

Congregation Ahavas Achim

P.O. Box 334

Westfield, MA 01086

DEC / JAN / FEB 2026 NEWSLETTER

<http://www.congregationahavasachim.org/>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sat. 12/13 @ 10:00 am – Shabbat Morning Service

Sun. 12/21 @ 5:30 pm – Community Chanukah
Menorah Lighting at Elm Street Plaza

Fri. 1/23 @ 7:00pm – Shabbat Evening Service via
Google Meet

Sat. 2/7 @ 10:00 am – Shabbat Morning Service via
Google Meet

Sat. 3/7 @ 10:00 am – Shabbat Morning Service via
Google Meet

Please contact us at ahavasachiminquiry@gmail.com or
leave a voicemail message at (413) 282-8429 if you want to
say Kaddish or have any suggestions for us.

Board Meeting: Meetings are held via conference calls.
Our next meeting is scheduled for February 11th. All are
welcome to join. Please let us know if you are interested
so that we may include you in our call by
emailing ablumenthal@congregationahavasachim.org

Hebrew School:

Coordinator: Andy Blumenthal

(Please call him at (413) 569-8399 if you or another
member of our community has expressed interest.)

Yahrzeit

*With great sadness, we remember the following
people on the Yahrzeit of their passing:*

2025-2026

Phyllis Mackler	Kislev 12	12/2
Lazare Temkin	Kislev 15	12/5
Paul Goldstein	Kislev 19	12/9
Richard Caplin	Kislev 29	12/19
Alvin Jacobs	Teveth 4	12/24
Ethel Levy	Teveth 5	12/25
Alan Tropp	Teveth 5	12/25
Irving Renninger	Teveth 12	1/1
Lillian Flax	Teveth 20	1/9
Abe Milstein	Teveth 24	1/13
Joseph Gubkin	Teveth 24	1/13
Milton Levy	Teveth 25	1/14
Herbert Silver	Teveth 26	1/15
Irving Stone	Shevat 2	1/20
Mildred Bowman	Shevat 8	1/26
Carl Stone	Shevat 9	1/27
Noah Nesin	Shevat 9	1/27
Samuel Garber	Shevat 15	2/2
Samuel Blumenthal	Shevat 16	2/3
Leah Brody	Shevat 20	2/7
Hilda Cooper	Shevat 24	2/11
Matthew L. Pearl	Shevat 27	2/14
Laura Rosenthal	Shevat 30	2/17
Honey Kaufman	Shevat 30	2/17
Shirley Goldstein	Adar II-1	2/18
Murray Sanders	Adar 9	2/26
Gail Wertel	Adar II-10	2/27

Congregation Ahavas Achim wishes to thank all its friends and members for their generous donations:

Barbara and Michael Davenport – in memory of Judith Schulman - General Fund

Sandy Mackler – in honor of Anna Blumenthal's marriage – General Fund

Fran Eisenberg – in honor of her four grandchildren, Delaney, Marley, Easton and Everett - General Fund

Geri Johnson – Torah Fund, Educational Development Fund and General Fund

Carol and Nate Rosenthal – in memory of Joy Dawson - General Fund

Sara Anderson – in memory of Lillian Anderson – Educational Development Fund

Sara Anderson – in memory of Gabrielle Anderson – General Fund

Wendell Choo – in honor of Sandy Mackler and family – General Fund

Rissa Larsen – in celebration of Congregation Ahavas Achim's 50th anniversary since its rededication – General Fund

Wendy and Bob Blondin – General Fund

Elsa Rosenak –General Fund

**Donations received as of 11/30/25*

High Holidays:

Thank you to all who contributed to the High Holiday services: special thanks to Rabbinical Student Noa Kattler Kupetz for leading a wonderful and engaging service. Thank you, also, to her husband, Asher, for his musical accompaniment on the guitar. Thanks to our many congregants who participated with Aliyah's and readings. Thank you also to Fran Eisenberg for coordinating the break-the-fast supper; and to all the adults and children who contributed to our services and helped make these services meaningful for us all.

Happy Birthday!

Birthday wishes go out to the following:

Wendy Blondin	December 23 rd
Barbara Davenport	December 26 th
Rich O'Donnell	December 26 th
Jacob Blumenthal	January 3 rd
Ellie Wright	January 7 th
Susan Blumenthal	January 9 th
Faith Blondin	January 13 th
Andy Rosenthal	January 19 th
Sarah Eisenberg	January 30 th
Andrew Blumenthal	February 21 st

Menorah Lighting Ceremony:

Congregation Ahavas Achim, together with Mayor Michael McCabe, and with the help of Westfield on Weekends, invite community members of all faiths and traditions to an evening of "Latkes and Lights." The festivities will begin at Elm Street Plaza, 47 Elm Street, on Sunday, December 21st at 5:30 PM on the eighth and last night of Chanukah. Rabbi Shahar Colt will lead attendees in prayer and song, and light the candle of the community menorah.

A special free Latkes and Lights party for all attendees, will be held after the lighting at the First United Methodist Church, 16 Court Street. We'd like to thank the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts for their support.

