

# The Tablets

The Official Newsletter of The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund • Fall 2024



**CHAPLAIN (MAJ) HEATHER BORSHOF  
PROVIDES RELIGIOUS SUPPORT TO  
JEWISH CADETS AT CAMP BUCKNER.**

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The Official Newsletter of  
The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund

FALL 2024



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Jewish Chapel Fund**

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# Fund News



#### MG (USA Ret.)

Jeffrey A. Jacobs

Two events, one bitter and one sweet, highlight how far we as the West Point Jewish community have come in a relatively short time.

The bitter event was the passing of the last of our founders, Lou Gross '54. Lou left us in August and was buried in the West Point Cemetery in October next to his dear friend and fellow founder, Herb Lichtenberg '55. As a Jewish cadet, Lou was denied the opportunity to attend Shabbat services in a Jewish space; he attended services (on Sundays) in the old cadet chapel. There was no rabbi stationed at West Point. In contrast, Lou's memorial service was conducted in the Jewish chapel that he and his fellow founders envisioned, raised money for, and endowed. The West Point Jewish chaplain officiated a moving service, and the superintendent sat in the front row. Scott Lichtenberg, the Fund's treasurer and Herb's son, gave a fitting and poignant eulogy. Please read the tribute to Lou in these pages.

The sweet event was the commemoration of the chapel's 40th anniversary, featuring the US Army Band klezmer ensemble. Who knew that the Army's premier musical organization has a Jewish music group? Our board member and executive vice president Woody Goldberg knew, and he conceived and tirelessly coordinated their visit to West Point. The sanctuary was packed for a wonderful Shabbat event, which also included reminiscences by board members Terry Bresnick '69 and Glenn Goldman '84. There was just something special about the US Army Band, in their ceremonial dress blue uniforms, playing and singing Jewish music in the West Point Jewish Chapel. Lou Gross would have been proud (or, as the expression goes, he would kvell).

The chapel also hosted the semi-annual Jewish Warrior Weekend in September. Over one hundred Jewish service academy and ROTC cadets and midshipmen descended on West Point for a terrific three days of Jewish fellowship (and a lot of kosher food). Highlights included a video presentation by and conversation with several Jewish lay leaders serving in the Army, Navy and Air Force, arranged and hosted by our own COL Ben Wallen '96; and an overnight stay, including Havdalah, in New York City. The cadets, led by Olivia Raykhman '25, did a superb job of planning and executing the weekend's activities. Thanks to your support, the Fund was able to provide the resources to make this event a first-class experience for the cadets and midshipmen, to include bringing in a couple of nationally renowned guest speakers from both coasts.

Longtime board member and chapel curator Bob Wolff '65 has decided to step down from the board and his position as chapel curator after many years of service, and to transition to director emeritus status. Bob's contributions to the Fund and to the chapel have been invaluable. The wall of honor and the Medal of Honor display (and accompanying hardcover book) are just two of his many great ideas that he has turned into reality in the form of improvements to the interior of the chapel. The contributions of both Bob and his wife Phyllis (who has lent us her own expertise as an interior designer) have made a huge impact. Thank you both, not only for your ideas and tenacity, which have made our chapel more beautiful, but also for your time and generosity.

As we thank Bob, we welcome a new member, Michael Lichtenberg, to the board. Michael is Scott's brother and Herb's son, and, in the Lichtenberg family tradition, he is a longtime supporter of the chapel and the Fund. We look forward to Michael's continued service.

And finally, let me welcome the class of 2024 to the Jewish long gray line! The baccalaureate service in May was a wonderful event for the graduating cadets and their families. Thanks to COL Ben Wallen, Ms. Elaine McConnell and Rabbi Borshof for putting it all together. The Fund was proud that our own board member, Ben Breslauer '54, hosted the unveiling of the new names on the wall of graduate plaques in the chapel and offered some pearls of wisdom to the newest Jewish grads (and, by the way, we have a great problem—we're running out of space to put new plaques up and have had to buy additional casts to mount on the wall for future classes).

Go Army, Beat Navy!  
Jeff Jacobs, USMA '79



# Chapel News



**Rabbi Heather Borshof**

Although the attacks on 7 October 2023 happened over a year ago, it often seems like it was just yesterday. As I write this in November, the war continues and Israel manages to not only survive (not without its tragic casualties throughout), but her citizens continue to live life to the fullest despite the constant attacks and challenges she faces.

In November we had the distinct pleasure of having over 70 Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers visit with us at West Point for a few hours. They were enthralled with our West Point Jewish Chapel and community, and equally excited to meet with Jewish and non-Jewish Cadets and Faculty where heartwarming open and honest conversations were had, and much learning took place. The IDF Soldiers finished their time with us with a visit to the grave of Mickey Marcus, the only West Point graduate to honorably serve and rise to high ranks in both the United States Army and the Israeli Army. It was an

incredible time for both militaries to engage in an experience that promoted growth and understanding during such a delicate time for both Israel and the United States.

As I write this article, we are approaching the holiday season. It is a time when one often focuses on giving to others and the notion of miracles. And we Jews have our own miracle, too, during this season. Chanukah is the story of a small group of warriors called the Maccabees who lived during the Second Temple Period, around 170 BCE. When they defeated the Greeks, and rededicated the Temple, they only had enough oil to light the menorah for one day. However, miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days, which is why Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days.

During the holiday season, songs are written, and movies are shown that often depict something miraculous that happens. On Chanukah, we light the menorah and often focus on the miracle being that the small jar of oil meant to only last one day, lasted eight days. However, I often see the real miracle being how this very small group of determined Jews defeated the giant enemy; not unlike what the homeland experiences today on a daily basis.

The miracle that Israel continues to fight for the Jewish homeland and not just survive, but flourish as a nation, as a country, and as a people. The miracle that any Jewish person who needs a place to be, is welcome in Israel. The miracle that, while not perfect, Israel makes the effort to behave morally despite the criticism that she takes from the rest of the world and the challenges she is faced with every day.

One may ask, "What is a miracle?" Merriam-Webster defines it as an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs or an extremely outstanding or unusual event, thing, or accomplishment. At times we think of miracles as something that must be big, or a one-time thing in our lives. But miracles can also be the small daily things that we experience in our lives; a simple conversation with someone that gives us a different perspective, a delicious meal that we enjoyed and will always remember, a fascinating book we read that changes us, or just a walk in nature where we can truly recognize the miracle of God and the world around us.

Our visit from our IDF friends helped to remind us of the miracles that happen daily, both in Israel and around the world.

By the time this Tablets magazine reaches you, Chanukah will be over, but perhaps the spirit of the holiday for giving to others, and the miracles that happen around us can remain with us as we go about our day to day lives. So, what are some miracles in your life?

I wish you a happy and healthy New Year. May we be blessed with a year of health and of vigor, and a year of miracles.

*Chazak, chazak, v'nitchazeik:* Be strong, be strong, and we will strengthen one another.

L'Shalom,  
Rabbi Heather Borshof

## 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.

## West Point Jewish Chapel

A Historic Edifice and Center for  
Jewish Life at West Point

**EST. 1984**

### UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST POINT

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CDT Adam Nichols  
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CDT Lucas Schwed  
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CDT Roni Chajmovic  
USMA '26

CDT Aidan Djavadi  
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**WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL**  
750 Merritt Road  
West Point, NY 10996  
Phone: (845) 938-2710

**VISITING HOURS**  
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**SHABBAT SERVICES**  
Friday 1900

**SAT, SUN AND HOLIDAYS**  
Please call for hours



## TRIBUTE TO LOU GROSS

The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund mourns the loss of our chairman emeritus, Louis Gross, USMA class of 1954, who left us on August 17, 2024. Lou was the last surviving founder of the Fund, and his many contributions to West Point, the West Point Jewish Chapel and the West Point Jewish community will forever be remembered.

**By Jeff Jacobs, Class of 1979**  
Major General, US Army (Ret.)  
Chairman of the Board

Lou Gross was born in 1930 in Brooklyn, New York. Imbued with a love of country from an early age, he enlisted in the National Guard at 18, achieving the rank of sergeant first class in a mere two years. In 1950, he won a competitive appointment to West Point and graduated in 1954. Commissioned as an engineer officer, he was assigned to the 42nd Engineer Battalion in Alaska. Lou spent the last few months of his three-year Army obligation with the US Army Corps of Engineers in New York City before resigning his commission in 1957.

Lou went to work for his father-in-law in his small business manufacturing television antennas, eventually taking over the business from him and transforming it into a diversified manufacturing and packaging company. He earned a masters degree in industrial engineering from Columbia University and a second masters degree in professional engineering, and was a licensed professional engineer.

In 1965, Lou's good friend from the West Point Jewish chapel squad, Herb Lichtenberg '55, invited Lou to lunch in Manhattan to discuss the possibility of constructing a Jewish chapel at West Point. Lou and Herb were two of "twenty assorted dreamers," as Lou described



them, including Jews and non-Jews, West Point grads and non-grads. As Lou explained, "I got involved because I felt that there should be some physical monument to the contribution of the Jewish American to the military exploits of the United States. Right or wrong, it's my country. And I felt there should also be a haven for Jewish cadets to assist them through what I felt was a rather trying plebe year, and three (kind of) isolated subsequent years."



Lou was a charter member of the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund when it was incorporated in 1968. The Fund initially set a goal of raising \$1 million, but Lou and others quickly realized that would not be enough to construct the chapel. Eventually, the founders raised over \$7 million. They pitched their plan



to the Army: the Fund would construct a synagogue at West Point and donate it to the government. The Army eventually agreed to the plan, and the chapel was completed in 1984.

