

The Tablets

The Official Newsletter of The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund • Spring 2023



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**JEWISH CADETS VISIT THE ISRAEL MUSEUM
DURING AN INTER-SERVICE ACADEMY TAGLIT
BIRTHRIGHT TRIP**

The Tablets

The Official Newsletter of The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund

Spring 2023

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL FUND

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Fund News

The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund is immensely proud of our Jewish graduates from the class of 2023. I can't describe the nachas I felt seeing 18 soon-to-be Jewish lieutenants on the bimah of our chapel during the baccalaureate service; I have a picture of the six of us from my class at the same service in Bartlett Hall 44 years ago. What a tribute to how far we've come since then and what the chapel means to West Point, the Army and the American Jewish community!



MG (USA Ret.)
Jeffrey A. Jacobs

At the Shabbat service two weeks before the baccalaureate, we said farewell to Chaplain (Major) David Frommer and his family. We at the Fund, not to mention the entire West Point community—Jewish and non-Jewish alike—owe a debt of gratitude to Cantor Frommer, and to his wife Rabbi Carla, for all they've done. Despite having to deal with Covid and its restrictions during much of his tour at West Point, Cantor Frommer nonetheless drew an unprecedented number of cadets to the chapel and to Jewish programs; not being able to fit everyone in the social hall for the Oneg Shabbat is a great problem to have. He has been an invaluable partner for the Fund, and it has been a true joy for us to support his efforts. We are all deeply indebted to the Frommers. We will miss them, and we wish them much success as Chaplain Frommer moves on to new challenges as a brigade chaplain at Ft. Bliss, Texas.

We were fortunate this past month that Cantor Frommer's replacement, Chaplain (Major) Heather Borshof, was able to travel to West Point for an entire week to facilitate her transition (and that the garrison chaplain's office paid for that trip speaks volumes about West Point). The Fund leadership was pleased to be able to sit down with Rabbi Borshof; we assured her that we will continue to do everything we can to support her and the community. Rabbi Borshof is currently a basic training brigade chaplain at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina and is eminently qualified to maintain the momentum that Cantor Frommer has created. I think the Army got this assignment right.

Many things are happening with the Fund. We're in the process of overhauling our website as a key part of updating our communications and outreach efforts. The site will be more modern, comprehensive, and user-friendly. Keep an eye out for its launch in the next couple of months. As part of our outreach overhaul, we're going to move away from snail mail (although we're not going to eliminate it entirely) and are going to make greater use of email and digital communications.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the generosity of our donors. In the past few months, the Fund has received major donations from Hersch Klaff, the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, and from our chairman emeritus and founder, Lou Gross. Thanks to all whose generosity allows us to maintain and improve the chapel building, fund Jewish programs at West Point, and support our Jewish cadets.

We believe that the Fund plays a key role in advocating for and sustaining Judaism at West Point and in the Army, but we know that our 25 board members don't have a monopoly on ideas about how to do that. We welcome your input; reach out to us!

Go Army!

West Point Jewish Chapel Fund Mission

The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, in support of the USMA mission to produce leaders of character, maintains an endowment to support Jewish cadets and programs, contributes to the beauty of the Chapel for the benefit of cadets and the public, and supports and engages with the Army Jewish community.

Chapel News

Greetings from the Chapel!

Of all the values we commonly associate with Judaism, perhaps none are as foundational as gratitude. This concept is encased in Judaism's very name itself, which derives from our biblical ancestor Judah, meaning "I will give thanks to God." The rabbinic sages of our tradition, conscious of the human tendency towards self-importance, taught that the surest way to garner honor for ourselves is to honor those around us instead.



Cantor David P. Frommer

And yet, as I prepared to serve at West Point three years ago, ingratitude seemed a remote pitfall compared to the more imminent prospect of total failure. I was then a part-time Chaplain in the National Guard who had never worked with Jewish college students before, and whose knowledge of West Point amounted to whatever I remembered from middle school social studies and a family site-seeing tour. In hindsight, though, the rabbis clearly got it right. Not only am I grateful for my time here, but my surprising success would've been completely impossible without the incredible community that supported me along the way.

It was, in fact, my future West Point family who believed I could succeed here long before I did. When COL (USA Ret.) Pete Gleichenhaus, USMA Class of '61, first suggested serving as the Academy's Jewish Chaplain, the proposal seemed so far-fetched that I repeatedly declined until his persistence won me over. When I finally arrived at West Point, only to find not a single Jewish Cadet for my first two Saturday evening services, it was Elaine McConnell, our volunteer Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of the Jewish Choir, who encouraged me that attendance would eventually improve. And when COL Ben Wallen, the OIC of Hillel Club, and an Academy Professor on the Dean's Staff, concluded his welcome email to me with the words YOU ARE SUPER!!!, despite the fact that we had never met, I started to feel that, no matter how unqualified I was for the job, it would be impossible for me to fail with the belief and the help of this extraordinary team.

These leaders and I shared an abundance of devotion and energy, but we could never have expanded Jewish engagement so dramatically without the backing of the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund. The Fund supports programming for over 100 Jewish Cadets currently at West Point by sponsoring Kosher meals at Shabbat dinner, Torah Study lunch, Choir rehearsals, and holiday celebrations, as well as covering expenses for travel all over the country to concert performances, community retreats, and training conferences. Its stewardship of contributions from generous donors like you ensures that Jewish life at West Point is better resourced and more dynamic than at any other Service Academy, and even most comparably-sized civilian colleges. A donation to the Jewish Chapel Fund enables our young Jewish men and women to deepen their connection to the Jewish rituals and values that will sustain them in their military service long after they graduate.

