

CONGREGATION AGUDATH JACOB

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FEBRUARY 2026 SHEVAT 5786

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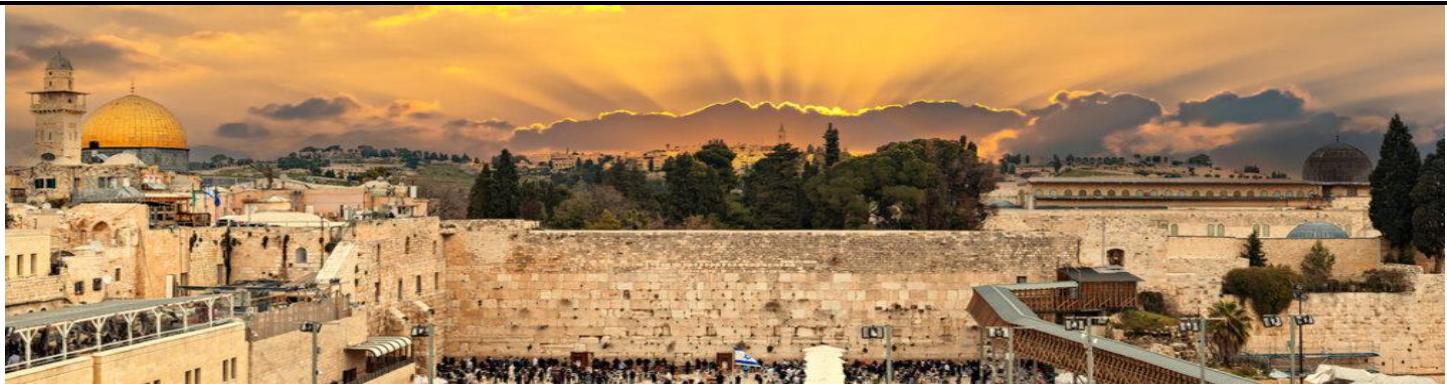
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From the Desk of  
Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner

(Last month continuation...of G-D, Israel and the Jews!)

Since the Jews are all anyone seems to care about these days, why don't I tell you; as a Jew, what it feels like to be a Jew.

### Being a Jew means:

- Finding yourself literally anywhere in the world and knowing that you will find Jews who will welcome you into their home and treat you like family.
- Knowing that your existence and the existence of your people defies all logic.
- Having your religion used as a slur. No one calls someone a Christian or a Muslim as a slur, but somehow "Jew" has become one.

- Being the recipient of the most illogical and persistent hatred, the world has ever known and despite that, continuing to flourish.
- Feeling constant pride that your people have punched above their weight for thousands of years.
- Dealing with constant persecution but knowing deep down that it'll end well for the Jews. Not so much for our enemies.
- Having a good laugh at the insane things people say about us like us controlling the media and the banks or that we have horns or more recently that we killed JFK or that we were behind 9/11.
- Being the center of worldwide media for no reason other than that we are Jews.
- Reading about Jew hatred on the internet knowing there's a good chance the computer or phone being used to spread the hate was built in Israel.
- Being a member of the only group that is told what constitutes a hatred of that group. Imagine sexists defining what sexism is or racists defining what racism is. Somehow antisemites get to tell me what is and what is not antisemitism.
- Living with the satisfaction that my people have done more to cure cancer than any other group on planet earth.
- Smiling inside knowing that every time someone waters their garden or unlocks their iPhone, my people facilitated that.
- Standing strong against the mob that has lost all ability to use critical thinking, knowing with 100% clarity that we are on the right side of history and our enemies the wrong side. Again.
- Feeling immense pride in our rich history, stunning culture, and a heritage that has sustained my incredible nation for thousands of years.
- Being a member of a club in which I know that in a time of need, I can turn to any other club member for help and they'll happily help.
- Feeling content that despite all the hatred, we've enhanced the lives of millions of people including those who hate us.
- Seeing incredible miracles every day that G-d performs for our people.
- Being proud that my people have developed some of the absolutely coolest tech to save lives.

And now, some things other people told me when asked what it means to be a Jew.