Lou was not done contributing to West Point, however. Along with Herb Lichtenberg and a third Jewish graduate, Lewis Zickel '49, the "three amigos," as they called themselves, set out to make an even greater impact. Together, they created the infrastructure improvement model that exists at West Point today: raising private funds for construction on West Point that the Army cannot fund. They funded and built homes on post for 18 intercollegiate athletic coaches. The Gross Center (adjacent to the Lichtenberg Tennis Center) is now the home of Army gymnastics. They repaired the floor of the Catholic chapel. Lou was the driving force behind the renovation of Building 147, transforming it into the World Religious Worship Center, which now serves the Muslim community, among others, at West Point. With a wry smile, Lou described the disbelief of foreign Muslim visitors when they found out that the Muslim worship center at West Point was funded by a Jew. And the (now) traditional old grad participation in the plebe march back from Lake Frederick? That was the three amigos' idea, which they sold to the superintendent.

Lou remained active with the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund until his death. He served as chairman for 15 years, expanding his vision to one of support for Jewish cadets and the West Point Jewish community, and continuing to bring his vision to fruition. And although the Fund

**Continued on page 29**





*Beast Support at Jewish Chapel*

## WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

# JEWISH SUPPORT DURING CADET SUMMER TRAINING

By COL Ben Wallen, Class of 1996, Hillel OIC

What an amazing summer of support for existing and new members of our Jewish Community! Our community grew over the summer with support to 17 Cadet Candidates participating in the Summer Leadership Experience who braved the construction in the main sanctuary to take a moment for prayer and appreciate the Jewish Chapel. Cadets participating in Cadet Field Training (CFE) and Cadet Leader Development Training (CLDT) out at Camp Buckner were visited six times, during which a total of 51 Cadets and six Cadre enjoyed a Havdalah service followed by food and fellowship.

The main push, as is true for every summer, was the excitement surrounding welcoming our incredible new community members as New Cadets with the Class of 2028. Starting with a pre-R-Day welcome at the Jewish Chapel and a booth in Eisenhower Hall on R-Day, we had 28 Jewish New Cadets enter West Point as part of the Class of 2028! Amazingly enough, we had 27 Jewish New Cadets join as part of the Class of 2027 last year. You know where I am going with this! We will hope for 29 Jewish New Cadets enter as part of the Class of 2029. But that is getting ahead of ourselves for a moment.

During this past summer, we supported 17 different Chaplain's times at the Jewish Chapel as well as in the field at different training ranges, culminating at Lake Frederick where our Jewish New Cadets along with many of their friends came to enjoy the food and fellowship. We would be remiss if we didn't mention that a big part of what kept bringing New Cadets and Cadets back to Chaplain's Time and field services was the wonderful food provided by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund and amazing support from Melanie Ullah, Elaine McConnell, COL (Ret) Glenn Goldman (USMA '84), COL Ben Wallen (USMA '96), the Bardales family, and Rabbi Heather Borshof.



*COL (Ret) Glenn Goldman with Cadet Candidates during Summer Leadership.*



*The Jewish Chapel Super Prep Crew.*



*Cadets observe Havdalah at Camp Buckner.*



*COL Wallen leading a discussion with New Cadets during Beast.*





*Bonfire time... smores included!*

## WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL PLEBE RETREAT FOR THE CLASS OF 2028

*By Elaine McConnell, Choir OIC*

To mark the end of Cadet Basic Training, we welcomed the USMA Class of 2028 into the Jewish Chapel Squad with a fabulous, relaxing retreat to Camp Ramah in the Berkshire Mountains. Although the new cadets had been treated to plenty of nature and fresh air on the beautiful grounds and surrounding training areas of our rockbound highland home, a change of scenery was most appreciated by the seventeen new cadets and eight upperclassmen who made up the trip section. We arrived at Camp Ramah in time to hold Friday evening services led by our own Chaplain (Major) Heather Borshof. Kabbalat Shabbat and Shabbat Maariv were followed by a wonderful Shabbat meal in the camp's dining hall. The highlight of the evening was a team building and introduction exercise led by trip Cadet in Charge (CIC) Charlie Aronov and Cadet Clementine Bondor.

Saturday morning was an opportunity for the cadets to explore the camp, relax by the lake, get to know each other, do homework, and feel a bit of freedom after the rigors of basic training. Camp Ramah provided delicious kosher food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner (it is a Jewish Camp after all). Cadets enjoyed the playing fields and meeting other groups who were spending the weekend at Ramah.



*Cadets Charlie Aronov and Roni Chajmovic show their ruach at Shabbat services with Rabbi Borshof.*



*Belting it out, the Jewish Chapel way.*





MG (Ret) Jacobs '79 talks to cadets at the dining hall.

More photos on page 8

## THE EVENING WAS CAPPED OFF BY HAVDALAH SERVICES AND A WONDERFUL BONFIRE - NO COMPLAINTS FROM ANY CORNER, EXCEPT THAT WE DID HAVE TO GET BACK TO WEST POINT ON SUNDAY. HERE IS WHAT THE CADETS HAD TO SAY AFTER THE RETREAT:

*"This weekend at Camp Ramah gave me the opportunity to have a restful Shabbat that I don't always get while at West Point and to get to meet new people in the Jewish community."*

– CDT Roni Chajmovic, USMA '26

*"This weekend has been a great weekend to get away from the stress of West Point and to learn more about the Jewish community. It has also been a really great opportunity to make new friends and bond."*

– CDT Sydney Quirk, USMA '28

*"This last weekend has meant the world to me and by far has been [among] the best moments I've had at West point so far. The camp and its natural beauty were great and what was greater ... was the beautiful community I found while on this retreat".*

– CDT Crawford Freedman, USMA '28

*"This weekend allowed me to build a strong foundation for the relationships I look forward to having with my fellow Jewish Cadets."*

– CDT Al Berner, USMA '28

*"This weekend was great. I tried observing Shabbat as best I could, something I haven't really ever done, and I feel very rested and ready for the week as a result of that."*

– CDT Mitchell Galardi, USMA '28

*"Coming back for my 3rd year for the Plebe Retreat has been so rewarding. I got to watch the Plebes form new friendships and begin their journey with the Jewish Community at West Point. What an amazing way to start off the academic year."*

– CDT Charlie Aronov, USMA '26

*"I had a wonderful time this weekend. I loved making new friends, connecting with a new community, and learning about traditions and a religion which is new to me. Thank you for everything you do to make this community so special! It meant a lot to me to be able to connect with everyone this weekend."*

– CDT Elly Melton, USMA '28

*"This experience was a chance to relax for a day. It was the first time I got to interact with upperclassmen, in more than just a subordinate role. It was fun getting to play water polo with them and hang out by the*

*lake. The services were nice; it was also my first Havdalah service, so it was cool to learn and try new things. I got to meet families who were at the camp, too, and get closer to other Jewish plebes. It was a really great weekend and trip. I can see myself coming back next year if I had the opportunity."*

– CDT Angelique Arfa, USMA '28

*"What this experience meant to me was being able to really get closer with the other members of the West Point Jewish Community, hopefully building friendships that will continue to grow throughout my time here and beyond."*

– CDT Josh Weiner, USMA '28

*"Really peaceful and a good time for reflection. [The retreat] allowed me to let loose and feel more human for the weekend. Time to enjoy myself after a tough first week."*

– CDT Sam Singband, USMA '28

*"The most important part of the plebe retreat was seeing all the plebes get to know each other and finally have a chance to just relax and be happy."*

– Anonymous





*The upper class cadets smile after a job well done of hosting the Class of 2028 at Camp Ramah.*



*Plebes, doing what they do best.*



*Cadets at the Ice Breaker.*



*We know what you're thinking, Rabbi ... this fluffy little chick will make a wonderful Shabbat dinner one day.*



*Even two-stars enjoy a good ice breaker!*





*We made it! The hiking crew takes a pic in order to prove they summited Mount Ramah.*

*At the archery range, relevant vocabulary for Jewish warriors.*

## WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

# GOINGS ON AT THE CHAPEL: TORAH STUDY, SHABBAT SERVICES, AND HIGH HOLIDAYS

By COL Ben Wallen, Class of 1996, Hillel OIC

If there was ever a time to be proud of our Jewish community, the time is now. With pervasive antisemitism throughout the country, this is one place you won't ever find it. The United States Military Academy and the entirety of the West Point community live the Army values and our Cadets experience nothing but the utmost support, from the top leadership to their fellow Cadets. This is most impactfully seen during our weekly Torah studies with an incredible program run by Chaplain (Major) Heather Borshof. Each week we have about 75 Cadets attend Torah study. The exciting part about those numbers is that the chain of command across the United States Corps of Cadets supports their participation and about 25 percent of the Cadets who come to Torah study are not Jewish. The impact of this diversity is that we have future leaders learning about Judaism, which enables them to be more sensitive to and informed about needs of their Jewish Soldiers in the future. The sense of learning continues every Shabbat service where Rabbi Borshof incorporates a Torah discussion versus a traditional d'Var Torah. She has also created an environment where Cadets lead parts the service - an amazing initiative to help prepare them to have confidence to take on the mantle of being a Jewish Lay Leader at their future Army posts. This is especially helpful as many will find themselves without a Jewish Chaplain once they



*CDTs leading Kiddush, with pizza included.*

arrive at their initial duty station. The pièce de resistance this year was the participation of Cadets and community members during High Holidays. During Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Cadets read and chanted Torah, chanted the Haftarah, led prayers, blew the shofar, and all members of each class and the community were invited for an Aliyah during both holidays. We even had Major General (Ret) Jeff Jacobs serve as the Hazzan for both high holidays and he was absolutely inspirational! The High Holiday groove continued with wonderful celebrations for Sukkot and Simchat Torah.

