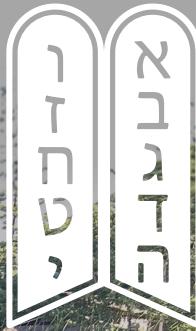


# The Tablets

The Official Newsletter of The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund • Fall/Winter 2025



**SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES  
DURING CADET LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT TRAINING (CLDT) LED  
BY CADET RONI CHAJMOVIC '26.**

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# The Tablets

The Official Newsletter of  
The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund

FALL/WINTER 2025



**West Point  
Jewish Chapel Fund**

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# Fund News



**MG (USA Ret.)**  
Jeffrey A. Jacobs

Welcome to the Class of 2029! This plebe class is a special one for me, because the class of 2029 is my class's 50-year affiliate. I've met the Jewish plebes and many of their families, and I assure you that they are a great addition to our extended West Point Jewish community.

Your Fund believes that to fulfill our core missions of supporting cadet programs and the West Point Jewish community, we must be active participants in two other, larger communities: the broader West Point community and the Army Jewish community. Our participation in these two communities is part of the strategic plan that the board adopted in 2022 and that guides our operations.

The recent government shutdown affected West Point and, especially, those who work there and their families. For example, our Christian friends were unable to buy the customary snacks for their Sunday services (ironically enough, not because they didn't have the money—the funds for those snacks don't come from Congress—but because the civilian employees who manage those funds were furloughed). So the Fund stepped in and bought the snacks for them (a big thank you and yasher koach to Rabbi Borshof for doing the legwork).

As the shutdown wore on, many of the civilian employees who work at West Point, some of whom were furloughed and others of whom were working without pay, were no longer able to pay for food and gas. In early November, a spouse's group organized a food drive on post and ran out of food in 30 minutes after giving away 500 food bags. The Fund donated \$10,000 to the garrison chaplain's account to help our fellow community members. We also bought and distributed gift cards for food and gas (again, thanks to the rabbi for schlepping all over the Hudson Valley to procure these). Given that the government spent over \$5 million to repair the chapel, the Fund leadership believes that we owed something to the West Point community—both as part of our efforts to be a valued part of that community and as a Jewish organization dedicated to putting Jewish values into action.

I've written before about our major effort to support the Army Jewish community: our rabbinical scholarship program. Five years ago, in coordination with the JWB Jewish Chaplains Council (the only one of the three accredited Jewish chaplain endorsers that endorses rabbis and cantors of all denominations) we launched an effort to provide scholarships to rabbinical students who, in return for our assistance, agree to serve as chaplain candidates while in seminary and, upon graduation, for three or four years as active-duty Army Jewish chaplains, endorsed by JWB. We awarded two scholarships, to Jesse Paquin and Trish Abrams, both of whom enrolled in the rabbinical program at the Academy for Jewish Religion in Yonkers, New York.

I'm pleased to report that both Jesse and Trish will graduate and be ordained in April 2026. An early mazal tov to both! They are serving now as Army Reserve first lieutenant chaplain candidates and have graduated from the Chaplain Basic Officer Leader Course. Trish led High Holiday services this year at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, one of the Army's largest Jewish communities.

I've gotten to know both Jesse and Trish, and I'm convinced that they will make outstanding Army chaplains. We are hopeful that the Army will see things the same way and select them for active duty. The Army, and especially the active component of the Army, does not have enough Jewish chaplains to take care of the Army Jewish community. The Fund believes that our scholarship program is an important contribution to remedy that chaplain shortage—one that will someday benefit our West Point Jewish community as well, when one of those rabbis is assigned there. More immediately, we are certain the program will benefit our cadets, who will become leaders in the Army Jewish community when they graduate.

Of course, none of this would be possible without your continued generosity and support. Thank you again. Happy Chanukah to all.

Beat Navy!

Jeff Jacobs '79  
Major General, US Army (Ret.)  
Chairman

# Chapel News



Rabbi Heather  
Borshof

As we celebrated the rededication of the Jewish Chapel back in November after two years of repairs and construction, I thought about how I will never forget this military assignment. Most people in the military know that after several years of having made numerous permanent changes of station (PCS) moves, it is easy to forget what the first days were like when first arriving at a new assignment. It is always an adjustment; whether that be unpacking an entire house, getting kids settled and enrolled in schools and activities, or just learning your job in this specific location and getting to know your new leadership, supervisors and people you will be working with. It can be stressful but, in the military, we get used to it because it happens every two to three years for most people. And so, after the first month or so, we settle in and some of those stressful memories are put in the back of our minds until the next move happens.

This year, I will be in the military for 15 years. Between different locations, assignments, and deployments, I have had nine different moves, with the most recent one being here to West Point. I can say with certainty that even when I move on from here, I will never forget my first days at West Point. It was the day after the major flood (the “one in a thousand-year flood”) that caused so much damage to the Jewish Chapel and to West Point as a whole.

I arrived to work in a chapel that would hold my office and be where I spent a good deal of my time. The air conditioning was broken during that first summer. And it was a HOT summer. The plumbing was damaged to the point that - to put it delicately - the building did not have a pleasant fragrance. During the next two years, there were leaks throughout the building, and mold was discovered in numerous locations. Last winter there was no heat, so we dressed in layers and sat next to portable heaters throughout those cold months to stay warm. The walkway leading to the front door was cracked and had a broken railing, making it unsafe for many to enter. These are just a few of the problems that were caused by the flood, as well as by “wear and tear” over the years.

There have been many times that something was being fixed and it was discovered that yet another repair would need to take place. Members of our community, local and distant, asked what was taking so long. Was there anything they could do to move it along? Again and again, we could proudly tell them that everything possible was being done to renovate and restore the chapel to its original or even better state.

Yes, I will remember these first days in this assignment, but not because of the challenges and discomfort that the storm damage caused. I will remember this because of the many people here at West Point who looked out for the welfare of the Jewish Chapel and the Jewish Community. When something happened that was urgent, I would call, and someone would be here almost immediately to help fix the problem. For two years, so many people on West Point worked hard to ensure that the Jewish Chapel was at the forefront of repair. Because of the Department of Public Works, the Army Corps of Engineers, multiple Contractors, the Chaplains, the Superintendent, and countless others, we were once again able to open up our beautifully renovated chapel to use and share with the community.

The Jewish Community throughout our country and throughout the world has frequently experienced difficult times in history, but especially over these last few years. There has been scrutiny, blame, and much antisemitism throughout many universities and institutions that one never expected to see or experience. However, at the United States Military Academy, we can proudly say that Jewish students and faculty feel safe and supported by the leadership and by the West Point Community as a whole. The time, effort, funding, and support that we have received is truly a blessing. Yes, I will remember my first days here and my overall experience at West Point. It is a place where I will always be able to tell others how much support the Jewish Community receives on a regular basis. This blessing comes to mind when I think of everyone who had a part in taking care of our Jewish Community.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam, asher kidshanu bemitsvotav, vetsivanu laasok betzorchei hatsibor.*

We praise You, Adonai our God, Source of all creation, who sanctifies us through mitzvot (commandments) and commands us to concern ourselves with the needs of the community.

