



CONGREGATION AGUDATH JACOB

JANUARY 2026 TEVET/SHEVAT 5786

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From the Desk of
Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner



G-D, Israel, & the Jews!

Do you know why I keep talking or writing about the Jews? Or why I keep talking about Israel? First and foremost, it is because I am a Son of Israel (Ben ZION) and I took an oath after my parents survived the concentration camps during the Holocaust and the Maqui (French Resistance), that I will never be SILENT about it, because for me, being a Jew is feeling immense pride of belonging to this amazing nation, thanking Hashem for this privilege. It also means unconditionally loving every Jew, because a Jew is a Jew is a Jew, even when we disagree with one another, we are still this one big family, the one of a kind "Mishpachah" and should behave as such! Secondly, because as a Rabbi, one of my holy duties is to give back and uplifting others with no expectations in return, lead my congregation, educate it to live purposely, culturally, and spiritually connected to our Jewish community and our shared 3000 years old tradition and history, the best I can, while standing arm in arm in our beliefs and mission to protect each other and stand up for one another, while at the same time, bringing good into the world, and leave it a little better place for the next generation.

And thirdly, because there is a **hyper fixation about the Jewish people and Israel** like anything else in modern history, and like anything else that would be tolerated towards any other group of people in the world.

And it doesn't matter what Jewish people do.

If they are too successful, they are accused of controlling the world.

If they struggle, they are mocked, demonized and blamed for their own persecution.

If they have no Homeland, they are told they don't belong anywhere.

And when they finally have their own Homeland, they are told that they stole it and that they must give it back, and that it's illegitimate.

They are hated for being too rich, but historically they were hated because they were too poor.

People say they look too white, but historically they have been called too dark, too ethnic.

Before the State of Israel existed, Jews were slaughtered, persecuted and expelled for not having a country of their own, now they are demonized for having one (thank G-d for the State of Israel "amazing and constantly #1 in the world in so many and various fields").

This isn't about policy disagreement my friends, policy disagreement or any disagreement with the State of Israel or its government is not antisemitism, in fact most disagreement and the criticism of Israeli policy come from our own self-hated left progressist Jews themselves, the likes of the Bernie Sanders, Jerry Nadler, Adam Schiff, the list goes on and on, unfortunately, shame on them!

This is about a consistent historical pattern of hatred that adapts to whatever Jews do,

But where the hypocrisy is undeniable is right here! Because if somebody said, black people secretly run the banks, or Asians are plotting the scenes to control Hollywood, or Hispanics are engineering wars to manipulate world affairs and take over the world, everyone would instantly label that as racist, xenophobic, hateful, and morally deranged.

Yet, when the same architecture of accusation is directed towards Jews, people say...well...let's hear them out, there might be some seriousness or truth to this. And this isn't rational skepticism; this is philosophical decay. It's the rejection of objective truth replaced with myth and conspiracy.

It is the transformation of envy and jealousy into some type of moral justification for hatred.

It is a psychological crutch used by individuals who literally cannot accept agency over their own failure, so it must be somebody else's fault. Antisemitism allows a person to say, "It's not my fault, it's their fault. My problems were designed by them, my failures are not mine, they are part of a larger conspiracy and it's all the Jewish people's fault".

This is the oldest form of human self-deception called "Scapegoating". And that is what antisemitism is at its core! It is the desperate attempt to escape responsibility by inventing a superhuman enemy. Antisemitism is not just plain old fashion hatred. It is a complete intellectual surrender. People are giving up their minds and abandoning logic or critical thinking for conspiracy. Abandoning moral judgment for tribal rage. It is in the truest sense, "brain rot". Antisemitism is the only form of hate where the more successful the target is, the more the hatred intensifies.

You see, unfortunately it doesn't matter what the truth is, the hatred is always there and it's not a reactionary emotion, it is a preexisting conclusion that these people have, where they will continue searching for an excuse. History has shown us what happens when people refuse to call "Evil" by its name. And let me make this promise to all of you reading this.

As long as antisemitism lives, so will my voice and my pen against it!

