



The Shofar

November-December 2026

Congregation House of Israel

21 Cheshvan - 21 Tevet 5787



Happy Hanukkah

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The Shofar

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Hanukkah? Chanuka? Hanukah?

By Sherrill Nicolosi

There are as many as 20 different spellings for the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, in part because there is no exact transliteration in the English alphabet. Regardless of how it is spelled, Hanukkah is a lovely and meaningful story of two significant related events in Jewish history.

When my children were growing up, they loved the story of Judah and his rebel army called the Maccabees. Perhaps it was related to the very popular comic book stories of the X-Men, created by Stan Lee, in which a small group of “mutants” were able to defend themselves and their allies from bigots.

The first story of Hanukkah tells how Judah and the Maccabees were able to defeat the mighty Syrian-Greeks who tried, and failed, to force their Hellenist culture and beliefs on the Jews. When the Jews defied the powerful army, their leader, Antiochus, defiled the Holy Temple with pigs’ blood and burnt offerings.

The Jews were able to drive out the Syrian-Greeks

and recover Jerusalem, cleanse the Temple, and rededicate it.

As the Jewish tradition requires a “holy light” to continuously burn in the Temple, the second significant story of Hanukkah emerges: there was only enough oil to burn for one day, but miraculously, it burned for eight days!

It doesn’t matter how you spell Hanukkah; what matters is this Jewish Festival of Lights commemorates a time when Jews defied the odds against them and stood up for their right to practice their religion and honor their Jewish customs.



Reb Shelly's Desk



Band of Brothers

The parshah Miketz, where Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams, is almost always read on Hanukkah. The dreams themselves give a hint to one of the themes of Hanukkah. Seven gaunt, unhealthy cows swallow seven strong healthy

cows. Seven thin, scorched sprouts of grain swallow seven healthy sprouts of grain. The weak overcome the strong.

This is of course the theme of Hanukkah; many would see it as the miracle of Hanukkah. We say it in the prayer we add to every service on Hanukkah, "You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the corrupt into the hands of the pure in heart."

I have always loved the brilliant plays and poetry of William Shakespeare. Every list of Shakespeare's greatest speeches and soliloquies includes a speech from Henry V, known as the St. Crispin's Day Speech. As I read it, and remembered the films of Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh delivering it, I realize how perfect it is for Hanukkah.

The English army, badly outnumbered and discouraged, are about to battle the French in Agincourt. A young King Henry, grown up from being the wild Prince Hal who hung out in taverns with Falstaff, delivers a speech to rally his troops. The speech is so moving that it has often been used by military leaders. Laurence Olivier delivered it on the radio during the Nazi siege of England, and Winston Churchill found it so inspiring he had Olivier film the entire play. King Henry V says, "The fewer men, the greater share of honor." In fact, he urges anyone frightened to turn around and return to England.

It is a direct reflection of the Torah, where we read in Deuteronomy, "Is there anyone afraid and disheartened? Let him go back to his home, lest the courage of his comrades flag like his".

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ARZA - World Union

Starting Over

By Rabbi Josh Weinberg

Friday, October 9, 2026

This Shabbat marks the fourth time since October 7, 2023, that we have begun reading the Torah again. The first verses of Genesis describe our situation better than we might be able to do on our own. The earth, the Torah says, was *tohu vavohu* – formless, chaotic, and void.

October 7 is our *tohu vavohu*, and we begin the cycle again standing squarely in it. Starting from the beginning is not the same as starting from a blank slate. The popular version of a line usually attributed to Heraclitus says, "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man." The Torah cycle works the same way. We step into the same text each year, and neither the text nor the reader is the same. But the river carries what it has gathered upstream. We do not start over by forgetting. We start over by returning, changed, to the first line.

Tohu Vavovhu

Translators usually render it as "formless and void," but the commentators hear more in it. Rashi connects *tohu* to *tohah*, astonishment: the emptiness was so total that a person standing before it would be stunned. Ibn Ezra and Ramban read it more philosophically, as matter without form, something that exists but has not yet been defined. For them chaos is not nothingness. It is potential that has yet to be shaped.

The phrase appears only twice more in the Bible, and both times it describes destruction. In Isaiah 34, it is the measuring line of chaos. In Jeremiah 4:23, the prophet says, "I looked at the earth, and behold, it was *tohu vavohu*." Jeremiah did not describe a world before creation. He is describing a world that has been undone.

That is the *tohu vavohu* we know. It is chaos we cannot clear from our memories or our national consciousness, and Rashi's reading fits it painfully well. Many of us are still astonished, still standing within the desolation.

