

The Tablets

The Official Newsletter of The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund • Spring 2021



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**JEWISH CADETS AND FRIENDS “TRAVEL”
TO SHUSHAN FOR PURIM FESTIVITIES IN
THE CHAPEL**

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Chapel News

Greetings from the Chapel!

Before commissioning as a Chaplain in the U.S. Army, I was privileged to serve as an enlisted Lone Soldier rifleman in the Israel Defense Forces. Basic trainees in the IDF, unlike in the U.S. Army, are allowed to leave post on most weekends (provided they haven't broken any rules) and our gravest fear was the prospect of missing a chance to relax with friends or family back home. Two or three straight weeks of training, we informed anyone who would listen, obviously bordered on the inhumane. Imagine our reaction if all our weekend passes had been canceled for *nine months*...



Cantor David P. Frommer

As I look back on this year at West Point, and recall my own mindset as a young Soldier, I marvel at the resilience our Jewish Cadets have displayed in the face of an unprecedented pandemic environment. When confronted with the loss of Spring Break, Trip Sections, Walking Privileges, and just about every other form of off-post travel, they not only responded with professionalism and resolve but, most impressively, with increased commitment to Judaism and to each other—just as our biblical ancestors did in a very similar situation!

In 701 BCE, the Assyrian King Sennacherib besieged the city of Jerusalem, confining King Hezekiah and his subjects inside it “like a caged bird.” Hezekiah offered prayers for Divine assistance but the Talmud notes that he justified his pleas by citing examples of his own, personal devotion, urging God to “remember how *I* walked before You sincerely.”

God agreed to help Hezekiah, but for a different reason. “I will save this city for the sake of My servant *David*,” God answered, implying that Hezekiah's example alone was not enough. The rabbis see in God's response a powerful lesson about community, especially in times of duress. “He who depends on his own merits will be raised through the merits of others, but he who depends on others' merits will be helped because of his own” (Ein Ya'akov, Glick Edition, Brachot 1:53). We cannot successfully navigate challenges by ourselves, but it is through the example of our personal behavior that we will inspire the help we need.

Just as the ancient Judeans in Jerusalem survived their confinement by the merits of the many, not the few, our Jewish Cadets answered the COVID challenge with enthusiastic Chapel engagement, attending services and programs in robust numbers, and supporting each other with friendship and warmth. Our outstanding CICs, Andrei Rosu, Benjamin Fernquist, and Sammantha Ponsell, set a shining example of leadership all year with their participation, logistical support, and care for others. We will miss them and all the Jewish Cadets in the Class of 2021, but we know they will go on to accomplish great things, and they will forever remain a part of the Jewish Chapel family.

Through it all, the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund has furnished critical assistance, purchasing holiday supplies, Shabbat and weekday kosher meals, and gifts for our graduating Firsties. I hope the stories and pictures in this newsletter convey a sense of the tangible difference the Fund makes in the lives of Jewish Cadets and of our appreciation for its support. This was not the year of isolation that a Soldier in any army would have wanted, but thanks to the character of our Cadets and the generosity of our donors, we came together as a community and emerged stronger than before. May we grow from strength to strength in the years to come!

Warmest regards,
Cantor David P. Frommer

Online Resources



Find us on Facebook!
WestPointJewishChapel



Join Microsoft Teams Meeting for Online
Shabbat Services on Fridays at 1900

+1 347-343-3103 Conference ID: 736 607 19#

The Tablets

The Official Newsletter of
The West Point
Jewish Chapel Fund

Spring 2021

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST POINT

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LTG Darryl A. Williams, USMA '83

Garrison Commander

COL Evangeline G. Rosel, USMA '97

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Garrison Chaplain

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CH (MAJ) David P. Frommer

Chapel NCOIC

SFC Michael T. Nichols

Hillel OIC

LTC Ben Wallen, USMA '96

Choir OIC

Elaine McConnell

CADET LEADERSHIP

Hillel CIC

CDT Andrei Rosu

Hillel CIC

CDT Benjamin Fernquist

Choir CIC

CDT Sammantha Ponsell

Ass't Hillel CIC

CDT Amir Udler

Ass't Choir CIC

CDT Mark Salzman

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL FUND

President

LTC (USA Ret.) Terry Bresnick, USMA '69

Chapel Curator

LTC (USA Ret.) Robert D. Wolff, PhD.,
USMA '65

Administrator

Melanie Ullah

Visiting Hours: Mon–Fri 0900–1600

Shabbat Services: Friday 1900

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



Dining-In: CH Frommer joins the Plebes, who are kings for a night at Sultan Achashverosh's table in Shushan.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