And yet, as indebted as I feel for all of this support, I am most grateful for the Jewish Cadets themselves, for without their participation all our efforts would be for naught. This year, we honored 18 outstanding Jewish graduates in the Class of '23--a group that included the Captain of USMA's Sandhurst Black Team, a female Cross Country runner competing for the World Class Athlete Program, two Cyber Officers who will be pursuing graduate degrees at Carnegie Mellon and MIT, and two female Aviation Officers who will be training as helicopter pilots. Their commitment to Judaism, together with their Jewish classmates, has been a constant source of inspiration and an honor to nurture, and I know it will be the same for my good friend and colleague, CH (MAJ) Heather Borshof, as she continues to lift the Jewish community to even greater heights. The future of Jewish life in the Long Gray Line is brighter than ever, and I am overwhelmed with gratitude to have played a small part in its story.

Warmest regards,
Cantor David Frommer

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www.westpointjewishchapel.com

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Ed Goldwasser

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COL Joshua Lubarsky, USAR

Visiting Hours: Mon–Fri 0900-1600

Shabbat Services: Friday 1900

Sat, Sun and Holidays: Please call for hours
(845) 938-2710



West Point at the Western Wall: Although another middle-eastern war almost breaks out over which school flag should fly the highest, USMA overmatch resolves the matter satisfactorily. While at the Kotel, Cadets write notes with prayers for the end of world hunger, religious conflict, and silly team-building games. Below: WPJCF board member Elad Yoran (USMA '91) generously treats the USMA Birthright Staff Team to lunch in Tel Aviv

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL BIRTHRIGHT TRIP TO ISRAEL

In an overall year of record-breaking numbers for the Jewish Chapel, 46 Jewish Cadets from West Point joined 23 of their counterparts from the U.S. Air Force Academy, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, The Citadel, Virginia Military Institute, and ROTC programs at Yale University, Georgia Institute of Technology, University of Utah, and Rutgers University, for the largest military Birthright Trip to Israel in the history of the program. Though Birthright initially reserved only a single bus, which could have accommodated no more than 38 participants, a second bus was secured thanks to the intervention of West Point Jewish Chapel Fund board member Ben Breslauer (USMA '54), allowing the full group to travel. The buses were staffed by CH Frommer, Hillel CIC Jacob Foster, Dr. Ruth Beitler, and Dr. (COL USA Ret.) Alan Beitler (USMA '77)--distinguished not only for his service as a West Point Jewish Chapel Fund board member, but also, according to Birthright leadership, as the oldest chaperone ever to staff one of their trips! The twelve-day tour, from 18-29 December 2022, explored the history, language, and culture of Israel, included seminars with leading experts on regional security, humanitarian cooperation, and entrepreneurial innovation, and paired each bus with junior officers from the Israel Defense Forces to strengthen ties of Jewish peoplehood and military cooperation. The 46 participating West Point Cadets are believed to represent the largest known group of Cadets to travel overseas in a single group for educational or religious purposes in the Academy's history.



A family portrait of Bus 1, a.k.a. the Thayermobile, including 36 West Point Cadets, 7 Israeli Officers, and Marina, the most patient Tour Educator in all of Israel. CDT Jacob Foster also added frequent historical lectures of his own, leading to Marina's total shock upon eventually learning that he wasn't a junior member of the USMA Faculty. Cadets and IDF Officers bond while trading stories, t-shirts, unit patches, and unprintable phrases in Hebrew and English slang.



Cadets enjoy two of Israel's biggest success stories: Victorious armor tactics from the Yom Kippur War in the Golan Heights and falafel for lunch... everywhere!



Our group spends the night at Kfar Hanokdim for a Bedouin Camp experience, where Cadets visit a farm with this camel named Inbal, and jam out around a campfire, celebrating the chance to use CH Frommer's guitar for something other than Chanukah music.



Cadets relax in the Dead Sea, where the soothing waters burn away even the most minor cuts and scratches, and commemorate their Masada Bar and Bat Mitzvahs with certificates, on our final day in Jaffa. The fine print incurs an ADSO of Jewish Chapel involvement for the next thirteen years!



Topsy-Turvy Theater: Plebes are Kings and Colonels are Dirt...man, as the Mighty Class of '26 poses for a cast photo with a celebrity guest from the Department of Geography and Environmental Engineering, following a mightily zany Purim Spiel.



WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL JEWISH HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS - PURIM

The West Point Jewish Community celebrated Purim with spirited festivities on 17 March 2023, featuring a lively megillah reading, a delicious dinner, and a rocking concert afterwards. WPJCF administrator, Melanie Ullah, and Chapel NCOIC, SPC Andrew Johnson, worked set design magic to transform the bimah into Sultan Achashverosh's Sushan palace, the Fourth Class entertained a raucous audience with their hilarious presentation of the spiel, and the guest Cadet Band, No Strings Attached, back by special request, joined with the Chapel Music Team to keep Cadets dancing in the social hall long past CH Frommer's bedtime (see below). Food and drink were generously sponsored for more than 100 Cadets by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, represented at the event by board members COL (USA Ret.) Glenn Goldman (USMA '84) and Dr. (COL USA Ret.) Alan Beitler (pictured at right) who helpfully inspected Purim gift boxes donated by Kosher Troops for any controlled hamantaschen filling.





