cutler
on the marriage of her son Winston to Rachel Snyder

Lisa and Stephen Eisenstein
on the marriage of their son Jacob to Carrie McKim

Randi Goldmann and Marty Forman
on the marriage of their son Max to Marisa Hutton

Liz and Randy Guggenheimer
on the marriage of their son Brian to Meghan Faulkner

Clarissa and Steven Lefkowitz
on the marriage of their son Matthew to Samantha Sherman

Amy and David Levere
on the marriage of their daughter Caroline to Spencer Mantis

Susan Minster
on the marriage of her daughter Kelly to Zachary Becker

Susan Horn Parisi and George Parisi
on the marriage of their daughter Julie to Evan Jacobson

Catherine Ravaux-Black and Jordan Black
on the marriage of their daughter Koko to Michael Berl

Allison Spitalny Silver (ECC Staff)
on the marriage of her daughter Samantha to Matt Katz

Wendy Sklar and Douglas Birns
on their marriage

Jill Spielberg and Spencer Rothschild
on their marriage

Ruth and Andrew Suzman
on the marriage of their son Evan to Hayley Blau

Barbara and Marc Tartell
on the marriage of their daughter Jamie to Jeremy Bacon

Karen and Barry Wolf
on the marriage of their daughter Staci to Marisa Gershwin

B'nei Mitzvah

Courtney Rabb and Dan Rosen
on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Sam

Lauren and Bradley Bass
on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Liv

Dana and Brian Hirsch
on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Jenna

Sharon and Matthew Chesler
on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Phoebe

Evelyn and Jacob Adlerstein
on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Sabrina

Tracy Ogin and Jeremy Stern
on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Jackson

Abby and Heath Sroka
on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Ava

Rachel and Joshua Gottlieb
on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Alexis

Jamie and Bradley Rogoff
on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Mila

Berit and Marc Berger
on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Peyton

Victoria and Mark Landau
on the B'not Mitzvah of their daughters Sophia and Alexis

Ronna and Corey Schneider
on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Jay

Allison and Justin Arest
on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Julian

Sara and Brad Cetron
on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Elizabeth

Condolences

Bradley Bass
on the death of his mother Renee Bass

Ilene Dolins
on the death of her husband Richard Dolins

Nicole Eisman and David Gilberg
on the death of their father Stephen Gilberg

Stefanie Elman
on the death of her father Edward Joseph Martin

Tom Ferber
on the death of his mother Fernande Ferber

Barry Frey
on the death of his mother Charlotte Cove

Jackie Gerber
on the death of her grandfather Fred Birenbaum

Michael Harris, Lisa Harris, and Beth Goldfinger Signer
on the death of their mother Marcia Goldfinger

Andy Grasheim
on the death of his mother Peggy Grasheim

Michael Greene
on the death of his father Alan Greene

Danielle Holtzman and Carly Weinerman
on the death of their father Gary Hirschberg

Ellen Judson and Karen Stolzenberg
on the death of their mother Louise Shulman

Daniel Kobi
on the death of his mother Deborah Kobi

Blaine Levenson
on the death of her father Edward Legum

Debbie Prince
on the death of her mother Harriet Klein

Erika Radin
on the death of her father Burton Lipsky

Jamie Roitman
on the death of her grandfather Hirschell Levine

Steven Rotter
on the death of his father Marvin Rotter

Susan Shedlin
on the death of her husband Victor Shedlin

Ruth and Andrew Suzman
on the death of their niece Jennifer Landsberg

Sue and Les Tolchin
on the death of their son-in-law Daryl William Reisfeld

Brooke Vaupen
on the death of her father Tim Sharpe

Lindsay Zaken
on the death of her father Jeffrey Mark Krieger

Stacey Zoland
on the death of her mother Juliane Haimes

The congregation of WRT mourns
the death of our member
Louise Shulman
and extends sympathy to her bereaved family

The congregation of WRT mourns
the death of our member
Richard Dolins
and extends sympathy to his bereaved family

The congregation of WRT mourns
the death of our member
Marcia Goldfinger
and extends sympathy to her bereaved family

The congregation of WRT mourns
the death of our member
Victor Shedlin
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.