**More photos** on page 10





*Kiddush*



*Cadets at Torah Study.*



*Rabbi Borshof, CDT Blake Schryer (USMA '25), CDT Angelina Pfister (USMA '25).*



*Spontaneous Special Edition of Adon Olam to close out Shabbat services.*





*Cadets, midshipmen, and students from the US Military Academy, US Naval Academy, US Coast Guard Academy, US Air Force Academy, US Merchant Marine Academy, Norwich, Harvard, Yale, Virginia Military Institute, Tufts, University of South Carolina, University of Southern California, and one member of the Israel Defense Forces attended Jewish Warrior Weekend.*

## RELIGIOUS CLUB – HILLEL

# GUARDIANS OF WISDOM: THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AT JEWISH WARRIOR WEEKEND

*By Cadet Olivia Raykhman, Class of 2025, Hillel Co-CIC*

Jewish society has always been an outlier, mostly because its principal religious and social activity is education. In our tradition, the highest praise is not reserved for the wealthy or the powerful, but for those who “know how to learn.” This commitment is deeply rooted in our history, and it goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge—it’s about fostering a lifelong journey of growth, wisdom, and the careful transmission of values. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks put it: “For Jews, education is not just what we know. It’s who we are.” He believed that the Jewish people were a “nation of educators,” conveyed directly by their greatest leader Moses, in the moment they became a nation, during the foundational speech made as he led his flock from slavery toward their destiny as a “Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation” in the promised land. In this sense, education isn’t just an instruction or a discipline—it’s the legacy of our people.

True freedom, Moshe suggested, is sustained not by armies but by education. This was, and remains, the cornerstone of Jewish life—the belief that we are not just individuals but guardians of a living tradition, one that is passed down through generations. Jewish Warrior Weekend is a continuation of this tradition, an event that

serves not only as a gathering of faith but as a space for intellectual exchange and the safeguarding of wisdom.

Jewish Warrior Weekend at West Point brought together over 100 Jewish cadets, midshipmen, and officers from across the armed services.—Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Space Force—in the largest interservice academy Jewish gathering in U.S. military history. Attendees from nine service academies, ROTC programs, and senior military colleges gathered not just to observe tradition but to deepen their understanding of what it means to be Jewish in the military.

More than trading stories of memorable cadet experiences, we shared what has shaped us as both Jews and military leaders. We wrestled with real questions: How do you honor Shabbat in a field environment? How do you maintain Jewish resilience when military life feels all-consuming? These aren’t easy questions, and no one had all the answers, but the weekend gave us space to explore them together.

Above all, Jewish Warrior Weekend reminded us that we are the guardians of our wisdom. In Judaism, *Idor v’dor*—

**Continued on page 12**



*Jewish Warrior Weekend logos created by Cadet Adam Nichols (USMA '25) through generative AI support.*



*Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Terry Bresnick addresses the JWW attendees.*



*US Air Force Academy Cadets receiving their fields of service! Three pilots and one Space Force!*



from generation to generation—is a core value. It's the responsibility to pass on our traditions, teachings, and understanding to those who come after us. Throughout the weekend, we weren't just discussing Jewish observance—we were living out this legacy. We were ensuring that the wisdom we carry as Jewish service members continues to evolve and endure through the unique challenges of today's military. By coming together, we were shaping the path for future generations who will navigate this same intersection of faith, identity, and service.

The invited speakers at Jewish Warrior Weekend contributed to the atmosphere of *l'dor v'dor*, each building on the insights of the others to shape a cohesive message about leadership, identity, and service. Distinguished in fields ranging from military service to public life, these leaders embodied the Jewish commitment to growth and wisdom, reminding us that the values of our faith and the military are not separate but deeply interconnected.

West Point leadership opened by emphasizing a key value that sets the academy apart: critical thinking. "If a cadet asks a professor, 'What do you think?' the response is, 'It doesn't matter what I think; it matters what YOU think.'" This core principle, instilled in all cadets, is not just a method of instruction but a guide to fostering independent, values-driven leadership. It speaks to the importance of shaping one's own thoughts and actions—an essential trait for both Jewish and military leaders who must lead with integrity.

Rabbi David Wolpe reminded us of the lasting impact of service. Quoting William James, he said, "The greatest use

of life is to spend it on something that will outlast it." His words underscored the idea that our actions in the military are part of a larger legacy—one that stretches across generations, grounded in service, honor, and wisdom.

Frank Luntz, renowned for his work in communication and public opinion, challenged us to "question everything," reinforcing the Jewish tradition of debate and inquiry. His message urged us to embrace intellectual rigor, ensuring that the wisdom we pass on is not static but constantly evolving.

Colonel (Ret.) Jack Jacobs, a Medal of Honor recipient, reflected on how the values he learned in military service shaped his leadership both in public service and the private sector after his time in uniform. His experience underscored the timelessness of military values—courage, integrity, and selflessness—values that, when coupled with our Jewish heritage, equip us to be leaders not just in the military but in all aspects of life. He offered a powerful reminder that service doesn't end when you leave the military; it becomes a lifelong commitment to lead by example, blending military and Jewish values seamlessly.

Sarah Hurwitz, former chief speechwriter for Michelle Obama, brought a deeply personal and reflective perspective to the weekend. She spoke about what it means to be a Jewish warrior not just in the military, but in civilian life—a role that, for her, is defined by continuous self-examination. Drawing from her own journey, she shared how deeply questioning her place in the world shaped her career, guiding her from the White House to



*Cadet Lilly Baker (USMA '25) asks a question during the panel discussion.*



*Rabbi David Wolpe and Dr. Frank Luntz, Pollster and Political Analyst (as well as USMA American Politics Senior Fellow), lead a session during the panel discussion.*



*All enjoying a great Oneg dinner provided by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund in partnership with the Jewish War Veterans.*

Continued on page 13



*The National Commander of the Jewish War Veterans, Command Sergeant Major (Ret) Gary Ginsburg, addresses the group.*



*Colonel Michael Kelly (former Deputy Commandant of the Corps of Cadets, and currently the USMA G3 Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations), Brigadier General Shane Reeves (USMA Dean) and our very own Dr. Ruth Beitler (Sosh Department Professor), lead a panel discussion in the sanctuary.*



becoming an author on Judaism and now a rabbinical student. Hurwitz encouraged us to ask ourselves how we could make the most impact, and to not shy away from the tough, soul-searching questions that push us to redefine our paths.

Her story illustrated that being a Jewish warrior is about more than strength or leadership in conventional terms—it's about having the courage to interrogate your purpose and adapt when necessary. She showed us that humility, curiosity, and the willingness to rethink our role in the world are key to both personal growth and effective leadership. Whether in public service or personal pursuits, her

journey is a reminder that leadership isn't just about positions held, but about how we continually seek to make a meaningful difference in the world around us.

Jewish Warrior Weekend equips us for that journey. It empowers cadets to become not only soldiers, but educated, thoughtful leaders who carry forward a living tradition of wisdom. By coming together, we fortify the bonds of the Jewish American military community and ensure that our values endure. As Moshe taught, freedom is not won on the battlefield, nor in the political arena, but in the human imagination and will. To defend a land, you need an army. But to defend freedom, you need education.



*Cadet Olivia Raykhman (USMA '25) presents Rabbi Wolpe with his very own tarbuket!*



*Medal of Honor Winner COL (Ret) Jack Jacobs speaks to the JWW participants.*



*The combined choirs of USMA and USAFA singing for a Havdalah celebration in NYC.*



*Cadet Olivia Raykhman and Sara Hurwitz (former speechwriter for President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama) during a panel discussion.*



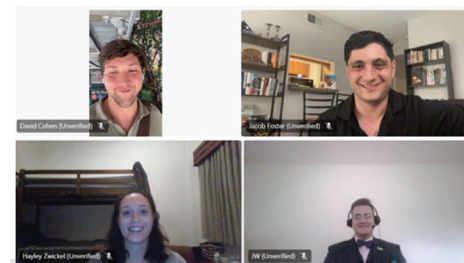
*Jewish Warrior Weekend participants conduct team building PT while also paying tribute to the recent loss of an Air Force Academy Cadet.*



*Ms. Hurwitz graciously donated copies of her book, "Here All Along," to every participant, and personally signed each one.*



*Representatives from all participating organizations led a portion of the service and came together to close out Shabbat services with a great closing song! To read the Cadet-led d'var Torah by Cadet Adam Nichols (USMA '25) see page 28.*



*Recent JWW graduates participating in a remote panel discussion about their experiences in the Army, Air Force, and Navy.*



**40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**  
**WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL**  
**1984 - 2024**

*Members of the U.S. Army "Pershing's Own" Klezmer Ensemble  
Thank you for your incredible musical support at our 40th Anniversary Celebration!*

- MSG Eric Seay, bass
- MSG(P) Chad Leader, guitar
- SFC Michael Dillman, drums
- SSG Chelsea Freidlander, soprano (voice)

*By MAJ Ramona L. Jones, Class of '05,  
Editor of the Tablets*

The West Point Jewish Community came together for a weekend of celebration and kvelling in September to mark the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Jewish Chapel.

