



September-October, 2026

Congregation House of Israel

19 Elul, 5786 - 20 Cheshvan, 5787



...In the seventh month, on the first of the month, there shall be a sabbath for you, a remembrance with shofar blasts, a holy convocation. -Leviticus 16:24

L'Shanah Tovah

The complete schedule of High Holiday Services is on page 4 and also on our website at www.hschi.org.

Thank You

We would like to thank the following donors (as of August 20, 2026)

General Fund

Anthony and Sherrill Nicolosi

In assistance with the graffiti removal on the temple outside wall

Sally Nicolosi

In assistance with the graffiti removal on the temple outside wall

Ian Nicolosi

In assistance with the graffiti removal on the temple outside wall

Andy and Jeanette Westerman

In loving memory of Susan Siegel

Lou and Susan Siegel

In loving memory of Bernice Lockwood Goltz

In Loving memory of Diane Goltz

In loving memory of Susan Siegel

The Shofar

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PO Box 20802

300 Quapaw

Hot Springs, AR 71903

(501) 623-5821

Website: <http://hschi.org>

Editor: Shelly Kleinman

Webmaster: Shelly Kleinman

Email to: info@hschi.org

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Distributed free to members, prospective members, local clergy and other interested parties.

The Yahrzeit

By Sherrill Nicolosi

The observance of the anniversary of a death is centuries old in Jewish traditions. "Yahrzeit", which means "a year's time" in Yiddish, is the traditional time to honor and memorialize those we have loved and lost.

A special Yahrzeit memorial candle is lit at sundown on the eve of the anniversary date of death, and burns for twenty-four (24) hours. Therefore, the Yahrzeit begins with nightfall and ends on the evening of the actual date of death.

By lighting the Yahrzeit candle, we are remembering the LIFE of our loved one, and as a sign of reverence, observing their death annually. It continues through the years following the death as a way of paying a loving tribute to the one who has passed away.

The Mourner's Kaddish is recited as the candle is lit. What may seem odd is that the Mourner's Kaddish does not mention death. Instead, the Mourner's Kaddish is a prayer in praise of G_d, who gave us life.

"Let G_d's name be blessed forever and ever".

Yahrzeit is another tradition that allows Jews to remember, honor, praise and respect our Jewish history. It appears that lighting the Yahrzeit memorial candle is not to make the mourners relive the loss, but to remind them of the very importance of the life of the one who is gone from our presence.



Reb Shelly's Desk



Isn't Google wonderful!

There once was a woman, we'll call her Catherine. She was born in Paris to a secular Jewish family, and lived a very familiar secular life. Somewhere deep down in her blood were her Yemenite roots, and a half-forgotten tradition of Jewish perseverance.

Catherine was an excellent student and seemed to fall in love with languages, mastering Arabic and Farsi. Her natural intellect and knack for remembering dates and stories led her to study comparative religion, where to the chagrin of her Jewish family, she focused on Islam, on Sunni and Shi'a thought, and became a modern scholar of Middle Eastern Affairs.

And then, dramatically, publicly, she converted to Islam.

Catherine began wearing a black long chador and passionately pursued her new faith with everything she had, with a reverence that stunned even Muslim clerics. Her poetry even appeared on the Supreme Leader's website, which seemed an impossible honor for a Jewish woman born of the west; some said it was a miracle.

Yet beneath those beautiful words and veiled eyes, Catherine was a dagger. She gained the confidence of the wives of IRGC officers, sat with them at tea and spoke of the most intimate things. She asked them questions about their husbands, their marriages, their children. "Does he ever find peace at home?" she asked. They spoke of routines, paranoia, and fears, never knowing that through all of this, the Mossad listened and recorded.

On the nights of June 13th and 14th, 2025, intelligence strikes fell on the regime's heart so precisely, wiping out senior commanders, scientists, and officers. And afterward, she just vanished, with no trace. Today she is a phantom, called "The Ghost in the Minarets", the "Scribe of Shadows", her true name folded forever into silence.

What gave Catherine the strength to do what she did? Perhaps there aren't so many people in the world like Catherine, but there sure are examples of personal strength that inspire us time and time

again.

In July 2024, young Maximus Freeman, just 3 years old, was diagnosed with a rare disorder where the immune system attacks the peripheral nervous system, leading to muscle weakness and in some cases paralysis. Max's condition rapidly progressed to full-body paralysis within days. He was hospitalized and placed on a ventilator in the pediatric intensive care unit, with doctors expressing deep concern over his critical condition.