JEWISH HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS - PURIM

The West Point Jewish Community celebrated Purim with unforgettable festivities on 26 February 2021, featuring a dramatic Megillah reading, a delicious dinner, and a rocking concert afterwards. SFC Nichols qualified for a new MOS in theater set design, the Fourth Class presented a hilarious, topsy-turvy spiel and the evening concluded with a terrific guest performance by the soon-to-be-famous Cadet

band, Conduct Unbecoming. The celebration was generously sponsored by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, with additional support from the Jewish Soldiers Project, the Justice Brandeis Law Society, and Kosher Troops. Donations were used to purchase costumes, props and scenery, as well as enough food and gift bags for over 90 Cadets in attendance!



Purim field kits included tactical necessities such as hamantaschen rations, sparkly party mask disguises and "noise suppressing" groggers.



CH Frommer's plan for after-dinner entertainment involved a solo performance of cantorial Purim arias, but thanks to CDT Max Weisman and his friends the Cadets enjoyed a different performance instead!

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

JEWISH HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS - PASSOVER

The spring holiday season continued with Passover, highlighted by two Seders on 27 and 28 March 2021 that drew over 100 guests combined, including BG Cindy Jebb, Dean of the Academic Board, and CH (LTC) Don Williamson, Garrison Chaplain. CH Frommer led the First Night Seder for the post's entire Jewish community at the West Point Club, with piano accompaniment generously provided as an additional duty by Emily Lapisardi, Music Director of the Catholic Chapel. Hillel and Choir ACICs Amir Udler and Mark Salzman led the Second Night Seder for

Cadets at the Jewish Chapel, with CH Frommer, SFC Nichols and LTC Wallen in support as waitstaff. During the rest of the week, the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund provided hot and cold Kosher-for-Passover meals to more than 20 Jewish Cadets and sponsored a pizza party to break the chametz fast at the holiday's conclusion. In addition to the Fund's generosity, the community gratefully accepted additional Passover support from the Jewish War Veterans, Kosher Troops, the West Point Directorate of Academy Advancement, the Garrison's Religious Support Office, and several families of the Cadets.



CH Frommer promises free matzah to any Firsties who donate to the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund after commissioning.



Cadets participate throughout the entire Seder with Hebrew songs, English readings, and funny animal noises for Chad Gadya.



The West Point Club offered a majestic setting and its catering team provided outstanding support. As CH Frommer now says at the end of every Seder, "Next year, in the Grand Ballroom!"



Cadets endorse CH Frommer's choice of the Jewish Welfare Board's Haggadah, which features helpful transliteration, historical vignettes, and several "action shots" of CH Frommer leading Seders overseas.



During the rest of the holiday week, Cadets dine in the Mess Hall Staff Break Room, where they have special access to Kosher-for-Passover food, stocked in a refrigerator the size of the Chapel Social Hall. Sponsored entirely by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, these meals attract over twenty Cadets each day, and offer a unique opportunity for the community to bond through Jewish observance.



It's all Frommer hands on deck for Passover, as the family hosts Cadets at their house in Stony Lonesome for a chocolate matza-making party, and the children help assemble gift bags at the Jewish Chapel library, carefully inspecting them for anything overly nutritious.



Jewish Cadets display their completed Ten Commandments quizzes, and celebrate their total irrelevance to their Academic Program Scores.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

JEWISH HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS - SHAVUOT

The Jewish community celebrated the Festival of Shavuot with special content in the week before the holiday, and an evening of dessert to welcome its arrival. Sixteen Cadets attended Torah Study Lunch 'n Learn for an in-depth reading of the Book of Ruth on 11 May 2021, and Shabbat services on 14 May 2021 featured Yizkor prayers and an introduction to the holiday's

rituals during the sermon. On 16 May 2021, Cadets gathered at the USMA Chaplain's Office for Erev Shavuot, where they enjoyed an assortment of dairy desserts, sponsored by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, and worked in teams to complete an open-Torah quiz on the Ten Commandments (sponsored by CH Frommer).