Events kicked off on Thursday evening, with a lovely and delicious dinner hosted by COL (Ret) Woody Goldberg (Honorary USMA '47) and his wife Susan. Attendees included MG (Ret) Jeff Jacobs, COL (Ret) Glenn Goodman, Chaplain (MAJ) Heather Borshof, Rear ADM (Ret) Paul Becker, LTC (Ret) Terry and Andrea Bresnick, COL (Ret) Alan Beitler, Ms. Elaine McConnell, COL Ben Wallen, COL (Ret) Glenn Goldman, Mr. Andrew Lotwin, and CPT(P) Ramona Jones. Our special guests were the members of the US Army Band's "Pershing's Own" Klezmer Ensemble, led by MSG Martin Gold. All guests had an opportunity to introduce themselves and mingle, which added an air of camaraderie and festivity to the evening. It also gave us all a chance to learn about the Klezmer Ensemble, which was launched in late 2021.

On Friday evening, Chaplain (MAJ) Heather Borshof lead the community in a special Shabbat service to commemorate the fortieth anniversary. LTC (Ret) Terry Bresnick, Mr. Ben Breslauer, and COL (Ret) Glenn Goldman shared reflections on major milestones in our collective history, the legacies of Lou Gross and Herb Lichtenberg, of blessed memory, and of their personal experiences as Jewish cadets in the “pre-chapel” era. COL Goldman got quite a few laughs when he recounted how his Irish Catholic roommate used to “highly encourage” him to sneak knishes and pastrami sandwiches back to the barracks for fellow (non-Jewish) cadets after Shabbat services. Clearly the copious amounts of delicious



*The Jewish Choir opens services with their melodies.*

Photos by Cadet Matt Griffin (USMA '25)



*The US Army Band “Pershing’s Own” Klezmer Ensemble.*

Jewish comfort food are the backbone of our Jewish community here at West Point and are a longstanding tradition!

The highlight of the evening was the stirring, lively, and beautiful performance by the Klezmer Ensemble. Lead vocalist, SSG Chelsea Friedlander, filled the sanctuary with her Yiddish melodies. The congregation soaked in the wonderful sense of community, togetherness, and celebration, keenly aware of the treasure we have in the Jewish Chapel, as well as the shoulders we stand on – namely, the

founders of the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund – that have led to the creation of this space; a bastion of Jewish pride and tradition as well as a link to all the past, present, and future Jewish cadets of the Long Gray Line.

*Please be sure to visit the WPJCF Website to read LTC (Ret) Robert Wolff's article, "Jewish Chapel Celebrates 40 Years at West Point," which was published in Assembly Magazine, Summer 2024. Visit <https://westpointjewishchapel.fund.org/news-events/links.html>.*



## MORE PHOTOS FROM THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



*COL (Ret) Goldberg presents the band with a framed painting of the Jewish Chapel.*



*SSG Chelsea Friedlander, Lead Vocalist.*



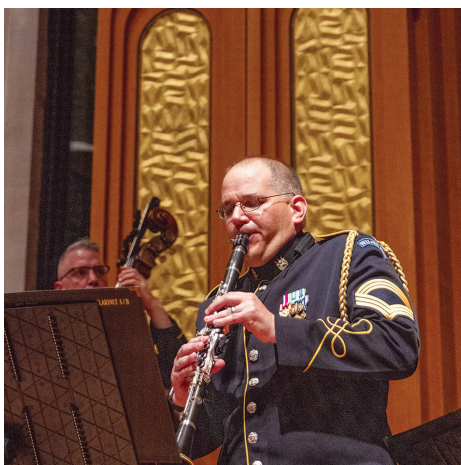
*MG (Ret) Jacobs introduces the US Army Klezmer Ensemble.*



*COL (Ret) Goldman recounts his experiences as a cadet prior to the founding of the Chapel.*



*Cadets enjoy a delicious Shabbat dinner.*



*MSG Martin Gold, Clarinetist and Leader of the Ensemble.*



*SFC Kevin Paul on the trumpet.*



*SFC Michael Dillman on the drums.*





*Cadets show off their haul at the orchard.*

## RELIGIOUS CLUB - HILLEL APPLE PICKING

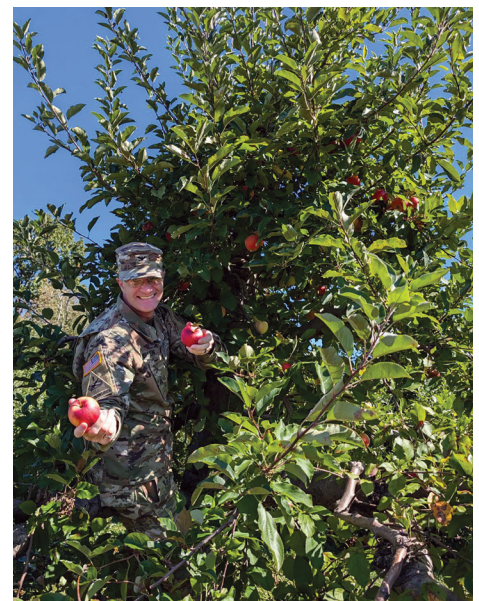
*By COL Ben Wallen, Class of 1996, Hillel OIC*

**A**s any good Army story starts ... and there we were! It was a beautiful fall day in the Hudson Valley at Dubois Farms as fifteen cadets from the West Point Jewish Community looked high and low for the very finest of apples to pick during our pursuit of sweet new year! Each year between Rosh

Hashana and Yom Kippur, we go apple picking and even pumpkin picking. Our wonderful cadets enjoyed the day, starting with apple cider donuts and apple cider and finishing with fresh apples to munch. We were joined by Elaine McConnell, Chaplain (MAJ) Heather Borshof, and COL Ben Wallen.



*Apple Picking Crew enjoying live music.*



*Army Colonel climbs 5 foot tall apple tree and lives to tell the tale.*



# ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES SOLDIERS VISIT WEST POINT

In November, seventy Soldiers from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) visited West Point. The Soldiers started their morning by visiting the Jewish Chapel, where they participated in a Q & A session with Rabbi Borshof and Dr. Yasmine Kalkstein (USMA Professor of Psychology). In the afternoon, the Soldiers transitioned to the cadet area for a tour and breakout discussions in one of the academic buildings. They were joined by over thirty staff and faculty as well as both Jewish and non-Jewish cadets. In the afternoon, the Soldiers paid a special visit to the grave of Col David “Mickey” Marcus. Their visit was an incredible opportunity to learn about the United States military and Jewish life here, and it was an invaluable experience for the cadets to host them.



*IDF visit the gravesite of COL Mickey Marcus.*



*IDF visit with Cadets in the Department of History library.*



*Rabbi Heather Borshof providing special recognition to an IDF Soldier.*



*Rabbi Heather Borshof discussing West Point and the call to service demonstrated by our fantastic Cadets.*





*The Choir on the Bimah at Temple Beth Sholom.*

## JEWISH CHAPEL CHOIR TRIP SECTION TO SARASOTA, FLORIDA

By Ms. Elaine McConnell, Choir OIC

Veterans' Day weekend is always meaningful, especially to Cadets and those who have served or are serving. This Veterans' Day was even more special for the Jewish Chapel Choir as we jetted south to Sarasota, Florida.

Singing before an appreciative audience is always fun, especially if the audience is in sunny Florida in November. The Choir, ably led by Cadet Blake Schreyer, left West Point at 0430 on Friday, November 8th, to catch an early Flight to Sarasota. We were met by our gracious hosts from Temple Beth Sholom and whisked to their homes where cadets had time to relax and enjoy the 80-degree Florida weather. Following an early pre-Shabbat meal we gathered at Temple Beth Sholom for Friday evening services. The Cadet Choir joined in the services participating with the Cantor as he led the joyous evening. Cadet Roni Chajmovic spoke about his family and his own experiences in Israel. After services we had the opportunity to meet members of the congregation and Chapel Fund members, Joel Kampf, USMA 1956 and Bob Wolff, USMA 1965. Saturday morning services were memorable with Cadets Blake Schreyer and Angelique Arfa chanting Torah portions. Cadet Roni Chajmovic was called

for an aliyah and cadets had the honor of carrying, lifting, and wrapping the Torah, during services.

After a lovely Oneg cadets had free time to swim, play pickle ball and enjoy Florida. We returned to Temple Beth Sholom for the close of Sabbath and our choir presentation. Cadet Daniel Clare assisted the Cantor in leading Havdalah just prior to the Choir's performance.

The Choir's main event, a program of musical numbers followed by a Question-and-Answer Period, was well received. We were happy to have former choir member and current Sarasota resident, Keith Samuels, USMA 1983, join in singing the Alma Mater.

Sunday morning's festivities included a men's club breakfast, viewing the award-winning diversity video and a panel with cadets, Chaplain (MAJ) Borshof, Colonel



*The Choir gets ready to perform.*

Wallen, LTC (Ret) Robert Wolff, Joel Kampf and Elaine McConnell.

Lest you think the Cadets had no free time, they did have Sunday afternoon, evening (into the late night) to enjoy the beach and take in the sights of Sarasota.

Huge thanks to Joel Kampf, our hosts, Rabbi Ed Weinsberg and the Jewish Chapel Fund for making this incredible event a reality.





*Choir joined by one of our younger members of the Jewish community as they lead Hanukkah songs.*

## WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

# EARLY HANUKKAH CELEBRATION AT THE CHAPEL

By COL Ben Wallen, Class of '96, Hillel OIC

**H**ow did the Jewish community close out the semester? Well, I am happy you asked!! For the last Shabbat of the semester, we celebrated Hanukkah early in grand style while balancing time for religious observances along with operational requirements to support our fantastic Army football team as they hosted the American Athletic Conference (AAC) Championship game – which they won!

