

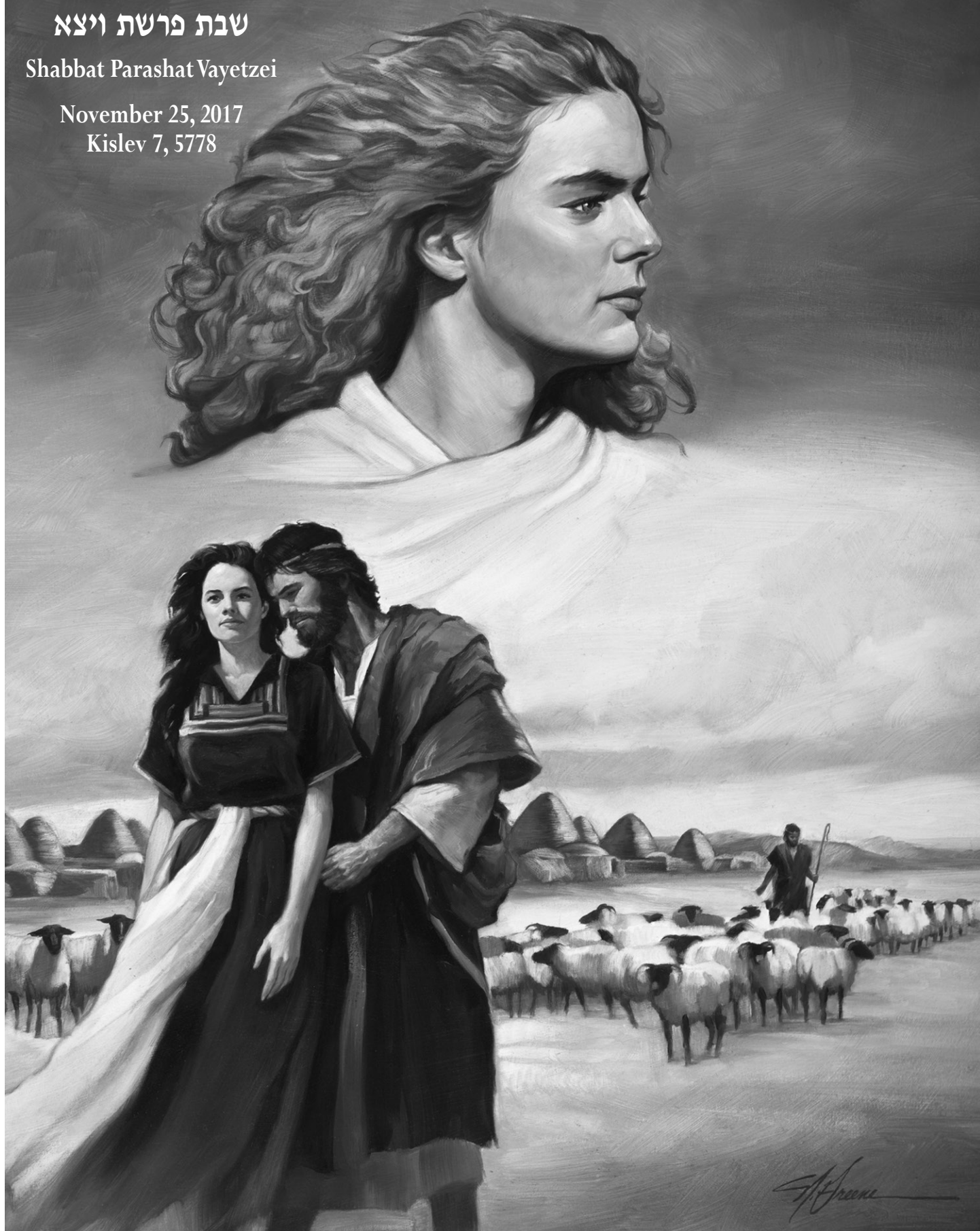
Congregation Beth Israel  
of the Palisades

שבת פרשת ויצא

Shabbat Parashat Vayetzei

November 25, 2017

Kislev 7, 5778



## TORAH STUDY

### This Week: Shabbat Parashat Vayetzei B'reishit 28.10-32.3, pages 166-187

**FIRST ALIYAH:** Yaakov supposedly is running away from Eisav, who wants to kill him. Or is he so intent? What in this episode suggests this just continues a Tragedy of Errors?

**FIFTH ALIYAH:** Yaakov learns that his brothers-in-law are becoming increasingly angry with his prosperity, presumably at their expense. God tells him it is time to head home. Yet he calls Rachel and Leah together to ask their permission. Why?