Giving at WRT

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the High Holidays and welcome the year 5787, we are reminded of the power of Hineini—"Here I am." More than a response to a sacred call, Hineini represents a willingness to show up for one another, embrace responsibility, and strengthen the community we share.

We witnessed this spirit in so many ways over the past few months: through the prayers we shared, the learning that deepens our Jewish lives, the music that brings us together, and the acts of compassion that extend beyond our temple walls. We also see it in the generosity of our members, whose commitment helps sustain the vibrant, caring, and meaningful community we cherish.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supports WRT through Inspired Giving, the Spring Celebration, and the many other ways our community comes together to ensure we remain a strong and thriving congregation. Your generosity makes it possible to go beyond membership dues and tuition to support the programs, people, and experiences that enrich Jewish life at every stage.

Looking ahead, we are excited to share that **Julie and Brad Bloom, Sydney and Jordan Solomon, and Mauri and Scott Zemachson** will chair our **Spring Celebration on Thursday, May 13, 2027.** This special evening will once again bring our community together to celebrate WRT and support its future. We look forward to sharing more in the months ahead!

As we continue answering the call together, we invite you to be part of this important work. Whether through a gift to Inspired Giving, participation in the Spring Celebration, or volunteering your time and talents, every contribution helps strengthen our sacred community.

Thank you for being part of WRT and for helping make it a place where we can pray, learn, celebrate, find comfort, and care for one another.

With deep appreciation and many thanks:

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

WRT Philanthropy Committee:
Beth Altschuler, Bryar Bernard,
Dan Bernstein, Sheryl Spivack Braun, and Sydney Solomon







Inspired Giving

Contributions received since July 1, 2026.

Cornerstone:
Betsy Stern

Guardian:
Celia and Larry Brown
Sari and Jay Canell
Susan and Jeff Goldenberg
Marjorie Miller
Ann and Fredric Price
Audrey and Richard Steuer

Visionary:
Randye and Gerald Blitstein
Mary and James Blum
Marcy Engel and Stuart Cobert
Judith West Edelman
Vera Erwich and Steven Frankel
Liz and Steve Gruber
Dara and Jon Gruenberg
Marcy and John Harris
Michael Potack
Debbie and Steven Prince
Holly and David Sherr
Hannah Shmerler
Kate Solomon and David Wasserman

Sustainer:
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Cheryl and Steven Kessner
Sara and Andrew Levine
Elaine and Steve Masket
Nancy and David Michaels
Shari and Leonard Potter
Susan and H. Lewis Rapaport

Innovator:
Amy Bauman
Beth Ehrich Berkeley and Alan Berkeley
Allison and Josh Block
Lisa and Stephen Eisenstein
Beth and Jeff Gelles
Lori and Gary Gertzog
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Ruth and Sidney Lapidus
Meg and David Lazarus
Stephie Miller
Pam Frankel-Stein and Jon Stein
Naomi and Joel Talish

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Michelle and Darren Friedman
Harriet Gruber
Janet Korins and Joe Kaufman
Debra and Jonathan Kolodner
Stephanie Blank and Jay Musoff
Diane and Stanley Vickers

Supporter:
Beth and Zachary Altschuler
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Allison and Richard Beitler
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Wendy and Howard Berk
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Perry Braun
Maud and Aaron Brown
Wendy and Michael Cohen
Betty and Stuart Cotton
Sindy and Kenneth Croen
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Erin and Eric Friedman
Kristin and Gary Friedman
Charlotte Church and Jonathan Gaines
Jennifer and Alan Goldfarb
Alice and Michael Gorelick
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Ronny and Jeffrey Hersch
Deborah and Benjamin Hochberg
Sarah and Stewart Kagan
Betsy Weiser and Eric Karp
Genette and Bruce Lieb
Linda Markowitz
Ayelet and Jason Pollack
Deborah and Gary Raizes
Paula and Daniel Reingold
Sarah Stern and Mark Rosenblatt
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Karen and Eric Scheffler
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Sharon Dizenhuz and Steven Seltzer
Robin and Gerald Silk
Suellen and Howard Singer
Jocelyn and Scott Sontag
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Carol Weiser
Bonnie and Norman Weiss