During this frightening time, his father, Freddie Freeman of the Los Angeles Dodgers, was placed on the family emergency list, missing several games to be by his son's side. He later shared that witnessing his son's suffering was more challenging than any moment he had ever faced, on or off the baseball field.

If that wasn't enough, that same season found Freddie, whose professional life depends upon his own physical health, having to play through an ankle injury and an intercostal injury.

And yet, despite the emotional and physical toll, Freddie Freeman returned to the Dodgers lineup and we all know how extraordinary he was in the 2024 World Series against the Yankees. He hit home runs in the first four games, including a historic walk-off grand slam in Game 1, and concluded the series with 12 RBIs and a .300 batting average. His resilience earned him the World Series MVP award.

Once upon a time, there was a Jewish man in Seattle with a vision. Howard Schultz initially struggled to convince investors of what he saw in his dream. He sustained rejection after rejection, facing skepticism about his idea of coffeehouse culture in a country dominated by quick-service coffee. And yet he persisted, and in 1987, he developed Starbucks, turning it into a global brand with tens of thousands of stores worldwide, and loyal customers who will seek out a Starbucks wherever they travel.

If there's one thing we're all looking for in this world, it is strength; the fortitude to struggle through illness, the perseverance to achieve a dream. This year has been the story of people searching for their strength. More people have lost a beloved spouse and need the strength to go on. Elementary school students have arrived at school to see antisemitic ugly words and symbols written all over the fence of a place they thought was safe. There

Continued on page 8

High Holiday Service Schedule

Rosh Hashanah

Friday	September 11	7:30 p.m.	Rosh Hashanah Evening Service Oneg to follow
Saturday	September 12	10:00 a.m.	Rosh Hashanah Morning Service

Kver Avot

Sunday	September 13	11:00 a.m.	Kver Avot Service, Jewish Rest Cemetery
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Yom Kippur Services

Sunday	September 20	7:30 p.m.	Kol Nidre
Monday	September 21	10:00 a.m.	Yom Kippur Morning Service
		5:30 p.m.	Yom Kippur Afternoon Service
		6:00 p.m.	Yizkor Service
			Neilah Service
			Break-the-Fast

ARZA - World Union

From Resilience to Responsibility

By Josh Weinberg

Ehud Banai took the stage around 10:30 p.m. to a roaring crowd in Jerusalem. The 73-year-old rocker's music transcends generations and ethnic lines and always carries a deep spiritual resonance. He is a Jewish rock star with roots in an Iraqi Jewish family, singing to a crowd that looks, sounds, and feels like Israel itself. A few thousand people had gathered in downtown Jerusalem to hear him on a summer night for the Israel Festival. For a moment, this felt like a different story of Israel.

The country is gearing up for what may be its most consequential election ever — which, of course, we say about every election, but this time it really does feel different. Political tensions are thick. Violence in the West Bank continues to rage, causing even the American Ambassador Mike Huckabee to speak out against it. The Haredim continue to protest the draft, and after three years of war, loss, trauma, stress, and uncertainty, there is a profound sense of exhaustion, and... resilience. Always resilience.

There in Jerusalem were thousands of Israelis singing and dancing together. Yet, that felt strangely normal.

This is part of what the Israel Festival is trying to capture. Now in its 65th year, the festival has long been one of Israel's premier cultural institutions, bringing together artists from Israel and around the world. But this year, international participation has dramatically diminished, both because of the realities of war and because of growing cultural isolation and boycott.

So, the festival has turned inward. Its theme this year is "Art That Takes Responsibility" That phrase says something important about Israel right now.

In a deeply polarized society, artists are refusing to disconnect from reality. They are using art to listen, connect, tell difficult stories, and imagine something different. Rather than pretending that everything is fine, they are insisting that culture itself has a role to play in repairing a fractured society. One of the most moving examples is VERSE, a two-night collaboration between the Israel Festival and the Aner Shapira Foundation, held at Jerusa-

Continued on page 7

Meet Our Cantor

Leslie Melinda Morgan



Rabbi Leslie Melinda Morgan is a born, raised and practicing conservative Jew in the State of Texas, where she currently resides.