*L'Shalom,*

Rabbi Heather Borshof

## West Point Jewish Chapel

A Historic Edifice and Center for Jewish Life at West Point

EST. 1984

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**GARRISON CHAPLAIN**  
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USMA '96

**CHOIR OIC**  
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USMA '26

**CHOIR CIC**  
CDT Lucas Schwed  
USMA '26

CDT Aidan Djavadi  
USMA '26

CDT Wyatt Cyprow  
USMA '26

**ASS'T HILLEL CIC**  
CDT Aaron DeBlasi  
USMA '27

**ASS'T CHOIR CIC**  
CDT Daniel Clare  
USMA '27

CDT Sam Gordon  
USMA '27

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Ed Goldwasser

**ASS'T USMA LIAISON**  
COL Joshua Lubarsky  
USMA '96

#### WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

750 Merritt Road  
West Point, NY 10996  
Phone: (845) 938-2710

**VISITING HOURS**  
Mon-Fri 0900-1600

**SHABBAT SERVICES**  
Friday 1900

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

#### 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.



*CH (MAJ) Rabbi Heather Borshof providing inspirational remarks to congratulate the New Cadets on being almost complete with Beast... just the road march back scheduled for the following day!*

## VIBRANT, STRONG, AND UNITED: AMAZING SUMMER SUPPORT AT WEST POINT!

This summer at West Point was truly a celebration of community, faith, and camaraderie! Thanks to incredible support from community members and dedicated cadets, Jewish spiritual life thrived during Summer

**By COL Ben Wallen, USMA '96**  
Hillel OIC

Leadership Experience (SLE), Cadet Field Training (CFT), Cadet Leader Development Training (CLDT), and Cadet Basic Training (CBT). From Camp Buckner to Eisenhower Hall, the

environment was filled with warmth, open arms, and joyful singing. Cadet Jacob Crossman, one of our own Jewish cadet leaders, captured the spirit by commanding SLE with pride. The support from community members like Elaine McConnell, COL (Ret) Glenn Goldman, MAJ Carolina Bardalis, COL (Ret) Dr. Al Beitler, Dr. Max Margules, Cara Wallen, Janna Lynn Wallen and MG (Ret) Jeff Jacobs created a vibrant atmosphere where cadets could grow both spiritually and personally.

Special highlights included a Friday Shabbat service during Beast followed by a memorable and delicious Shabbat meal, weekly Havdalah services with at least one

led by CDT Daniel Clare, and a Saturday Shabbat service during CLDT. Families visited the Jewish Chapel table during R-day which was adorned with tasty food, fostering immediate camaraderie and connection. Despite construction at the Jewish Chapel, the resilient community adapted, sharing meaningful experiences that strengthened bonds in the Mess Hall Break Room (where we host our weekly Torah study during the academic year). This summer proved that with shared support and enthusiasm, we can create a strong, inclusive, and vibrant Jewish community open to all!

**Continued on page 5**



Wonderful New Cadets and Cadre ready to transition from CBT to the academic year!



New Cadets celebrating the joy of being Jewish, enjoying food, and building fellowship during Cadet Basic Training (CBT) – otherwise known as “Beast!”



(Left to Right): Havdalah services during Cadet Field Training (CFT) led by CDT Daniel Clare '27 and other community ruach out at Camp Buckner.

## RESPONSES FROM CBT QUESTIONNAIRE: WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO COME TO WEST POINT?

*“Many of my friends enlisted in the IDF, but I felt it was important to have religious Jewish representation in the American Army, too.”*

*– CDT Ari Schwab*

*“My parents were born in Russia and Ukraine and lived in poverty and antisemitism and now we get to live in the USA. I want to give back to the country that gave my parents the American dream.”*

*– CDT Naomi Bekkerman*

*“I wanted to serve as an Army officer in one of two countries in the world that has always been protective of Jewish practice, my country.”*

*– CDT Ozzy Enis*

*“I want to go to the best school in the world, challenge myself, and have experiences I could not have anywhere else.”*

*– CDT Avi Cohen*

*“I want to be surrounded by people who have the same values that I do and I want to serve my nation.”*

*– CDT Joseph Hershfield*

*“There are not as many Jewish people in the Army as there should be, and I would like to change that.”*

*– CDT Max Wasserman*



*What an amazing start to the semester!*

## FIRST SHABBAT OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR

We had 114 wonderful Jewish community members, family and friends join us for the first Shabbat service of the year! About 45 of the 114 were Cadets. The service

**By COL Ben Wallen, USMA '96**  
Hillel OIC

was beautifully led by Rabbi Heather Borshof, West Point Jewish Chaplain. She was supported by lovely musical accompaniment from Cadet Angelina

Pfister '26 throughout the service. Cadet Lucas Schwed '26, Co-Cadet-in-Charge of the Jewish Choir, helped lead the v'ahavta, introduced the Jewish Choir leadership, and provided superb information about the Jewish Choir. Cadet Aidan Djavadi '26, Co-Cadet-in-Charge of the Hillel, introduced the Hillel leadership and provided a beautiful message about Jewish service in our Army from the beginning of our nation and the legacy that continues with our newest Cadets who just completed Beast. Cadet Daniel Clare '27, Assistant Cadet-in-Charge of the Jewish Choir, invited

everyone to join him for Havdalah every Saturday in the Cadet area. MG (Ret) Jeff Jacobs '79, Chairman of the Board of the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, shared the history of the inspiration and efforts which led to the building of the West Point Jewish Chapel and the role the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund takes to maintain the Jewish Chapel and to support Jewish life and Cadet programs at West Point. (To learn more about the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, please visit <https://westpointjewishchapelfund.org>.)

**Continued on page 7**



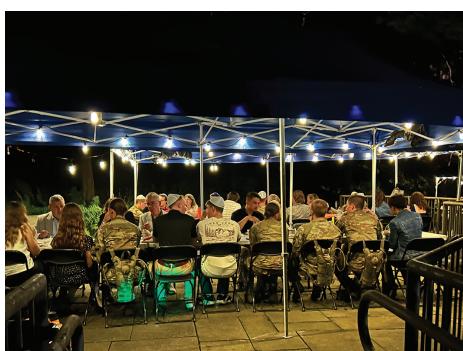
*With the chapel social hall still under renovation, Rabbi Borshof coordinated to ensure we had enough food and seating in the garden behind the chapel. Melanie Ullah magically ensured everything was ready for a fantastic dinner after Shabbat services.*

As we have done since COVID, we hosted services remotely and had twelve wonderful remote community members joined us online. They are listed below. It was so special to have them join us!

- Terry Bresnick '69 (President, West Point Jewish Chapel Fund)
- Andrea Bresnick
- Perry Silver
- Bill Brigadier '67
- Mark Sweborg '75
- Holden Neff '12
- Janna Lynn Wallen (mother of COL Ben Wallen '96)

- Jannifer Djavadi (mother of CDT Aidan Djavadi '26)
- Katherine Pfister (mother of Angelina Pfister '26)
- Dana DeBlasi (mother of Aaron DeBlasi '27)
- Dana Ivey (mother of Benjamin Ivey '28 and Jack Ivey '28)
- Sara Cohen (mother of Danielle Ginzburg '20, Maya Ginzburg '22, and Jonathan Benchabat '27)

We implemented a new interface to improve the sound for those online. This worked out very well! In fact, if you would like to view a recording of the service, here is a link: <https://youtu.be/yTKQWKRm0I>. Below is a screen shot from the service. Ma tov!