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Sisterhood Update

Sisterhood has started the year busy!

Congratulations to Millie Baron, our Sister of the Year!

We are so happy to celebrate this well-deserved honor!

We would also like to acknowledge **Katie Gordon**

for the delicious challah bread she is baking for us on Shabbat! Thank you, Katie, for sharing your time and talent with us. It is truly appreciated!



With Hanukkah starting early this year on December 4th, we are getting ready for our annual

**Hanukkah Party on Sunday, December 6th,
from 4:00–6:00 PM.**

A sign-up sheet will be emailed soon. Tickets for everyone 18 and over are **\$15**. Please make sure your payment gets to Barbara by **November 30th**.



Bonus Gift for Marie, James, and Staff

This is the time of year when we ask everyone to be generous and support the **Bonus Gift for Marie, James, and the staff**. Their work every week is invaluable to us all and greatly appreciated. Let's show them how much we value everything they do!

Please send your gift to Barbara by **November 30th** and write **"Bonus"** on the information line.

Join us for holiday fun and great food!

Checks should be sent to:

CHI Sisterhood

c/o Barbara Morgan

45 Almanzora Circle

Hot Springs Village, AR 71909

ARZA - World Union

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What We Bring

If this is a reset, we should ask what we are bringing to it. We bring trauma, real trauma. It lives in families who buried their dead, in the people who came home from captivity, and in a community that felt and feels unsafe in ways it had not felt in decades.

We bring confusion. The Jewish world has been pulled in every direction since that day, and many of us no longer recognize the arguments we are having, or the people we are having them with.

And we bring defensiveness. That is understandable. Jews have spent the last three years watching our grief questioned, our fears dismissed, and our allies disappear. Defensiveness happens when people are attacked, and sometimes it is justified.

But it carries a danger: defending ourselves from unfair accusations can slide into defending what cannot be defended. We should be able to say both things at once: that the attack on us was monstrous and the world's response to it was often shameful, and that not everything done in our name since can be morally justified. A community that can only be defensive has lost its ability to judge. Being defensive is a reflex. Being able to judge is what the Torah asks of us.

And we bring a strong sense of determination and commitment to do better and to be better. To build on the civic engagement of the pro-democracy protests and the "Chamalim" (makeshift "war rooms" set up by Israeli civil society to address the immediate needs after October 7) to build a better society. And we bring partnership from the global Jewish community, which has much to offer beyond our pocketbooks and political advocacy.

Three Lessons

As we begin, Genesis offers three ideas that help here. **From chaos to order.** Creation is the work of distinction: light from darkness, water from water, sea from land. The verb that runs through the chapter is *vayavdel*, "and He separated." Chaos is not just emptiness. It is the collapse of distinctions, when the line between festival and massacre, between home and battlefield, is violently erased.

The image of God. The German-Jewish philosopher Erich Fromm, in his 1966 landmark work *You Shall Be as Gods*, read the Bible as the story of human beings growing into freedom, learning to take up the task that God begins. If humans are created *B'tzelem Elohim*, in the divine image, then the first thing we know about the God whose image we bear is that God brings order out of chaos. To carry that image is to carry that job. The distinction that humans (as opposed to other animals, and

as opposed to other people's creation stories) are created in God's image is an oft-used universalist ideological and values-based verse, but it is often employed because so much of humanity too often fails to live up to it. What does it actually look like for us as Jews, and as humans, to look at another person and see God's image in them (even if you don't believe in God)?

The knowledge of good and evil. This is the hardest lesson. The fruit of the tree gives humans the ability to tell good from evil, the same faculty that drove creation itself. The cost of losing that distinction is losing paradise. We leave Eden because a world in which we can recognize evil is no longer innocent.

I think that is the point. Once we can recognize evil, we cannot unsee it in the world or in ourselves. We cannot recognize it only in our enemies and never in our own camp. The same knowledge that lets us name October 7 for what it was also obliges us to name what is wrong closer to home. That is painful, and failing to do so ends any hope of returning to a simpler moral world. But it is the cost of being people who can build something. An Eden that cannot tell good from evil is not one we can live in, and certainly not one we can repair.

The Choice Before Us

On October 27, Israelis go to the polls, the first election held on its scheduled date since 1992. It is the first national election since October 7, and the first chance for Israelis to decide what they want to build out of this chaos. I do not mean that as an endorsement of any party. I mean it as a description of the moment. *A tohu vavohu* does not organize itself. Someone has to do the separating, the naming, and the ordering. In a democracy, that work is done through choices, and voters bear the same responsibility the Torah gives to the first humans. They must decide what to carry forward, what to leave behind, and what kind of country will rise from the ruins.