The West Point Club's Grand Ballroom offers the roomy setting needed for twelve tribes' worth of Passover guests, who have come in hopes of avoiding more holiday text reminders from CH Frommer, but who stay for the excellent wine, donated by Carla's cousin, Ruth Suzman.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

JEWISH HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS - PASSOVER

The Jewish Chapel kicked off its week-long celebration of Passover with a giant Community Seder at the West Point Club on 06 April 2023. The extravaganza exceeded expectations with over 185 in attendance, including Jewish Cadets, families, faculty, and staff, non-Jewish guests, and even the IDF's Military Attache to the U.S. Marine Corps. Pete Hommel, Music Director of the Post Chapel, once again provided volunteer piano accompaniment and the evening also featured a performance by the Jewish Chapel Choir. The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund sponsored a smaller, Cadet-only Seder at the Jewish Chapel the next evening, led by CDT Jacob Foster, as well as hot and cold Kosher-for-Passover meals throughout the rest of the week, which Jewish Cadets and faculty enjoyed in the Mess Hall Staff Break Room (bottom right).



Board members COL (USA Ret.) Glenn Goldman (USMA '84) and COL (USA Ret.) Woody Goldberg, join with Melanie Ullah to represent the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund at Passover.





Be Thou at Peace: CH Frommer and Jewish Cadets light six candles in memory of Jewish victims of the Holocaust, and reflect on the special privilege of service in defense of America, the safest place Jews have ever lived in the Diaspora. At right, Cadets finish the memorial ruck march together near Quarters 100, but advise against CH Frommer's idea to wake up the Supe for a late-night discussion of Holocaust history.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

JEWISH HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS - YOM HASHOAH

The West Point Jewish community participated in two programs during the month of April in honor of Yom Hashoah, organized respectively by the USMA Equal Opportunity Office and by Cadet leaders of the Jewish Chapel. The first event was held at the West Point Club on 13 April 2023 and featured a presentation by author Matthew Rozell, who addressed an audience of Jewish and non-Jewish Cadets and faculty on the efforts of U.S. Army Soldiers to rescue Holocaust victims as recounted in his book, *A Train Near Magdeburg*. For the second event, Jewish Cadets organized a candle lighting ceremony and six-mile ruck march around post on the night of 18 April 2023, in memory of the six million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis.



CH Frommer, COL Wallen, and Jewish Cadets meet with guest speaker Matthew Rozell, following his presentation for Yom Hashoah.



A Unique Legacy: Jewish Cadets, Corrections Officers, and Machal family members honor Mickey Marcus' contributions to the U.S. Military Academy, the City of New York, the U.S. Army, and the Israel Defense Forces. He is the only graduate of the Academy buried on its grounds to have died while fighting under a foreign flag.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

JEWISH OBSERVANCES - MICKEY MARCUS MEMORIAL

West Point honored its most famous Jewish graduate with its annual Mickey Marcus Memorial Service, conducted at the Jewish Chapel and followed by a wreath-laying ceremony at the Post Cemetery on 07 May 2023. The event celebrated the illustrious legacy of COL David Marcus, better known as “Mickey,” who graduated in the Class of 1924, parachuted into Normandy with the 101st Airborne in WWII, and died while serving as the Israel Defense Forces’ first General Officer in the War of Independence in 1948. The event was organized by the American Veterans of Israel Legacy Corporation, which preserves the history of Marcus and the original 1500 Machal volunteers—foreign Jews who fought for Israel’s independence—and featured a keynote address by Mr. Israel Nitzan, the Israeli Deputy Consul General of New York, as well as a performance by the Jewish Chapel Choir. Also in attendance were representatives of the New York City Department of Corrections, where Marcus served as Commissioner during the interwar years, and a handful of younger American volunteers who, like CH Frommer, followed Marcus’ example as soldiers in the IDF.



Mr. Israel Nitzan meets with Jewish Cadets before and after the ceremony, and assures them that CH Frommer's service in the IDF's kitchens was just as impactful as Mickey Marcus' service on the front lines.



First to Fight: Jewish Warrior Weekend is about fostering inter-service collegiality, strengthening organizational partnerships, and proving that West Point has more Jewish Cadets than anywhere else!

RELIGIOUS CLUB - HILLEL

JEWISH WARRIOR WEEKEND

Jewish Cadets and Midshipmen from around the country gathered in Boston over the weekend of 13-16 April 2023 for Jewish Warrior Weekend, a semi-annual convention that deepens their connection to Judaism and strengthens their sense of Jewish community within the Armed Forces. Of the 54 participants, 29 represented West Point, with the rest in attendance from the U.S. Air Force Academy, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, The Citadel, Norwich University, Boston University, Cornell University, Yale University, Rutgers University, and Georgia Institute of Technology. Programming for the event was conducted at BU's Hillel, and included Shabbat services and dinner (at right and below), guest speakers, free time to explore the city, and a special tour of the Kraft Family's Foundation to Combat Anti-Semitism. The substantial food, lodging, and transportation expenses for the weekend were underwritten by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, with additional contributions from Jewish War Veterans and first-time sponsor Hillel International.



College Board: Tim Cohen, Elad Yoran (USMA '91) and COL Ben Wallen (USMA '96) party with Cadets and students, I mean, represent the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund at BU Hillel's Shabbat dinner during Jewish Warrior Weekend.



At left, CH Frommer leads a morning PT run through Boston's Emerald Necklace Conservancy, frequently stopping to "take pictures" while he catches his breath. At right, JWV Vice National Commander Barry Lischinsky explains the secret to the organization's success in advocating for veterans: they've been doing it since 1896!