The community menorah will be lit each evening of Chanukah, which begins at sundown on Sunday, December 14, and continues through to nightfall of Monday, December 22. Any residents who wish to volunteer to light the evening's candle on the community menorah on any day of the holiday can sign up ahead of time. A separate signup sheet will be emailed.

Soup Kitchen:

In keeping with our longtime tradition, CAA will be serving Christmas dinner at Our Community Table Soup Kitchen in Westfield on Thursday, December 25th. We are looking for volunteers to help cook the meal (in your own home is fine and then delivered), prepare, serve, and clean-up. Judy and Bob Brown have once again volunteered to cook the beef roast. The meal will be served at 5:00 pm and volunteers are asked to arrive at the soup kitchen (101 Meadow St. Westfield) at 4:00 pm on 12/25/25.

We will be putting together gift bags, as we have done in previous years. Items most needed include socks, hats, soap, shampoo, toothpaste and various toiletries. To donate items, contact Sandy at 413-262-4564 or email sandra.mackler@comcast.net

In addition to monetary donations for the purchase of the meat, cheesecakes, hats/gloves/socks, and toiletries for the gift bags; the following food items are needed to prepare the Christmas meal:

3 large boxes (24-26 oz) of unflavored instant mashed potatoes prepared in disposable aluminum pans; 10 one pound bags of frozen green beans; 8 jars or cans of beef gravy; blocks of cheese or cuts and crackers, vegetable crudite such as carrot sticks, pepper slices, sliced cucumbers (to serve approx 70.); blueberry and cherry canned pie filling, Christmas cookies, clementines (70) and mini candy canes. Please contact Fran at volleyfran@comcast.net with what you can bring and/or availability to volunteer.

Please mail donation checks payable to Congregation Ahavas Achim to Fran Eisenberg, 110 Big Wood Dr., Westfield, MA 01085.

Facebook:

Congregation Ahavas Achim is now on Facebook!

Please click on the following link to find us:

<https://www.facebook.com/AhavasAchimWestfield/>

Once you find us, please “Like” our page. Feel free to post comments or any pictures that you would like to share with us. You will also be able to find announcements and listings for our services and events. If you have any questions, or would like us to post any announcements, events or pictures for you, please email them to: Carol and Nate Rosenthal - ncrose@comcast.net

Hebrew Free Loan Association:

The Hebrew Free Loan Association of Greater Springfield offers interest-free loans to Jewish individuals and families whose needs are urgent and who may not qualify for personal loans from a bank or other financial institution. For more information, go to:

<https://hebrewfreeloanassociation.org/>

Reminder:

Dues payment plans end in February unless special arrangements have been made. All membership dues should be paid in full by February 15, 2026. If you are having difficulty, please contact someone on the board to discuss an alternative payment plan.

Rabbi's Message:

November 2025

Dear Ahavas Achim and Westfield Jewish Community,

On Friday November 21, Jews around the world welcomed Rosh Chodesh Kislev, the new Jewish month of Kislev, the month of Chanukah!

This year, as Chanukah approaches, I am thinking about a key symbol of the Chanukah story: oil. According to the Chanukah story, when the Maccabees returned to the destroyed Temple, they found only one day's worth of the oil needed to light the Menorah. Still, with faith, they lit it anyway, and it burned for eight whole days, enough time to procure more for the Temple's light to keep shining. To honor this miracle, even if most people today go for candles over oil lamps, we still eat plenty of fried latkes and donuts.

In Jewish tradition, outside of Chanukah, oil has its own value. Proverbs 27:9 teaches a sweet connection between oil and friendship, "Oil and incense gladden the heart; the sweetness of a friend is better than one's own counsel." Oil is understood to make one's heart happy in a way parallel to the sweetness of a friend's presence. Rabbenu Bayha interprets this verse to lift up how we treat others. For him, oil refers to the physical sustenance we can offer others, which can be augmented by a friendly attitude towards strangers. The attitude goes hand in hand with the gift of sustenance.

The oil in the Chanukah story came from the ancient land of Israel/Palestine. Ever since the time of the Maccabees, farmers have grown olives as a valuable source of nourishment, a deep connection to the land, and a practice of hope: it takes ten years for a new sapling to bear fruit, and the trees can live for hundreds of years.

Yet in stark contrast to the ethic of appreciation for olives/oil and the friendly attitude that should be directed towards others, these Palestinian olive groves and their farmers have been under attack by violent Israeli settlers, and the Israeli army has turned its back on interventions to protect the farmers or the trees. Powerful solidarity by Israeli and international activists continues- I am moved by [this story](#) by my rabbinic colleague's daughter- but the violence continues and escalates as well.

Harassing farmers and chasing people from their land cannot lead to peace for Israelis or Palestinians. As we prepare to celebrate Chanukah and the many miracles of our lives, reflected in the light of Chanukah candles and the fried food we consume, I invite you to honor the olives and their oil in Palestinian culture. Palestinian poet Naomi Shihab Nye's "[Olive Jar](#)" poem centers the meaning of olives in her community. I invite you to join me in praying for the safety of these olive farmers and their trees, and for the steadfastness of all the people working towards peace. May the light and joy of the Chanukah candles this year fortify and inspire us to keep working towards the more equitable and peaceful world we all wish to live in.

Rabbi Shahar