We started services early which began with the community lighting Hanukkiah and concluded with members of the Jewish Chapel Choir leading closing songs of the classics: Hanukkah, Oh Hanukkah, Maoz Tzur, and of course, everyone's favorite: I Have a Little Dreidel. However, just when everyone thought it was time to go into the synagogue for the Oneg dinner, COL Wallen jumped up and shared a final stanza of the song he learned from his father (COL (Ret) David Wallen) which is slightly less well-known: "I have a little dreidel. I made it out of plastic.

And when it's dry and ready, it really spins fantastic!"

The Jewish War Veterans graciously sponsored the Oneg dinner, which featured latkes made by our very own cadets led by "Latke 6." That's correct! We had a call sign for Cadet Roni Chajmovic who served as our latke-making commander. Did the celebration end with the Oneg dinner? Of course not! We transitioned to hearing three great songs from the newly formed "Take One" Cadet Band made up of our very own Cadets Roni Chajmovic and Justin Collins. They were the openers for the Cadet Rock Band "No Strings Attached." Great fun was had by all. But wait, there's more! To close out the weekend, four Cadets joined Dr. Al Beitler (USMA '77 and Chair of the Jewish Community Council), Elaine McConnell (Officer in Charge of Jewish Choir), and Rabbi Heather Borshof as they helped pack Hanukkah care packages for deployed Soldiers around the world in support of Kosher Troops. Now that's the way to close out the semester!!



*Hanukkiah Lighting.*



*Kiddush Singing.*



*Latke Making.*

**MORE HANUKKAH PHOTOS ON PAGE 20**



# STRIVE TO BE ALL YOU CAN BE – A MEMOIR

## BY MG (RET) EUGENE FOX, USMA '56

PUBLISHED BY ROSSEL BOOKS, 2024

The memoir takes the reader from General Fox's early youth in Bronx, New York, to West Point, through his 33-year military career and a civilian career of

### Book Review by LTC (Ret) Robert Wolff, USMA '65

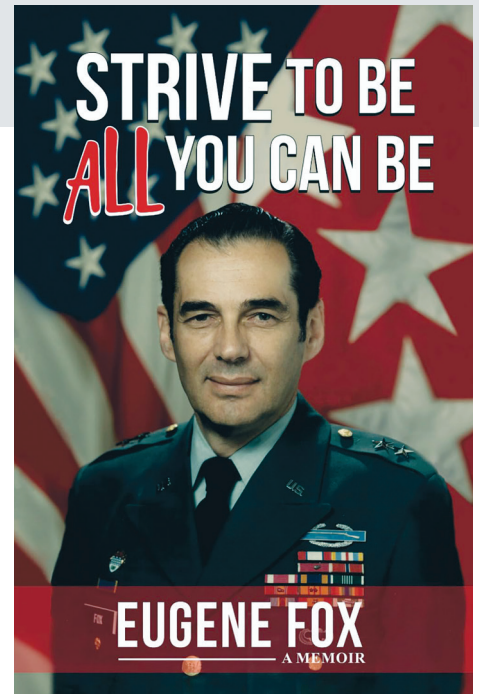
continuing service to the nation until his retirement in 2022. Raised by his mother as an only child, Gene excelled in school and wanted to join the Army like his uncles who served in WWII. He decided to apply to the Military Academy without any real knowledge of the Academy or a military career.

The book dwells little on his time at West Point and focuses more on his career and family. Several themes can be recognized throughout the book. First, the importance of family throughout Gene's career, including his marriage to Evelyn in 1957, the upbringing of his four children and his pride in his eleven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Evelyn was instrumental in their children's upbringing and taking them on trips to broaden their horizons.

Another main theme is the poor state of some of the military units to which Gene was assigned as a junior officer, including both RVN and US units in Vietnam and US units in Germany.

This included the availability of spare parts and the poor leadership of some officers. Gene learned from these experiences in his approach in subsequent jobs. Third, the difficulty of the development and integration of major weapon systems, including the inability of some senior leaders to think strategically and not remain committed to the complete testing of a system prior to fielding. Gene succeeded in many high-level positions in his military and civilian career due to his ability to articulate the best possible solution to the development and fielding of sophisticated weapon systems.

Probably one of the most important events during Gene's tenure in the Pentagon was related to the Homing Overlay Experiment (HOE) in 1984 and the follow-on Flexible Lightweight Agile Guided Experiment (FLAGE) in 1985. These programs provided the US the capability of a defensive missile (kill vehicle) to direct itself to hit the ICBM target. The test facility was under



Gene's command. After several failures, Gene convened a panel of experts and implemented the recommendations so that the final test vehicle was a success. This enabled the US to start working on building a system. These major successes were recognized by President Regan.

Throughout the book, Gene references the close professional relationships that developed into close personal relationships for himself and his family. He referenced both those leaders who mentored him and those who he mentored. This is truly the mark of a well-liked and effective leader. Gene and Evelyn now live in Plano, TX.

### MORE HANUKKAH PHOTOS FROM PAGE 19



*Our very own Cadets Justin Collins (USMA '26) and Roni Chajmovic (USMA '26) open as the newly formed "Take One".*



*The Cadet band "No Strings Attached" rocked out the evening with great songs and energy!*



*The Hanukkah party cranked up to an 11 with clearing the floor for dancing...complete with a mosh pit!*



# SUPPORT THE GROWING COMMUNITY AT THE WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

Interest and attendance at the West Point Jewish Chapel continue to rise, with more cadets—both Jewish and non-Jewish—finding a supportive community and valuable resources within its walls. In response, the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund is ramping up its efforts to meet the increasing demand for support.

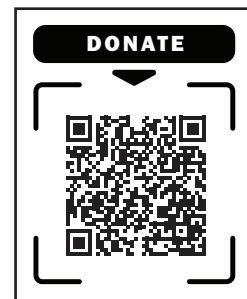
This year, we have been heartened by the engagement of current cadet parents, many of whom have taken the important step of providing financial support. Additionally, our outreach to West Point alumni has grown, with a focused effort to reconnect with former cadets and ask them to “pay it back” by contributing to the Chapel Fund. We look forward to continued and strengthened support from our Jewish West Point alumni community.

Amid a concerning rise in antisemitism and related challenges on campuses nationwide, West Point stands

as an oasis of respect and unity. Here, our cadets are spared from the antisemitic incidents seen across universities in the United States. This environment underscores the importance of building strong, enduring Jewish resources and programs to attract, educate, and support cadets during their time at the Academy.

We invite you to support this mission by making a gift to the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund this year. Your contributions make a significant difference in the lives of these future leaders. To donate, please visit [westpointjewishchapel.org/support/donate-now.html](https://westpointjewishchapel.org/support/donate-now.html).

We are also actively recruiting alumni to serve as class captains to assist with outreach to their fellow graduates. If you would like to join this effort or have any questions about supporting the Chapel Fund, please reach out to Billy Medof, Chair of our Development Committee, at [bmedof@gmail.com](mailto:bmedof@gmail.com), or to our Development Advisor, Randy Gorod, at



[Randy@PisgahConsulting.com](mailto:Randy@PisgahConsulting.com).

Thank you for your generosity and commitment to the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund. Together, we are building a lasting legacy of support, respect, and community for our cadets.

## WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL UPCOMING EVENTS

### JANUARY

- First weekly Shabbat, Torah Study, and Choir Practice of the Semester
- West Point Jewish Chapel Fund Board Meeting

### FEBRUARY

- Kosher Troops Care Package Support ([www.koshertroops.com](http://www.koshertroops.com))
- Purim Party

### MARCH

- Aleph Military Symposium and Conference ([www.alephmilitary.org/symposium](http://www.alephmilitary.org/symposium))
- Plebe Parent Weekend Shabbat
- Choir Performance (Town & Village Synagogue)

### APRIL

- Community Passover Seder (first night)
- Cadet-Led Passover Seder (second night)

- Choir Performance (Somers, NY)
- Guest Speaker Event: Rabbi Elan Babchuck (Torah Study & Dinner)
- Jewish Warrior Weekend

### MAY

- West Point Jewish Chapel Fund Board Meeting
- Baccalaureate Service for the Class of 2025
- Graduation and Commissioning Ceremonies



## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# SERVICE WITH THE IDF

COL (Ret) Glenn Goldman, Class of '84

Former Director of the Department of Military Instruction (DMI), USMA

The 7th of October 2023 is a date that all of us will remember for the rest of our lives as an infamous date of murder, massacre, barbarism, inhumanity and evil. We will, no doubt, all remember exactly where we were and what we were doing. As for me, my wife and I had just returned home from the Army vs.



Glenn H. Goldman

Proud Sar-El volunteer  
January-February 2024

Colonel, US Army (retired)  
West Point Class of 1984

Board Member, West Point  
Jewish Chapel Fund

Boston College football game at Michie Stadium, where we enjoyed the beautiful West Point fall day tailgating with friends and classmates and cheering on the 'Brave old Army Team.' We were disappointed that Army lost that day, 27-27, but that feeling was insignificant compared to the shock, disbelief

and outrage we experienced when we returned home and saw the news and began to try to get our heads around the reports of the Hamas terrorism, murders and hostage-taking. I can vividly recall the sense of nausea, helplessness, anger, frustration, and profound sadness that I experienced. How could this happen? How could humans be so poisoned by a sick, hate-filled, evil ideology that they could perpetrate such unspeakable acts upon others?

A few days after the attacks, I was shocked, saddened and surprised to see the large amount of Hamas supporters around the world - AND right here, in

the United States. Age-old anti-Semitism, quite clearly, was still alive and well, even in my own country. The evil ideology was now emboldened to act more publicly. The disease was on our streets, in our cities, on our college campuses and even in our own government. I asked myself, what is my role and how can I help? After sending out a few checks to Israeli charities and State of Israel advocacy organizations I felt I needed to do more. After a late-night internet search of 'how can I help Israel?' I came across the Sar-El website. Honestly, I had never heard of the organization, but in a quick scan of their website I saw the words "volunteer to help the IDF" and that was all I needed to know. It was after midnight, but I quickly filled out the application and volunteered. My wife was already asleep, and I knew I had to tell her first thing in the morning. I was a career US Army officer for 30 plus years and had participated in six hazardous duty pay/combat deployments.