On Saturday evening, Cadets join for a soulful Havdalah service at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Boston Common, but with the Red Sox trailing the Angels going into the eighth inning at Fenway Park, the real praying is happening elsewhere...



On Sunday morning, West Point Cadets enjoy lunch as guests of the Foundation for Combating Anti-Semitism, headquartered at Gillette Stadium. The visit, organized by CDT Jacob Foster, includes surprise virtual remarks by New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft, as well as VIP access to the field where Army will beat Navy this December.



Youth Movement: The Choir welcomed fourteen new members from the Mighty Class of '26, who not only infused its operations with energy and enthusiasm, but also brought the expertise needed to settle complicated halachic debates, like whether or not a red sash could be worn over the bottom row of full dress buttons for this photo.



JEWISH CHAPEL CHOIR SEMESTER REVIEW

The West Point Jewish Chapel Choir completed another successful semester with a series of meaningful performances and exciting travel opportunities, thanks to the dedicated support of OIC Elaine McConnell and the Cadet leadership of CIC Sophie Cohen and ACIC Celeste Pollack-Lamirand. On post, the Choir supported the Community Passover Seder on 06 April 2023, as well as the Mickey Marcus Memorial Ceremony on 07 May 2023 (see Page 9) and the Jewish Baccalaureate Service on 24 May 2023 (pictured at left). Off post travel was highlighted by a weekend trip section to New York City (see Page 13), and also included performances at the Wanaque Reserve retirement community in New Jersey on 23 April 2023 and at the Jewish Community Center Association's headquarters in Manhattan (see below), where JWV Post 1 honored CH Frommer with the COL Larry Epstein Award for his success at attracting record numbers of Cadets to events with free food. The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund continued its generous support of Choir activities, covering transportation and lodging expenses for its trip sections and sponsoring delicious dinners on Tuesday evenings after rehearsal.





Shabbat Style: The Choir performs after dinner in their Dress Grays--not the fanciest attire back at West Point but definitely a novel sight at Columbia, where students last wore uniforms when Alexander Hamilton was enrolled there.

JEWISH CHAPEL CHOIR TRIP SECTION TO NEW YORK CITY

The West Point Jewish Chapel Choir enjoyed a weekend of music, learning, and fun in New York City for its spring semester overnight trip section on 11-13 February 2023. On Friday night, the Choir attended Shabbat services and dinner at Columbia/Barnard Hillel, where it performed for students and fostered civilian-military relations (pictured at right). The next day, CDT Lucas Schwed's parents, Alejandro and Ines, generously hosted the group for a delicious lunch at their apartment (bottom left), where Jewish Old Grads Josh Lubarsky (USMA '96) and Miranda Bass (USMA '18) joined for an informal panel discussion on Jewish life at West Point, in the military, and beyond. Following lunch, the Choir toured the Tenement Museum (bottom middle), where Cadets learned about the experience of Jewish immigrants in the early 20th century, and then enjoyed a free evening in the city before returning to West Point the next day. This trip was made possible by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, which paid for bus transport, Shabbat dinner, museum admission, hotel accommodations, and even Saturday night theater tickets (bottom right) during the weekend.





Frozen Mood: CH Frommer completes the Fallen Comrades Half Marathon with Jewish Cadets, though his constant complaining about the chilly weather lead some of them to wonder if he's missed the broader point of the morning.



WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

JEWISH CHAPLAIN'S RUNNING GROUP

CH Frommer joined with Jewish Cadets throughout the year as an informal running group, meeting on Study Days and weekend mornings for Physical Training (PT) runs around post. On 19 March 2023, CH Frommer and eight Jewish Cadets completed the Fallen Comrades Half Marathon, dedicated to West Point graduates who died while serving their country in war. The group conducted training runs throughout the year while on trips to Boston (bottom left) and even Jerusalem (bottom center), but none were as adventurous as CH Frommer's trailblazing attempt through the brambles of West Point's woodline. Participating Cadets (bottom right) are still researching the possibility of a Weed Wacking Skill Identifier for surviving the ordeal.





Subject Matter Expert: Cadets study Torah over lunch with guest-lecturer Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, an award-winning author on Jewish liturgy and leadership. (Discussions led by CH Frommer are equally thought-provoking, tackling philosophical questions like how many Cadets would attend his lectures if the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund did not provide free food.)

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL HEBREW AND TORAH STUDY

While Jewish Cadets attended special events and celebrations this year with their usual robust numbers, the most astonishing measure of their engagement was Torah Study Lunch 'n Learn, which met every Tuesday at noon in the Mess Hall Staff Break Room. Led by CH Frommer, with guest appearances by Jewish USMA Faculty members and visiting civilian scholars, this event averaged 70 participants each week--an increase of 80% over last year, thanks again to the Mighty Class of '26. The immense cost of providing kosher food for these meals was shouldered by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, ensuring that Cadets and Faculty of all Jewish backgrounds would feel included. Cadets also deepened their connection to Judaism through Hebrew language instruction, offered by CH Frommer both informally on Tuesday evenings (pictured at right) and formally as an elective for credit through the Department of Foreign Language (pictured below).