(Above) Cadets work in teams on their Ten Commandments quiz, with extra credit given to anyone who could actually read the "answer key" in its original language.

(Below) The Shavuot tradition of decorating the synagogue with greenery recalls when Mount Sinai flowered during the revelation of the Torah, and no one among the Israelites suffered from allergies.

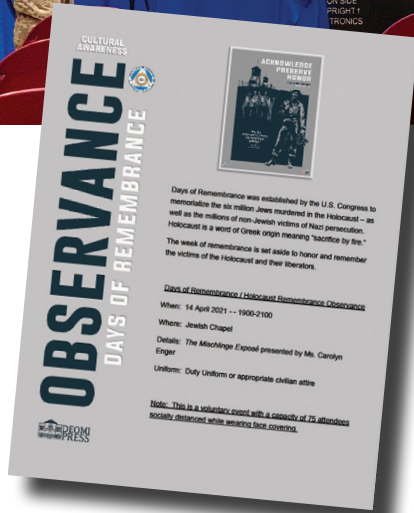


WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

JEWISH OBSERVANCES - YOM HASHOAH



CH Frommer offers words of thanks to Ms. Enger as the West Point Jewish community welcomes her to the Chapel.



In honor of Yom Hashoah, the Jewish Chapel hosted the USMA Days of Remembrance program, The Mischlinge Exposé, presented by Ms. Carolyn Enger. Recommended by Dr. David Frey, Director of the West Point Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and organized by the USMA Equal Opportunity Office, the program featured a multimedia presentation centering around Ms. Enger's family history and her personal experience

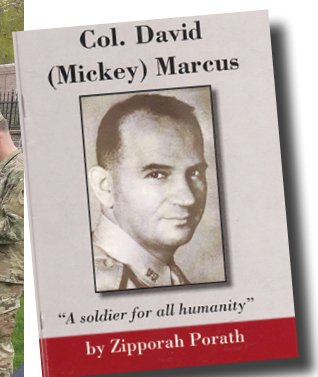
with Judaism, followed by Q&A. It also highlighted the music of German-Jewish-born composers, such as Felix Mendelssohn, Alexander Zemlinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, and Hanns Eisler, whose works Ms. Enger performed on piano. CH Frommer was joined at the event by Jewish Cadets, faculty and staff, including BG Cindy Jebb, Dean of the Academic Board.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

JEWISH OBSERVANCES - MICKEY MARCUS MEMORIAL

COL David "Mickey" Marcus graduated from West Point in 1924 and went on to become the most famous Jewish alumnus in the Academy's storied history. He served during WWII as a general staff officer, Ranger School commandant, U.S. Presidential advisor, and forward observer, parachuting into Normandy with the 101st Airborne Division in 1944. In 1948, he accepted a commission as the first General Officer of the Israel

Defense Forces, where he organized the training of its officer corps, and commanded the forces that broke the Siege of Jerusalem during the War of Independence. On 25 April 2021, CH Frommer, LTC Wallen, Jewish Cadets, and online participants gathered at the West Point Cemetery to honor Marcus' legacy with a memorial ceremony at his grave, followed by lunch at the Jewish Chapel, sponsored by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund.



Jewish Cadets honor Marcus' memory on the Wall of Graduates and at the West Point Cemetery, where they dutifully read through an entire booklet of his biography at CH Frommer's enthusiastic request.