She was ordained as a liberal Rabbi in 2012 through the Jewish Spiritual Leadership Institute. She has been active in formal capacities in synagogue life for over 40 years.

Leslie has taught and mentored over 500 students for their B'nai Mitzvah, has been a religious school teacher for 30+ years, and has taught elementary, middle school, high school, adults and confirmation classes.

Leslie loves to sing and lead organized prayer and is a regular service leader with a focus on *P'sukay D'zimrah*, *Shacharit*, *Kabbalat Shabbat* and Torah Services. She is a regular Torah reader and Haftarah chanter and has led Family High Holiday Services for over 10 years.

Leslie has a BS in Mechanical Engineering and worked in "Corporate America" for IBM for 34 years. She was recently a small business owner with a wheelchair ramp and accessibility franchise in Texas. She is now retired.

However, Leslie's true love is Torah and teaching all aspects of Judaism. She also loves helping those in love "tie the knot" and has officiated over 300 weddings.

Leslie is a proud Mom to 5 grown children and a *Softa* (grandma) to 5 grandchildren.

Congregation House of Israel Board of Directors

Rabbi Sheldon "Shelly" Kleinman
501-623-5821
skleinm2@gmail.com

Dennis Williams, President
870-230-3529
jwmensch1@gmail.com

Glenda Kirsch, Secretary
281-458-2655
ghkirsch@hotmail.com

Millie Baron, Treasurer
501-538-6619
millie487@hotmail.com

Yossi Baron
501-655-1280
kimyossibaron@yahoo.com

Sherrill Nicolosi
501-984-1517
sherrill@thevillagelawyer.com

Mark Fleischner
501-627-5541
hmfleischner@gmail.com

Michael Richardsson, Past President
903-278-6453
maheegan@aol.com

Sisterhood



A note from the Sisterhood Treasurer August 17, 2026

As we get ready for the start of a new Sisterhood year I would like to thank everyone who has mailed in their Sisterhood dues and dues for their Daughters of Congregation House of Israel. The membership dues are \$36.00 for the entire year and \$18.00 for Daughters of CHI. If you have not sent in your dues yet, there is still time. Make your check out to CHI Sisterhood and mail it to:

Barbara Morgan
45 Almanzora Circle
Hot Springs Village, AR 71909

Also remember that our first meeting will be on Monday August 24, 11 a.m. in Burgauer Hall. We all bring our own lunch, so please join us.

Here is the current list of Sisterhood members as of August 17.

Barbara

Sisterhood Mmbers

(As of August 17, 2026)

- Millie Baron
- Kim Baron
- Madeline Bull
- Laura Castillo (Past President)
- Kay Fleischner
- Patti Fleischner
- Sophie Fleischner
- Katie Gordon
- Lisa Gordon-Hamby
- Gail Greenberg
- Glenda Kirsch
- Betty Kleinman
- Mary Klompus
- Judy Levy
- Barbara Morgan (Current Treasurer)
- Sharon Parrett
- Martha Price
- Sherrill Nicolosi
- Karen Reagler (Current Secretary)
- Ruth Sedler
- Sharon Waxler

Daughters of CHI

- Shelly Baron
- Mattea Fleischner
- Leah Fleischner
- Sally Nicolosi
- Tillie Reagler
- Hannah Reagler
- Mimi Reagler

Thank You

After our recent vandalism at the Temple with the graffiti that was painted on our sanctuary wall, we received several warm wishes from people in our community as well as former members of our congregation. Along with their very generous donations to help pay the cost of the graffiti removal, we received these lovely notes from Ian and Sally Nicolosi:

... Millie

I was horrified to learn of the graffiti incident recently. CHI was where I was bar mitzvahed and has a very special place in my heart for many other reasons. I no longer live in Hot Springs and I now reside in New Orleans, which I'm positive my mom has mentioned (haha!). I work for Jewish Children's Regional Service and help get kids to Jewish camps through scholarship aid. If you know of any children in need of these services, please keep JCERS in mind.

Sincerely, Ian Nicolosi

Congregation House of Israel will always hold a special place in my heart. It wasn't just where I grew up—it was where so many of the values that define who I am today were first planted. I learned the importance of compassion, service, and community. I learned about mitzvot.

No matter where life takes me, I will always be grateful for the love and encouragement I found within those walls. This congregation has helped shape the person I have become, and for that I will always carry a deep love and appreciation for each of you. I will always be proud to call this my temple, and I will continue to do anything I can to support and give back to the community that has given me so much.