Having said that, permit me to backtrack a bit and let's be honest for a minute...no one in the Jewish community will disagree with me on the undeniable fact that antisemitism and antizionism

have reached alarming levels nowadays especially after October 7th, 2023. The massacre a couple of weeks ago, Sunday at a Hanukkah event in Sydney, Australia was the latest example of how it has become “open season” on the Jews.

We all agree we should do *something*, but what? Should we fight back and defend Zionism? Should we correct the lies and the libels? What will have made the most impact?

Our first line of defense has always been condemnation and outrage, especially when the Jew-hatred rises to the violence we saw at Bondi Beach. Hundreds of statements were released by various Jewish organizations condemning the horror and expressing the “urgent need to better protect Jews”. On the activist front, there are efforts to brand antizionism to make it unacceptable, calling it a hate movement or even a racist movement. Also on the activist front is the tactic of punishing the culprits, usually through the legal system.

A mainstay of pro-Israel activism has been to call out the injustice of singling out Jews and Israel, either on college campuses or in international venues like the United Nations, which condemns the Jewish state more than all other nations combined. Finally, there are powerful statements of defiance—we will not be cowed, we will remain proud, we will double down on our Judaism, and so on.

The point is this: all of these approaches are worthy, but they point in the same direction—reacting to our enemies by defending ourselves.

Please, don’t misunderstand me, indeed, there’s nothing inherently wrong with defending ourselves. If we get attacked with lies, shouldn’t we defend ourselves with the truth?

Yes, we should. The question is: Which truth?

So far, we have used the truth to debunk lies like genocide, apartheid, colonialism, capitalism and so on. This is fine and good, but again, we’re still fighting on the enemy’s turf, we are on the “defense”, we are still *defending* the Jewish people and Zionism. We should be on the “Offense”. This doesn’t mean we should stop defending ourselves. What it *does* mean is that we are in desperate need of a radical new approach that will push forward something positive about Jews and Zionism rather than push back against something negative.

That something positive is staring at us in the face. The country that is most maligned, vilified and criticized on the planet today— the State of Israel — turns out to be one of the “**top contributors**” to that same planet. Projecting a positive view of Zionism should be a juicy idea, but it’s not. It bores us. We’re tired of hearing about “Start-Up Nation,” about drip irrigation, the pill cam and the endless innovations that Israel has brought to the world of technology, cyber security, agriculture, medicine and so on.. Focusing on positives doesn’t make us feel like we’re in a fight. It feels good to be in a fight. It feels good to express outrage, to make noise, to correct lies.

So, given that, what possible value could there be in a campaign that would express the immense value of the Jewish State of Israel to the world? For starters, it will change the playing field.

Instead of fighting over whether Israel is a genocidal, racist monster, a new question will be introduced where we have plenty of great answers: How is the Zionist state so helpful to the world? In other words, **we will begin to change the conversation in Israel’s favor**, as there is plenty of truth to support the claim of Israel’s value to the world.

The second thing it will do is send shock waves through enemy territory. Just when Zionism is at its lowest point, we brand it at the highest possible level. Outrageous & stunning!

That's the other thing we must acknowledge about a defensive strategy — it makes us look weak. We're always alarmed, always concerned, always looking for safety. That may be justified, but it's not a strong look. And to be true to ourselves, it's also not who we are. Jews are more than an alarmed people who demand more security.

To be Jewish and to be a Zionist is to think big. By putting us on the defensive, our enemies have made us look small. How do we break out of that trap?
By returning to who we really are. Zionism is about building, about creating, about prevailing against all odds, about having faith in G-d, having faith in our strength and our destiny.

As Professor Gil Troy says, "Zionism is one of the most successful forms of liberal democracy ever invented — a kind of nationalism that has created a productive society and a happy people — rooted in the past, thriving in the present and helping to invent a better future".
Our enemies want the world to never hear any of that, and right now, they are succeeding. All people hear about Zionism is poison on top of poison. That is a crime not just against Zionism but against the truth.