- Knowing my ancient biblical roots and finding family amidst all who share these roots.
- **Being Jewish means Israel is my home.**
- **For me, being a Jew is feeling immense pride of belonging to this amazing nation and thanking Hashem for this privilege.** It also means unconditionally loving every Jew, even when you disagree with one another; we are all one big family and should behave as such!!! 
- I love the history, going to synagogue and worshipping and singing the prayers all together in community, as One people, with One Voice!
- Being part of a wonderful "Mishpucha" who are dedicated to HaShem, foundational religious tradition, learning, morality, resilience, humor and kindness. **Am Israel Chai.**

- Gratitude that Hashem gave us the Torah and that it connects the Jewish people in the past and in the present
- Being a Jew means: My food intake is important to my body, My mind has an extreme desire to dive Deeper, Family is always number one, Despair is not allowed and Silence means that I don't have to have the last word, Relationship is defined and Love is real, There IS Truly- No Place Like Home!
- Being Jewish I know we stood together for thousands of years through so many hardships, but we are still here. I'm always a proud Jew even when I was called names.
- It means to belong.
- It means being a member of the tribe. Of the 0.2 and so darn proud!  יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי

- It means always giving back and uplifting others with no expectations in return. Living purposefully, culturally and spiritually connected to our Jewish community, and our shared history. Standing arm in arm in our beliefs and mission to protect each other and stand up for one another. Bring good into the world and leave it a little better place for the next generation.
- Having the strength to stand back up and the power to do so. It is so ingrained in me that as a Jew it is my duty to not only survive, but to thrive.
- Landing in Israel for the first time and feeling like arriving home.
- Forever family, friends and homeland, knowing the past, present and future with Hashem beside us.

Or in other words, summed up in four words.

## The. Jews. Are. Awesome!

No amount of hate, no ridiculous lies, no name-calling, nothing will change the fact that whoever you are, the Jews have enhanced your life significantly.

### Deal with it.

And if you think that I am bias, please read the following declaration of a Muslim Imam.....Sheik Musa Drammeh.

“The French Imam of Tunisian origin, from Drancy near Paris, expresses his deep admiration for what Israel is doing. He writes: I, Ben Ismail, an Imam, a Muslim, a man of peace, offer here my sincere testimony about this great people: I must admit that I believe in religions and in miracles. But there is something about this people—the people of Israel—that makes you feel, in fact, like a living miracle.

A people the Pharaohs tried to destroy 3,000 years ago... and failed.  
 A people the Babylonians tried to destroy 2,800 years ago... and failed.  
 A people the Romans sought to destroy 2,000 years ago... and failed.

A people the Nazis devastated 80 years ago... without succeeding in annihilating them.

A people against whom the Arabs waged five wars of extermination... and failed.

It is a people small in number, yet endowed with a unique strength, by the grace of God. Wherever they settled, they achieved success. In finance, commerce, science, philosophy, and literature... a barren land turned into a paradise, devoid of oil and gas, yet endowed with freedom, democracy, intelligence, and willpower.

This is a nation that gave the world Einstein, Newton, Kafka, Karl Marx, Nietzsche, Spinoza, Freud... and many others who left their mark on humanity.

There are facts that challenge logic and reason. One word describes them: a miracle.

For two and a half years, this nation has been fighting a war on five fronts. It was said that it was beginning to tire, that it was on the verge of collapse... and yet it surprised the world by opening a new front against an Iranian enemy that instills fear in many, even among Arab regimes.

Yet despite their small numbers, they possess the courage of nobles, the wisdom of prophets, the patience of the righteous, and the determination of survivors. How could it be otherwise, when they are descendants of Abraham, Solomon, David, Moses, Jacob, Joseph... and 1,523 prophets and messengers from their lineage?

They are a people who brought monotheism and belief in one God to the world.

A people overflowing with a passion for life, for work, for innovation, and for continuity—a passion that has endured for more than 4,000 years.

Truly, I can describe them only as a wondrous people.

If the Arabs had true insight, they would choose to unite with this people, to learn from them and to cooperate with them... perhaps then they would benefit from their knowledge, wisdom, and honor.

Hassen Chalghoumi

The Imam “.

*With Blessings! Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner*



## President's Message

The Torah has several lists instructing us on things we ought to do and things we ought not do. One of these is in *Tehillim* (Psalms) 15. Here, David asks: "L-rd, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Thy holy mountain?/He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart;/That hath no slander upon his tongue, nor doeth evil to his fellow, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour;/In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honoureth them that fear the L-rd;/He that putteth not out his money on interest, nor taketh a bribe against the innocent" (JPS).