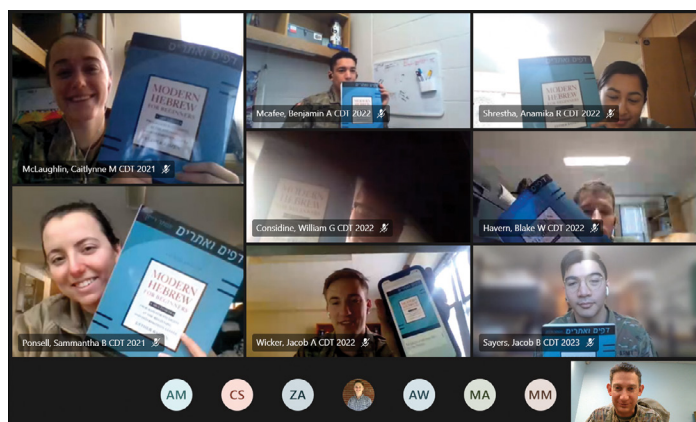


Cadets maintained strong attendance at weekly Torah Study throughout the semester, sharing CH Frommer's equal enthusiasm for Jewish sacred texts and lunch specials ordered from Citrus, a local Indian restaurant.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES - TORAH STUDY AND MODERN HEBREW

Cadets enjoy a number of formal and informal opportunities for Jewish learning at West Point. Courses in Holocaust Studies and the Modern Middle East are offered through the Department of History, and this semester, CH Frommer offered Introduction to Modern Hebrew as an elective for credit through the Department of Foreign Languages. He also led a weekly Torah Study Lunch 'n Learn, attended by an average of 13 Cadets, as well as Jewish and non-Jewish faculty and staff. The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund sponsored all meals for Torah Study, while the USMA Chaplain's Office provided convenient meeting space in the Central Cadet Area. CH Frommer's Modern Hebrew elective included a mix of Jewish, Muslim and Christian Cadets and covered cultural as well as linguistic material, like Jewish holidays and food, as well as military service in the Israel Defense Forces.



CH Frommer and his students celebrate the arrival of everyone's Hebrew textbooks as they meet online during the first two weeks of classes due to COVID protocols.



Hebrew students practice sentences that CH Frommer suggested for their evaluations of his course: "HaProfessor sheli tov m'od!"



CH Frommer shows a brief video about the history of Zionism, followed by several hours of stories detailing his own service in the IDF and the Hebrew words he wished he'd learned beforehand.



The Choir maintains maximum professionalism during COVID, even donning India Whites for pre-recorded performances online, while CH Frommer almost showed up in his pajama pants.

JEWISH CHAPEL CHOIR

ONLINE AND IN-PERSON PERFORMANCES

Though COVID protocols restricted off-post trip sections this semester, the Jewish Chapel Choir maintained a busy schedule. Led by CDT Sammantha Ponsell (Choir CIC), CDT Mark Salzman (Choir ACIC) and Ms. Elaine McConnell (Choir OIC), the Choir supported on-post observances with live performances and provided recorded material for organizations that it would have otherwise visited in person. Online engagements included The Jewish Sports Hall of Fame for its annual induction ceremony, the Westchester Bar Association for its spring meeting, and the Jewish Welfare Board for its Memorial Day observance. The Choir's in-person performances highlighted the two most important events of the semester--the First Night Passover Seder at the West Point Club on 27 March 2021, and the Baccalaureate Service at the Jewish Chapel on 19 May 2021. Attendance at Choir events remained strong, with an average of 10 Cadets, thanks to convenient rehearsal space provided by the USMA Chaplain's Office, and delicious dinners sponsored by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund.



Choir singers support the First Night Seder by leading a spirited rendition of Dayeinu and, seven hours later, assisting CH Frommer with backup singing for Moishe Oysher's Chad Gadya to close out the event.



The Choir dedicates numerous rehearsals to learning new material, while CH Frommer is fired as Repertoire Readiness Officer after suggesting that "No one will know what you're singing while you're wearing masks."

BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

LTC (USA RET.) TERRY BRESNICK, USMA '69 – PRESIDENT OF THE WPJCF BOARD

The Tablets periodically features a board member of the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund. The board was created to fund and build the West Point Jewish Chapel, and it currently supports Jewish and non-Jewish programming and other improvements for Cadets and the West Point community.