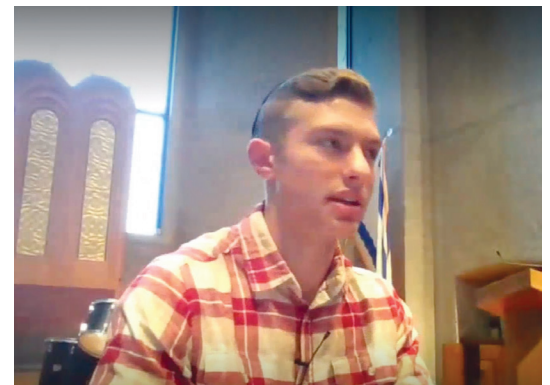




Jewish Cadets train as future lay-leaders during services, and support CH Frommer's recovery from the mental trauma he suffered after chanting the wrong blessing at his bar mitzvah.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL LAY LEADER TRAINING

One of the Jewish Chapel's most important missions is to train Cadets with skills they can use to strengthen Jewish life in the military as lay-leaders, after they graduate from West Point. From providing musical accompaniment, to chanting Torah, to delivering sermons (pictured at right), Cadet contributions to Shabbat and holiday services deepen their Jewish identity and develop their confidence with Jewish ritual and thought. This semester, the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund supported this effort by funding 11 Cadets, chaperoned by OIC MAJ David Forrester, to attend a Lay-Leader Training Course run by the Aleph Institute in Miami, FL during the weekend of 23-26 February 2023. The Cadets networked with Jewish Chaplains from across the Army (bottom left) and joined WPJCF President, LTC (USA Ret.) Terry Bresnick (USMA '69) to discuss lessons learned from his work as a lay-leader during his military service (bottom right). Given the critical shortage of rabbis and cantors serving as Chaplains in the Army, lay-leaders play a vital role in facilitating religious and social events for Jewish personnel who are often isolated from synagogues and other Jewish infrastructure.





Posting the Colors: CH Frommer presents a critical piece of decor to the College Counseling Office at the Heschel School in New York City, during an engagement coordinated by Heschel faculty member and U.S. Air Force Reserve Chaplain, Rabbi Ezra Frazer. Below, CH Frommer visits college fairs at local Jewish high schools to encourage students to consider joining the Jewish Chapel Squad at West Point.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL RECRUITING FUTURE CADETS

The Jewish Chapel continued to grow its recruiting efforts of Jewish applicants to West Point, with key leader engagement at four Jewish high schools in the New York area--The Heschel School and the Ramaz School in Manhattan, Salanter Akiba Riverdale (SAR) Academy in the Bronx, and the Leffell School in Westchester. CH Frommer met personally with College Counseling Officers at each of these schools during the fall semester to educate them about Jewish opportunity and community at West Point, and then returned to three of the schools in the spring to meet with students during their College Fairs. West Point has become a particularly attractive college destination for Jewish high school students in recent years, given its zero tolerance for anti-Israel and anti-Semitic expressions found at other academic institutions, and its extensive support of Jewish cultural and religious life, in balance with elite academic and military training. If you know any Jewish students who are looking to develop themselves as leaders and aren't afraid of a challenge, contact the Jewish Chapel Fund to arrange a recruiting phone call with the Jewish Chaplain today!



West Point Jewish Chapel Fund Secures Major Donation

This March, the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund received a most generous gift from Hersch and Avril Klaff, through the Klaff Family Foundation. Beginning this year and lasting a total of three years, the Klaff family is contributing \$100,000 per year to support travel for the West Point Jewish Chapel Choir, Jewish Warrior Weekend, and the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund Rabbinic Scholarships. We look forward to welcoming Hersch and Avril to the West Point Jewish Chapel this fall and thanking them in person.

ALUMNI REFLECTIONS

WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH WHOM YOU DISAGREE



One of the aspects of my time in the Army that I most value was my exposure to different types of people. Even though my hometown of New York is one of the most diverse cities in the world, the Army enabled me to forge deep, meaningful relationships and lifelong friendships with people I had otherwise little in common with and would never have met. Many veterans reflect on this feeling of brother and sisterhood as a unique aspect of their time in the service, and I feel lucky to have had this opportunity from the age of 17.

BY MIRANDA BASS, USMA '18
Computer Forensic Analyst,
Homeland Security Investigations

It was not until I left the Army years later that I realized how unusual this experience of living, training, and becoming friends with people so different from me was. In civilian life, most of us are naturally surrounded by people we choose based on shared values or common interests - and this is a good thing. It allows us to foster community and feel grounded and safe. But in recent years, the pandemic and political climate have created a vicious cycle of polarization and isolation, keeping us away not only from our chosen communities, but creating even more distance from those with whom we disagree or don't have much in common.

I was privileged recently to be a Mahloket Matters Fellow at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies based in Jerusalem. Mahloket is a Hebrew word meaning disagreement, specifically, disagreement for the sake of Heaven that is generative and deepens our understanding of ourselves and others, instead of disagreement that is reductive, destructive, and isolating. The program taught sources from the Tanakh until today about how our Jewish tradition values Mahloket, how we can foster it in our lives, and the potential it has to help heal some of our culture's deep wounds.

The Mahloket Matters curriculum is incredibly rich, too much so to do

it justice in a brief article, but perhaps the most powerful idea I learned from Mahloket Matters is the 49-49 conversation. In Jewish texts, the number 50 often represents an idea of wholeness and completion, that everything is encompassed and contained. The Talmud teaches us in a story that even our great sages, the early rabbis, could only achieve 49 in their learning and knowledge. It is impossible for a human being to know and contain all the wisdom and perspectives on a given matter, and so we need to live and disagree with a profound humility.

This humility does not mean that we cannot advocate for and defend our beliefs. On the contrary, the premise of a 49-49 conversation is that we are already doing just that!