*The haftarah, Hoshea 11.7-12.12, begins on Page 195.*

### Next Week: Shabbat Parashat Vayishlach B'reishit 32.4-36.43, pages 198-220

**FIRST ALIYAH:** After Eisav and Yaakov embrace, Eisav looks up and sees the women and the children, and asks who they are. How do we explain Yaakov's response (and why do we need to)?

**SIXTH ALIYAH:** Reuven sleeps with Bilhah (verse 35.22). At all other times, she is referred to as one of Yaakov's wives. Here, she is identified as his concubine (pilegish)? Why does the text diminish her status? Is it suggesting she was complicit here?

*The haftarah, Ovadiah 1.1-21, begins on Page 222.*

*For haftarot, we follow S'fardi custom.*

## THE 12 TRIBES: HISTORICAL REALITIES IN A BIBLICAL TEXT

In the eyes of biblical scholarship, the B'reishit narratives that detail the birth of Yaakov's sons constitute an important historic document relative to the evolution of the league of Israelite tribes. To the scholars, certain stages of development can be discerned. The six Leah tribes, they say, must have originated in Mesopotamia. The handmaid tribes must have endured a subordinate status. Binyamin was the last to join the Israelite league.

Re'uven is supposed to be Yaakov's first-born, and his name heads every biblical list. The prominent role he plays in the Yosef saga echoes his position of seniority, and creates the expectation he will enjoy future leadership of the tribes. Yet such is not the case in the historical sources. The Re'uven tribe was insignificant in our texts. As Moshe's farewell shows (D'varim 33:6), its very existence was at one time in jeopardy. This means the depiction of Re'uven as Yaakov's first-born cannot possibly be a retrojection from later times. It is, in fact, inexplicable unless it accurately represents an early historic reality in which Re'uven enjoyed hegemony at least over the five other Leah tribes.

Similarly, decisive conclusions about the antiquity of the data in the birth narratives may be drawn from the portrayal of the other three sons in the first Leah group. Shimon is next in line in seniority, but he does not inherit the mantle of leadership. Historically quite unimportant, the tribe did not even merit a mention in Moshe's farewell (D'varim 33) or the Song of D'vorah (Shof'tim 5). It was largely absorbed by Y'hudah, who took over many of the cities assigned to Shimon. Nevertheless, our narrative makes Shimon senior to Y'hudah.

Levi, too, is here senior to Y'hudah; yet in later times, it had no territory and was dispersed throughout Israel. The story of his birth yields not the slightest intimation of all this.

All in all, the contrast between what is known of the post-settlement history of the tribes and the reality that can be culled from the present narrative account about the birth of Yaakov's sons unmistakably points to the conclusion that the latter preserves the earliest traditions.

*—Adapted from the JPS Torah Commentary to Genesis*

## CBIOTP STANDARDS & PRACTICES

1. Men must keep their heads covered in the building and must wear a talit when appropriate. Women may choose to do either or both, but it is not mandatory.
2. Anyone accepting a Torah-related honor must wear a talit, regardless of gender.
3. Only one person at a time may take an aliyah.
4. No one should enter or leave the sanctuary during a K'dushah. One should not leave the sanctuary when the Torah scroll is being carried from or to the ark.
5. No conversations may be held in the hallway outside the sanctuary, or while standing in an aisle alongside a pew.
6. The use of recording equipment of any kind is forbidden on sacred days.
7. Also forbidden are cell phones, beepers and PDAs, except for physicians on call and emergency aid workers (please use vibrating option).
8. No smoking at any time in the building, or on synagogue grounds on Shabbatot and Yom Kippur.
9. No non-kosher food allowed in the building at any time.
10. No one may remove food or utensils from the shul on Shabbatot. An exception is made for food being brought to someone who is ailing and/or homebound.

מזל טוב!

## MAZAL TOV

Donna and the rabbi  
on granddaughter Shifrah Cohen's wedding

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Monday Michael Kamil  
Mayer Chalom  
Thursday Judy Golub

*Did we miss a birthday, anniversary, or other simchah?  
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This week's Shabbat Booklet  
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Call the office on Monday.

## THE IMAHOT:

*Following is the text adopted by the Ritual Committee  
for use by the Prayer Leader in reciting the Amidah, and  
those wishing to insert the Matriarchs in their Amidot:*

ברוך אתה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵנוּ, אֱלֹהֵי  
אַבְרָהָם וְיִשְׂרָאֵל, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְרַבֵּקָה, וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, רַחֵל  
וְלֵאָה. הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן, גּוֹמֵל  
חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַכֶּל, וְזוֹכֵר חֲסָדֵי אֲבוֹת, וּמֵבִיא  
גּוֹאֵל לִבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה.