1. Where are you from, how many years did you serve in the Army, and what were some highlights of your service?

I grew up in Paterson, NJ and served 10 years on active duty with specialties in Air Defense and Operations Research/Systems Analysis. I had assignments as a Platoon Leader and an Aide de Camp in Vietnam; a battery commander for a HAWK AIT unit in Ft. Bliss, Texas; an Assistant Professor in the Department of Engineering at West Point; and an Assistant S-3 and then a Nuclear Weapons detachment commander outside of Athens, Greece. The Army was nice enough to send me to Stanford University in preparation for teaching at USMA

from which I hold the Degree of Engineer in Engineering-Economic Systems and an M.S. in Statistics. I retired from active duty in 1979 and remained in the Reserves for another 18 years with duty in the same Department of Engineering/Systems Engineering at West Point until I retired from the Reserves in 1996. Since then, I've been a management consultant - my job has been to help people make better decisions. I'm the former President and co-founder of Innovative Decisions, Inc. and I'm President of Innovative DecisionScapes. I've been living in Boca Raton, FL with my wife, Andrea since 2005 who is just as excited about working with the cadets as I am.

2. What was your connection to the Jewish community as a Cadet?

As a cadet, I was very active in the Jewish Chapel Squad, taught in the Sunday School, and sang in the Jewish Choir. Chapel was mandatory, and we went on Sundays by marching to the Old Cadet Chapel. We put away the platform with the cross, wheeled out the Ark, and had beautiful services led by our part-time Chaplain, Rabbi Avraham Soltes. For the High Holidays, we got to go to his congregation in Great Neck, Long Island. Our Seders were held in the Thayer Hotel with more than 300 people attending!

to “drive around to my room” by the Firstie. There I got to explain, and he was pretty embarrassed. Interestingly enough, a few years ago, that same person was an Undersecretary of the Air Force and was tasked with adjudicating some instances of anti-Semitism in the Air Force. I just hope he remembered the crab cake incident and was sensitive to the needs of all religions.

During my time as a cadet, there were quite a few Jewish officers, and many set a great example for me of how to engage with the Jewish Community. One of my favorite stories is that my dates would often stay at the home of then Major Max Kovel. I taught his son

Jake in Sunday School. Years later, I was teaching at West Point and Jake was then a cadet. Jake's dates would stay at my house, and he taught my kids in Sunday school. What goes around comes around in the circle of life.

3. How did your time at West Point inform your military service and Jewish engagement?

My experience with the Jewish officers at West Point inspired me to give back as a lay leader or assistant lay leader wherever I served. When I was stationed in Greece during Passover, we had more than 100 people signed up for the military community

Seder. A “circuit rider” Jewish chaplain was supposed to lead it but a few days before the Seder, I was notified that there was a death in the Rabbi's family, and he couldn't make it. It fell to me as the lay leader to run the Seder, and fortunately it came off without a hitch!

The Alumni Wall in the Jewish Chapel really tells the story of my Jewish Engagement. When I first saw the wall, of course, I looked for my name and the names of my classmates. Then I looked for the names of the cadets I knew best in classes before and after me – names such as Ellis Green with whom I roomed on choir trips and who died

Continued on page 11



From New York's West Point to Florida's East Coast, Terry Bresnick can be found conducting services as a Jewish lay-leader (pictured at USMA in 1978) and enjoying time with family.

I kept strictly kosher before coming to West Point, so I decided that while there, I would eat things such as beef and chicken that could be kosher, but not shellfish or pork. As fate would have it, the first meal on the first day of Beast Barracks featured crab cakes for the main course! I picked my way around them and focused on the veggies until the table commandant asked me if I was allergic to crab cakes. Of course, I replied “no, sir.” He then ordered me to eat them saying that I had to learn to eat things I didn't like. My attempt to explain my situation by asking “may I make a statement, sir?” was rejected, and again, I was told to eat the crab cakes. I continued to eat around the crab cakes and was ordered

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

JEWISH CHAPLAIN'S RUNNING GROUP



This year, CH Frommer and CDT Mark Salzman organized an informal Jewish Running Group, meeting on Sunday mornings and occasional weekdays for Physical Training runs around post. On 21 March 2021, CH Frommer and five Jewish Cadets completed the Fallen Comrades Half Marathon, dedicated to those members of the Long Gray Line who have gone to war and made the ultimate sacrifice. Among those honored was 1LT David R. Bernstein (USMA '01), a Jewish graduate of West Point from Phoenixville, PA who was killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom on 18 October 2003.