What it does mean is that we need a level of openness in the conversation to truly hear and understand not just the differing opinions or beliefs someone else holds, but why they feel that way, the context in which they came to hold their beliefs, and our common humanity. The goal is not to win an argument, but to deepen our understanding of others and ourselves.

A 49-49 conversation is also predicated on mutual respect and safety in order to be vulnerable enough to share our beliefs and receive others that may be directly opposed. If all parties are able to muster that basic respect and feel safe enough, Mahloket has the

potential to transcend disagreement and turn into real learning and even healing.

Nowhere have I seen Mahloket in action in my life more than in the Army. Units, barracks living, duty assignments, training, deployments, and more all put us on intimate terms with

every other type of American out there. For much of my career, I spent every waking moment around people with whom I strongly differed and disagreed.

This resulted in funny, frustrating, and even painful misunderstandings and disagreements, but through them I learned to try to bring humility to people whose experiences are so different from mine, that relationships can survive and become stronger through disagreement, and that there can actually be fun, joy, and incredible learning in seeing Mahloket through and becoming true friends with someone with whom you disagree. Military life has much to teach us about the value and practice of Mahloket and how we cannot just coexist, but live well with people with whom we disagree.



At left, Miranda celebrates with friends at Jewish Baccalaureate services in 2018, where she received the Chapel's Mickey Marcus Award for outstanding leadership. At right, she speaks with Jewish Cadets about her experiences at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, during their visit to New York City on a Choir trip section.

HARRY GARTEN

A LEGACY OF SERVICE TO THE WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

Earlier this year, on January 9th, our dear friend, mentor, and advocate for Jewish Cadets, Harry Garten, passed away at the age of 102.

Harry would want to be remembered for what he loved most – other than his beloved wife and son, Lila and David

BY WILLIAM M. MEDOFF, USMA '94
WPCF Board Member

– and that was the U.S. Army and its soldiers. Harry had so much to be proud of: successful attorney and real estate investor, brilliant writer, piercing humorist, enrolling in Columbia University at 15 years old, and graduating from Harvard law school at 22. Harry was particularly tickled that he was the last surviving member of the Harvard Law Class of 1942.

But what Harry most cherished, in his professional life, was his service in the U.S. Army. Harry enlisted in the Army, at the height of World War II, in his last year of Law School. Harry was a Ritchie Boy, among 20,000 soldiers trained at Fort Ritchie, Maryland, during World War II, in military intelligence fields including psychological operations, signals interception, interrogation, and translation. A sizeable number of the Ritchie Boys were Jewish immigrants from Austria and Germany, using their German language skills to great effect. Harry spoke fluent French and served in both France and Germany.

Harry left the Army in

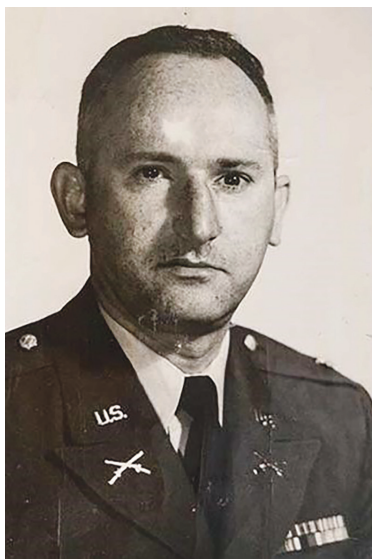
1949, Married Lila, and they were married for 56 years, until her death in 2005. After the war, Harry went into the real estate business with his father, Nathan Garten. But Army duty called again, when Harry was recalled to active duty in 1961, during the Berlin Wall Crisis. Harry served for a year as a military police Major at Fort Bragg. Harry served in the Army Reserves for the next 19 years, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1980.

Harry began volunteering at the newly built West Point Jewish Chapel in 1985. For the next 30 years, Harry built lifelong relationships with both Jewish and non-Jewish Cadets, and members of the West Point community at large. A fixture at the chapel, Harry never missed Kabbalat Shabbat services, so long as he could make the 40-mile twisting, turning drive from his home in Scarsdale. Over a decade, from 1988 to 1999, Harry accompanied Cadets on the JINSA (Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs) summer

trip to Israel. Seeing Harry, at age 73, briskly hike up the snake path to the top of Masada, was an inspiration to Cadets and Midshipmen from USMA, USNA, and USAFA!

In his later years, Harry found great satisfaction from the many Cadets he mentored and guided, both during their time at West Point and after. Dozens of West Point graduates stayed in touch with Harry, with frequent phone calls, reunions at the Jewish Chapel, and visits to Harry's house in Scarsdale. Harry was unceasingly generous with his advice and support, from the always-answered phone call to graduate school recommendations and advice.

Harry, we will miss your humor, your love for the U.S. Army and its soldiers, your always-apt commentary on life in these United States, and mostly your friendship. May your memory forever be a blessing to the West Point Jewish community and beyond.



At left, Harry during his service in World War II. At right, still ready for action after his 100th birthday.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL FACILITIES UPDATE



The concept of honoring Jewish graduates was presented to the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund Board of Directors in the Spring of 2022 following the dedication of the 1LT Howie Pontuck Wall of Distinction in the Lou Gross Sports Center in January 2022. Howie was a 1966 Jewish

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL FUND HONORS DISTINGUISHED GRADUATES

By LTC (USA Ret.) Robert D. Wolff, USMA '65
WPJCF VP for Chapel Building

graduate and the captain of the gymnastics team, who died in Vietnam in 1966. The Wall Distinction honors not only Howie but other gymnasts who excelled in the sport as well as in their military careers.