Take note that in the midst of all of this positivity verse 4 stands out. We are to despise a "vile" person (*nim'as*), also rendered in various other translations as reprobate, despicable, evil, flagrant sinner, or one who has rejected G-d. For some, this may seem jarring. For those who have bought into the core Christian value that we are to love our enemies, this may come as a surprise. It shouldn't. It is not and has never been a core Jewish value. For sure, we are to deal justly and compassionately with people and not seek revenge, but we are not commanded to feel love for people who seek to harm or destroy us. Similarly, neither is pacifism a Jewish value. While we are to pursue peace wherever possible and to eschew unnecessary violence, we are commanded to defend ourselves, not to "turn the other cheek" and allow ourselves to be destroyed. Perhaps living in a majority Christian culture, we run the risk of assimilating alien values that may sound virtuous but are not ours, and these are a couple of examples.

Back to *Tehillim* 15:4, and the command to despise the vile. We are, of course, to eschew *sinat chanim* (baseless hatred); we all know that. But what about if it is not "baseless"? As the Talmud tells us, in the Steinsaltz translation, "If someone is coming to kill you, rise and kill him first" (*Sanhedrin* 72a). For us, self-defense is not just a right; it is a religious obligation to protect the life that G-d gave us. Again, if this seems jarring, it may simply be a sign that we have failed to internalize the teachings of our faith.

Why is this verse inserted into this particular psalm? Perhaps Hashem wanted to cast light on a serious issue: the sad spectacle of members of our tribe who for whatever twisted psychological reasons rush to apologize for and excuse and even defend and support those among our enemies who wish to annihilate us, *chas v'sholom*. What a strange phenomenon. Throughout our history we have had among us those who raced to side with people who were open in their pledge to exterminate the Jewish people, and this continues today. Consider the Jews who sided with the Inquisition, with the German national socialists in the 1930s, with the Soviet socialists during the Cold War, and with Hamas and others of our avowed enemies today. There are Jews who when something terrible happens to a fellow Jew or to our homeland, Israel, will first, instinctively, automatically, place the blame on fellow Jews or on the whole of the Jewish people. How is this possible? Our late esteemed community leader, Dr. Hersh, z"l, used to refer to these unfortunate folks as "Jews by accident of birth."

The Rabbis had a word for Jews-by-heritage-only who reject the commandments inherent to the practice of our faith, such as rejecting solidarity with our people or defense against our enemies. That word is *apikorsim* (apostates). Without getting political, I'm sure that all of us can identify such unfortunate people in the public eye, including in government, media, entertainment, and academia. With *lantzmen* like this, who needs enemies?

Here is a question for us: can we or should we make common cause with them? Because they are fellow Jews, tribally speaking, I would not hesitate to defend them and would come to the aid of any Jews if they were to find themselves in danger. This includes material aid and, if possible, physical aid. This is our eternal obligation to our brothers and sisters, and we shouldn't have to think twice about it. Even if not all such Jews would ever come to our own defense. No matter, we will have their backs. But, again, my question: does this mean that we must compromise our own religious and moral values to support people whose attitudes and actions regarding fundamental Jewish principles are, in the Torah's words, vile?

This is a terribly difficult question, and a disheartening one that I do not enjoy contemplating. But, in light of the present world scene and the unfolding situation in Israel and here in the U.S., I believe that all of us are obliged to earnestly pray and meditate on this issue.

*L'shalom,*  
Jeff Levin



Monday, February 2, 2026

The Fast of Esther is on Monday, March, 2, 2026



Be sure to mark your calendars for Purim, which falls on  
Tuesday, March 3, 2026

