



## Rabbi's Message



This year at my parents' Thanksgiving table, we each went around and shared what we were thankful for. It is an important tradition for us, one that has taken on almost religious significance. I'm sure that many of you share this practice.

What makes this tradition stand out at my family's Thanksgiving table is what happens after each person shares what he or she is thankful for: A shot of vodka. This has been going on for several years now, and is an essential moment in the dinner. So much so, that there was some last-minute scrambling when the bottle that we expected to show up didn't arrive. The tradition began when someone was abroad in Ukraine, and missing from our celebration. In her honor, we each took a shot. We have done it every year since, and at this point it wouldn't be Thanksgiving if we didn't get to watch certain members of the family grimace their way through the ritual.

The role of Thanksgiving in American Jewish life is perhaps unique. It is a non-Jewish holiday, and yet it is something that most American Jews feel comfortable (even obligated) to observe. I remember feeling determined to celebrate Thanksgiving the two times that I was abroad in November - and disappointed when I couldn't find kosher turkey to eat.

And yet, the exact interaction between Thanksgiving and Judaism is uncertain. Some rabbis hold that it needs to be made clear that it is not a Jewish holiday, and we should be certain to mark it differently than we do Jewish holidays.

At the other extreme, Rabbi Saul Lieberman, one of the most prominent teachers of Talmud at the Jewish Theological Seminary, argued that one should not recite *Tahanun*. This requires a little bit of unpacking. *Tahanun* ("supplication") is a part of the morning and afternoon services, is also known as *n'filat apayim*, "falling on one's face." It is a moment of pleading before God, a chance to recite formal as well as personal prayers of petition.

But *Tachanun* is not recited every day. We omit it on holidays and on Shabbat, which is why we rarely say it at the PJC. It is also omitted in the entire month of Nisan (as part of our joy at the exodus from Egypt), when a recently married person is present, and in several other circumstances. Rabbi Lieberman held that as Americans, we share in the joy of the rest of our nation on this day, and should leave out the penitential section of our service.

This perspective brings into focus our roles as both Jews and Americans. Rarely, if ever, in Jewish history have we found a home as open to us as America is. We take pride in the accomplishments of our country, and mourn its setbacks and failures. We are full members of society, and have an obligation to ensure that our nation lives up to its highest ideals.

One of the simplest ways that we do this is through the observance of Thanksgiving. When we focus our attention on the people and events for which we are grateful, we are able to recognize the gifts that we enjoy as residents and citizens of this nation. And hopefully, we can gain strength through these moments to work to ensure that these gifts continue to exist for generations to come.

As we said around my Thanksgiving table:

*Na Zdorovie!* (To health!)

Rabbi Alex Salzberg

[TOP](#)

## From the Desk of Our Education Director

*"Hanerot halalu, anu madlikin, al hanisim ve'al hanifla'ot, ve'al hateshu'ot, ve'al hamilchamot,  
She'asita la'avoteinu, bayamim haheim bazman hazeh.*

*These Hanukkah lights we kindle in honor of the miracles, the wonders, the salvation and the wars  
You fought, for our fathers, on those days and in present time."*

These are the words we recite as we light the [Hanukkah](#) candles, adding one candle each night, for eight nights. We celebrate the Maccabean revolt victory against the Seleucids and their Hellenistic influence in

### In this Issue

[Rabbi Salzberg's Message](#)

[Education Director Ana Turkienicz's Message](#)

[President's Message](#)

[Hanukkah Celebration](#)

[Blood Drive Scheduled](#)

[Joseph Musical to be Staged](#)

[PJC Israel Trip/ Summer 2017](#)

[PJC Library News](#)

["Share a Simcha"](#)

[Tributes & Donations](#)

### Top

### Upcoming PJC Activities & Events

#### December

**3** -- Women's Group/  
1pm

**10** -- Hooked on  
Havdalah/4:30pm

**13** -- Soup Kitchen/  
4:30pm

**18** -- Hanukkah  
Celebration/2:00pm

#### January

**8** -- Blood Drive/  
9:00am

**10** -- Soup Kitchen/  
4:30pm

**22** -- Joseph & the  
Amazing Technicolor  
Dreamcoat/1:00pm

## Quick Links

[Donate to the PJC](#)[Find us on the Web](#)[2016 Calendar](#)[2016-17 Board of Directors](#)

lights. We celebrate the [Maccabean Revolt](#) victory against the Seleucids and their Hellenistic influence in Israel during the years 167-160 BCE. On the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev, the victorious *Maccabees* rededicated the *Beit Hamikdash*, the Great temple in Jerusalem (*bayamim hahem* - on those times) and this is when we (*bazman haze* - now) light the first of the eight Hanukkah candles, on the night of the 25th of Kislev, which falls this year on Saturday night, December 24. Lights are so meaningful in Hanukkah, that it is called the "Festival of Lights" or the "Feast of Dedication".