One of these truths is that the world, and especially the West, has a lot to learn from the Zionist state. Take the Hanukkah massacre at Bondi Beach a couple of weeks ago, the media reported that four police officers just "froze" during the 20-minute rampage.
It's hard to imagine, a situation where four Israeli policemen "freezing" while two terrorists are shooting at civilians. That's because Israel can't afford to be in denial about the threats it is facing. If Australia is serious about upgrading its security to better protect its Jews, I suggest the first call it must make is to Israel. No nation has more experience on that front.

We also have to recognize the slow erosion of the West, especially Europe, and how Zionism provides a model against that erosion. (as these Islamist fundamental Jihadists are right on target forcing the inhabitants to convert to Islam, entrenching themselves in every single country in Europe, while implementing Sharia Law courts everywhere). Sir Winston Churchill quote on Islam: "Islam is as dangerous in a man as rabies in a dog".
To quote Douglas Murray's 2018 book, "The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam": "More than any other continent or culture in the world today, Europe is now deeply weighed down with guilt for its past ... it has lost faith in its beliefs, traditions and legitimacy," Murray wrote.

Zionism feels no guilt for its past — on the contrary, the miracle of returning to our biblical homeland after 2000 years is a source of unlimited pride. The West could use some of that pride. This pride of accomplishment has created an odd duality — on the one hand, Israel must fiercely defend itself against enemies sworn to its destruction, but on the other, there is a fierce love of life that is demonstrated in multiple ways.

One of those ways is innovation.

The liquid of the last century was oil. The liquid of this century is water. Droughts are plaguing

much of the Middle East, and it will only get worse. No country is better suited to solving that problem than the world's number one expert in water technology.

Yes, the State of Israel! Just go down the list of the world's biggest problems — health care, cybersecurity, food insecurity, climate change, harnessing solar and wind power, fighting diseases, helping people with special needs, dealing with mental trauma, among so many others — and you will find Israelis who are delivering at the highest levels. Israel is #1 in Cancer research and medical innovations to cure Cancer, Israeli scientists are one step closer to finding a cure for ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), Israel innovates, Americans benefit as 30,000 Americans are living with this ALS devastating disease. Israeli doctors perform more in-vitro fertilization per capita, free of charge, than any other nation.

The IDF is a leader in saving people trapped by natural and man-made disasters. On short notice, its search and rescue unit has operated in many countries (including Mexico, Kenya, India, Turkey and the U.S.) following earthquakes, train wrecks, collapsed buildings and of course, terrorist attacks. Israel has the highest rate of university degrees, per capita, in the world! Perhaps only the "Chosen People" could have succeeded in reviving a dead language and making it their national tongue!

More than a million letters to G-D, mailed from anywhere in the world, go to Israel and are placed in the "Kotel" the Western Wall.

Israeli life expectancy is one of the highest on the planet – 82 years!
And Israelis, in spite of living in constant danger, are among the happiest people in the Western world! I think you got the picture.

(See You Next Month for the Next Chapter!)

Wishing y'all a Happy, Healthy, Prosperous & Peaceful New Year!

Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner



Presidents Message

As we know, it's a common routine for so many of us to make a list of New Year's resolutions. Among religious Jews, that may not be precisely the case: for one, the secular new year isn't really "our" new year; also, we're not in the habit of making what could risk being interpreted as formal vows (*nedarim*), at least ones for which we'd have to pray for annulment on *kol nidre*. All that being said, it's perfectly acceptable for each of us to resolve in the coming year to be a better person and a better Jew and a better member of our community. So, to that end, I'd like to suggest some things that all of us, collectively, can strive together to achieve in 2026.

First, as a congregation, let's commit to strengthening our observance of *mitzvot*, of both types: the "vertical" (between each of us and G-d) and "horizontal" (among each other). We can do this in our daily lives, as individuals, by finding new ways to keep to *halachah* or perhaps to focus on a certain *mitzvah* that we'd like to add to our regular repertoire. We can also do this through contributing to the life of our *shul* and ensuring that it's a sacred space, a place imbued with *kedushah* (holiness). This can be achieved through our attendance at services and classes and events, and also through the intentions that we put forth in our dealings with our fellow congregants. For example, performing *gemilut chasadim* (acts of lovingkindness) toward our fellow Jews and toward all people is a wonderful *mitzvah* that can serve as a standard for all of us. In fact, *Pirke Avot* says that it's one of the very foundations upon which the world stands.