Sincerely, Sally Nicolosi

ARZA - World Union

Continued from page 4

lem's Campus of the Arts. The project brings together artists and stories from across Jerusalem, creating space for different communities and voices to encounter one another.

The connection to Aner Shapira is particularly poignant. Aner was killed on October 7 after throwing grenades back out of the bomb shelter where he and others were trapped, saving lives at the cost of his own. His mother, Shira Shapira, an architect and former deputy director-general of the Heritage Ministry, has since entered public life, joining a new Zionist political alliance.

There is something powerful about her decision to help create a cultural space in her son's memory.

The response to October 7 cannot only be security, nor can it only be politics. It also has to be the work of rebuilding a society through memory, creativity, conversation, and the willingness to imagine what kind of country we want to become.

That is resilience. Not pretending or forgetting. Instead, creating.

There is another side to this year's festival that is harder to ignore, and that is that Israel has become increasingly isolated from the world of international culture. There is something painful and paradoxical about this. Cultural boycotts may be intended to protest the actions of Israel's government, but they can end up isolating the artists, writers, musicians, storytellers (an increasingly popular genre), and other Israelis who are among the country's most open, questioning, liberal, and globally engaged voices.

Israelis are remarkably resilient; we know that. Israelis have always had an extraordinary capacity to create new life amid difficulty and challenge. Coffee shops are filled, kids play, musicians perform, restaurants buzz, people argue politics late into the night. New businesses open, books are published, films are made, and art emerges. People fall in love and learn to love life. They have re-learned anew to build, create, celebrate, and carry on through unimaginable circumstances. Parashat Shoftim offers an interesting counterpoint. Amid establishing the institutions of a sovereign Jewish society, the Torah commands: "Justice, justice shall you pursue." (Deuteronomy 16:20)

The goal of Jewish sovereignty was never simply to possess the land and survive. It was to build a society worthy of our people's highest values in the Land. That requires more than military strength. It requires the

establishment of justice, of accountability and moral imagination, and the ability for our people to hear the voices of pain and suffering beyond our own. The Torah gives us a haunting phrase: "A people that dwells apart, not reckoned among the nations." (Numbers 23:9)

Jewish history taught us the necessity of self-reliance. Zionism gave the Jewish people the ability to defend ourselves and determine our own destiny in our people's ancient Homeland. But self-reliance should never become isolation, and sovereignty should never become separation from the world.

We need Israel to be resilient, but the irony is that isolation comes precisely when liberal Israel most needs connection with the world. We also need Israel to remain connected — to the Jewish Diaspora, to the democratic world, to culture, and to the universal values that are part of our own Jewish tradition. This is where the festival phrase, "Art That Takes Responsibility," resonated with me. Because ultimately, taking responsibility is not, or should not be, just the task of artists. It is the task of all of us.

Shoftim reminds us that building a Jewish society is not a one-time act of sovereignty. It is an ongoing responsibility. The Torah places responsibility for the character of society on those who create, build, govern, teach, protest, serve, and participate in it. Perhaps that is the challenge before Israel now. Not simply to survive another year, endure another war, or to withstand another election. But to take responsibility for what comes next.

That responsibility belongs to Israelis, of course. But it also belongs to us. To those of us who live in the Diaspora and understand ourselves as part of the same Jewish people. There is a curse to being 'a people that dwells apart'. But there is danger in allowing Israel to become isolated from the Jewish world and from the wider international arena. Our responsibility is not to reinforce that isolation, but to build the bridges to our people around the world and the international community. Perhaps that is what resilience ultimately means. Not simply the ability to withstand what happens to us, but the willingness to take responsibility for what happens next.

The artists at the Israel Festival are doing their part. They are creating, listening, connecting, and imagining. The rest of us have to do the same thing. Because the future of Israel is not something we simply watch unfold. It is something we are responsible for creating.