Friend:
Arlene and Robert Alin
Roy Appel
Naomi and Yigal Baruch
Janet and Lawrence Bell
Catherine Ravaux-Black and Jordan Black
Elaine and Mark Blass
in honor of Austin and Spencer Crisses B'nei Mitzvah

Eileen and Jay Bloom
Cheryl and Joel Breitkopf
Amy and Benjamin Breyer
Sara and David Cheitel
Jackie Cutler
Pamela and Glenn Dickstein
Shelley Donato
Marilyn and David Faust
Stephanie and Alan Finkelstein

Elizabeth and Glen Friedman
in honor of Allison and Josh Block

Lisa and Jeffrey Gerson
Rachel and Scott Gerwin
Susan and Howard Greenberg
Laurence Kaplan & Family
Jon Kirwin
Claire and David Kusnetz
Phyllis and George Lantos
Carole Princer Levy

Ruth and Burton Leibert
in honor of Natalie and Joshua Leibert

Keely and Keith Mann
Tom Mandel
Dale Mathias
Holly and Charles Mayer
Margot and Daniel Milberg

Susan Reed
in honor of Maddy Reemer's Bat Mitzvah

Lauren and Ed Rimland
Halina and Gary Rosenkranz
Kitt and Robert Rosenthal
Claudine Gecel and Stephen Sabba
Rachel and Guy Schaller
Linda and Dick Schapiro
Nancie and Steven Schnur
Linda and Joseph Simon
Teri and Jeffrey Stein
Paula and Roy Swartzberg
in honor of Ellen and Bob Sunness' Wedding Anniversary

Tracy and Spencer Svetcov
Suzanne Seiden and Kevin Thurm
Charles Tamarin
Sanae and David Tenembaum
Joan and Richard Toder

Beth Tomkiewicz
in honor of Fran and David Frydman

Jessica and Jeffrey Weiland
Carol and Larry Wolfe
Gilda Zalaznick

Contributions & Tributes

Received since July 17, to October 20, 2026.

SUPPORTING ALL THE PILLARS OF OUR COMMUNITY

Fund for the Generations

Debbie and Jeff Geller
in honor of the Perelman Family

Daniel Hennessy

AVODAH - SPIRITUALITY

Rabbis' Discretionary Fund

Beth Ehrich Berkeley and Alan Berkeley
in memory of Jerome White, father of Gregory White

Jeri and Andy Casden
in memory of her mother, Vivian Jaeger

Judy and Jean-Louis Chapdelaine
in memory of Harriet Klein, mother of Debbie Prince

Lisa and Stephen Eisenstein
in honor of the marriage of their son Jacob to Carrie McKim

Vicki and Jay Elkins
in honor of the marriage of their son Jordan to Marisa Kaplan

Amy and Rob Feilbogen
in memory of Harriet Klein

Ed Feinberg
in appreciation of WRT Torah Study

Dvora Fields
in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

Nancy Tarlin and Tom Ferber
in memory of his mother, Fernande Ferber

Pamela and Roger Freedman
in memory of Harriet Klein

Lori and Gary Gertzog
in memory of Harriet Klein

Lory Gilberg
in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

Susan Epps-Ginsberg and Dan Ginsberg
in memory of his parents, Ruth and Murry Ginsberg

Norma and Robert Goldberg
in appreciation of Rabbi Platcow

Barbara and Bennett Josselsohn
in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

Nancy and Stephen Karotkin
in memory of Harriet Klein

Paula and Michael Kramer
in memory of Harriet Klein

Amy and David Levere
in memory of Harriet Klein

Sandy and Mark Mayo
in memory of her parents, Rhoda and Ben Sherman

Susan Horn Parisi and George Parisi
in honor of the marriage of their daughter Julie and Evan Jacobson