Recite this only between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur:

זְכַרְנוּ לְחַיִּים, מֶלֶךְ חַפֵּץ בְּחַיִּים, וְכַתְּבָנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים,  
לְמַעַן אֲ-לֹהִים חַיִּים.

מֶלֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמַגֵּן. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ אַבְרָהָם  
וְיִשְׂרָאֵל.

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# WHY YAAKOV IS THE TRUE FATHER OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

What is it that made Yaakov—not Avraham or Yitzchak or Moshe—the true father of the Jewish people? We are the “congregation of Yaakov,” “the children of Israel.” Yaakov/Israel is the man whose name we bear. Yet, Yaakov did not begin the Jewish journey; Avraham did. Yaakov faced no trial like that of Yitzchak at the binding. He did not lead the people out of Egypt, or bring them the Torah.

To be sure, all his children stayed within the faith, unlike Avraham or Yitzchak, but that simply pushes the question back one level. Why did he succeed where Avraham and Yitzchak failed?

It seems the answer lies in this week’s parashah and the next. Yaakov was the man whose greatest visions came to him when he was alone at night, far from home, fleeing from one danger to the next. In this week’s parashah, escaping from Eisav, he stops and rests for the night with only stones to lie on and he has an epiphany:

He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and angels going up and down. When Yaakov awoke, he thought, “Surely Hashem is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” He was afraid. “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.” (B’reishit 28.12-17)

In next week’s parashah, fleeing from Lavan and terrified at the prospect of meeting Eisav again, he wrestles alone at night with an unnamed stranger.

Then the man said, “Your name will no longer be Yaakov, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.” So Yaakov called the place Peni’el, saying, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.” (B’reishit 32: 29-31)

These are the decisive spiritual encounters of Yaakov’s life, yet they happen in liminal space (the space between that is neither starting point nor destination), at a time when Yaakov was at risk in both directions, where he came from and where he was going to. Yet, it was at these points of maximal vulnerability that he encountered God and found the courage to continue despite all the hazards of the journey.

It is this strength Yaakov bequeathed the Jewish people. What is remarkable is not merely that this one tiny people survived tragedies that would have spelled the end of any other people: the destruction of two temples, the Babylonian and Roman conquests, the expulsions, persecutions, and pogroms of the Middle Ages, the rise of anti-Semitism in 19th century Europe and the Shoah. After each cataclysm, it renewed itself, scaling new heights of achievement.

During the Babylonian exile, it deepened its engagement with the Torah. After the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, it produced the great literary monuments of the Oral Torah: Midrash, Mishnah and Gemara. During the Middle Ages, it produced masterpieces of law and Torah commentary, poetry, and philosophy. A mere three years after the Shoah, it proclaimed the State of Israel, the Jewish return to history after the darkest night of exile.

When I became Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, I had to undergo a medical examination. The doctor put me on a treadmill, walking at a very brisk pace. “What are you testing?” I asked him. “How fast I can go, or how long?”

“Neither,” he replied. “What I am testing is how long it takes, when you come off the treadmill, for your pulse to return to normal.”

That is when I discovered that health is measured by the power of recovery. That is true for everyone, but doubly so for leaders and for the Jewish people, a nation of leaders (that, I believe, is what the phrase “a kingdom of priests” means).

Leaders suffer crises. That is a given of leadership. When Harold Macmillan, prime minister of Britain between 1957 and 1963, was asked what was the most difficult aspect

of his time in office, he replied, “Events, dear boy, events.” Bad things happen, and when they do, the leader must take the strain so that others can sleep easily in their beds.

Leadership, especially in matters of the spirit, is deeply stressful. Four figures in Tanach—Moshe, Eliyahu, Yirmiyahu and

Yonah—actually pray to die rather than continue. Nor was this true only in the distant past. Abraham Lincoln suffered deep bouts of depression. So did Winston Churchill, who called it his “black dog.” Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., both attempted suicide in adolescence, and experienced depressive illness in adult life. The same was true of many great creative artists, among them Michelangelo, Ludwig Von Beethoven and Vincent Van Gogh.

Is it greatness that leads to moments of despair, or moments of despair that lead to greatness? Is it that those who lead internalize the stresses and tensions of their time, or is it that those who are used to stress in their emotional lives find release in leading exceptional lives? There is no convincing answer to this in the literature thus far. Yaakov, however, was a more emotionally volatile individual than either Avraham, who was often serene even in the face of great trials, or Yitzchak, who was more than usually withdrawn. Yaakov feared; Yaakov loved; Yaakov spent more of his time in exile than the other patriarchs. Yaakov, however, endured and persisted.