*Jewish Plebe retreat participants arriving at Camp Nah-Jee-Wah – super excited for the wonderful weekend planned by CDT Daniel Clare '27.*

## PLEBE RETREAT

**O**n 22 August 2025, Jewish community members departed for the Plebe Retreat hosted at Camp Nah-Jee-Wah in Milford, Pennsylvania. What a truly wonderful weekend, superbly planned by Cadet Daniel Clare '27, with fantastic support

**By COL Ben Wallen, USMA '96**  
Hillel OIC

from Ms. Elaine McConnell (Jewish Choir Officer-in-Charge). This was the largest Plebe Retreat in the history of retreats – at least for the last 10 years! A total of 38 Cadets attended (17 Plebes, 14 Yearlings, 6 Cows, and 1 Firstie). That's right!!! We had a Firstie – our very own Cadet Roni Chajmovic '26 received his class ring, went to dinner with his family, and then drove the hour to join the community for a wonderful tisch to close out Friday night Shabbat festivities. There is no better example of how much our community means to all of us than that effort! We were also super pleased to have an Air Force Academy exchange Cadet

(2CL Jacob Gelder '27) join us. Those participating also included Rabbi Heather Borshof (West Point Jewish Chaplain), MG (Ret) Jeff Jacobs '79 (Chairman of the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund), LTC (Ret) Terry Bresnick '69 (President, Chairman of the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund), Andrea Bresnick, COL (Ret) Dr. Al Beitler '77 (Chairman, Jewish Community Council), Dr. Ruth Beitler (Department of Social Sciences), COL Ben Wallen '96 (West Point Jewish Lay Leader), Elaine McConnell (Jewish Choir Officer-in-Charge), CPT Daniel Fernquist '16 (Department of Military Instruction), Olivia Fernquist and their baby boy, Teddy. As an aside, the last time our community had a Plebe Retreat at Camp Nah-Jee-Wah was in 2019. During that weekend in 2019, then Cadets Ben Fernquist (yes – CPT Fernquist's youngest brother!) and Andrei Rosu provided superb Cadet leadership for the weekend.

The weekend focused on introducing 4th Class Cadets to the rich, supportive Jewish community in and around West Point. Well, by golly, we definitely did that! On Friday, Rabbi Borshof led

Shabbat services. There was a lovely Shabbat dinner, followed by team building activities designed to bring the community together and grow as one. The success of these initial team events grew into a Tisch (spontaneous Shabbat singing with much *ruach*!) to close out Friday night. Saturday began with a wonderful Shabbat morning service led by LTC (Ret) Terry Bresnick '69 and included reflection on what it was like to be a Jewish Cadet from COL (Ret) Dr. Al Beitler '77 and MG (Ret) Jeff Jacobs '79. The rest of the day enabled camaraderie to reach new heights through fantastic events which included playing board games, chess, a Ninja Warrior Course, a low ropes course, a climbing wall and zipline, swimming, a water slide, a king/queen of the water trampoline royal rumble, boating, volleyball, smashball, corn hole, Frisbee, ping-pong, and gaga!!!! All that! Shabbat concluded with a wonderful Havdalah service led by Cadet Clare '27 followed by singing and then roasting marshmallows and creating s'mores over a campfire.

**Continued on page 9**

What made this Plebe Retreat different from any other Plebe Retreat was the frequency that CDT Clare incorporated other Cadet leaders for a D'var Torah. In fact, throughout the weekend at almost every meal, a different Cadet delivered an insightful, meaningful D'var Torah, relating the Torah portion to life at West Point with a focus on how our Plebes may achieve success.



*After wonderful Shabbat Services lead by CH(MAJ) Heather Borshof, Plebe Retreat participants learned about each other through ice breakers followed by a wonderful Tish!*



*Shabbat morning services led by LTC(ret) Terry Bresnick '69 (President, West Point Jewish Chapel Fund).*



*D'var Torah discussion during services regarding Jewish experiences during different decades at West Point and in the Army by LTC (ret) Terry Bresnick '69, COL (Ret) Dr. Al Beitler '77, and MG(ret) Jeff Jacobs '69.*

**More photos** on page 10



Team building activities leading to fun for all ages which included playing board games, chess, a Ninja Warrior Course, a low ropes course, a climbing wall and zipline, swimming, a water slide, a king/queen of the water trampoline royal rumble, boating, volleyball, smashball, corn hole, Frisbee, ping-pong, and gaga!!!! Games – fun for all ages!



Ninja Warrior Course.



Team building activities continued with the low climbing course.



Climbing wall and zipline.

Archery excitement...practicing steel on target!



Swimming, boating, and king/queen of the water trampoline royal rumble.

## FAVORITE QUOTES BY THE CADETS WHEN ASKED, "WHAT DID GOING ON THE PLEBE RETREAT MEAN TO YOU?"

*"It was incredible to spend the weekend with likeminded individuals, friends, and fellow Jews. I feel much better connected to the community now and had lots of fun while doing it. As an example, singing by the campfire after Havdalah with my arms around everyone was an incredible feeling. I've truly never experienced anything like that. I look forward to opportunities to connect with my fellow Jews and the Jewish chapel in the future."*

– CDT Levi Halley '29

*"I had an amazing time on the plebe retreat! The most meaningful part for me was being quickly welcomed into the USMA Jewish community. I was able to get to know everyone which will set me up for a great semester. I already feel like I have a place in the USMA Jewish community."*

– Cadet Jacob Gelder, USAFA Exchange Cadet '27

*"Before coming to West Point, I never really had any Jewish connection. I never celebrated Shabbat, didn't even go to services on the high holidays but the community here has welcomed me with open arms. I really appreciate the culture created here. It's a positive, uplifting community and it feels more like a family than it does a community. I was able to connect with my Judaism on the trip and get some well needed rest! This weekend meant a lot to me."*

– Cadet Asher Seifan '29

*"The plebe retreat was a great opportunity to meet a majority of our Jewish Plebes. I think it would've taken months to get to know them and build this level of community that we did this weekend, if we didn't have the retreat. It was a fun and relaxing trip, and I feel like I have gotten closer to both the plebes and the Old Grads that came with us on the trip. This trip feels like the rebuilding of the Jewish community after losing all of our graduating firsties."*

– Cadet Angelique Arfa '28

*"The trip was great since it allowed me to connect with the new plebes. I enjoyed being on the other side of the plebe retreat where I got to help out and be a welcoming face to the incoming class. I enjoyed the Judaism aspect that was used this year with the d'var Torahs and interacting with the Jewish Old Grads to get their perspective of Judaism in the operational Army. This trip has increased my desire to be more active in the Jewish Chapel, so I will be joining the Jewish Choir and will try to attend more Jewish Chapel related events."*

– Cadet Brock Hochberger '28

*"I had a great time and made some amazing memories and friendships which I am sure will last a lifetime. One thing that stuck out to me was how the Cadets gave their own d'var Torah. Something about seeing other kids my age examining and extracting lessons from this ancient text brought me so much closer to Judaism. I am happy to have finally found some like minded people in the Jewish community and look forward to involving myself further."*

– Cadet Josh Kaplan '29

*"The Jewish plebe retreat was everything I thought it would be and more. I had seen the pictures from previous years and expected the sports, games, and Jewish services. However, I did not expect how much I would bond with my fellow Jewish Cadets. Especially the upperclassmen, it felt like I could ask them anything and they would give sound advice. All the team leaders are good for that, but they always emphasize that they aren't our friends. Here it felt like I was part of a brotherhood that really cared for each other, where everyone hoped for everyone else's success, rather than you have to succeed because West Point chose you to be here."*