The Torah does not begin with a blank page. It begins with a world in disarray and a voice that says *yehi or*, "let there be light." We start over for the fourth time, carrying it all: the grief, the confusion, and the knowledge of both good and evil (in the other and in ourselves) that we cannot erase.

Starting over does not require pretending the wound has closed. It means remaking a world in which the distinctions violently erased are restored: between justice and vengeance, between hard-heartedness and compassion, between security and domination, between grief that deepens our humanity and grief that hardens it. The Torah begins with disorder because creation happens there. We start over for the fourth time, carrying all of it, and the text tasks us to begin again, and so we shall.

Jewish Trivia for November

Nov 3, 1917	Lord Arthur Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, signed the Balfour Declaration establishing the state of Palestine for Arabs and Jews.
Nov 4, 1995	Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin assassinated at a peace rally by Yigal Amir, an Israelite right-wing extremist.
Nov 4, 1954	Abe Ribicoff elected governor of Connecticut.
Nov 4, 1938	The Andrew Sisters record "Bei mir bist du Schön."
Nov 4, 1938	Kate Smith introduces "God Bless America" to her radio program, song composed by Irving Berlin.
Nov 9-10, 1938	Kristallnacht, Night of the Broken Glass, in Germany and Austria, considered the beginning of the Holocaust.
Nov 12, 1954	Ellis Island closed. It opened in 1897 and processed over 20 million immigrants.
Nov 20, 1954	Nuremberg trials begin for the Nazi leaders.

Deceased

Nov 1, 1985	Phil Silvers: comedian, actor
Nov 4, 1995	Yitzhak Rabin: Israeli prime minister
Nov 4, 1847	Felix Mendelsohn: composer
Nov 8, 1983	Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan: founder of Reconstructionism
Nov 8, 1965	Dorothy Kilgallen: writer, newscaster
Nov 9, 1991	Yves Montand: actor
Nov 9, 1952	Chaim Weizman: 1st president of Israel
Nov 10, 1960	Isadore Freed: composer of Jewish melodies
Nov 10, 1973	Allan Sherman: singer, comedian
Nov 11, 1995	Jerome Kern: composer
Nov 18, 2004	Cy Coleman: composer
Nov 22, 2014	Claire Bagleman: singer (Barry Sisters)
Nov 23, 2006	Betty Comden: Lyricist

Jewish Trivia for December

Dec 2, 1763	Dedication of the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island. Touro is the oldest synagogue in America.
Dec 7, 2017	U.S. recommends that Jerusalem become the capital of the State of Israel
Dec 8, 1987	Palestine Intifada founded by Yasser Arafat
Dec 26, 1936	Arturo Toscanini conducts the first performance of the Israeli Philharmonic in Tel Aviv. The orchestra was founded by the Polish violinist Bronislaw Huberman in 1935.

Deceased

Dec 1, 1973	David Ben Gurion: Israeli Prime Minister
Dec 2, 1990	Aaron Copeland: musician
Dec 8, 1978	Golda Meir: Israeli Prime Minister
Dec 10, 1987	Jascha Heifitz: violinist
Dec 12, 1971	David Sarnoff: founder of RCA
Dec 16, 1984	Bess Myerson: politician, television actress, former Miss America
Dec 16, 1984	Jan Pierce: opera singer
Dec 20, 1962	Arthur Rubinstein: pianist
Dec 23, 2000	Victor Borge: pianist, humorist
Dec 25, 2016	Carrie Fisher: actress
Dec 26, 2016	Jack Benny: entertainer
Dec 29, 1967	Paul Whiteman: conductor

Refuah Shelemah

The following people are in our thoughts and prayers for healing. Pray that they have a full and complete recovery.:

- Gail Baumgartner
- Adam Bierman
- Francine Gordon
- Oded Grenman
- Sharon Jennings
- Pat McCarthy
- Palma Ortiz
- Steven West
- James Woodfork

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Anniversaries

Michael and Sharon Waxler	Nov 27
Brad and Elaine Wolken	Dec 26

Birthdays

David Kirsch	Nov 7
Dennis Williams	Nov 21
Myrna Taxer	Nov 28
Sophie Fleischer	Dec 7
Sherrill Nicolosi	Dec 20
Kim Baron	Dec 22
Frances Iverson	Dec 30



The Shofar

Reb Shelly's Desk

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Henry V continues that this battle will take place on St. Crispin's Day, and in the future soldiers will look back with pride on this day. Then he recites the most famous words of the speech: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; For he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother."