CH Frommer finally arrives at the finish line to join Jewish cadets for a post-race photo.



Jewish Cadets work as a team to improve CH Frommer's physical fitness.



Board Member Profile Continued from page 10

in Vietnam. Later looks drew my attention to the officers that mentored me at West Point and with whom I served on active duty. Next, my attention was drawn to the names of the “minyan” of grads that belonged to my synagogue when I lived in Fairfax, VA. More recently, I look for the names of those have served or who still serve on the Board with me. Each time I look at the Wall, it reminds me of how interconnected Jewish grads really are, and how important it is for us to carry our Judaism to those who serve with us, particularly with those under our command.

4. What are some favorite memories and accomplishments from your volunteer work on the WPJCF Board?

I can't remember when I first joined the Board

of the Chapel Fund, but I think it was around 2001. In 2014, Lou Gross stepped down as President for health reasons and he asked me to take on that role. I am fortunate to have a dedicated, hard working team of Board members, mostly from the 60s, 70s, and 80s but also with representation from each decade since. It is a tremendous responsibility to make sure that the building is maintained and that the cadets are cared for with programs. Throughout the years, we have tried to make sure that the choir had some great trips on their agenda – I even brought them to my synagogue to sing in Boca Raton twice. We have sponsored trips for the Jewish cadets to Brazil and have helped the Jewish Chaplain organize Birthright trips to Israel. It gives me and the rest of the Board great pleasure to

provide wonderful kosher food for Onegs, Kiddushim, and special events. We celebrated the 35th anniversary of the Jewish Chapel in 2019. We have installed a beautiful display honoring Jewish Medal of Honor winners, and we commissioned a well-known artist, Paul Steucke, to paint The Legacy commemorating the 1000th Jewish Graduate from West Point in 2019. Since COVID hit and cadets were limited in their activities, we have redoubled our efforts to make sure the Jewish Chapel is a sanctuary for them in all respects – for companionship, for food, and for meeting their spiritual needs. Now that Shabbat and other services are live-streamed on the Internet, several Board members are participating every time and loving the enthusiasm that we see in the cadets – that is the true reward for us.

Lay Leader Training for West Point Cadets April 2021



Rabbi Tracy Kaplowitz (far left) conducts JWB layleader training for Jewish Firsties, explaining the military's talmudic system of funding regulations for different types of religious supplies.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL LAY LEADER TRAINING

A major initiative of the West Point Jewish Chapel is its Lay Leader Training Program, which prepares Cadets to facilitate and support military Jewish communities wherever they are stationed and needed. Cadets begin their training as underclassmen, honing their skills by leading prayers, chanting Torah, and delivering sermons. In their final year, Firsties are invited to conduct an entire service, and receive further training from the Jewish Welfare Board to educate them about key religious support processes and personnel. This semester, five Jewish Firsties participated in

a new online lay leader preparatory course, taught by US Navy Chaplain Candidates at Jewish Theological Seminary and supported by Hadar. On 11 April 2021, the Jewish Chapel welcomed Rabbi Tracy Kaplowitz, JWB Director of Operations, for an interactive lay leader training session, focused on best practices, certification, budgeting, and more. With a shortage of rabbis and cantors willing to serve as military Chaplains, lay leaders play a critical role in organizing and sustaining Jewish service members and their families throughout the military.



Cadets lead prayers, recite blessings, and chant Torah during Shabbat and holiday services, with CH Frommer onhand to provide counseling for any b'nai mitzvah-related traumatic memories.