Refuah Shelemah

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

- *Aria Baron*
- *Shoshana Baron*
- *Adam Bierman*
- *Jerry Fager*
- *Francine Gordon*
- *Oded Grenman*
- *Janet Hunter*
- *Pat McCarthy*
- *Palma Ortiz*
- *Mike Richardson*
- *Lori Roslawski*
- *Kirstin Whitman*
- *Steven West*
- *James Woodfork*

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Anniversaries

David D. and Karen Reagler	Sept 13
Stuart and Linda Leibowitz	Oct 13
Stuart and Kay Fleischner	Oct 28

Birthdays

Madeline Bull	Sept 2
Lynda Kass	Sept 12
Cooper Bull	Sept 18
Jerry Rephan	Sept 27
Betty Feir	Oct 3
Karen Reagler	Oct 3
Betty Forshberg	Oct 8
Jacob Kleinman	Oct 8
Zev Kleinman	Oct 8
Brad Wolken	Oct 12
Steven Kirsch	Oct 16
Stuart Leibowitz	Oct 16
Westley Kleinman	Oct 29

Reb Shelly's Desk

Continued from page 3

are job losses that profoundly threaten self-worth. There are teens struggling to figure themselves out and become who they're meant to be. In so many stories, the approach of despair threatens to yank people down by their ankles. It takes a lot of courage to live in this world, where living life means we will confront death, where being a Jew means we will confront those who hate us, where experiencing wins means we will also experience tremendous losses.

Let me conclude with another story I picked up on Google.. Once upon a time, a Canadian orthodox yeshiva had an exceptional skier among its students, named Yossi. So fast was Yossi that in his practice sessions, with tzitzits flying out behind, he had beat various world records. After checking to make sure none of the men's slalom races would fall on Shabbat, he tried out and made the Canadian Winter Olympic team.

Word of his prowess spread the world over, making him a big favorite for the Olympic gold medal. On the day of the final, the crowd waited with anticipation for the wunderkind. As you may know, in a slalom race the skier must pass through about 50 gates.

The French champion sped down the course and arrived at the final gate first, closely followed by the Swiss, German, and Italian champions. Yossi was nowhere to be seen. The crowd waited, and waited, and waited . . . Finally, many minutes later, far behind any world record or even reasonable time, Yossi crossed the finish line.

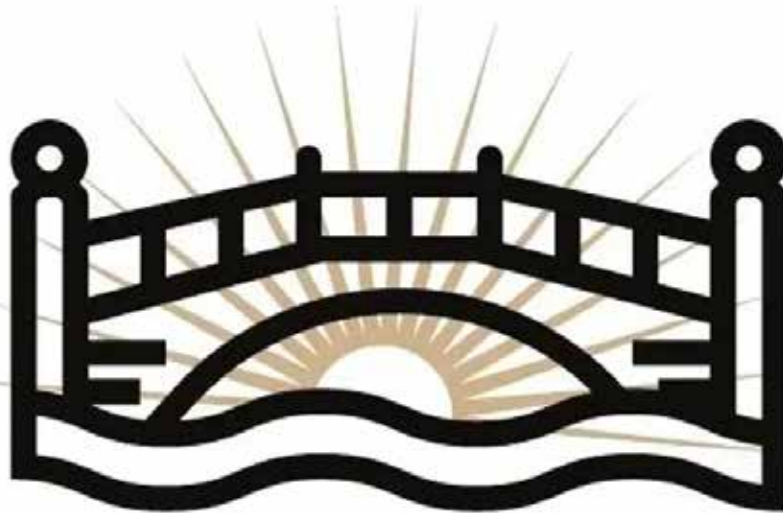
"What the heck!?!?" screamed his coach. "Last place?? What happened? Did you miss any of the gates??" Breathing hard, an exhausted Yossi replied, "No, I got them all, but who was it that put a mezuzah on each one?"

Yossi knew what was really important, and it sure wasn't winning that race. It was the mitzvot, the connection to God, to the values and inscriptions written on those mezuzot.

A final word here. It isn't just nice if we find our strength. It is crucial.

Just look around this world and you will understand what is at stake, and how much we are all needed. There are going to be times when all of us hit rock bottom. We can use all these resources but still it feels impossible to climb. So maybe, there will be someone from this Jewish community of ours who knows where you are. They will climb into the pit with you, and they will wait until you are ready to climb.

And then, we will climb together, and find the strength entrusted to our souls.



Bridge to Hope

*Developed by
Cooperative Christian Ministries and Clinic*

Poverty has been identified as the number one health need issue in our community. CCMC's Bridge to Hope Workshop for Community Leaders not only raises awareness and better understanding of poverty but includes actions and resources unique to the Hot Springs area.