But why do we light eight candles to celebrate that one day of rededication?

Your children will probably tell you that it's because the oil lasted for eight days when the Maccabees lit the Menorah in the Temple. They will also tell you that this is so they can receive gifts during each of those eight nights ... However, there are other reasons for the eight candles and eight nights of Hanukkah.



One reason is that the number eight has a deeper symbolic meaning in Jewish tradition. The number eight symbolizes additional perfection; from the story of Creation, we learn that the number seven is considered a symbol of completeness: Shabbat, the seventh day of Creation, was sanctified by G-d as a holy day of enjoyment of the perfection and beauty of nature. So much so that the seven branches in the biblical Menorah symbolize the idea of Divine completeness and is today the symbol of the Modern State of Israel.

On Hanukkah, we light a special Hanukkah menorah, called *Hanukkiah*, for eight days, not seven. The extra day, the eighth, symbolizes perfection that is beyond natural forces; a perfection achieved through the mystical combination of human and divine forces, for the sake of the spiritual connection between men and the Divine.

### The Ancient Menorah

For example, in biblical times, even before the Maccabees, we learn about the inauguration of the first Menorah, in the desert, from parashat "*Shmeini*" (the eighth), in the book of Leviticus, 9:11-11-27. The parsha is called "*Shmeini*" because on the eighth day, following the seven days of their inauguration, Aaron and his sons begin to officiate as *kohanim* (priests). The menorah and the *Mishkan* built in the desert by the Israelites can certainly be considered creation that transcends natural forces. They were intentionally built to allow for the enhancement of the spiritual connection between G-d and the Israelites. In this parsha, a fire issues forth from

G-d to consume the offerings on the altar, and the divine presence comes to dwell in the Sanctuary - the *Mishkan*. The crafting of the ancient Menorah and the work of Aaron the High Priest and his sons in the *Mishkan* were beyond natural perfection. It involved human effort and action towards building a visible connector with G-d. The ancient menorah was lit uninterruptedly, and it was the *Kohanim's* responsibility to keep its brilliant light shining at all times. Their sacred work began on the eighth day of the dedication of the *Mishkan*.

Similarly, the *Brit Milah*, the circumcision, which symbolizes our sacred covenant with G-d, since the time of Abraham, is performed on a baby boy's eighth day of life. It is a human action that supersedes natural forces, and therefore, becomes an embodiment of the spiritual link between each one of us and G-d, a "beyond natural perfection" act. The same idea of perfection beyond natural forces applies to the Maccabean victory. The inexplicable victory of the few maccabees against the many Seleucids enabled the ancient Menorah to be lit again in the Great Temple (*Beit Hamikdash*) in Jerusalem, and gave continuity to the symbolic light of Judaism to continue to

irradiate throughout the land of Israel. The Maccabees' actions allowed for the Menorah, the symbol of the Jewish spirit, to remain lit as an expression of the people's connection to G-d.

An additional reason for us to celebrate the eight nights of Hanukkah is that during the Seleucids' reign in the land of Israel, Jewish practices were forbidden. During the month of Tishrei preceding the victory, the Jews were not allowed to celebrate the Sukkot festival.



## A Hanukkiah

Therefore, on the day of their victory, the Maccabees declared that the festival of Sukkot would be belatedly celebrated during that week.

So the first Hanukkah, the actual Dedication Feast, was also celebrated as a Sukkot holiday, which has 8 days because of the addition of ... *Shmeini Atzeret*. By now you are already familiar with the word *Shmeini* - the eighth. *Shmeini Atzeret* is also an additional day of Sukkot, when G-d wishes to "sit" with the Jewish people for one more day in the Sukkah ...