There was much discussion on who to honor, what to call the display and the size and shape of the display. The purpose of the display is to demonstrate to cadets and visitors the contribution of Jewish graduates to the military service. There was no intent to cite examples of exemplary contributions to the nation in civilian careers, although there are numerous examples of these among Jewish graduates. The Board finally agreed to call the display “The Wall of Honor” and to include three categories of Jewish West Point Graduates:

- 13 Died in a Combat Zone (7 WWII, 5 Vietnam and 1 Global War on Terrorism)
- 46 Received a Valor Award (2 WWI, 12 WWII, 9 Korea, 22 Vietnam, 1 Global War on Terrorism)
 - 15 Distinguished Service Cross
 - 31 Silver Star
 - 14 Distinguished Flying Cross
 - 18 Bronze Star w/V Device

– 22 Purple Heart

- 20 Achieved the Rank of General Officer (16 Army, 4 Air Force)

To determine the names in each category, the information in the Association of

Graduates (AOG) online and printed Register of Graduates was reviewed and verified with the AOG. The review covered the names of over 600 Jewish Graduates from 1802 to 1990. The latter date was selected as it would cover those graduates who had the time to serve a full 30-year career. Future reviews

may uncover additional names and the displays provide for adding names in the future. The main problem with this research is the lack of information submitted by graduates to the AOG Register. For those deceased graduates, I also found some obituaries and news articles online. Jewish graduates are encouraged to keep their information updated on the AOG

Register.

We should be proud of the military service of Jewish West Point graduates, especially those who made the military a career. The review revealed that 43 percent of the Jewish graduates from 1802 – 1990 served a career of 20 or more years. In many years from 1802 – 1939, one hundred percent of the Jewish graduates retired after a career of service. Following are the percentages for each decade beginning in 1940:

- 1940 – 1949 – 44 percent (WWII)
- 1950 – 1959 – 43 percent (Korea)
- 1960 – 1969 – 41 percent (Vietnam)
- 1970 – 1979 – 51 percent (Vietnam)
- 1980 – 1989 – 28 percent (Gulf War)

The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund continues to improve the chapel facility and to tell the story of Jews in the military. We look forward to having visitors learn of the important contributions of Jewish graduates to the armed forces.



The West Point Jewish community extends its gratitude to Bob Wolff for his tireless energy in researching and designing the Chapel's new Wall of Distinction display, which inspires Cadets with the legacy of distinguished Jewish graduates who came before them.

Congratulations to the Class of 2023

As we depart from thee... Serving on land or sea



Alyssa Austin
Marlboro, NJ
Aviation
Fort Novosel, AL



Jackson Blanchard
Greenwich, CT
Field Artillery
Schofield Barracks, HI



Paul Budoff
Arvada, CO
Infantry
Fort Liberty, NC



Jack Fish
Berlin, Germany
Field Artillery
Fort Campbell, KY



Jacob Foster
Newton, MA
Armor
Fort Cavazos, TX



Alisa Friel-Watanabe
Edmond, OK
Engineers
Fort Bliss, TX



Daniel Hoffman
Glenside, PA
Quartermaster
Fort Cavazos, TX



Jacob Lapin*
Los Angeles, CA
Cyber
Fort Eisenhower, GA



Chaney Lieberman
Aliso Viejo, CA
Aviation
Fort Novosel, AL



Benjamin Lockey
New City, NY
Infantry
Joint Base
Elmendorf-Richardson, AK



Levy Margolin
Wilmington, DE
Ordnance
Fort Cavazos, TX



Julia Nolletti
Asheville, NC
Military Intelligence



Brooke Rosenfeld
Weston, MA
Cyber
Fort Eisenhower, GA



Ian Schneier
Nashville, TN
Military Intelligence
Fort Cavazos, TX



Alyssa Spell
Lewes, DE
Armor
Fort Bliss, TX



Vivian Tsai
Vernon Hills, IL
Armor
Fort Cavazos, TX



Benjamin Wettstein**
Franklin Square, NY
Cyber
Fort Eisenhower, GA



Arielle Zlotnick
Amherst, NH
Chemical
Schofield Barracks, HI

Thanks to Academy Photo for once again providing pictures of our graduating cadets.

* Recipient of the Carnegie Mellon - West Point Scholarship

** Recipient of the MIT Lincoln Laboratory Fellowship



Jewish Firsties enjoy their final evening at the Chapel on Baccalaureate Night while CH Frommer prepares to send them all text messages for the next 47 months of their Army service.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL BACCALAUREATE SERVICE

The Jewish community honored its graduating Cadets with its annual Baccalaureate Service, conducted at the Jewish Chapel on 24 May 2023. WPJCF Secretary & Communications Director LTC (USA Ret.) Elizabeth Robbins, USMA '92, opened the proceedings with introductory remarks in the Alumni Gallery (bottom left), where eighteen new names were added to the Wall of Graduates. In the sanctuary, award-winning Jewish author Dara Horn delivered the keynote address, and COL Wallen conferred certificates of lay-leadership on deserving Cadets, as well as the Mickey Marcus Award on CDT Jacob Foster for his outstanding work as CIC of Hillel Club. The service was further highlighted by special music from the Jewish Chapel Choir, and a Torah Passing ritual, where rising Firsties assumed the responsibility of leadership from those about to leave (bottom center). Every graduate received a gift from the Jewish War Veterans, represented by JWV West Point Liaison, Ed Goldwasser, as well from the Jewish Welfare Board and the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund. The Fund also sponsored a celebratory dinner afterwards, expertly organized by Fund Administrator, Melanie Ullah, with flowers and a photo booth provided by the Polesky Margolin family. The Jewish Class of '23 leaves behind a shining legacy of accomplishment at West Point and dedication to the nation's future—Freedom is not Free!