Topics included in the Bridge to Hope Workshop:

- Understanding the Complexities of Poverty
- Challenges and Barriers faced by those in Poverty
- Exploring Community Resources to Disrupt Poverty
- Building Community Collaborations to Disrupt Poverty

2026 Bridge to Hope Workshop will be August 28

All Workshops begin at 9am and conclude at 1pm and held in the St. Luke's Episcopal Church Parish Hall, 228 Spring Street in Hot Springs.

Cost is \$30, which includes lunch.

For more information, contact Nicholas Freeman: nfreeman@ccmchs.org or call 501-318-1153 x101

**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR THE BRIDGE TO HOPE
WORKSHOP**

September - October Yahrzeits

Kaddish Recited September 4

Bruce Staffin

Brother of Myrna Taxer

Sam Taub

Father of Betty Feir

Edward I Rephan

Grandfather of Jerry Rephan

Margie Tollefson

Mother of Sharon Waxler

Bill Ginsburg

Brother of Millie Baron

Lila Raines

Mother-in-law of Steven Kirsch

Kaddish Recited September 11

Sadye Fleischer

*Grandmother of Mark Fleischer
Grandmother of Stuart Fleischer*

Sybil Fleischer

*Aunt of Mark Fleischer
Aunt of Stuart Fleischer*

Kaddish Recited September 18

Arthur Williams

Brother of Dennis Williams

Jean Gershner

Member of CHI

Kaddish Recited September 25

(No member yahrzeits for this week)

Kaddish Recited October 2

Helen Poncher Newman

Grandmother of Brad Wolken

Eathel Greenberg

Mother of Bobby Greenberg

Abraham Taub

Grandfather of Betty Feir

Carrie Karnofsky Davis

*Grandmother of Rachel Schulman
Grandmother of David D. Reagler*

Kaddish Recited October 9

Laura Fleischer

*Mother of Mark Fleischer
Mother of Stuart Fleischer*

Seymour Kleinman

Father of Sheldon Kleinman

Robert Fields

*Great Uncle of Mark Fleischer
Great Uncle of Stuart Fleischer*

Kaddish Recited October 16

Rosalind Goltz Hudson

Mother of Madeline Bull

Scott Douglas Bull

Uncle of Cooper Bull

Alice Wolken

Grandmother of Brad Wolken

Oscar H. Greenberg

Father of Bobby Greenberg

Kaddish Recited October 23

Don Levy

Brother of Jerry Levy

Dale Tollefson

Father of Sharon Waxler

Bernard Levi

Father of Larry Levi

Earl Hudson

*Grandfather of Cooper Bull
Father of Madeline Bull*

Rachel Zucker Reagler

Grandmother of David D. Reagler

Kaddish Recited October 30

Louis Kleinman

*Husband of Betty Kleinman
Father of Ira Kleinman
Grandfather of Zev Kleinman
Grandfather of Jacob Kleinman*

September Parshiot

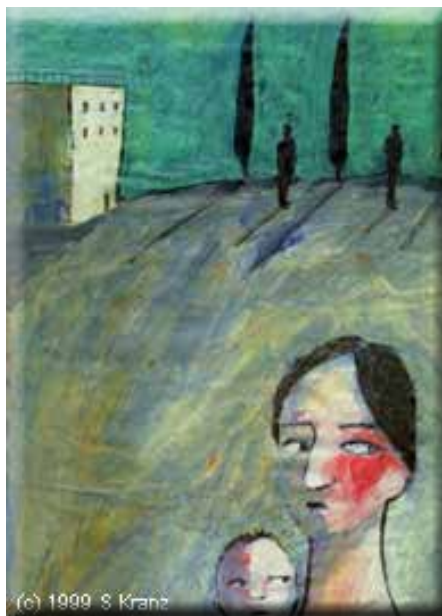
Nitzavim - Vayelech

September 5, 2026

The Parshah of Nitzavim includes some of the most fundamental principles of the Jewish faith: The unity of Israel: “You stand today, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d: your heads, your tribes, your elders, your officers, and every Israelite man; your young ones, your wives, the stranger in your gate; from your wood-hewer to your water-drawer.”

The Parshah of Vayelech (“And He Went”) recounts the events of Moses’ last day of earthly life. “I am one hundred and twenty years old today,” he says to the people, “and I can no longer go forth and come in.” He transfers the leadership to Joshua, and writes (or concludes writing) the Torah in a scroll which he entrusts to the Levites for safekeeping in the Ark of the Covenant.