Each one of us can also identify with the idea of extra human effort and determination overcoming natural forces, doing the "impossible" to keep our personal connection to G-d and Judaism. Many of our families juggle with conflicting demands and try their best to prioritize what is important in their homes. Managing to bring their children to Religious School on time, attending Shabbat and Junior Congregation services, having a family Shabbat dinner, celebrating Jewish holidays, performing random acts of lovingkindness, all of these achievements are certainly celebratory, they attest to the resolve to keep Judaism relevant in our lives. This year, when lighting each of our eight lights of Hanukkah, let's reflect on our personal and communal victories. On our personal and communal strength as we restate our resolve to keep the flame of Judaism alive in our families for the future generations. Let's rededicate our families' temples, and rejoice on our personal victories facing so many challenges. Let's celebrate what's beyond natural forces of perfection. The perfect combination of each and every one's effort to contribute to the uninterrupted connection between the Jewish people and G-d, our individual and communal "miracles", *Hanerot halalu* (these candles), *sheanu madlikim* (that we kindle)...*bayamim hahem* (on those days) , *bazman haze* (and in our time).

*Chag Hanukkah Sameach,*  
Happy Hanukkah,

**Ana Turkienicz**

Education Director

[TOP](#)

## President's Message



I applaud the recent publicity and public outcry against anti-Semitic attacks. It was not too long ago when swastikas were found in Pelham, and just last week on the bike path in White Plains (one which I have ridden frequently) and on a playground in Brooklyn.

But this is not a new phenomenon, and certainly not isolated to the U.S. In the U.K., incidents of anti-Semitism rose by 11% for the first 6 months of 2016, and in France, anti-Semitic crimes more than doubled in 2015 and continue to rise in 2016.

Last week, at the PJC commemoration of *Kristallnacht*, Esther Geishals spoke quite graphically to our Learning Center students

Geizhals spoke quite graphically to our Learning Center students

about her experience in Auschwitz. Her passionate and emotional words juxtaposed the atrocities of the Nazis with the humanity of ordinary people who shielded her from certain death. She reminded us of how lucky we are to be here in the U.S. with family, and in a country that offers a safe haven for those in need.

Esther's words, along with this highly charged discriminatory climate, made me think of the alternative *Al Het* prayer by Rabbi Avraham Holtz, from the Yom Kippur service, included in the *Lev Shalem Mahzor*, ... "we have sinned against you, and them, by being over cautious", "we have sinned against you and them by not using our power" and "we have sinned against you and them by complacency".

In the immortal words of Elie Wiesel: *"We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."*

At the PJC we will always take the side against those who support hatred. We will use our power as a community, to not be overcautious and call out hate speech and anti-Semitic rhetoric when we see it.

As we express in our Vision Statement:

"We will marshal our resources, realizing that our universe of moral obligation begins in the home, extends into our synagogue and among the Jewish people, into our local and national community, and then into the world".

To this end, I would like to invite ideas and specific actions that we at the PJC might undertake to develop a cohesive strategy to address the rise of hate speak and bigotry in the broader community. I look forward to hearing from you.

Darren

[TOP](#)

## Hanukkah Celebration

**Save the Date!**

**PJC Family Hanukkah Celebration  
Food, Fun, Festivities!**

**Sunday, December 18th, 2:00-4:00 pm  
At the PJC**

**All welcome, invite your friends & neighbors**

[geared to children ages 0-10]  
No charge



[TOP](#)

## Blood Drive Scheduled for January

Pelham Jewish Center  
Annual Blood Drive Sunday, Jan. 8, 2017

Whose life could you help to save?

Someone needs you !

**Heather** had a malignancy at age 5 that ultimately required the removal of several organs. She had extensive blood transfusions to support her surgeries. With the possibility of many snow storms this winter season there is an urgent need for blood donations. Regardless of weather conditions, patients in our community rely on the generosity of blood donations. Blood is perishable and only 2% of our eligible population donates! Join us, roll up your sleeves to help replenish our community



up your sleeves to help replenish our community blood supply.