Second, let's all of us remember that because we are a small minority in our local population, we represent the Jewish people and our religion of Judaism to the non-Jews whose paths we cross. It's thus incumbent upon us to ensure that our actions in public shine a positive light on the members of our tribe and reflect well of our faith. None of wishes to be a *shande far di goyim* (if you don't know the Yiddish, look it up). We live in a time, as we're all aware, of increasingly virulent anti-Semitism, of aggressive Jew-hatred, and so the eyes of our co-workers and neighbors and of strangers are probably upon us more than we can imagine. We should therefore never, G-d forbid, give folks any ammunition or reinforce existing prejudices about our people. Remember, each of us is representing not just ourself but all of us.

Third, give! I am not simply referring here to money—as President, I've put out that call several times lately, including obligatorily in my annual address on *Yom Kippur*. We're all aware that we're a small congregation and need increased funds to continue to operate long-term, so I'm not referencing that here (although the need of course still exists). Rather, I'm referring to finding ways to contribute to the ongoing religious and social life of the *shul* and to its ongoing operation. I'm so grateful to everyone who stepped up this past year in helping with the house and grounds, with the kitchen, with events, with routine maintenance, and with working with the Rabbi and Rebbetzin and Office Administrator on various tasks. I'm also grateful to everyone who made and continues to make donations of time and money and labor and material goods to assist in all of the above. *Yasher koach*. Let's find ways to do even more in 2026.

Finally, a personal note: it has been a privilege to serve as President of CAJ, and I look forward to one more year on the job. There is a lot that makes this an overwhelming role, especially considering that I have another full-time job, at Baylor. But what makes it so worthwhile for me is every time we're together for services or an event and I can see fellow Jews praying and learning and doing *mitzvot* together and otherwise having the opportunity to live religiously observant

Jewish lives. Having been placed in a position of stewardship is such a privilege, and I experience both gratitude and a recognition that I'm merely something of a figurehead: all of the real work, the real labor, is done by every member and participant who together make up our community. Without all of you, there is no CAJ. My prayer for 2026 is that all of us continue to live full Jewish lives and keep finding new ways to strengthen our *shul* and the larger community of Jews here in Waco and worldwide.

L'shalom,
Jeff Levin

The Sisterhood of Congregation Agudath Jacob would like to Thank the Entire Congregation for a very Successful Hanukkah Celebration and Bingo!

Inez Bonneville

If any of you ladies would like to join the Sisterhood, for the comradery and share in the fun! please contact Inez Bonneville.

The next Yehudi Men's Night Out, the community-wide "Jewish men's club" for Waco and Central Texas, will be on Sunday, January 11th, at 3 pm, at Poppa Rollo's on Valley Mills Dr.

This is always a great way for the men of CAJ and TRS and unaffiliated Jews to get together and break bread. It's been a couple months since our last gathering, so we're looking forward to getting back together. Please join us!

January Service Schedule

<u>Friday, January 2</u>		<u>Saturday, January 17</u>	
Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm	Shacharit	10:00 am
Candle Lighting	5:19 pm	Shabbat Ends	6:29 pm
<u>Saturday, January 3</u>		<u>Friday, January 23</u>	
Shacharit	10:00 am	Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Shabbat Ends	6:18 pm	Candle Lighting	5:37 pm
<u>Friday, January 9</u>		<u>Saturday, January 24</u>	
Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm	Shacharit	10:00 am
Candle Lighting	5:25 pm	Shabbat Ends	6:35 pm
<u>Saturday, January 10</u>		<u>Friday, January 30</u>	
Shacharit	10:00 am	Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Shabbat Ends	6:23 pm	Candle Lighting	5:44 pm
<u>Friday, January 16</u>		<u>Saturday, January 31</u>	
Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm	Shacharit	10:00 am
Candle Lighting	5:31 pm	Shabbat Ends	6:40 pm



January 10
Javis Howeth

January 12
Mike Stupak

January 19
David & Lesley
Rosen



THANK YOU for your donations in December!