When I told my wife she was, to put it delicately, not overly pleased. "You've already done more than your share ... why?" she asked. I replied, "I have little faith in the media, and I need to see for myself. Writing a few checks is simply not enough. I think I can be of some use; I need to do this." With that, my amazing Army wife of over 33 years completely understood, begrudgingly agreed, and gave me her blessing, but cautioned me to 'not screw this up and to be safe'.

The application process involved getting recommendations from Jews who knew me and who had been to Israel. I called upon our past West Point Jewish Chaplains, Rabbi Henri Soussan and Cantor Dave Frommer to serve as references. I also needed a health

certificate and certification from a medical professional verifying that I could, in fact, "work and perform" as a volunteer with the IDF. I received that from our very own Dr. Alan Beitler (it pays to know folks on the WPJCF!). I also had to sign a waiver, send in a payment, undergo a background check, and sit through an interview. At first, I thought I might not be accepted due to my age, but that was not the case. During the interview in late December 2023, I was told that I was "clearly over-qualified," but I assured them that I was willing to do whatever they needed me to do. Once officially accepted, I booked a flight on El-Al for early January 2024. I wanted to arrive two days early to acclimatize. I knew, given the instability in air travel to and from Israel, that El-Al would fly no matter what.

Upon arrival at Ben Gurion Airport, I went to my hotel in Tel Aviv to check in and was immediately confronted with the realities of Israel's plight and struggle. The check-in clerk stated I was "lucky to get a room" because hotels in Tel Aviv were overflowing with internal refugees. He stated that over 100,000 refugees from the border kibbutzim and towns along the Golan were pulled "in-land" for safety. He further stated that his hotel had been unable to host a wedding or bar or bat mitzvah since October 2023 because the meeting rooms had all been converted into school rooms and other support facilities to accommodate the internal refugees.

After checking in, I went for a walk along the beach and began exploring Tel Aviv. Life appeared "normal" with people going about their lives, but evidence

Continued on page 23



of the brutal attack and the ongoing war was everywhere. I saw posters of hostages all over; makeshift memorials on street corners and parks; cars had yellow ribbons on the door handles and vigils and large public gatherings were taking place. The Shabbat tables set with an empty seat for each hostage near the Art Museum (locally renamed Hostage Square) were impactful and heartbreaking to see.

When I “reported for duty” I was met by my 20-year draftee squad leader and assigned duties at a logistics base south of Beersheba in the Northern Negev. The first thing my squad leader instructed me to do was download the apps on my cell phone to communicate with him and receive alert messages for incoming rocket attacks. Each time we stopped at a work site, my squad leader would point out the bathrooms, the coffee/water/snack station, and the nearest bunker. Suddenly, reality had set in for me. The first night in camp I had difficulty sleeping because my cell phone kept buzzing and alerting, literally, all night long. The next day, I told my squad leader that the app he insisted I download needed to be deleted; it was annoying. He checked my phone and laughed. I had my phone incorrectly set to alert me on ALL incoming rockets—all over Israel. He helped me adjust the settings to alert me to just attacks within 5 kilometers of my current location. This helped a great deal—but it did, in fact, alert a number of times while I was there.

I looked around and began to assess my new team-mates. My volunteer group consisted of about 100 men and women of various ages; ranging from mid-20s to mid-60s. I was one of the more “senior” in the group. Over the next several days I met many of the volunteers and made an effort to get to know them, talk with them and learn their stories. I wanted to know why they came to volunteer. I was amazed that the volunteers came from



*The first pallet of rations that I built.*

all over; my team-mates were American, Canadian, British, South African, Australian, French, Brazilian, Dutch, Lithuanian, Polish, Spanish, and more; all mostly Jews. But I was also amazed to see Christian volunteers from Germany. All were passionate about serving and helping out. As my bunk mates the first week, I had two “Phillippes”: one from France (a former French paratrooper) and the other from Germany (the CEO and owner of an IT Company). In the bunks nearby, I met two former British Soldiers who were now students. One lady was a high school PE teacher from Florida on unpaid leave, another was a wealthy businessman from Toronto, and still another was a PhD candidate in Theology from Scotland. The diversity of volunteers was eye-opening and heartwarming. I’m still in touch with many of them and hope to see them again.

My initial duties centered around preparing, sorting, and packing rations for deployed troops in Gaza and along

the Golan Heights. This involved putting commercial food products (e.g., cans of tuna, coffee/tea packets, pita breads, canned fruit, ramen noodle cups, candy, energy bars, cookies, etc.) into boxes. Each box would feed one infantry squad for one day. These boxes were then palletized (72 boxes to a pallet) and loaded onto trucks to be taken to deployed units. I took great pride in helping prep, pack and dispatch a week’s worth of chow for an IDF infantry battalion all in one duty day.

On another occasion, my squad leader needed twelve volunteers for another assignment at a different logistics base. I volunteered and we were dropped off at a warehouse that contained individual Soldier gear (e.g., helmets, flak jackets, rucksacks, sleeping bags, etc.). The IDF Reserve sergeants on duty at the warehouse that day were unclear on

**Continued on page 24**





*Packing Medical Supplies for Trauma Kits.*

exactly what needed to be accomplished. I hated to waste time; through one volunteer, a retired British policeman from London who spoke some Hebrew, and some hand and arm signals, we finally figured out that they needed us to sort, assemble or repair, then pack and palletize helmets, body armor into platoon-sized batches for later issue to activated IDF Reserve units. The Reserve sergeants were unfamiliar with the gear and assumed everything in the warehouse was unserviceable and instructed us to get back on the bus. Up until this point, I managed to “keep a low profile” and was just “Glenn, an American volunteer.” But when I countered the Reserve sergeants and showed them that the gear was, in fact, serviceable, but just needed some rubberized lacing or assembly I tipped my hand and “blew my cover.” I recognized most of the gear as US surplus or NATO gear and was very familiar with it. I was able to locate the needed parts in the warehouse and got our detail going in

accomplishing the day’s task. When my squad leader returned to pick us up, the Reserve sergeants “outed” me as being a former US Army Officer with a “bit of experience.” My squad leader, after that, called me “Mr. Glenn” and often asked for advice or approval in leading our group. I assured him that he was in charge and that I’d do anything to help. I think he got a kick out of giving orders to an ex-US Army Colonel and I didn’t mind at all. I learned that, in real life, he was a musician with a dream of studying music and performing in a folk-rock band. He was assigned to the Sar-El command to lead volunteers due to his English-speaking ability. He shared that his term of service was actually up, but due to the 7 October attack, he had been extended indefinitely. It was the IDF version of stop-loss. During my second week, I received a new squad leader: a young 19-year-old female IDF draftee who spoke excellent English because she had been a high school exchange student

in California; she had only been in the IDF for six weeks. We were her first leadership role, and she was very shy, timid, and unsure of herself. I took it upon myself to serve as her “first sergeant” and enforcer when dealing with the volunteers. Her goal was to get her Army time over with soonest and go to college to study biology.

One night after work when we returned to our camp, I noticed there were about ninety or so young, unkempt men newly billeted alongside our portion of the camp. My squad leader informed us that dinner would be at a different location this evening. I went for a short walk around the camp and wandered over to where these men were singing, dancing, resting, praying, reading, playing cards, kicking around a soccer ball or just chatting by a fire. The smell of kabobs drew me in. I was still in my IDF uniform and “just got in the chow line” with these guys, thinking I was in the right place. I was issued two large kabobs, fresh off the grill. As I started to eat I was approached, challenged and told that I was not supposed to be there. When I apologized to the NCO and explained that I was a Sar-El volunteer, he went to fetch his officer. A moment later a Major walked up and introduced himself as the Operations Officer for an infantry battalion currently fighting in Gaza. The young men present were one of the battalion’s companies that had been pulled of the line for rest, re-fit, recovery, recreation, and counseling. They were, he explained, basically blowing off some steam before the mental healthcare professionals came in the next day to counsel them. Once that was completed they would bring in the families to meet with the Soldiers. The Major further explained that these young draftee Soldiers “grew up fast” had been actively “on-the-line,” fighting since 7 October, without a break. This unit was one of the

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first units to engage the Hamas terrorists, killing them and driving the terrorists back into Gaza. This unit also cleared the border area and was among the first to enter the areas devastated by Hamas. They saw unspeakable sights and helped clean up the gory mess. While doing so, the Major, explained this unit suffered 19 killed in action along with several wounded. I thought to myself, "These

In another volunteer role I was assigned to a medical supply logistical base near Tel Aviv where we were used to support the IDF medical re-supply effort. In one role we were sorting, organizing, and inventorying medical devices (chest tubes, splints, tourniquets, eye patches, neck braces, etc.) medicines (everything from aspirin to foot power to IV bags to pain meds - over 175 different types of

insisted we work slowly, accurately and with great attention to detail. I recognized that we were packing tracheotomy and chest/lung wound kits. This involved sterile plastic sheets with pockets that needed to be filled with exactly the right kind of gear (e.g., scalpels, alcohol wipes, rubber tubes, surgical gloves, iodine, gauze, syringes, tape, clotting bandages, etc.) and in the right order. Once properly packed and inspected, these items would then be vacuum sealed and placed in combat lifesaver bags. Once, in the middle of packing one of these kits my phone buzzed loudly alerting me to an inbound rocket attack. I heard the supervisor yelling, "bunker, bunker, bunker!!" but chose to ignore him since I had seen the Iron Dome sensors and launchers only about 400 meters from our position and figured we were safe. Plus, I didn't want to lose my train of thought and mess up the kit I was building. But when I saw our platoon leader sprinting by and yelling at me to follow, I dropped what I was doing and ran to the bunker. Once in the bunker I checked my phone and determined that the strike was about 4km away and that we'd be fine. I mumbled to myself, "I'm too old for this #\$\$%." The platoon leader ordered that we wait for the all-clear signal before we return to work. That took about 15 minutes. The time was spent singing Hatikvah and some zimra.