*Yaakov feared; Yaakov loved;  
Yaakov spent more of his time in exile  
than the other patriarchs.  
Yaakov, however, endured and persisted.  
Of all the figures in B'reishit,  
he is the great survivor.*



# **On Sunday, December 3, do a BIG MITZVAH!**

**With the cold weather setting in and holidays approaching,  
this is a great time to offer a helping hand to neighbors in need.**

**On Sunday, December 3,  
bring unexpired non-perishable food  
and new or never-used toiletry items  
to the shul between 10 a.m. and Noon.**

**Whatever you give us will go to help  
the needy in our community at large.**

Of all the figures in B'reishit, he is the great survivor.

The ability to survive and to recover is part of what it takes to be a leader. It is the willingness to live a life of risks that makes such individuals different from others. So said Theodor Roosevelt in one of the greatest speeches ever made on the subject (Speech at the Sorbonne, April 23, 1910):

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the

triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

Yaakov endured the rivalry of Eisav, the resentment of Lavan, the tension between his wives and children, the early death of his beloved Rachel and the loss, for 22 years, of his favorite son Yosef. He said to Pharaoh, "Few and hard have been the years of my life" (B'reishit 47.9). Yet, on the way he "encountered" angels, and whether they were wrestling with him or climbing the ladder to heaven, they lit the night with the aura of transcendence.

To try, to fall, to fear, and yet to keep going: that is what it takes to be a leader. That was Yaakov, who at the lowest ebbs of his life had his greatest visions of heaven.

—Based on the writings of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

# May He who blessed | מי שברך

*May He who blessed our ancestors bless and heal all those whose names are listed here, those whose names will be called out, and those whose names we do not know because either we are unaware of their illness or they are.*

*We pray He mercifully quickly restore them to health and vigor. May He grant physical and spiritual well-being to all who are ill. אמן*

Sydelle Klein	Rifkah bat Chanah	Avraham Akivah bat Chanah Sarah
Bonnie Pritzker Appelbaum	Sarah bat Malka	Avraham Yitzhak ben Masha
Deenah bat Sarah Leah	Sarah Rifka bat Sarah	Aharon Hakohen ben Oodel
Rut bat Esther	Shimona bat Flora	Chaim ben Golda
Miriam Zelda bat Gittel D'vorah	Sura Osnat bat Alta Chayah	Ezra ben Luli
Miriam Chanah Sarah bat Liba	Tzipporah bat Yaffa	Gil Nechemiah ben Yisraela
Miriam Rachel bat Chanah	Yospeh Perel bat Michlah	Mordechai ben Almah
Harav Mordechai Volff ben Liba Miryam	Michelle Blatteis	Moshe ben Shimon
Adina bat Freidel	Diane Fowler	Harav R'fael Eliyahu ben Esther Malkah
Baila bat D'vorah	Goldy Hess	Harav Shamshon David ben Liba Perel
Chavah bat Sarah	Fay Johnson	Harav Shimon Shlomo ben Taube v' Avraham
Chayah bat Flora	Micki Kuttler	Yisrael Yitzhak ben Shayndel
Devora Yocheved bat Yehudit	Katie Kim	Yitzchak ben Tzivvia
Esther bat D'vorah	Elaine Laikin	Yonatan ben Malka
HaRav Ilana Chaya bat Rachel Esther	Mira Levy	Yosef ben Flora
Liba Ruchel bat Michlah	Robin Levy	Zalman Avraham ben Golda
Masha bat Etl	Lani Lipis	Harry Ikenson
Masha bat Rochel	Karen Lipsy	Shannon Johnson
Matel bat Frimah	Kathleen McCarty	Itzik Khmishman
Mindel bat D'vorah	Gail Schenker	Adam Messing
Ninette bat Aziza	Linda State	Gabriel Neri
Pinyuh bat Surah	Mary Thompson	Mark Alan Tunick
Rachel Leah bat Malkah	Michelle Lazar	
Rita bat Flora	Norma Sugerman	

## We pray for their safe return...

May He who blessed our ancestors bless, preserve, and protect the captive and missing soldiers of Tzahal—Ron Arad, Zecharia Baumel, Guy Chever, Zvi Feldman, Yekutiel Katz, and Zeev Rotshik—as well as those U.S. and allied soldiers, and the civilians working with them and around them, still missing in Afghanistan and Iraq, and all other areas of conflict, past and present.