– Cadet Ozzy Enis '29

*"This weekend was a great way for me to get to know the Jewish community at West Point. I learned more about the peers in my class and also made connections with many of the upperclassmen. Additionally, as a result of this retreat, I feel significantly more attuned to the Jewish religion and culture and feel inspired to continue and feel inspired to continue to involve myself in the community as much as I can. Thank you for making this possible!"*

– Cadet Jaden Young '29

*"Coming into the Academy, I was worried there would not be a solid group of Jewish Cadets. After this weekend, I feel very proud to be at the Academy, and I'm overjoyed to have found a group of people who I can relate to religiously. Services were very nice. I am not the most religious, but after seeing how happy everyone gets, and what Shabbat services mean, I am going to try my hardest to come to services."*

– Cadet Ari Kaplan '29

*"After participating in the Jewish plebe retreat now from the perspective of an upperclassman, I can not only see the effects the trip can have by looking around at now some of my best friends who went on it the previous year, but also being able to see these plebes bond over their shared faith and culture through prayer, song, games or simply conversation is truly heartwarming. The plebe retreat helps to create and solidify these strong bonds that will last throughout their time at West Point and hopefully after as well."*

– Cadet Josh Weiner '28



*Cadets from the West Point Jewish Community enjoy apple picking along with COL Ben Wallen and Rabbi Heather Borshof.*

## APPLE PICKING

*By Cadet Sam Gordon, '27  
Assistant Hillel CIC*

**O**n 21 September 2025, a wonderful group of 16 Cadets, accompanied by COL Ben Wallen '96 and CH (MAJ) Rabbi Heather Borshof, traveled to Dubois Farms in Highland, NY for the Jewish Chapel Club's annual apple-picking trip in celebration of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish

New Year. Cadet leaders Sam Gordon and Philip Markus organized the event and provided driving support, helping make the afternoon a success.

All enjoyed freshly made cinnamon-apple donuts, apple cider, and picking apples straight from the trees. While there, we recorded a Rosh Hashanah message from both West Point and our Air Force exchange Cadet, a symbol of friendship and unity across the academies during a time of celebration.



*Cadets raising each other up during a time of joy.*



*Honey on apples, an ancient and reliable fuel source during rigorous picking.*

# BUILDING SUKKAHS, BUILDING FUTURES: A MESSAGE OF FAITH AND PERSEVERANCE

By Cadet Roni Chajmovic '26  
Hillel Co-CIC

**T**he Jewish community at West Point, on the first day of Sukkot, held a Candlelit Vigil, remembering the lives lost on October 7th and praying for the safe return of the 48 hostages left in Gaza. Together we read the names of those still held captive and a little about the lives they led before the attack. Each person that showed up served as a reminder of something powerful, that Am Yisrael remains strong and that our spirit cannot be broken.

We followed the vigil by watching a documentary about the events that occurred and the fighters that heroically defended Kibbutz Magen. Here is link to that documentary: [https://youtu.be/L\\_nBmWIVPDU?si=SGms0UfJqESb7ESz](https://youtu.be/L_nBmWIVPDU?si=SGms0UfJqESb7ESz).



The following are thoughts shared during Torah study and the remembrance:

Two years ago today, on October 7th, 2023, our entire world was shaken up, to say the least. It was the largest and deadliest attack on the Jewish people, since the Holocaust, taking the lives of over 1200 people and kidnapping 255 hostages by Hamas attacks on Israel. Two years ago today was Simchat Torah, but two years later today, we are celebrating the first day of Sukkot, known as Z'man Simchateinu, the time of our joy.

This is really difficult contrast to deal with. Today we are mourning the anniversary of the 1200 murdered, 255 kidnapped, and 48 still held hostage, but at the same time find ourselves in the only festival where we are explicitly prescribed in Leviticus Chapter 23 to rejoice and be joyful.

As hard as it may be to deal with and to reconcile, I think that in a way this contrast gives us a good reminder of the heart and soul of the Jewish people and a path forward. The path forward does not mean forgetting what happened or completely moving on, but rather to remember who we are as the Jewish people and the chutzpah that we have.



Candlelit Vigil Held in the West Point Jewish Cadet Chapel.

Sukkot is a remembrance of our Exodus from Egypt, and the protection Hashem gave us during our journey. We celebrate this by building a temporary and fragile shelter that we eat and sometimes sleep in. This reminds us that real security doesn't come from sturdy walls or a solid roof, but that it really comes from our faith, community, and belief in enduring against all odds, regardless of the circumstances.

Two years ago, when hundreds of Hamas terrorists ran and drove into Israel, our walls were fragile. Others paraglided in and we saw that our roofs were too. And for those of us who were here in the United States, safe from the physical attacks, our emotional walls and feelings of safety proved to be just as fragile. Since then, with the rise of antisemitism across the world and on college campuses have us living at least a little on edge. For example, the stabbing and murder of two Jews in Manchester just last week on Yom Kippur outside of a Synagogue.



Jewish Choir performance led by Cadet Lucas Schwed singing Acheinu and Hatikvah during the Candlelight Vigil.

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*Torah Study led by Cadet Ron Chajmovic during Lunch on October 7th.*

## Building Sukkahs

**Continued from page 13**

It's important to note that this fragility has no impact on how we use our sukkah. We spend lots of time building it, decorating it, singing in it, eating in it, and being a community in it; all that time and effort knowing that it's going to be brought down in a week.

That's the core of Jewish resilience. That's who we are as a people: we faced the horrors of October 7th, but after mourning (which has not yet ended) we chose to move forward, fight for the release of the hostages, and continue with simchas; one of the most incredible being the increase in Jewish weddings in Israel since the attacks.

After October 7th we built sukkahs, we built families, we're building a future, and we're fighting for that future.

Though remembering and persevering through what happened on October 7th is important, it's just as important to remember the history of tragedy that we've faced for the past few thousand years. We've faced generations of slavery in Egypt, seen the destruction of both temples, been exiled four major times, in modern times endured the Holocaust

and many wars since Israel's birth. Each time, we were a people faced with tragedy but had the strength to continue to push forward. We refuse to let our story end in tragedy. We honored those lost by carrying forward what they stood for.

I recently heard Or Levy speak about his experience in captivity. On October 7th he was with his wife Eynav (ב"ת), and Hersh Goldberg Polin who were cornered into a bomb shelter where the terrorists and opened fire and eventually took Or and Hersh hostage. They spent the first three days together where Hersh told him, "He who has a why, can endure any how." For the 491 days he spent in captivity he said that his why was to get back to his son. He said that he knows that "people are waiting for him and that his son Almog was waiting for him."

I briefly share his story to show that ordinary people in ordinary situations have been, and unfortunately will continue to be put in unimaginable situations. Ordinary people like Or Levy can bear these extraordinary events despite the fragility that we inherently have as people. And just like the Sukkahs we build inherently as temporary structures,

we need to remember that we can be shaken, knocked over, and taken down, but never truly destroyed. We can be rebuilt, come back stronger, and endure over evil.

We are inheriting this moment in Jewish history. Where we are now following the 7th, we didn't choose or create. We inherited it. We are now carrying the responsibility to remember the past and to build up the future. We have the responsibility to keep Judaism alive and not have it be something that we need to hide or apologize for.

No matter the challenge we face or responsibility we individually bear, our role is to keep building Sukkahs, year after year. Physical and spiritual. Places, situations, relationships and everything else that we create to be shelters of community, growth, and goodness.