On Friday mornings we were required to leave the base for Shabbat. The IDF arranged to have buses drop us off at the main bus station in Tel Aviv where we'd be released to do as we pleased. We then had to find our way back to the assembly point at Ben Gurion Airport on Sunday mornings to report back for duty. I told my leadership that I understood and, of course, appreciated Shabbat, but that I'd be more than willing to stay on base, watch the radio, pull guard duty or



*Morning Formation.*

young kids have seen the absolute worst of humanity and are now hardened combat vets that will likely have some legit PTSD issues in the future". I wished the Major and his NCO God speed, lots of luck, offered my condolences and quickly left to find my group and the correct dinner site.

items) and various bandages. These items would later be placed into medical kits or trauma chests to be issued to combat units. In another role I worked in a quiet room separated from the other volunteers under the close supervision of a civilian IDF staffer who needed four volunteers to carefully package "special kits." He

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whatever, in order to allow an IDF Soldier or Reservist to go home. I was politely, but firmly, told “to please follow the rules and get on the bus.” I found a hotel that was incredibly supportive of volunteers and stayed in Tel Aviv for Shabbat. It was actually a blessing because I needed a hot shower, some rest, a cold beer and a place to do some laundry. While at the hotel, I asked the receptionist if there were any opportunities to serve/volunteer over the weekend. I figured, I’m not in Israel on vacation, I’m here to do whatever I can to help. I was offered a “harvest work detail,” which involved heading south with multiple bus transfers to report to a farmer to help harvest crops and fruits. The receptionist explained to me that the Israeli economy is suffering because all the farmers and workers were now serving in the Army, and no one was left to do the harvest. I welcomed the opportunity, but didn’t want to get lost or delayed and “miss movement” on Sunday morning. I asked if there was an alternate opportunity. The receptionist scribbled down an address on a “yellow sticky” and said, “go there ... they always need help.” I checked Google Maps and realized that the address was about 30 minutes away on foot, so I took off.

I arrived at the non-descript gray multi-story building and entered. This would be the toughest, most gut-wrenching, and emotional portion of my Sar-El experience. The armed guards checked my passport, frisked me, and questioned why I was there. I stated I was a Sar-El volunteer and they immediately lit up and showed me to the elevator. I arrived on the fourth floor where an elderly lady greeted me. She smiled at me and waved me in, saying “Shhh, it’s Shabbat we’re really not supposed to be here working ... but come in, we’re glad you are here.” “Where, am I?” I asked.

She replied, “This is the hostage family support center.” There I was shown how to make little yellow ribbon pins that would be sold for a few shekels to support the families and to maintain public awareness of those poor souls still in captivity. I sat right down and got busy. There were two elderly ladies at the table who were originally from Russia. They told me their stories of living in Soviet Russia and dreaming all their



*Yellow Ribbons at the Hostage Family Support Center.*

lives of coming to Israel. They both had established successful businesses, which they had passed on to their children. Suddenly, one of the old ladies began to cry when she saw another lady, perhaps in her mid-30s enter the room. This younger lady came in and asked in broken English, “Where is the American?” I stood up and said, “I’m American.” She came up to me and hugged me, kissed my hand, and began to praise and thank me. I was extremely embarrassed and asked, “Ma’am, who are you and why the fuss?” She told me her name and stated that her younger 18-year-old brother was a hostage. She told me that he and his three buddies had gone to the music festival to have fun. His three friends

were all brutally murdered. It took the IDF a few days to find enough body parts of one of the young men to send home to the grieving family. When I asked how she knew that her brother was a hostage, she replied that she clearly saw him on the videos released by Hamas, being zip-tied, thrown in the back of a pick-up truck, and hauled away. I was sick to my stomach and asked, “Why are you here today?” She replied, “I came to thank you and the other volunteers for coming and to conduct our press conference. You see”, she said, “those families who are able and strong enough, do a daily press conference to keep up awareness that our loved ones are still being held captive.” I had no idea how to respond, I hugged her and said, “Please stay strong. There are still decent people out in the world who care and know that this is completely wrong.” She left and I got back to work cranking out as many of those yellow ribbons as I could, feeling drained, emotional, and enraged. Later, in May 2024, I was watching the news and saw the same lady I met whose brother was a hostage ... the IDF had recovered the young man’s remains in a Hamas tunnel. I was heartbroken.

One of the Israelis I met while in Tel Aviv was told by another volunteer that I was a former US Army Officer. This Israeli lady asked for my card, Googled me, and then told me, “There is someone I need you to meet, do you mind?” I didn’t think anything of it and said, “Yeah, sure, whatever.” Later that night I received a phone call from a number I didn’t recognize and answered. The caller spoke good English and introduced himself, stating that he had received my name and number from the lady I had met earlier. I was speaking with an Israeli General

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Officer who ran a IDF Officer Academy near Haifa. This gentleman was a US Army War College Graduate who had also visited West Point during his time in the States. We chatted about leadership, training, character development and other military topics. After about 30 minutes on the phone, I felt like I had known this man for years, we seemed to have much in common. He then bluntly said, "You must come to Haifa and visit. We must speak in person!" I told him that I was not currently in control of my destiny, that I didn't have any transportation and that I had to follow the Sar-El rules and schedule. "No problem, I'll arrange it," he said. The day I was to return home, my squad leader came to me and said, "Mr. Glenn, you no work today ... you go to front gate with your bag." Turns out this IDF general, the school commandant, had arranged for me to visit his school. I got in the car and was taken to the Military Academy in Haifa. I was met at the front gate by the commandant and his senior cadet staff. They were gracious hosts and showed me around their facility. At each key sight or monument, a cadet would give me a short briefing. They took me into their memorial hall where all the 8x10 photos of fallen graduates since the 1950s were solemnly displayed. I thought to myself, "this is their Cullum Hall." I saw fourteen framed photographs displayed on a table in another room. I asked, "Who are these fine-looking young Soldiers?" The senior cadet answered, "These are the most recent fallen heroes, all killed in action since October 2023." The general clarified that the fourteen KIA came from the three most recent graduating classes. I asked, "how many cadets are in your school?" He replied, "About three hundred." After the tour, I was taken into an auditorium where his entire Cadet Corps was seated. The general proudly announced, "Today, we are privileged to have as our guest speaker, Colonel Goldman from the US Army,

who is serving as a Sar-El volunteer." I was stunned; I had nothing prepared. Heck, I hadn't even shaved and was still wearing work clothes, dusty and dirty. "Sir?!", I said, "What gives? I'm a private volunteer, not an official US Army representative. What am I supposed to talk about?!" He grinned and said, "Just tell 'em about what we talked about on

glad and relieved that I didn't fail him. He quipped, "when you're done with Sar-El and go back home, you'll come back and be my deputy. Together we'll run this place." I'm still in touch with the commandant and have sent him some papers on leader and character development.



*Near the HQs of the base, I served at.*

the phone the other night, you know, leadership, character, honor, trust ... stuff like that. You'll be fine." So, I gave an impromptu leadership pitch talking about the role of a junior officer, honor, building trust in units, and the need for leaders to have character, competence, and commitment. I sensed it was well received. After talking off-the-cuff for about 30 minutes, I opened it up for questions. I was amazed and impressed by the depth and thoughtfulness of the questions that these 15–18-year-olds - future IDF lieutenants - were asking. They really asked good, challenging questions and I relished the discussion. I felt like I was back at West Point teaching firsties MX400, the capstone officership course. Afterwards the school commandant said I had squarely met his intent. I was

My short service in the IDF as a Sar-El volunteer was a life-altering experience. It opened my eyes and gave me much to think about. I did not return from this experience as an orthodox Jew or a rabid Zionist, nor did it make me an extremist. But it did make me re-appreciate freedom, peace, liberty, stability and all the many blessings that I have in my life. It also exponentially increased my affection, respect, admiration, and support of the State of Israel. Likewise, it equally vastly increased my loathing and distain of terrorism, anti-Semitism and the sick, evil ideology of Hamas, Hezbollah, and other anti-Israel groups. I've resolved to try and do more to combat this evil and challenge other descent humans to do the same. May G-d continue to bless Israel. Am Chai Yisroel!



# JEWISH WARRIOR WEEKEND D'VAR TORAH

**Ki Teitzei**

Good Shabbos.

Thank you all for coming and celebrating Jewish Warrior Weekend here at the United States Military Academy. Thank you, Rabbi Borshof, COL Wallen, and the rest of the Jewish Community at

**By Cadet Adam Nichols**  
Class of 2025, Hillel Co-CIC

West Point, for allowing me to give this week's Dvar Torah for such a significant occasion. Although I am not a Rabbi, I feel that my Bar Mitzvah training has prepared me for this moment, to once again be the thing that stands in between a group of hungry Jews and Oneg.

I would like to start off by discussing this week's parsha, *Ki Teitzei*, which presents an array of *mitzvot* (commandments) that govern the moral and social conduct of the Jewish people; one of which could be more relevant than the others, given today's current geopolitical climate.