That name, Band of Brothers, became a book about a group of heroes during World War II. It was made into an HBO miniseries produced by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks. I have to admit I never realized the title was written by William Shakespeare.

The Maccabees were also a band of brothers, five of them. They also fought a war against an army that outnumbered them. And in the end, they were victorious. We light candles on Hanukkah to commemorate their military victory and celebrate the fact that the Jewish people were once again able to practice their religion. The light of the oil that burnt was able to chase away the darkness.

Returning to Henry V, what happened at the real battle of Agincourt? It was a historical battle that took place on St. Crispin's Day in 1415, part of the Hundred Years' War. And the vastly outnumbered English were victorious over the French. Were they inspired by a speech delivered by a young king? Historically, King Henry V did lead the troops in battle. But did he deliver a moving speech? We will leave that to Shakespeare's imagination. We know that through inspiration, the few can overpower the many. That is the lesson of Hanukkah.



November - December Jahrzeits

Kaddish Recited November 6

Fred Stein

Father of Judy Levy

Stuart Klompus

Husband of Mary Klompus

Leland H. Williams

Father of Dennis Williams

Kaddish Recited November 27

Adolph Korngut

Father of Fred Korngut

Elsa Stein

Mother of Judy Levy

Sharona Grenman

Wife of Oded Grenman

Kaddish Recited November 13

Joseph Wolken

Grandfather of Brad Wolken

Al Ginsburg

Father of Millie Baron

Philip Gladner

Father of Neal Gladner

Eva Harris

Grandmother of Barbara Morgan

Kaddish Recited December 4

Warner Kass

Husband of Lynda Kass

Kaddish Recited December 11

Bernice Waxler

Mother of Michael Waxler

Harry Leibowitz

Father of Stuart Leibowitz

Kaddish Recited November 20

LeRoy Tucker

Father of Patti Fleischer

Alan R. Klompus

Father-in-law of Mary Klompus

Jacob Koppel

Father of Hal Koppel

Mollie Forshberg

Mother-in-law of Betty Forshberg

Hyman Kirsch

Father of David Kirsch

Leon Peterson

Father of Cheryl Cohen

Kaddish Recited December 18

Shep Taxer

Husband of Myrna Taxer

Theodore Gottlieb

Grandfather of Barbara Morgan

Lynn Raines Kirsch

Wife of Steven Kirsch

Nellie Sheets

Mother of Mary Klompus

Kaddish Recited December 25

Pauline Levy

Mother of Jerry Levy

Hyman Robins

Grandfather of Betty Feir

November Parshiot

Chayei Sarah

November 7, 2026

Sarah dies at age 127 and is buried in the Machpelah Cave in Hebron, which Abraham purchases from Ephron the Hittite for 400 shekels of silver.

Abraham's servant, Eliezer, is sent laden with gifts to Charan to find a wife for Isaac. At the village well, Eliezer asks God for a sign: when the maidens come to the well, he will ask for some water to drink; the woman who will offer to give his camels to drink as well, shall be the one destined for his master's son.

Rebecca, the daughter of Abraham's nephew Bethuel, appears at the well and passes the "test". Eliezer is invited to their home, where he repeats the story of the day's events. Rebecca returns with Eliezer to the land of Canaan, where they encounter Isaac praying in the field. Isaac marries Rebecca, loves her, and is comforted over the loss of his mother.

Toledot

November 14, 2026

Isaac marries Rebecca. After twenty childless years their prayers are answered and Rebecca conceives. She experiences a difficult pregnancy as the "children struggle inside her"; G-d tells her that "there are two nations in your womb," and that the younger will prevail over the elder.

Esau emerges first; Jacob is born clutching Esau's heel. Esau grows up to be "a cunning hunter, a man of the field"; Jacob is "a wholesome man," a dweller in the tents of learning. Isaac favors Esau; Rebecca loves Jacob. Returning exhausted and hungry from the hunt one day, Esau sells his birthright (his rights as the firstborn) to Jacob for a pot of red lentil stew.

Vayetzei

November 21, 2026

Jacob leaves his hometown Be'er Sheva and journeys to Charan. On the way, he encounters "the place" and sleeps there, dreaming of a ladder connecting heaven and earth, with angels climbing and descending on it; G-d appears and promises that the land upon which he lies will be given to his descendants.

In Charan, Jacob stays with and works for his uncle Laban, tending Laban's sheep. Laban agrees to give him his younger daughter Rachel -- whom Jacob loves -- in marriage, in return for seven years' labor. But on the wedding night,

Laban gives him his elder daughter, Leah, instead -- a deception Jacob discovers only in the morning. Jacob marries Rachel, too, a week later, after agreeing to work another seven years for Laban.