Shabbat

Javis Howeth
Inez Bonneville
Susan Raphael
Jeff Levin
Steven Draher

Paty Haessly
Chris Culver
Susan Lanxner
George & Kathleen Keller

In Memory Of

Gandler, Beerman, and
Chodorow families
Michaele Brown

MB Farmer
Paul & Paula Farmer

Hanukkah Donations

The Congregation Agudath Jacob Sisterhood would like to Thank everyone who came and participated in The Bingo Event which was a HUGE success, Thanks to all of you!



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 January 2

Tevet 14	Sarah Adams Ida Farbstein* Ruben Gandler* Mrs. Sam Genecov* Hattie Lansky
Tevet 15	Mrs. Hermine Block J M Freeman Eli Frankfort Charlotte Gleber H Rosenberg Fannie Harris Wolf*
Tevet 16	Bert Altman* Mrs. B R Goldberg Elias Greenfield* Hilda Hoffman* Herman Levi* Mrs. L Ringold* Arthur N Rubel*
Tevet 17	Jacob Arnold Fischman Rachel Levy*
Tevet 18	Taube Jacobsen Cohen M B Farmer Frances Jacobson* Nathaniel Louis Kaplan* Pauline Kolom* Ben Levin* Dr H Irwin Mendelson Frances Novy* Madeleine Richings
Tevet 19	Hanina Pinto

Kaddish will be read on January 9

Tevet 20	Samuel B Epstein Isadore Fred* E Hoffman* Louis Shanin Barnet Silevitch*
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Tevet 21	Sarah Adelman* Robert Bloch Harry Jornitzky
Tevet 22	Mae Rubel Altman* Mrs. Sam (Minnie) Aronson* Asher Lowich*
Tevet 23	Sam Adelman Julius Jacobson* David Levy
Tevet 25	Anna Gurkoff Abe Hayman* Gussie T Hayman* Leo Ringold Pearl Rubenstein*
Tevet 26	Harold Fink Cal Goldberg

Kaddish will be read on January 16

Tevet 27	Mr. Jake Lynn*
Tevet 28	Ella Bettis Mrs. H Novich*
Tevet 29	David Brickman Morris Fred* Mrs. Max (Fannie) Reed* Abe Rosenberg* J Rubin* Mary Ruttenberg
Shevat 2	Harry Fetter*
Shevat 3	Mark Papernov Rebecca Borschow Lynn Gurkoff Annie Hoffman*

Kaddish will be read on January 23

Shevat 5	Aaron Levy Leonard Parven B Tobolowsky*
Shevat 6	Henry Naphtali Heyman* Elizabeth Israel

Shevat 7	Mary Ann Schiller Akers Morris Hoffman* Diane Koss Florine Zeo Campbell
Shevat 8	Dave Lebowitz*
Shevat 9	William Atlas Max Budin* Florence Rubinsky* Jeanette Shcein*
Shevat 10	Fay Goldberg Abe Hoffman* Mrs. N Suravitz*
Shevat 11	A Brickman* Mrs. H B Cohen* Sam Genecov* B Levinson*

Kaddish will be read on January 30

Shevat 13	David R Begal* Arthur Levy* Philip H Robinson Joe Zoblotsky*
Shevat 14	Rose Miller Beerman* Mrs. Jake (Cecilia) Berkman* Manuel Frank Harris* Esther Goltz Wolf*
Shevat 15	Max Harelik* Naomi Stein
Shevat 16	Jacob Koppel Bauer* Betty Safan Anna Kroll
Shevat 17	Mrs. Florence Cohen* Mrs. J Greenspan* Nathan Salpeter Bessie Tannenbaum Pearl Wolpo
Shevat 18	Mrs. M Cohen* Sarah Lebowitz* Doris Sprecher Silver*