**Sunday, January 8, 2017**

**9:00 am — 1:30 pm**

**In the Kiddush Room  
Pelham Jewish Center**

451 Esplande  
Pelham Manor, N.Y. 10803

Please eat and hydrate prior to your donation

Bring your donor card or identification with photo and signature

*If you have medical eligibility questions,*

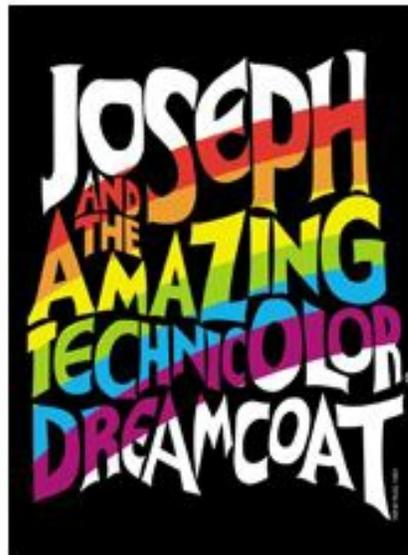
*please call 1-800-688-0900.*

 **New York** Blood Center



[TOP](#)

**SAVE THE DATE -- *Joseph* at the PJC**



Save the date for the PJC's premiere staged reading of *Joseph*  
Sunday, January 22, 2017 at 1:00pm at the PJC

[TOP](#)

**PJC Israel Trip -- Summer 2017**

Please contact [Mimi Steinberg](#) if you are interested in joining the trip or to get more information.



When we say "B'shanah Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim" this year, we really mean every word of it... and we want **YOU** to be with us and share this transformational experience.

[TOP](#)

## PJC Library News

The PJC Librarian ordered new books for our Learning Center students and young congregants. They can be found on the Library book shelves in our Youth and Children's section.

**The new titles include:**

YCarmi, Giora: *And Shira Imagined*

YMorris, Ann: *When Will the Fighting Stop?*

YSofer, Barbara: *Shalom, Haver*

YZenatti, Valerie: *When I Was a Soldier*

YBunting, Eve: *Terrible Things*

YWaldman, Neil: *The Never-Ending Greenness*

YSaypol and Wikler: *My Very Own Megillah*

YCrown, Paul: *A Torah Is Written*

YGellman, Marc: *Does God Have a Big Toe?*

YJaffe, Nina: *The Mysterious Visitor*

YBerstein, Joanne: *Dimitry: A Young Soviet Immigrant*

YLazo, Caroline: *Elie Wiesel*

YRosen, Michael: *The Golem of Prague*

YLanton, Sandy: *Daddy's Chair*



[TOP](#)

## "Share a Simcha"!

***simcha!***

"Share a Simcha" allows congregants to share their news with our PJC community. Please submit news about family members -- engagements, births, job updates, kid achievements, community acknowledgements and any other milestones to [Leah Leonard](#). This will be a

- *Mazel Tov* to Yelena Dymant and family in honor of the *Bar Mitzvah* of her son, Aidan Zusin on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

[TOP](#)

## Tributes & Donations



### Tributes to the PJC in Honor of ...

- Brian Jablowsky, in celebration of his *Bar Mitzvah*, by Marshall & Naomi Jaffe
- The Learning Center Program, by The New York Community Trust/Herbert & Edythe F. Benjamin Fund

### Tributes to the PJC in Memory of ...

- Julius & Bronia Fink, founding members of the PJC, by their sons -- Max & Sidney
- Larry Levitz, by Richard Aarons
- Larry Levitz, by Eric Friedman

### Donations to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund from ...

- Jeremy & Jennie Driesen, in honor of Jill Goldenberg, with thanks for her very meaningful and important High Holiday *d'var Torah*
- Jeremy & Jennie Driesen, in honor of Ben Yelsey, for his magnificent sounding of the High Holiday Shofar
- Richard Pine & Cheryl Agris, in memory of Cheryl's father, George Agris
- Steven & Heather Schneider, in honor of Benjy's *Bar Mitzvah*

### Donations to the PJC Library from...

- Barbara Saunders-Adams, a set of *Metsudah Chumash with Rashi*

**Make Tributes & Donations [ONLINE!](#)**

At any time, if you wish to pay by check, please make it payable to "**The Pelham Jewish Center**" and mail it to our bookkeeping firm at: The Pelham Jewish Center, P.O. Box 150, Montvale, NJ 07645. All donations to the **Rabbi's Discretionary Fund**, at any time throughout the year, should be made payable to "**The Pelham Jewish Center -- Rabbi's Discretionary Fund**" and mailed directly **[to Julia Coss at the PJC office.](#)**

Thank you!

[TOP](#)

**The Pelham Jewish Center**  
451 Esplanade  
Pelham Manor, NY 10803  
Phone: 914-738-6008 ~ Fax: 914-931-2199  
Email: [office@thepjc.org](mailto:office@thepjc.org) ~ Web: [www.thepjc.org](http://www.thepjc.org)