# February Service Schedule

## Friday, February 6

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm  
Candle Lighting 5:50 pm

## Saturday, February 7

Shacharit 10:00 am  
Shabbat Ends 6:46 pm

## Friday, February 13

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm  
Candle Lighting 5:56 pm

## Saturday, February 14

Shacharit 10:00 am  
Shabbat Ends 6:52 pm

## Friday, February 20

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm  
Candle Lighting 6:02pm

## Saturday, February 21

Shacharit 10:00 am  
Shabbat Ends 6:57 pm

## Friday, February 27

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm  
Candle Lighting 6:07 pm

## Saturday, February 21

Shacharit 10:00 am  
Shabbat Ends 7:02 pm



February 1

Jeff Wolf

February 3

Deborah Hersh

February 9

Simcha Via

February 13

Carrie Drahler

February 17

Jeff Levin

February 22

Rick Bauer

Florence Hersh

February 28

Barbara

Dankenbring

**February 11**  
**Steven & Carrie  
Draher**  
**February 19**  
**Benjy & Betty Bauer**



**THANK YOU for your donations in January!**

***Shabbat***

Joseph Settle

Inez Bonneville

George & Kathleen

Susan Raphael

Carrie Draher

Keller

Javis Howeth

Chris Culver

Jeff Levin

***In Memory Of***

**MB Farmer**

Paul and Paula Farmer

**Henry Heyman**

Benjy Bauer

Rick and Melanie Bauer

**Jake Bauer**

Benjy Bauer

***In Honor of Esther Lipinsky's 100th Birthday - Marsha Lev***



The following names of dearly departed will be read aloud by the Rabbi preceding the Mourner's Kaddish on Shabbat morning. It is fitting and customary that the nearest of kin be present in the synagogue for the recitation of this special prayer in their memory. Attendance not only honors the departed but also enhances and guarantees that a Minyan is present to recite the Kaddish.

**Kaddish will be read on February 6**

Shevat 19	Meyer Hoffman*
Shevat 20	Norman Goldberg*
	Mrs. Leslie (Margaret) Hoffman*
	Louis Kantrovich
	Mrs. Sam Marks*
Shevat 21	Jacob Aronson*
	Sam A Israel*
Shevat 22	Hymie Greenspan
	Aaron Archie Hoppenstein*
	Frank Israel*
	Issie Polonsky*
	Frances Segal
Shevat 23	Sadie C Schaeavitz*
	Naomi Chazanow Smith*
Shevat 24	Ann Chodorow*
	Sam Greenberg*
	Max Harris*
	Lauren Hoffman*
	Raven Jornitzky*
	Bernard Stewart
Shevat 25	Barney Brickman*
	Ben Koffman
	Bertha Genecov Miller
	Sheila Schnur

**Kaddish will be read on February 13**

Shevat 26	M Adams*
	Zelig Feldt*
	Bella Levy
	Mrs. A Polansky*
Shevat 27	Gertie Kantrovich
	Samuel Harelk*

Shevat 28	Abe Novich*
	Mrs. I F (Toby) Aronson*
	Dr Stanley Hersh*
	Miriam Salpeter
	Jacob Wolf*
	Sarah Lebowitz*
Shevat 29	Doris Sprecher Silver*
	Fannie Berkman*
	Esther Ann Gulman
Shevat 30	Moses David Beerman*
	Bert Gardner*
	Sharon Lee Slutsky
	Nathan Zidman*

Adar 1	H Baker*
	William Chernoff
	Mrs. L Levy*
	Tama Settle
	Nathan Zidman*
Adar 2	Hyman Herzlich
	<b><u>Kaddish will be read on February 20</u></b>

Adar 3	Ruth Budin
Adar 4	Anne Goodman Deyo*
	Cecelia Dryfus
	Paul E Leka
	William Ruttenberg
	Sam Wolstein
Adar 5	Rebecca Greenberg*
	Emma Podrizki*
	Morrie Alperin
	I Aronson*
	Harry Siegel*
	Joseph L Wise*

Adar 7	Lois Helfer Mrs. A (Ray) Lowich* Esther Sigel*
Adar 8	Mike Perry Marie Doris Rosenberg* Adolph Rubel* Chaym D Silevitch
Adar 9	Leon Berman* Jacob Farbstein*
<b><u>Kaddish will be read on February 27</u></b>	
Adar 10	Lauren Hoffman*
Adar 11	Rachel Stein Schmuel Tzvi Lanxner Bessie Offman Rose Patlis Harriett Polinsky L Weisberg*
Adar 12	Louis Belove*
Adar 14	Mrs. Daniel (Annie) Adams*
Adar 15	Max Levy* Larry (Leibel) B Harelk* Isidor Sacks*
Adar 16	Richard Sifuentes Gerald Abels Fannie H Englander* Max Jortner Dora Peasachovitz