



אור חדש

New Light Congregation

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New Light News November 2024

The Flashlight

I was speaking to Rabbi Genack of Congregation Shaarei Torah about an innovation the synagogue introduced on Simchat Torah. After a ceremony that called to memory those who were killed in the October 7 pogrom (in the Jewish calendar it falls on Simchat Torah), they introduced a new cover for one of their Sifrei Torah. Emblazoned across the front were the words: *ayt spod v'ayt rikud*, "A time to grieve, A time to dance" from the Book of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes).

We have the ability to hold grief and dance in tension with one another. "You transformed my mourning into dancing" (Psalm 30). Leave it to the Jews to express such sorrow and then turn it around at a moment's notice and express joy in dancing. In Israel, people flock to gravesites on Memorial Day and remember young soldiers and then at sunset the festivities begin with fireworks for Independence Day. You don't get enough time to catch your breath.

In Pittsburgh this year we have a similar phenomenon. We have completed the three weeks of holidays. We have sounded the shofar. We have atoned for our sins in a somber mood of liturgy. We met our family and friends in outdoor sukkahs and wave the bouquet of plants with the sweet smelling etrog. Finally, at the end, we pray for a good rainy season and at night the Sifrei Torah are released as we parade and dance at Simchat Torah. It is a lot of work to celebrate! Then the day after the ritual season comes to an end, it is October 27th and we get sad and memorialize the Pittsburgh Eleven whose lives were taken six years ago. October/Tishrei has solemnity but mostly joy; November/Heshvan has grieving and remembrance. We hold grief and dance in tension with one another.

It is a Jewish value to not hold back. We express our emotions. That is important. But we realize that we need to be persistent and look to the next day when we are called upon to be happy and dance a little. I thought about these two emotions as we danced around the Torah and shouted out songs until we no longer had voices. I think there is a cathartic character to all of this and as much as I want to leave the holidays behind me, I acknowledge my responsibility to mark October 27th and the 18th of Heshvan (November 19) as a Jew from Pittsburgh who lived through the tragedy as did most of you. I most remember Mel, Rich, and Dan holding their respective Sifrei Torah and smiling and dancing with all their hearts. That is their legacy to us.

Rabbi



Presidents' Report

October has been devoted to remembering. We began the month by asking God to remember us in the Book of Life during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; and ended it by remembering our martyred members killed on October 27, 2018. We also added a new day of remembrance, as we mourned those massacred and still held hostage by Hamas on October 7, 2023.

MEMORIAL TO THE VICTIMS OF OCTOBER 27, 2018

Work continues on developing the Memorial on the Tree of Life property. (As an aside, there is still no word on when construction will begin). At our October Board Meeting, members of the Memorialization Working Group, including Selena Shultz, Sharyn Stein, Jodi Kart, Maggie Feinstein and Eric Lidji, presented an update on the Memorial. As presented last December, the Memorial is to be located at the corner of Shady and Wilkins Ave and will consist of a winding path featuring eleven "Books of Life" – one for each victim. Three new features have been added. First, at the entrance to the path a pillar will be constructed providing an introduction to the Memorial with a brief description of what happened on 10.27.18. Second, to the right of the pillar, a sculpture of a shattered Jewish star (shards) will be erected. Last, a twelfth plaque/Book of Life is being added to reflect the impact of those lost to their congregations.

The purpose of the presentation was to ask our reaction to the proposed language for the introductory pillar and, more importantly, to solicit our input into the creation of that twelfth plaque. Regarding the twelfth plaque, "the Memorialization Working Group would like to curate the three congregations' perspectives on how the eleven were gifts to their congregational communities so a statement can be included as part of the Memorial. Eric Lidji has been working with the families to gather their thoughts on their loved ones and the Working Group would like Eric to conduct a similar process for the congregations. Eric will conduct listening sessions with each congregation. Each congregation can structure this however they see fit and Eric is happy to do multiple sessions if it makes sense to create some smaller groups within a congregation. After Eric hears from each congregation, he will create a draft statement for approval/feedback. Thank you for being an important part of this process." (email from Selena Shultz, 10/23/24)

After discussion, the Board decided to open this request to the entire congregation. If you wish to provide input to Eric, please contact Stephen Cohen (info@newlightcongregation.org). As indicted above, Eric can meet with you individually, or if desired, as a group. Or you can express your thoughts in a letter/email that can be forwarded to Eric. Dan, Rich and Mel were the religious heart and soul of our congregation. Here is our opportunity to remember them.