Let's take this time to remember those whose lives were stolen from us two years ago. Remember their families, friends, and communities that are still healing. Honor them not only through mourning, but through living our lives with the chutzpah we all have to push forward.



*Torah Unrolled with all Cadets and a family and Rabbi.*

## REJOICING IN THE TORAH – THE WEST POINT WAY!

What a beautiful way to close out the High Holy Day season at West Point! The community celebrated Simchat Torah as we do everything...where everyone is involved. Rabbi Heather Borshof welcomed everyone, invited community members to light candles, led some opening prayers, and then turned over the event to our West Point Jewish Choir. Cadet Lucas Schwed '26 led the choir with singing two beautiful songs. Cadet Joseph Hershfield '29 and Cadet Elias Toren '28 lifted the Torah from the ark with the community supporting as we completely unrolled the Torah scroll with the beginning of the Torah held by Cadets Lucas Schwed and Catherine Brodsky '26. Rabbi Borshof masterfully pointed out a wonderful variety of key areas through the length of the Torah with some examples

such as the delineation between the five books of Moses, the location of the ten commandments (at two different locations), and the final speech Moses gave to the Israelite people. The service concluded with the community having two aliyot. The first incorporated everyone reading the translation of the closing verses of Deuteronomy. The second aliyah included everyone reading the translation of the first verses of Genesis. This is where the evening turned from super to most excellent as Cadet Ozzy Enis '29 charted the Torah verses as he read from the Torah scroll – with no prior coordination...that's who we have in our community!! To top it off, Cadet Ari Schwab '29 led a beautiful kiddush prior to a wonderful meal provided by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund.



*Torah Chanting of Bereshit by Cadet Ozzy Enis 2029.*



*Cadet Ari Schwab 2029 leading Kiddush.*



*Choir Singing.*



*Choir Singing.*



*Unrolling the Torah.*

# JEWISH WARRIOR WEEKEND (JWW)

*(Photo) Shabbat Services  
at USAFA in Polaris Hall.*

**By COL Ben Wallen, USMA '96**  
Hillel OIC

**O**n the weekend of 24 to 26 October 2025, CH (MAJ) Rabbi Heather Borshof and COL Ben Wallen took 38 Cadets from West Point to join 43 Cadets from the Air Force Academy, U.S. Coast Guard Academy, the Citadel, VMI, Texas A&M, and ROTC Cadets from Colorado, Massachusetts and Florida who came together at the Air Force Academy for faith, fellowship, and fun. The Fall 2025 Jewish Warrior Weekend hosted at the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) began with an exceptional welcome brief by Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind, the Air Force Academy Superintendent. His messaging was clear, meaningful, and highlighted the importance of spiritual readiness. Next,

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all those present for JWW participated in a superbly joyous and engaging activity to maximize meeting each other and building the joint Jewish community.

Friday continued with guest speakers from the Jewish War Veterans (JWV) including CWO4 (Ret) Scott Stevens (JWV National Commander) and CDR (Ret) Don Price (JWV Denver Post Commander) who presented special coins to everyone present to commemorate the USAFA-hosted JWW. The day concluded with a lovely Shabbat service and a dinner in Polaris Hall. Saturday brought a variety of optional activities both before and after group fellowship and learning. Seventeen Cadets (eight from West Point) participated in a 3-mile hike to Eagle's Peak while others attended Shabbat morning services. All gathered for kiddush and brunch which were followed by an amazing fireside chat with Lt. Col. Samuel Eliason, Director of Operations, 4 OSS, Seymour Johnson AFB, NC. Other significant guest speakers included

CH (COL Ret) Rabbi Larry Bazer (Vice President JCC Association, Director JWB Jewish Chaplains Council) and Hadassah Nitzan (Director, Operations and Outreach, JWB JCC). The official program for JWW concluded with small group breakout sessions moderated by leaders from USAFA, USMA, JWV, JWB, and the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund (WPJCF). Cadets were broken into groups about 9 or 10 Cadets per room where they reviewed four different scenarios which they may face as Jewish community members and leaders in their units.

The remainder of Saturday included a number of optional activities such as Havdalah (led by our very own Cadet Daniel Clare '27), dinner, and a movie at the Planetarium. The USAFA Cadets, with guidance and support from CH (Maj) Rabbi Alan Kahan, led a fantastic JWW and provided numerous activities each evening for additional fellowship

and fostered incredible growth of the joint Jewish community! They also had fantastic gifts for everyone which included JWW patches and Air Force kippot with the following inscription "Jewish Warrior Weekend at USAFA, 24-25 October 2025, Connect. Grow. Lead."

The superb student leadership of each academy/school made the weekend a resounding success with CDTs Aidan Djavadi and Roni Chajmovic leading the effort from West Point. The weekend was made possible by the superb support of the Directorate of Cadet Activities, the Brigade Tactical Officer, leadership across the Academy, and from the generous and professional support by the WPJCF. This JWW (when not hosted at West Point) saw the greatest number of West Point Cadets and the highest number of WPJCF board members present – LTC (Ret) Terry Bresnick '69 (President, WPJCF), Ben Breslauer '54, Andrew Lotwin '85, and COL Ben Wallen '96.



*Cadets emphasizing the "warrior" in Jewish Warrior Weekend as they started Saturday around 0600 with a hike to Eagles Peak!*

**Continued**  
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All 81 Jewish Warrior Weekend participants enjoying the ice breaker activities while getting to know each other and build fellowship.



(Left) Cadet Justin Collins '26 asking a question during the superb fireside chat with Lt. Col. Samuel Eliason, Director of Operations, 4 OSS, Seymour Johnson AFB, NC. (Right) Small group discussions covering four ethical dilemmas facilitated by wonderful Jewish senior leaders from across USAFA, USMA, JWB, JWV, and the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund.



JWW shoulder patch made by USAFA.



Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind, the Air Force Academy Superintendent, providing wonderfully meaningful opening comments and welcoming all Jewish Warrior Weekend (JWW) participants.



JWW coin made by Jewish War Veterans Post #344 and presented to all attendees by CDR (Ret) Don Price (JWV Denver Post Commander).

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*Jewish Warrior Weekend participants enjoying a farewell group photo. Just look at those fantastic smiles reflecting the joy of friendships made across the joint Jewish community!*

## “WHAT DID THIS WEEKEND MEAN TO YOU?”

*Below are some favorite quotes related to the top ten reoccurring themes identified by the Cadets with the number in parenthesis reflecting the number of Cadets whose comments applied to each theme.*

### **Connecting with Fellow Jewish Cadets and Building Community (33 Cadets)**

*“The best part of this weekend was my experience with the Jewish cadets from other academies and ROTC. The connections we build on these trips will help me for the rest of my life.”*

*– Aaron DeBlasi '27*

### **Fostering Interservice and Inter-Academy Relationships (26 Cadets)**

*“Jewish Warrior Weekend is more than just a Shabbaton, it’s an opportunity for cadets to share a unique Shabbat experience with interservice cadets. We get the opportunity to connect and learn about each other’s lifestyle and culture while building relationships across branches.”*

*– Daniel Clare '27*

### **Deepening Faith and Spiritual Readiness (22 Cadets)**

*“This weekend was meaningful for me as I felt like I helped connect the two Jewish families I am now part of—West Point and Air Force.”*

*– USAFA Exchange Cadet at West Point for the semester, Jacob Gelder '27*

*“This weekend to me was an opportunity to explore Jewish culture. In understanding more about tradition and building camaraderie, I feel more connected with my fellow Jews in a way that will sustain meaningful relationships in the long term as well as a pride for Jewish Heritage.”*