Congratulations to the Class of 2021

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



Sydney L. Alekseyev
Orlando, FL
Branching Intelligence
First Duty Assignment:
Camp Casey, South Korea



Benjamin Fernquist
West Bloomfield, MI
Branching Field Artillery
First Duty Assignment:
Fort Campbell, KY



Alexander Field
Johns Creek, GA
Branching Aviation
First Duty Assignment:
Fort Rucker, AL



Spencer T. Glazer
Goleta, CA
Branching Field Artillery
First Duty Assignment:
Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA



Ozz Gold
Malibu, CA
Cross Commissioning
Air Force



Howard Mahoney
Northampton, NH
Branching Field Artillery
First Duty Assignment:
Fort Sill, OK



Eric Moraly
Calabasas, CA
Branching Infantry
First Duty Assignment:
Fort Irwin, CA



Aaron Mullally
New Fairfield, CT
Branching Signal
First Duty Assignment:
Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA



Daniel Muncaster
Crest Hill, IL
Ambassadorial Scholar
Hertie School of
Governance, Berlin



Ryan Murphy
Stamford, CT
Branching Aviation
First Duty Assignment:
Fort Rucker, AL



Sammantha Ponsell
Felton, DE
Branching Intelligence
First Duty Assignment:
Camp Humphreys,
South Korea



Andrei Rosu
West Orange, NJ
Branching Engineers
First Duty Assignment:
Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA



Max Scheps
Orange, CT
Branching Field Artillery
First Duty Assignment:
Fort Drum, NY



Max Weisman
Malibu, CA
Branching Field Artillery
First Duty Assignment:
Fort Stewart, GA

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



Jewish Firsties prepare to be honored at Baccalaureate Services with more gifts than they have room to pack.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL BACCALAUREATE SERVICE

On 19 May 2021, the Jewish Chapel community conducted its Baccalaureate Service to honor the Jewish graduates from the Class of 2021. The proceedings began with the unveiling of fourteen names on the Wall of Graduates in the Alumni Gallery, and continued with a service in the sanctuary, attended by ten of those fourteen in person, and another 35 Jewish Cadets, faculty and staff. WPJCF Board members COL (R) Glenn Goldman, USMA '84, and Dr. (COL-R) Alan Beitler, USMA '77, delivered welcome remarks, CH Frommer offered an invocation, and the event was highlighted by a keynote address from BG Cindy Jebb, USMA '82, the 14th Dean of the Academic Board and an alumna of the Jewish Chapel. Ms. Elaine McConnell presented CDTs Andrei Rosu and Ben Fernquist with the David “Mickey” Marcus Award for their work as Hillel CICs, and LTC Ben Wallen presented CDT Sammantha Ponsell with the Jeanne Hutchison Leadership Award for her dedication as CIC of the Jewish Chapel Choir. Each of the fourteen graduating Cadets received gifts from the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, the Jewish War Veterans, the Aleph Institute, and the Jewish Welfare Board. Chapel NCOIC SFC Nichols and WPJCF Administrator Melanie Ullah provided heroic support for this event, including decorating the social hall, assembling gift bags, and coordinating food service at a celebratory dinner afterwards, sponsored by Jewish Gift Funds at the Association of Graduates.



CDTs Sammantha Ponsell, Andrei Rosu and Benjamin Fernquist are honored for doing all the work that outside visitors think CH Frommer does.



CICs and ACICs pass the Torah scroll down from the class of '22 to those of '23 and '24, symbolising the unbroken chain of Jewish Cadet leadership.



BACCALAUREATE KEYNOTE ADDRESS

A recent NYT Op-Ed titled “Can We Really Picture Auschwitz?” centers on the life of Buba Weisz Sajovits. Towards the end of the essay, author Bret Stephens writes of Buba: “She is now 95, one of only 2,000 or so Auschwitz survivors still living. Her husband, Luis, who survived

One of my Jewish woman classmates and I joined the Jewish choir—even though we could not sing. I loved the melodies, and I loved when we had the opportunity to travel. I did not truly appreciate at the time what an impact it must have been for some to see Jewish West Point cadets. One of those times was a choir trip that took us to an area synagogue. I remember talking with an elderly woman, and at the end of our conversation, she removed her wedding band and placed it in my hand. I was overcome with emotion, and I tried to resist receiving it—she insisted.

After plebe year, I did not stay with the choir, and I did not regularly attend services. But I do remember enjoying the Passover seders at the Hotel Thayer, ending in the traditional Dayenu; listening to the shofar on Rosh Hashana; and feeling the emotion of Kol Nidre during Yom Kippur services.