ERADICATE HATE CONFERENCE

Members of the congregation joined with thousands of attendees at the fourth annual Eradicate Hate Conference at the Convention Center. The objective of the Conference is to create pathways to combat all forms of hate. Whereas the first years concentrated on identifying programs and policies to combat hate, this conference presented successful programs in operation that work. One panel, for example, examined successful programs on college campuses to educate students about how to talk about the Israel-Hamas War without creating anti-Semitic acts.

A second panel focused on a new program created by the 10.27 families. Early in the process of designing a Memorial, two goals were identified: the need for a physical Memorial and the need to educate people about anti-Semitism. Over the last few years, schools and other organizations have reached out to family members to speak to their students or members about the event. In response, the families have formed an organization, called **REACH**, to promote speaking engagements with students, schools and other organizations to remember their loved ones, to educate, and to combat hate. REACH presentations can be a valuable part of a well-rounded curriculum on historical and modern antisemitism. Students can hear powerful firsthand accounts

of hate-based violence, ask questions, and connect with speakers in a personal way. The creation of REACH may ultimately be the most important memorial to those we lost.

NEW LIGHT CELEBRATES ITS NEW SUKKAH

New Light purchased a new “easier to erect” 12’ x 30’ Sukkah for Sukkot. Thanks to the assistance of the Boy Scout troop leaders (and instructions with pictures!) we enjoyed the use of the Sukkah throughout Sukkot. Almost thirty congregants joined in celebrating a Shabbat luncheon in the Sukkah.



UNDERSTANDING THE SHIFTING DYNAMICS IN THE MIDDLE EAST: ISRAEL AT WAR

Classrooms Without Borders, New Light Congregation and Congregation Beth Israel are presenting two lectures by CBW Scholar-in-Residence, Avi Ben Hur on the Israel-Hamas/Hezbollah War.

November 12th at 6 PM in Helfant Chapel: **Current Arab alliances in the Middle East and How Hamas Terror is Linked to these Alliances.** This lecture will examine the different alliances and frictions within the Arab world vis a vis Israel. FREE with a suggested donation of \$10.

Registration: <https://tinyurl.com/2s3rampa>

November 19th at 6 PM in Helfant Chapel: **Israel at War: Analyzing the Netanyahu Government’s Policies and their Implications.** This session will delve into the complexities behind the current Israeli government’s steadfastness in negotiating a peace deal, despite widespread protests both within Israel and internationally. We will explore the political, social, and ideological factors contributing to this intransigence, examining how shifts in leadership, public sentiment, and security concerns play a role. FREE with a suggested donation of \$10.

Registration: <https://tinyurl.com/2xv7dk75>

About the Speaker: A Brooklyn native, Avi Ben-Hur moved to Israel in 1983. As a “Scholar in Residence”, Avi has lectured, taught and facilitated workshops in the US, Warsaw, Prague, Berlin and Greece. Avi has taught in Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies. At present, Avi is an examiner for the Israeli Ministry of Tourism Licensing Boards and is the ongoing scholar in residence of Classrooms Without Borders.





NEW TORAH COVERS

Thanks to donations from several congregants (Bruce Hyde, Carol Black, Sharyn Stein and Arthur Weinrach), we are replacing our torn Torah mantles (the mantles will be navy blue – the picture shows a black cover). They are expected to arrive in December and will possibly be unveiled at our Hanukah Party! We would also like to replace the bima covers (the ones in use belong to Beth Shalom). The cost for two bima covers is \$2,000. If you would like to make a donation, please send your check or contribute on-line.

Barbara Caplan & Stephen Cohen
Co-Presidents

November Board Meeting

The next board meeting is Sunday, November 3rd, 10:30 AM, in Helfant Chapel and on Zoom. Use the same Zoom connection as for Shabbat.

November 9 Kiddush Luncheon

Everyone is invited to Kiddush Luncheon on November 9 in honor of Carol Black’s birthday.

November Birthdays
 Judy Blumenfeld
 Barbara Caplan
 Hugh Casper
 Marilyn Kramer
 Jenni Swerdlow

Reminders

- To purchase Memorial Plaques, Simcha Tree Leaves or Stones contact Ileen Portnoy.
- To purchase bricks for our “Garden of Freedom” contact Barbara Caplan.
- To purchase Giant Eagle gift cards contact Karen Coburn.
- For information on our cemetery contact Stephen Cohen.

NEW LIGHT CONGREGATION

5915 Beacon Street
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www.newlightcongregation.org
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 Co-President/Social VP/Yahrzeits
 Co-President/Cemetery/Website
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 Treasurer/Men’s Club
 Simcha Tree/Plaques
 Religious Committee
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