*– Romin Millan '29*

### **Leadership and Growth Through Experience (19 Cadets)**

*“This weekend for me was super impactful. Meeting our extended Jewish community from all the other branches helped me learn how faith plays a role in leadership and service.”*

*– Jonathan Benchabat '27*

*“This weekend was an incredible experience to connect with other cadets and explore Judaism further. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing other perspectives on various things and having deep conversations.”*

*– Sydney Quirk '28*

### **Learning from Guest Speakers and Sharing Experiences (17 Cadets)**

*“I really enjoyed listening to guest speakers and especially appreciated gaining new perspectives on leadership, faith, and service.”*

*– Ellie Melton '28*

### **Celebrating Jewish Heritage and Culture (15 Cadets)**

*“It was a nice time to meet other Jewish cadets and just become more familiar with another academy and their culture. I also enjoyed getting the chance to engage with other Jews from programs like ROTC and make those connections.”*

*– Ari Schwab '29*

### **Fostering Long-term Relationships (14 Cadets)**

*“This weekend brought me much closer to the other Jewish Cadets from all classes and schools. Though I am a Firstie and have already gone on many trips with these cadets, JWW at USAFA this year was structured in a way that allowed me to naturally branch out and make these connections.”*

*– Roni Chajmovic '26*

### **Experiencing a Sense of Inclusion and Support (13 Cadets)**

*“This weekend means a lot to me because it shows how there is a support network for Judaism wherever you go in the military. Being able to meet Jewish Cadets from all the branches of service allows me to have confidence in my identity knowing there are so many like me.”*

*– Kiran Goldstein '26*

### **Involvement in Religious and Cultural Activities (12 Cadets)**

*“I truly enjoyed building relationships with other Jewish individuals that I will be ultimately serving with in the joint force in the future. Connecting with my peers allowed for more spiritual readiness.”*

*– Parker Brown '28*

### **Awareness and Representation of Judaism in the Military (11 Cadets)**

*“It is my responsibility to represent the Jewish people and show how the values engrained in my faith can help create a stronger team.”*

*– Asher Seifan '29*



Ribbon cutting at the Jewish Chapel to officially open the social hall and celebrate the \$13M effort incorporating more than 18,000 man-hours over the more than two years to address interior and exterior improvements. Those participating from left to right include LTG Steven Gilland (West Point Superintendent), CH (MAJ) Rabbi Heather Borshof (West Point Jewish Chaplain), Scott Lichtenberg (West Point Jewish Chapel Fund Senior Leader), Elizabeth "Betsy" Troeder (Director, Directorate of Public Works), and COL Benjamin Wallen (West Point Jewish Lay Leader).

## JEWISH CHAPEL REOPENING CEREMONY

### *A Celebration of Command and Community Support*

What a wonderful way to start off the Veterans Day weekend activities! On 7 November 2025, West Point leadership gathered at the West Point Jewish Chapel to reopen the Jewish Chapel and celebrate

the ceremony she went on to thank key individuals such as John Seeley (DPW Engineering Division Chief) and mention that "more than 18,000 man-hours were put into the project which took more than two years."

Other guest speakers included Scott Lichtenberg representing the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund. Scott provided a historical perspective of the Jewish Chapel, while COL Ben Wallen '96 provided a reflection and recounting of the 1,000-year storm, and Father Matt Pawlikowski (US Corps of Cadets Chaplain) highlighted the strength in spiritual resilience and community across faith groups on West Point. CH (MAJ) Heather Borshof provided a superb statement during the ceremony that we are, "excited that our chapel, our holy space, can finally be used once again to hold the amazing events that we have with our Cadets, our Jewish community, and our West Point community and family." The ceremony concluded with wonderful remarks by LTG Gilland and a ribbon cutting to officially open the social hall.

**By COL Ben Wallen, USMA '96**  
Hillel OIC

the amazing effort provided by the Department of Public Works, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and contractors. Beyond aging infrastructure that necessitated repair, the 1,000-year flood on 9 July 2023 wreaked havoc across all of West Point and the surrounding areas. Betsy Troeder (Director, Directorate of Public Works (DPW)), a member of our Jewish community, shared that, "with an enormous amount of help from our Superintendent, West Point was able to obtain close to \$13M of Congressional funding so that we could make most of the repairs and improvements that the Jewish Chapel needed." During



LTG Steven Gilland, Michael Lichtenberg, and Scott Lichtenberg enjoying some refreshments after the opening ceremony.



Father Matt Pawlikowski sharing an inspirational message about faith, fellowship, and the West Point community working as one.



Scott Lichtenberg superbly integrating a historical perspective of the Jewish Chapel leading to the herculean efforts required by response to the 1,000-year flood.

# FIRST SEMESTER JEWISH CHOIR ACTIVITIES

## PART I: TEMPLE EMANU-EL VISIT AND PERFORMANCE

By Cadet Wyatt Cyprow '26

**O**n Friday, November 7th, fifteen cadets from our wonderful Jewish Choir traveled to Temple Emanu-El in New York City. Temple Emanu-El is the largest reform synagogue in the country, and it was a true honor to be invited. The community was celebrating Veteran's Day and in addition to the choir, we had the opportunity to listen to CPT Oren Abusch and CPT Emma Abusch, the first Jewish Army couple to have graduated the US Army's grueling Ranger school.

The choir performed on stage with a group of professional choral singers. This



Singing at Services.

was an amazing experience for the choir as not only did we get to perform in front of a large crowd, but we got to sing with another group (the first in my four years in the choir). The choir sang traditional Friday night Shabbat songs as well as "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "Eli Eli".

After services we took a brief tour of the beautiful temple before joining the community for dinner. Cadets spoke with members of the synagogue, many of whom had never met a cadet before, let alone a Jewish one. At the end of dinner, the Cadet-in-Charge of the Choir, CDT Lucas Schwed '26, gave a heartfelt thank

you to the community for their hospitality.

## HERE'S SOME FAVORITE QUOTES FROM CADETS ON THE TRIP:

"Tonight was meaningful to me as it was my first performance with the USMA Jewish Choir. Visiting the largest reform synagogue in North America and getting to participate in services was a super cool experience. I'm really grateful that I'm here this semester because I could have never imagined myself having the opportunity to do something like this." – C2C (Cadet) Jacob Gelder '27, USAFA Exchange Cadet

*"I learned a lot about reform synagogue services from going on this trip section. I loved the songs we sang and the stories from the military couple were inspiring as well!"*

– CDT Bradley Demeritt '26

*"I never knew there was a congregation of this magnitude in the city ... seeing so many people welcome us with open arms was a show of goodness in the world."*

– CDT Brock Hochberger '28

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## PART II: CONGREGATION OLAM TIKVAH

By Cadet Lucas Schwed '26

**F**ollowing the trip to Temple Emanu-El, the Jewish Choir spent Veterans Day weekend in Washington, D.C. The cadets were treated by Dr. Frank Luntz to breakfast on Sunday morning before driving down to the Nation's capital, where they were graciously hosted at Dr. Luntz's home. Monday morning and afternoon were spent touring the National Mall, and in the evening the



Group at WW2 Memorial on Veterans Day Weekend.

Choir made its way to Fairfax, Virginia to visit Congregation Olam Tikvah.