Vayelech concludes with the prediction that the people of Israel will turn away from their covenant with G-d, causing Him to hide His face from them, but also with the promise that the words of the Torah “shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their descendants.”



Haazinu

September 19, 2026

The greater part of the Torah reading of Haazinu (“Listen In”) consists of a 70-line “song” delivered by Moses to the people of Israel on the last day of his earthly life.

Calling heaven and earth as witnesses, Moses exhorts the people to “Remember the days of old / Consider the years of many generations / Ask your father, and he will recount it to you / Your elders, and they will tell you” how G-d “found them in a desert land,” and made them a people.

Sukkot

September 25 - October 3, 2026

The reading lists the annual Callings of Holiness -- the festivals of the Jewish calendar: the weekly Shabbat; the bringing of the Passover offering on 14 Nissan; the seven-day Passover festival beginning on 15 Nissan; the bringing of the Omer offering from the first barley harvest on the 2nd day of Passover, and the commencement, on that day, of the 49-day Counting of the Omer, culminating in the festival of Shavuot on the 50th day; a

“remembrance of shofar blowing” on 1 Tishrei; a solemn fast day on 10 Tishrei; the Sukkot festival -- during which we are to dwell in huts for seven days and take the “Four Kinds” -- beginning on 15 Tishrei; and the immediately following holiday of the “8th day” of Sukkot (Shemini Atzeret).

October Parshiot

Bereishit

October 10, 2026

God creates the world in six days. On the first day He makes darkness and light. On the second day He forms the heavens, dividing the “upper waters” from the “lower waters.” On the third day He sets the boundaries of land and sea and calls forth trees and greenery from the earth. On the fourth day He fixes the position of the sun, moon and stars as timekeepers and illuminators of the earth. Fish, birds and reptiles are created on the fifth day; land-animals, and then the human being, on the sixth. God ceases work on the seventh day, and sanctifies it as a day of rest.

Noach

October 17, 2026

God instructs Noah -- the only righteous man in a world consumed by violence and corruption -- to build a large wooden *teivah* (“ark”), coated within and without with pitch. A great deluge, says God, will wipe out all life from the face of the earth; but the ark will float upon the water, sheltering Noah and his family, and two members (male and female) of each animal species.

Rain falls for 40 days and nights, and the waters churn for 150 days more before calming and beginning to recede. The ark settles on Mount Ararat, and from its window Noah dispatches a raven, and then a series of doves, “to see if the waters were abated from the face of the earth.” When the ground dries completely--exactly one solar year (365 days) after the onset of the Flood--God commands Noah to exit the ark and repopulate the earth.



Lech Lecha

October 24, 2026

God speaks to Abram, commanding him, “Go from your land, from your birthplace and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you.” There, G d says, he will be made into a great nation.

Still childless ten years after their arrival in the Land, Sarai tells Abram to marry her maidservant Hagar. Hagar conceives, becomes insolent toward her mistress, and then flees when Sarai treats her harshly; an angel convinces her to return, and tells her that her son will father a populous nation. Ishmael is born in Abram’s eighty-sixth year.

Thirteen years later, God changes Abram’s name to Abraham (“father of multitudes”), and Sarai’s to Sarah (“princess”), and promises that a son will be born to them; from this child, whom they should call Isaac (“will laugh”), will stem the great nation with which God will establish His special bond.

Vayeira

October 31, 2026

God reveals Himself to Abraham three days after the first Jew’s circumcision at age 99; but Abraham rushes off to prepare a meal for three guests who appear in the desert heat. One of the three -- who are angels disguised as men -- announces that, in exactly one year, the barren Sarah will give birth to a son. Sarah laughs.

Abraham pleads with God to spare the wicked city of Sodom. Two of the three disguised angels arrive in the doomed city, where Abraham’s nephew, Lot, extends his hospitality to them and protects them from the evil intentions of a Sodomite mob.

While taking shelter in a cave, Lot’s two daughters (believing that they and their father are the only ones left alive in the world) get their father drunk, lie with him, and become pregnant. The two sons born from this incident father the nations of Moab and Amon.

God remembers His promise to Sarah and gives her and Abraham a son, who is named Isaac.

Hagar and Ishmael are banished from Abraham’s home and wander in the desert;