It reads "If a man is discovered kidnapping any person from among his brothers, of the children of Israel, and treats him as a slave and sells him, that thief shall die, so that you shall clear out the evil from among you" (Deuteronomy 24:7).

You might be able to guess why I selected this excerpt. On any ordinary day, this commandment would seem outdated. Today, however, this commandment is not just an ancient directive—it echoes painfully in our hearts, as we remember those who remain kidnapped by Hamas and those who were just recently executed in Gaza: **Carmel Gat, Eden Yerushalmi, Ori Danino, Alexander Lobanov,**

**Almog Sarusi, and Hersh Goldberg-Polin.**

Each of these names deserve their own eulogy and Kaddish, however for the sake of time I will only focus on one, Hersh Goldberg-Polin. Born in Berkely California, he spent his childhood in Richmond, Virginia, until his family moved to Israel when he was 7 years old. He was discharged from the IDF in April of last year and was planning to take a two year vacation to see the world, which would have begun in December 2023, a planned holiday upon which he would never embark.

I know there have been many stories of the hostages since October 7th, stories of joy for reunited families, the pain upon learning of loved one's fates, and acts of heroism for those who have fought and remain fighting in the Gaza strip. We do not mention their names and memories nearly as often as we should. Personally, I have been drawn to Hersh's story since the war started. For some reason I feel a certain connection to him that I cannot shake. I often wonder to myself why it is that his story is so memorable.

**I realize now it's because he was so relatable.** If circumstances were different, he could've been me. Or anyone of us for that matter. He was a fan of the White Sox and Chicago Bulls. His favorite foods were mac and cheese and schnitzel. His bar mitzvah Torah portion was the story Noah's Ark. He listened to Bob Marley and played soccer. Hersh was your typical Jewish boy, who wanted to make a positive impact on the world and those around him, but unfortunately, he committed the unforgivable crime that so many before him in history had committed: being Jewish at the wrong time and in the wrong place. A crime he paid for with his life.

**Pikuah haNefesh**

A question that, we as Jews, often find ourselves asking is, Why, upon hearing the death of a Jew, do we feel so strongly? Like a member of our own family had died, regardless of whether or not we actually knew the deceased personally? This, I believe, can be explained by a fundamental idea in Judaism, one commandment that supersedes all others. And that is, *Pikuach haNefesh* meaning, "to save a soul".

*Pikuach haNefesh* is one of the most important commandments in Judaism. Talmudic teachings tell us that saving a single life is like saving the entire world. Every life is unique, sacred, and full of infinite potential. This is why the Torah values life so highly and why we are called to protect it at all costs.

As servicemembers, we understand this intimately. We have chosen careers where the preservation of life is not theoretical—it's real, it's immediate, and it's constantly at the forefront of what we do. Whether we are on the battlefield, in training, or supporting from garrison, the decisions we make have a direct impact on whether lives are saved or lost. It's a reminder that as Jews, we are doubly obligated to fight against the theft of life, to eradicate evil, and to ensure that every human being is treated with dignity and respect.

As the Torah commands in Leviticus 18:5, "You shall live by them", meaning that the *mitzvot* (commandments) are given to enable life, and not be the cause of death. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein explained that this verse is a foundation for *Pikuach haNefesh*, teaching that almost every commandment must be set aside if a life is in danger. For Rabbi Feinstein, the essence of Jewish law is not ritual for its own sake, but the enhancement and

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protection of life. The value placed on life is so absolute that the Talmud declares, "Whoever saves a single life is considered as if they have saved an entire world" (Sanhedrin 37a). But why is this so? Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel offers a powerful perspective: every human being is created in the image of God, *B'tzelem Elohim*. This means that to save a life is to honor the Divine presence within that person. He writes, "Indifference to evil is worse than evil itself." To turn away when life is threatened is to ignore the spark of God in another person. This reflects a deep commitment to seeing every person as a reflection of God, deserving of dignity and protection.

Moreover, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks reflected on why Jews care so deeply about saving lives. He wrote that the principle of *Pikuach haNefesh* is a profound affirmation that Judaism is a religion of life. The commandments are not just arbitrary rules but are designed to create a society where every human being can live in peace, dignity, and security. To uphold *Pikuach haNefesh* is to protect life, to see the face of God in each person, and to never stand idly by when a life is at risk.

*Pikuach haNefesh* compels us to act with urgency and compassion, to prioritize life above all else, and to remember that in saving one life, we are affirming the sacredness of all life.

As a result, when we see Jewish lives ending, it tears open an ancestral wound that never fully heals - which serves as a stark reminder of our history as the Jewish people, and the persecution we have suffered and continue to suffer, at the hands of those who would love nothing more than to see us dead.

But here's the thing—we are not the victims of history. We are survivors. We are the product of thousands of years of oppression, and yet we are still here. We are the descendants of those who refused to give in, who held onto their faith and their peoplehood at times when the world tried to tear them apart.

And as Jewish service members, we carry that legacy with us. We stand not just for ourselves but for those who came before us, and for those who will come after us. Our mission is clear—protect life, eradicate evil, stand up for justice. And we strive to do that every single day.

Now, I believe that it is no coincidence that this week's Torah portion falls on this week of Jewish Warrior Weekend. The Jewish tradition does not believe in coincidences. Therefore, I'd like each of you to take this into consideration during your reflection about this weekend.

I challenge all of you to take some time and think about what it means to be a Jewish American Warrior. Ask yourself what role you can take to preserve the

spirit of the Jewish people. How can you conduct yourself in your everyday life that honors the sacrifice of those who have paid the ultimate price? Understand that although we may be geographically removed from the State of Israel, we are united by blood, identity and Adonai our G-d.

Take some time think about Hersch. Think about his parents, his sisters, his friends and all those lives he touched during his 23 years on this earth. Understand that had circumstances been different, it could've been you at the Nova festival. It could've been you taken by Hamas and forced underground for 330 days, never to see your family ever again. It could have been your family who spoke at your funeral, apologizing to you, about how they were not able to do enough to keep you alive.

My hope for us is that we use this weekend to come together, through our shared identity as Jewish servicemembers. That we lean on each other in our times of need, and that through Adonai our G-d we can find our meaning in what it means to be a Jew today. Thank you.

*Cadet Adam Nichols is a firstie in Company H4. He is majoring in International Relations and minoring in Russian. He will be branching Field Artillery upon graduation from USMA in 2025. He attended high school in Israel.*

## Tribute to Lou Gross

Continued from page 4

will be eternally grateful for his financial contributions, his ideas and his leadership in implementing them were even more valuable.

The Association of Graduates recognized Lou's many contributions to West Point by naming him a distinguished graduate in 2016. Lou aptly summed up his own legacy: "And that's

what we delighted in—in having a good idea that would benefit the Corps, that would benefit the Academy, that would be adopted." The West Point Society of New York succinctly described his contributions to West Point: "His record will never be replicated."

Lou was buried at West Point on October 28th, surrounded by his loving

family, friends, and West Point leadership, to include the Superintendent. He is survived by four children and thirteen grandchildren; his wife, Barbara, passed away in 2009.

*Y'hi zichrono l'vracha*—May his memory be a blessing. Well done; be thou at peace.



# WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

## GRADUATE UPDATES

PREPARED BY LTC (RET) ROBERT WOLFF, '65

### OLDEST LIVING WEST POINT JEWISH GRADUATES

#### CLASS OF 1941

COL(R) Herbert Stern,  
USA, SS, LM (2)

#### CLASS OF 1947

Robert Beckelman  
Robert Haas

#### CLASS OF 1949

COL(R) Norman Katz,  
USAF, 2LM

#### CLASS OF 1946

Norman Wahl

#### CLASS OF 1948

LTC(R) Jay Josephs, USAF

LTC(R) Edwin Triner,  
USAF

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### JEWISH GRADUATE DEATHS JANUARY 1 – AUGUST 30, 2024

*We remember the following Jewish graduates and thank  
them for their service to our country.*

#### CLASS OF 1948

COL(R) Irving B. Schoenberg,  
USAF, 3LM,  
June 1, 2024

#### CLASS OF 1954:

Ira Coron, USA,  
February 19, 2024

Louis “Lou” Gross,  
August 17, 2024 <sup>(1)</sup>

#### CLASS OF 1959

MG(R) William A. Cohen,  
USAFR, 4DFC, DSM, LM,  
June 6, 2024 <sup>(2)</sup>

#### CLASS OF 1949

Jack Hayne, USA,  
March 26, 2024

#### CLASS OF 1967

Jack Ziemke, USA,  
June 3, 2024

#### NOTES:

<sup>(1)</sup> Buried in West Point Cemetery

<sup>(2)</sup> On the Wall of Honor in West Point Jewish Chapel



## OLD GRAD SPOTLIGHT



*LTC (Ret) Bob Wolff with Rear Admiral (Ret) Paul Becker in front of the Chapel's Wall of Honor at the 40th Anniversary Celebration.*



*MG (Ret) Jeff Jacobs and LTC (Ret) Terry Bresnick visit West Point's oldest living graduate, COL (Ret) Herbert Stern (Class of 1941).*



*Cadet Clementine Bondor (USMA '27) and CPT(P) Ramona Jones spent two weeks together at an intense NATO language training program in Tallinn, Estonia.*

### OLD/FUTURE GRAD SPOTLIGHT!



*About two weeks later, Clementine and Ramona reunited at the Plebe Retreat (much more local)!*

## OLD GRADS, LET US KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP TO!

Send pics to the Fund Administrator at [WPJCF@outlook.com](mailto:WPJCF@outlook.com).