The community organized a wonderful dinner and engagement between Cadets and the middle school and high school students who study at the congregation. Dinner was followed by a meet-and-greet with the members of Olam Tikvah, during which the Cadets answered many questions and capped off the visit with the singing of Hatikvah and the West Point Alma Mater. It was quite a busy few days for the Choir, but the energy and warmth of the communities they visited made it all worth the effort.

## HERE'S SOME FAVORITE QUOTES FROM CADETS ON THE TRIP:

*"I really enjoyed getting to have pizza with the youth community and to connect with them. It was really special to get to connect with the synagogue as a whole as well and sing for them. I loved getting to talk to them and it gives me confidence in my decision to go to West Point. On top of that, I also loved the opportunity to get to see new things in DC like the monuments and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum."*

– CDT Ellie Melton '28

*"Going on this trip was an amazing experience which allowed me to connect with my fellow Jewish Cadets as well as connect with the greater Jewish community in the DC area."*

– CDT Ari Zatlin '29



Group photo after a wonderful breakfast and grocery shopping at a Kosher market in Monsey, NY.

## WEST POINT AND MEOR BOSTON JOINT SHABBATON IN MONSEY

By CDT Roni Chajmovic '26

Over the weekend of 14–16 November, the West Point Jewish Chapel Hillel had the chance to join Meor Boston for a Shabbaton in Monsey, New York. Meor is a college student organization dedicated to creating a vibrant Jewish future led by a new generation that is literate, inspired, committed, and engaged, composed of students from colleges all around Boston including Boston University, Brandeis, and Tufts. From the moment we arrived at our host families, the Monsey community welcomed us and made us truly feel like we were family joining them for Shabbat dinner.

Shabbat began in a community member's home for Kabbalat Shabbat, where singing and prayer set a great tone for the days ahead. Afterward, the twelve attending cadets split up among five families across the community, each offering its own type of hospitality and giving us a real look into Jewish life in Monsey. Later that night, everyone came together for an Oneg filled with singing, conversation, and a moment for each of us to share something we were grateful for in our lives.

On Shabbat morning, we attended synagogue for Orthodox Services, an experience new for many of us, and then enjoyed a long and amazing lunch with the Meor students, giving us a chance to get to know each other better. Following this, Rabbi Avrohom Loketch, the

Regional Director of Meor Boston and an integral leader of the Shabbaton, led a special learning session just for the West Point cadets, where we talked about Torah, Jewish identity, and how those values can carry into our futures as Army officers. We wrapped up the day with Havdalah, a bowling trip, and a lively farewell dinner with a DJ at Rabbi Benzion Klatzko's home.

The weekend ended with breakfast at Hava Java before we headed to the Hatzalah of Monsey headquarters. There, we got a tour and learned about the incredible lifesaving work they do for the Monsey community. We received a walk-through of their dispatch system, ambulances, equipment, and rapid-response procedures, explaining how they mobilize in seconds to provide lifesaving care across the community. Hearing how Hatzalah operates as an entirely volunteer-based, yet highly organized and incredibly professional organization, left a strong impression on all of us. This Shabbaton reminded us of how powerful community can be, and we returned to West Point carrying not just memories, but a renewed sense of purpose and connection.



Visiting Hatzalah Emergency Medical Services.



CDT Elias Toren '28 guides CDT Rafa Shurkin '28 in putting on Tefilin.

# LOU GROSS MIXOLOGY NIGHT



*Cadets enjoying learning from the four great folks from the Columbia Bartender Association.*



*Fun and Learning had by all.*



*Bouncers (CDT Mitchell Galardi '28 and COL Ben Wallen '96) ensuring only authorized Cadets were able to participate in the libations.*

*By CDT Aaron DeBlasi '27*

The Lou Gross Mixology Night was another opportunity for upperclassmen in the Jewish community and their friends to grow closer. The event was a three-hour bartending class led by the Columbia Bartending Association. We started with the basics, learning how to make different types of drinks and what distinguishes them from one another. Once we had learned the fundamentals, they invited us up to the bar to create our own drinks using a custom recipe book they provided.

By the end of the night, we had accomplished three things: we built community, learned new skills, and received hands-on training in the bartending arts.

## KOSHER TROOPS

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

**O**n November 23rd, several cadets from the West Point Jewish community joined our friends in Monsey, New York, to assemble Hannukah care packages to Jewish Soldiers stationed all over the world. Chaperoned by COL Ben Wallen, CH (MAJ) Heather Borshof, and Mrs. Elaine McConnell, the cadets made quick work of hundreds of care packages. They started by packing Hannukah treats, to include chocolate gelt, dreidels, and cute Hannukah-themed shocks, into colorful boxes, and then packed these boxes into bigger mailing cartons to ship to military communities all over the globe.

After a busy morning of assembling and packing, the cadets enjoyed a kosher pizza lunch, and they also participated in a local Kosher Troops singles event! Our cadets turned on the charm and contributed to a warm and friendly atmosphere, showcasing their excellent social skills, for which any Jewish parent would have been proud.

Wishing all of our Jewish military community a happy Hannukah!



*The team receives a briefing from Mrs. Sara Fuerst before packing boxes.*



*And did we mention that lunchtime kicked off with a Jewish singles event? Cadets practice their schmoozing skills.*



*Chaplain (MAJ) Borshof and Ramona Jones '05.*



*The taping team is ready for anything!*



*Packing up treats and smiles.*



Great leaders putting together Army Lego mini-figures as Jared Oswald (Life In Pieces) prepares the 62 independent sections for installation of the Jewish Chapel Lego Model.

## HISTORY IN THE MAKING – A LEGO MODEL FOR ALL AGES!

The 21st of November was a day to remember for so many reasons!

The litany of great events included the Jewish War Veterans (JWV) of Post 1 hosting a luncheon at the Hotel Thayer, a walking tour of West Point, an unveiling ceremony of a Lego model of the Jewish Chapel with special guests, Shabbat

**By COL Ben Wallen, USMA '96**  
Hillel OIC

services with Matt Bernstein (the most legendary Jewish college football player, also known as the “Hebrew Hammer”) as guest speaker, and a Tisch to round out the evening after an amazing Oneg Shabbat dinner sponsored by the JWV and the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund. To top it all off, this was also Adam Wallen’s birthday – USMA Class of 1995!

As with the celebration of support from the West Point community regarding the Jewish Chapel reopening ceremony on 7 November, the effort

surrounding the Jewish Chapel Lego Model unveiling was equally impressive. The catalyst for the Lego model was none other than our very own Jewish Chaplain (MAJ) David Frommer, the West Point Jewish Chaplain prior to our current amazing Chaplain (MAJ) Rabbi Heather Borshof. Chaplain Frommer was introduced to Lego master builder Jared Oswald from “Life In Pieces” back in 2023 and the rest isn’t just history ... it’s a Lego set for the ages! With the ever-present support of the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund and additional support from the Kaplan Class of ’39 Fund from the West Point Association of Graduates, a two year journey of innovation and exceptional craftsmanship culminated with the installation and unveiling of the Jewish Chapel Lego Model.

The Lego model scale is 1:30 which means that the Lego model is to scale for the Lego mini figures. The resulting effort led to a model comprised of 91,933 pieces with the following dimensions: length - 75.5 inches, width – 45.5 inches, and

height – 21.8 inches. The 139.6-pound model was delivered in 62 independent sections. With these dimensions, a special table was designed and built along with a case to cover the model for display purposes. Upon delivery of the table, the amazing Department of Public Works (DPW) helped to position the table inside the entrance to the Jewish Chapel with support coming from Roads and Grounds, Carpentry, and the Paint Shop.