As a faculty member over the years and then as the Dean, it is the synagogue, built in 1984, that helps keep my cadet memories of my Jewish faith alive. I love how the synagogue has the names of the donors listed beautifully on the wall. Every time I walk by that wall, I remember many of them from Bartlett Hall and their welcoming smiles and encouragement. I love seeing the names of all the Jewish graduates on the wall inside West Point’s Jewish Chapel and I cannot help but linger over the names from the Class of 82, along with those a bit older and a bit younger. I remember the faces. And I do love seeing my son’s name tape a few columns over from mine.

What has always drawn me to our faith has been its love of humanity—*l’chaim* (to life); to always strive to do good deeds—*mitzvot*; and to always explore, question, and debate even the most sacred topics—to include the existence of God, the form of God, and the goodness of God. And these questions are especially poignant to me as we leave April and the Days of Remembrance. How does a people survive with their faith intact after the horrors of the Holocaust? I don’t have a good answer, but I do know that we can never forget. And perhaps it is our tradition rooted in faith that gives us the strength and the

hope for the future, or perhaps it provides the courage as Rabbi Nachman’s prayer offers, “the world is a narrow bridge and the important thing is not to be afraid.”

And perhaps we need the most courage to introspectively sort through our identity and purpose.

Not to be afraid to be open to learning.

Not to be afraid to commit.

Not to be afraid to show vulnerability.

Not to be afraid to be outside one’s comfort zone.

Not to be afraid of those who are different.

Not to be afraid to be Jewish.

My Judaism became stronger through my interfaith marriage. My husband and I raised our children in both of our religious traditions. We all feel as welcome in a church as we do in a temple. And together,

JEWISH REFLECTIONS

By BG Cindy Jebb, USMA '82
14th Dean of the Academic Board

Mauthausen, is 99. Both of them embody what, for me, it means to be Jewish: a member of a religion that cherishes life and memory alike, and believes that we live best, and understand best, when we remember well.”

There was a time that I thought I might want to become a Rabbi—that time was most likely around my Bat Mitzvah. While I did not study to become a Rabbi, the Jewish traditions of discussing, debating, questioning, and exploring stayed with me. The traditions of community and being part of something bigger than oneself stayed with me. And the Jewish community at West Point reinforced all those things—to cherish life, cherish memory, and to remember well in order to better serve, live, and understand.

As a New Cadet, I was surprised how small the Jewish community actually was, which was evident when we were lined up by religion to try out for the choir—I was in a very small line. It was during Beast that I first encountered the Jewish community. My Jewish classmates would line up at the bottom of the mess hall steps and wait for one of the Jewish upper-class cadets to march us over to the fourth floor of Bartlett Hall’s chemistry lab for Friday night services. As we would march over, I felt myself exhaling a bit, and when we arrived, it always felt so welcoming—the Jewish war veterans were there, always providing smiles, conversation, and a wonderful Oneg. The upper-class cadets spoke to us like normal human beings, and for a short while, it felt so good to be connected with a community that reminded my classmates and me of our roots. I had awesome Beast roommates, who would be preparing for Saturday morning inspection while I attended services, and I would reciprocate by shining shoes and whatnot on Sunday mornings.



BG Jebb receives a copy of the JWB siddur, signed by Cadets of the Class of 2021.

we continue to discuss, explore, and debate as we evolve and solidify our identity, purpose, and commitment.

We must remember well. And perhaps that is the best tradition we can pass on to the next generation. Judaism provides roots and wings: to cherish life and memory and to serve all humanity well. Thank you to the West Point Jewish community for helping us remember well.



The West Point Jewish Chapel congratulates Brigadier General Cindy Jebb (USMA '82), the 14th Dean of the Academic Board, on her retirement this spring after 39 years of service in the US Army. BG Jebb has always generously offered her time and counsel in support of Jewish Chapel programs, including delivering the keynote address at this year's Baccalaureate ceremony. We will miss her presence at High Holiday services, Passover seders, Yom Hashoah observances, Jewish Warrior Weekends, and so much more. She leaves a lasting mark of excellence and empathy on our community and we wish her the best of luck at her new assignment as the 5th President of Ramapo College of New Jersey. Mazal Tov!