Debbie and Steven Prince
in memory of her mother, Harriet Klein

Laurie Roth
in honor of the birth of Maya Lily Staehelin, granddaughter of Andrea and Kenneth Taber

Wendy and Neil Sandler
in honor of the marriage of their son Matt to Emily Michaels
and in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

Bruce Rader
in honor of Roxene Sloate

Harriet Rader
in honor of Roxene Sloate
and in honor of the birthday of Arthur Walker

Sarah Steinberg and Jordan Roker
in honor of the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Charlotte

Linda Shapiro
in memory of her husband, Melvin "Shep" Shapiro

Audrey Weinberg
in memory of Harriet Klein

Kim Reichig and Michael Ziegelbaum
in honor of the naming of their grandson Tyler Saxe and granddaughter Cloe O'Neill
and in appreciation of Rabbi Blake

Michael Alcamo
Karen and David Baranick
Rosalyn and Ronald Binday
Arlene and Lee Goldsmith
Dara and Jon Gruenberg
Gail Hoffman
Helene Lorinsky
Marjorie Miller
Brenda Stein
Debra and Alan Radov
Nancy and Kenneth Rilander
Harriet Rothkopf
Bonnie and Mitchell Rudin
Ruth and Andrew Suzman
Letty and Michael Tanchum
Susan and Barry Weisfeld

Cantors' Discretionary Fund

Lory Gilberg
in appreciation of Cantor Kleinman

Iris and Fred Green
in appreciation of Cantor Kleinman

Sarah and Stewart Kagan
in appreciation of Cantor Kleinman

Lyn Goldstein
in honor of the Bat Mitzvah of Maddy Reemer

Lisa and Michael Simon
in honor of the marriage of their daughter Charlotte to Jeremee Bornstein
and in appreciation of Cantor Kleinman

Barbara and Marc Tartell
in honor of the marriage of their daughter Jamie to Jeremy Bacon
and in appreciation of Cantor Kleinman

Joan Kagan and Max Winograd
in appreciation of Cantor Kleinman

Arlene and Lee Goldsmith
Tara and Andrew Grasheim
Dara and Jon Gruenberg
Brenda Stein
Kacey and Alec Ofsevit

Jewish Music and Spirituality Fund

Sarah and Stewart Kagan
in appreciation of Cantor Kleinman

TALMUD TORAH- LEARNING

JLL Family Fund

Erin and Matthew Bass
Erin and Brian Hamburger
Joanna and Edward Manheimer
Jill Spielberg
Emily and Daniel Sirotkin
Jessica and James Smith
Tara and Jason Sussman

JLL Special Projects Fund

Myrna and Robert Getz
in memory of their son, Steven Getz

TIKKUM OLAM- REPAIRING THE WORLD

Food and Housing Insecurity Fund

Karen and William Frommer
in honor of Harriet Croll

Anne and Jeff Haber
in honor of the engagement of their son Danny to Alex Weyerhaeuser

Carole Princer Levy
in honor of the birthday of Fran Scheffler Siegel

Nancy Abraham
Diane and Jeffrey Levin
Bonnie and Mitchell Rudin
Florence Sinsheimer
Joan and Richard Toder

CHAVURAH-COMMUNITY

Caring Community Fund

Debra and Charles Glassman
in memory of Renee Bass, mother of Bradley Bass

Joan and Michael Grant
in honor of the birthday of Eugene Weissman

Leona Kern
in memory of her mother-in-law, Anna Kern

Stephie Miller
in honor of the birthday of Harriet Gruber

Alla Kachuro
in memory of Elizaveta Lokshina

Rachel Miller and Kent Becker
in memory of her grandparents Bill Miller and Ann Miller

Stephen Katz
in memory of Edward Legum, father of Blaine Levenson

Joan and Richard Toder
in memory of her parents, Ilse and Max Brenner

Ronee Weissman
in honor of the birthday of her husband, Eugene Weissman

Marjorie Miller
Carol and Leon Jacobs
Judith Oestreich
Eleanor and Michael Simberkoff



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.**



Thank You for Supporting WRT!