And may He bless the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces and Tzahal, and those who serve the United States and Israel in foreign lands in whatever capacity, official or unofficial, members of our community or related to members, and their colleagues and companions. Guide them in peace and return them speedily to their families alive and unharmed. אמן

**HONOR YOUR DEPARTED LOVED ONES  
WITH A PLAQUE ON OUR  
VIRTUAL MEMORIAL BOARD.**

**CALL THE OFFICE TO ADD THEIR NAMES  
TO OUR MEMORIAL BOARD.**

## Yahrzeits for Today Through Next Friday

זכרונם לברכה — May their memories be for a blessing!

- 25 Melvin Lobel\*, *Ros Lobel's husband*  
 Eli Kolkin\*  
 Yaakov Moshe Liebowitz\*  
 Louis Zolty\*  
 Judith Schneider\*  
 Leon Benedict\*
- 26 John J. Miller\*, *Gary Miller's paternal grandfather*  
 Arthur Paul Tunick\*  
 Lina Frimet\*  
 Toba Megibow\*  
 Martha Rachowitz\*
- 27 Rose Glick, *Al Glick's mother*  
 Beatrice Gimelstob\*  
 Fred Kahn\*  
 Lucy Cohen\*  
 Chantshe Weinstein\*  
 Herman Pozner\*
- 28 Sophie Kamil\*, *Phil Kamil's grandmother*  
 Martin Koenig, *Matt Koenig's father*  
 Sam Sokolitsky, *Selma Kamil's father*  
 Dr. Jerry Finkelstein, *Donna Amsterdam's cousin*  
 Max Oppenheimer\*  
 Rose Perl\*  
 Rose Goldfarb\*
- 29 Irving Taub  
 Mildred Botwonick\*  
 Robert Samuel Goldfarb\*  
 Meyer Rosenbaum\*  
 Muriel H. Schneider\*
- 30 Beverly Mandelbaum\*, *Michael Mandelbaum's mother*  
 Edith Wingens\*  
 Morris Hahn  
 Rose Brand\*  
 Sidney Bernstein\*  
 James Rosen\*  
 Mildred R. Baxter\*  
 Jacky Rosenfeld\*  
 Lawrence Cohen\*
- 1 Molly Klein, *Rabbi Engelmayer's grandmother*  
 Kay Sussman  
 Anne Bing  
 Malka Prashker\*  
 Rachel Siegel\*  
 Louis Eisenberg\*
- \* A plaque in this person's name is on our memorial board.

Is there a yahrzeit  
we should know about?

## Kaddish list

Selim Chamuel	Rebecca Kaplan
Francine Feder	Haviva Khedouri
Nancy Friedlander	Judith Lorbeer
Moshe Glickman	Norman Harry Riederman
Jay Greenspan	David Rosenthal
Harvey Jaffe	David Shandalow
	Randolph Tolk
	Lawrence Glazer

## Are we in your will? Shouldn't we be?

When people prepare their wills, they usually look to leave a mark beyond the confines of their families. Thus it is that general gifts are left to hospitals, and other charitable organizations.

All too often ignored, however, is the synagogue, even though its role in our lives often begins at birth, and continues even beyond death. We come here on Yom Kippur and other days, after all, to say Yizkor, the prayer in memory of our loved ones.

Our Virtual Memorial Plaques remind everyone of who our loved ones were, and why we recall them. All of us join in saying the Kaddish on their yahrzeits.

Considering this, it is so unfortunate that, in our final act, we ignore the one institution in Jewish life that is so much a part of us.

The synagogue is here for us because those who came before us understood its importance and prepared for its preservation. By remembering it in our wills, we will do our part to assure that the synagogue will be there for future generations, as well.

Think about it. We have always been here for anyone who needed us in the past. Do not those who need us in the future have the same right to our help?

Of course they do. Do not delay! Act today! Help secure the future of your communal home.

Congregation Beth Israel of the Palisades  
ק"ק בית ישראל של הפליסד  
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HOLD THESE DATES!  
Tuesday, December 12  
Public Candle Lightings:  
Cliffsides Park Boro Hall—5 p.m.  
Edgewater Community Ctr. Veterans Field—5:30 p.m.  
Sunrise Assisted Living—6 p.m.

Friday, December 15, at 6:30 p.m.  
Daven 'n' Dine Friday Night, Chanukah edition  
Members: \$25 per person;  
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All others: \$35 per person;  
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Shabbat ends Saturday night with havdalah at 5:15 p.m. EST