BACCALAUREATE KEYNOTE ADDRESS

It is an enormous honor to be here today to wish you Mazal Tov on this beautiful moment in your lives, and in the shared life of our country. Tomorrow night is Shavuot, the holiday when we celebrate the giving of the Torah at Mount

even hearing what those laws were, and without regard to where those obligations might lead them, and only later did they listen to those laws, learn them, study them, and discover what they might mean. All of you have responded to that call in your lives

as Americans, to defend this country with everything you have, and to use your talents to lead others in its defense. And in this beautiful Jewish chapel today, all of you are

revealing. God didn't give Joshua military advice, or tell him to respect his elders, or to make mistakes, or to wear sunscreen. Instead, God told Joshua to keep learning. God said to Joshua, "You should keep the book of the Torah always on your lips, you should recite from it day and night." For God, "chazak ve'ematz," to be strong and courageous, meant being brave enough to always continue learning: to keep going back to that uncomfortable place, to be curious and humble enough to learn what you don't yet know—not just about the battlefield, and not just about life, but about this timeless Jewish civilization, this powerful antidote to tyranny, that has brought us to this moment and that now relies upon you to sustain it.

MOUNT SINAI AT WEST POINT

By Dara Horn, PhD

American Jewish Professor of Literature and Award-Winning Novelist

This address has been edited for length

Sinai thousands of years ago. Jewish legend teaches us that it was not only the Jews of that generation who stood at Sinai, but that all future Jews were also physically present at that moment, standing at Sinai to receive the Torah from God.

In the ancient Near East, the various nations had many gods, and sometimes one of those gods was the dictator. In ancient Egypt, where the Jews' ancestors were enslaved, the pharaoh was considered one of the gods. When the Jewish people said that they do not bow to idols, what they really meant was that they do not bow to tyrants.

The Jewish people 3,000 years ago, like the American people almost 300 years ago, had to create a model of human leadership that was the antidote to tyranny. The generation of freed slaves discovered that freedom requires hard work, because it turns out that societies that aren't run by tyrants require constant cooperation, decision-making, problem-solving, dedication and vigilance to sustain them.

We all know the famous words that God tells the Egyptian pharaoh through Moses: Let my people go. But in the Torah, almost every time God says Let my people go, it's followed by another phrase: Let my people go, so they may serve me in the wilderness. The purpose of freedom is to allow the people to willingly accept the commandments—laws about how to create a just society. Human dignity comes from choosing to take on responsibility, from accepting obligations to others. Today at West Point, you are all now standing once more at a kind of Sinai, recognizing your obligations as you commission as officers.

When the Jewish people accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai, they said: Na'aseh venishma: We will do it, and then we will listen. They accepted the Torah's laws before

also responding to that call in your lives as American Jews.

Your lives as American military leaders in the coming years will be well-structured, but how you continue to lead and deepen your Jewish lives is still entirely up to you. That freedom and responsibility will be very uncomfortable. You will be making those choices in places where you might not have a Jewish community to support you, and at a moment in history when a resurgence of hatred might tempt you to make the more comfortable choice of not being openly Jewish at all. But you also have the courage of many generations of Jews behind you who made the uncomfortable choice—the ancient generations going back to Sinai, the more recent generations who escaped the persecutions of other places to come to this country, and also the 1,000-plus Jewish graduates of West Point, to whose names we now add yours.

You have spent the past four years learning from the many military leaders around you. But allow me to take a moment to prepare you for your future with some advice given to the very first Jewish military leader, long before West Point existed. When Moses died in the wilderness, the leadership of the Jewish people passed to Joshua, a military leader tasked with entering enemy territory and defending the nation.

At Joshua's commissioning ceremony, God said to Joshua the famous Hebrew words: "Chazak ve'ematz"—Be strong and courageous. But the way God continued this commencement speech is very

So on this momentous day, I'm not going to tell you to wear sunscreen. I think you have all the rules and regulations you need to tell you exactly what you're supposed to wear. You also already know that you will make mistakes, and you can already teach the rest of us about how to live life to the fullest. Instead, I offer you the words of the God of our ancestors: Chazak ve'ematz:



CH Frommer attempts to compute the combined IQ of CDT Jacob Foster and Dara Horn but his brain overheats and he switches to calculating the number of desserts at the buffet instead

Be strong and courageous. Be strong and courageous enough to lead people into battle. Be strong and courageous enough to learn, again and again, what is worth defending. Be strong and courageous enough to stand at Sinai, at every hour of every day. Be strong and courageous, as you carry forth with you the antidote to tyranny.

May God bless America and its defenders. Mazal Tov.



Hail and Farewell: WPJCF leaders from left to right, Scott Lichtenberg, MG (USA Ret.) Jeff Jacobs, LTC (USA Ret.) Terry Bresnick, and Dr. (COL, USA Ret.) Alan Beitler honor CH Frommer's three years of service and welcome CH (MAJ) Heather Borshof as the new West Point Jewish Chaplain at a celebratory Shabbat service on 05 May 2023.

**MAZAL TOV TO THE
CLASS OF 2023 AND
THEIR FAMILIES!**