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 tuition for our students.
- **The Eslyn Fund –** To encourage, promote and support educational travel to Israel for the youth of WRT.
- **ECC-The *Gan* Fund –** This fund was established to help replace and add to our beautiful *Gan* playground.
- **JLL Family Fund –** Supports gifts to families and staff in our community who experience a significant life cycle event. Your donation will also support scholarships for families in need.

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, click on the GIVE tab to access MAKE A DONATION or visit https://www.wrtemple.org/give/make-a-donation/

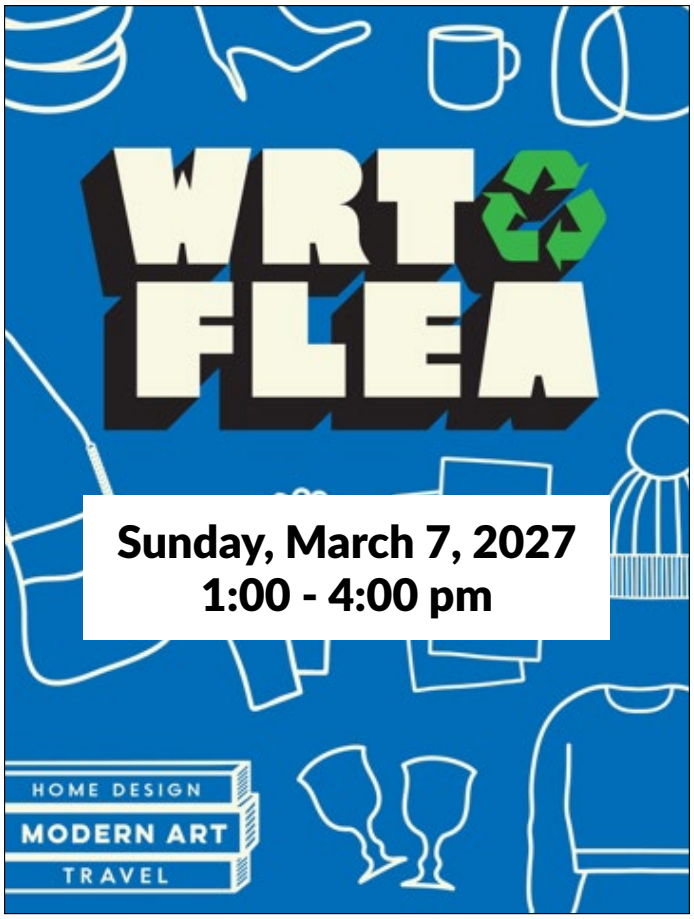
Scan QR to make a donation

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/** or call Laura Rosen Apostolou at 914-723-7727, ext. 8128.

Save the Dates





SAVE THE DATE: Thursday, May 13, 2027

Our Annual Celebration

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.

Co-Chairs: Julie and Brad Bloom, Sydney and Jordan Solomon, Mauri and Scott Zemachson.

Cantor in the Kitch

CHANUKAH

FOOD. MUSIC. STORYTELLING.

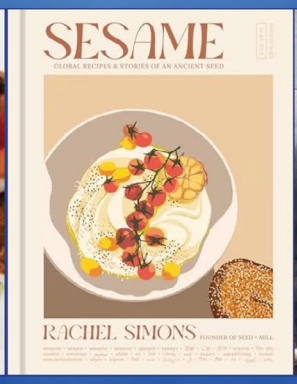


CANTOR LESLIE NIREN
Host of Cantor in the Kitch

RACHEL SIMONS
Founder of Seed + Mill, Author of SESAME

Wednesday, December 2, 2026 | 7:00 pm







RSVP Here

wrt Westchester Reform Temple

For questions, contact 914-723-7727.

WRJ WOMEN OF REFORM JUDAISM

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