Vayishlach

November 28, 2026

Jacob returns to the Holy Land after a 20-year stay in Charan, and sends emissaries to Esau in hope of a reconciliation, but his messengers report that his brother is on the warpath with 400 armed men. Jacob prepares for war, prays, and sends Esau a large gift

(consisting of hundreds of heads of sheep and cattle) to appease him.

That night, Jacob ferries his family and possessions across the Yabbok River; he, however, remains behind and encounters the angel that embodies the spirit of Esau, with whom he wrestles until daybreak. Jacob suffers a dislocated hip but vanquishes the supernal creature, who bestows on him the name Israel, which means "He who prevails over the Divine."

December Parshiot

Vayeishev

December 5, 2026

Jacob settles in Hebron with his twelve sons. His favorite is 17-year-old Joseph, whose brothers are jealous of the preferential treatment he receives from his father, such as a precious many-colored coat that Jacob makes for Joseph. Joseph relates to his brothers two dreams he has which foretell that he is destined to rule over them, increasing their envy and hatred towards him.

Shimon and Levi plot to kill him, but Reuben suggests that they throw him into a pit instead, intending to come back later and save him. While Joseph is in the pit, Judah has him sold to a band of passing Ishmaelites. The brothers dip Joseph's special coat in the blood of a goat and show it to their father, leading him to believe that his most beloved son was devoured by a wild beast.

Mikeitz

December 12, 2026

Joseph's imprisonment finally ends when Pharaoh dreams of seven fat cows that are swallowed up by seven lean cows, and of seven fat ears of grain swallowed by seven lean ears. Joseph interprets the dreams to mean that seven years of plenty will be followed by seven years of hunger, and advises Pharaoh to store grain during the plentiful years. Pharaoh appoints Joseph governor of Egypt. Joseph marries Asenath, daughter of Potiphar, and they have two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

Famine spreads throughout the region, and food can be obtained only in Egypt. Ten of Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to purchase grain; the youngest, Benjamin, stays home, for Jacob fears for his safety. Joseph recognizes his brothers, but they do not recognize him; he accuses them of being spies, insists that they bring Benjamin to prove that they are who they say they are, and imprisons Shimon as a hostage. Later, they discover that the money they paid for their provisions has been mysteriously returned to them.

Vayigash

December 19, 2026

Judah approaches Joseph to plead for the release of Benjamin, offering himself as a slave to the Egyptian ruler in Benjamin's stead. Upon witnessing his brothers' loyalty to one another, Joseph reveals his identity to them. "I am Joseph," he declares. "Is my father still alive?"

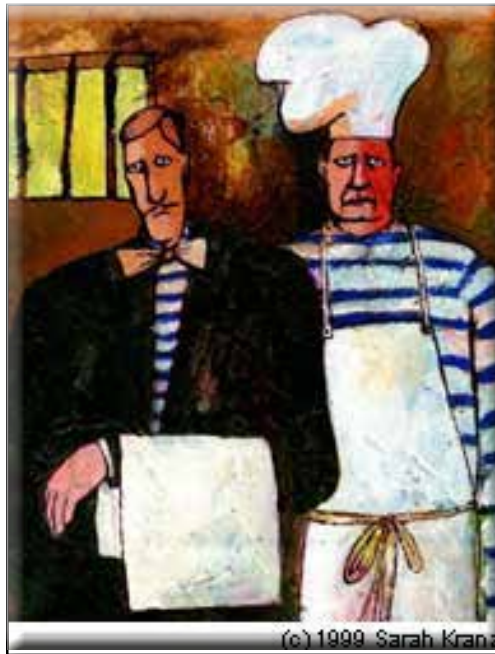
The brothers are overcome by shame and remorse, but Joseph comforts them. "It was not you who sent me here," he says to them, "but G-d. It has all been ordained from Above to save us, and the entire region, from famine."

Vayechi

December 26, 2026

Jacob desires to reveal the end of days to his children, but is prevented from doing so. Jacob blesses his 12 sons, assigning to each his role as a tribe: Judah will produce leaders, legislators and kings; priests will come from Levi, scholars from Issachar, seafarers from Zebulun, schoolteachers from Shimon, soldiers from Gad, judges from Dan, olive growers from Asher, and so on. Reuben is rebuked for "confusing

his father's marriage"; Shimon and Levi for the massacre of Shechem and the plot against Joseph. Naphtali is granted the swiftness of a deer, Benjamin the ferociousness of a wolf, and Joseph is blessed with beauty and fertility.



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