After on-site preparation, the unveiling ceremony included Jared orchestrating the installation of the 62 independent sections. Every community member present had the opportunity to add one of the sections. Those participating include several Jewish community Cadets, Jewish War Veterans, Matt Bernstein, West Point Jewish Chapel Fund Board Members, other community members, and Chaplain Frommer. That’s right! He came to West Point along with his three wonderful children to participate in this historic event. Thanks to Elaine McConnell’s superb

**Continued on page 25**

idea, everyone walked away with an Army Lego mini figure.

The installation and unveiling of the Jewish Chapel Lego model closed with the placement of West Point Cadet Lego mini-figures inside the model by the current Hillel and Jewish Choir Cadet leaders. The Jewish Chapel Lego Model is ready for visitors to come and enjoy, along with our Cadets, as we plan to reposition the Lego mini figures in the model occasionally ... just for fun!

*(Photo right) Lego Table placement support by the Department of Public Works' Roads and Grounds, Carpentry, and Paint Shop.*



Great leaders putting together Army Lego mini-figures as Jared Oswald (Life In Pieces) prepares the 62 independent sections for installation of the Jewish Chapel Lego Model.



*View from above of the Jewish Chapel Lego Model to see the exquisite detail throughout!*



Lego Model assembled with the roof on (left) and with the roof off inside the case (right).

## SO MANY CELEBRATIONS

# HANNUKAH CELEBRATION FOR A LAST SHABBAT OF THE SEMESTER!

The final Shabbat of the semester had so many fantastic events rolled into one night, and some may say that it is impossible to summarize everything... but, I will try! The night started prior to services with a discussion about West

**By COL Ben Wallen, USMA '96**  
Hillel OIC

Point and service to our Nation. Cadets Elias Toren '28, Daniel Clare '28, and Isabel Ioffe '28 shared their thoughts with eight 7th graders from Temple B'nai Or from Morristown, NJ. They had a great discussion leading into Shabbat services which began with an early Hanukkah celebration due to being away from West

Point for most of Hanukkah.

Joining us for Shabbat were three U.S. Coast Guard Cadets who added to our joint Jewish community where we have absolutely enjoyed our USAFA exchange Cadet Jacob Gelder '27 during this Fall semester! Jacob was an incredible addition to our community - he participated in almost every event held by Hillel and our Jewish Choir! Following Shabbat services, Cadets led a vibrant Kiddush and enjoyed a wonderful latke Oneg Shabbat dinner hosted by Post 1 of the Jewish War Veterans and the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund. A great night for sure ... but that wasn't all! We even enjoyed a personal concert from the Cadet Rock Band "No Strings Attached"!

The night concluded with an additional d'var Torah discussion by over



*Final Shabbat - Jewish community lighting the Hanukkah Benjamin Wallen.*

25 Cadet followed by a Tisch – fantastic, motivational, spontaneous singing!! Of course, this was just Friday! More fun was had by the USCGA Cadets and our West Point community which included a wonderful Havdalah service led by Cadet Daniel Clare '27. What a truly wonderful Jewish community we have at West Point!

## WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL FUND DEVELOPMENT REPORT

*By Billy Medof, USMA '94 and  
Randy Gorod, Development Advisor*

This year has been a very active year for the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund. Thanks to the generosity of alumni, parents, community supporters and institutions, we have had one of the best fundraising years in our history. To the numerous people who replied to the year-end campaigns with donations, thank you! The West Point Jewish community continues to go from strength-to-strength, with the number of Jewish Cadets more than doubling over the last 20 years.

Speaking of history, this past year also saw the passing of Louis Gross USMA '54 z"l, who was one of the key leaders in the creation of the Jewish Chapel at West Point. In addition to the Chapel and its work, Louis supported West Point in

many ways. He even thought about the future of the Chapel Fund through an estate gift that will continue to support the work he saw as so vital.

Thanks to the vision and lead investment of the Klaff Family Foundation, the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund has partnered with Friends of the Jewish Chapel (US Naval Academy), JWB Jewish Chaplains Council, Jewish War Veterans of America, and Hillel International to form the American Jewish Military Service Initiative (AJMSI). The core mission of AJMSI is to increase awareness of, interest in and support for Jewish service in the United States Armed Forces. We are thrilled to share our first AJMSI speakers, in conjunction with Veteran's Day services



Thanks to your generosity and engagement, we've seen a significant increase in the number of donors and the total funds raised. You can always make a gift online to support the Chapel at: [www.westpointjewishchapelfund.org/support/donate.html](http://www.westpointjewishchapelfund.org/support/donate.html)

at Temple Emanu-El in NYC (Captains Oren and Emma Abusch <https://youtu.be/1E-B9F9yRJc?si=hTa3IVVtpCrGWJH5&t=1>) and reform and conservative synagogues in Columbia, SC (1LT Mark Salzman). Congregants at Temple Emanu-El (NYC) and in Fairfax, VA were also treated to performances by the amazing West Point Jewish Chapel Choir. You can also watch the video by scanning the QR code.

We also have plans to increase the sharing of all the amazing stories of our cadets, alumni and West Point. If you have a thought for a story or someone to highlight, please reach out to me and let me know. We can be reached at [Development@WPJCF.org](mailto:Development@WPJCF.org)

# 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

### CLASS OF 1947

Robert Haas

### CLASS OF 1949

COL(R) Norman Katz, USAF, 2LM

### CLASS OF 1946

Norman Wahl

### CLASS OF 1948

LTC(R) Jay Josephs, USAF

## JEWISH GRADUATE DEATHS REPORTED TO THE ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATES (AOG) FROM JULY 1 2025 TO PRESENT

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

### CLASS OF 1954

Paul Lansky, USAF

Died March 10, 2024

Buried: Woodlawn Cemetery, Sioux Falls,  
SD

### CLASS OF 1959

Paul N. Sper

Died Feb 12, 2025, Tampa, FL

Buried: Florida National Cemetery,  
Bushnell, Sumter County, FL  
Section 607, Site 1804

### CLASS OF 1968

COL(R) Marvin Belasco, MD, USAF

Died July 25, 2025

Buried: Fort Sam Houston National  
Cemetery, San Antonio, TX

## WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL UPCOMING EVENTS

### JANUARY

- First Shabbat of Spring Semester
- West Point Jewish Chapel Fund Board Meeting
- Jewish Community Mentorship Program  
(Focus: Post Night)

### FEBRUARY

- Aleph Institute Lay Leader Training
- Purim Celebration

### MARCH

- Plebe Parent Weekend
- Kosher Troops Passover Packing

### APRIL

- Cadet-led Passover seder
- Jewish Choir at Castle Point, VA

### MAY

- Mickey Marcus Memorial Service
- West Point Jewish Chapel Fund Board Meeting
- Baccalaureate Service
- Graduation

### JUNE

- R-Day

# OLD GRAD SPOTLIGHT

THIS ISSUE'S OLD GRAD SPOTLIGHT IS DEDICATED TO THE CLASS OF 2005!

The Class of 2005 returned to their rockbound highland home in November to celebrate their 20 year reunion. It was an exciting, emotional, and very social weekend. The Jewish old grads had the opportunity to show their families and loved ones around post, including the chapel, which for some of us was the most important place for us during our years as cadets. The reunion happened to be timed perfectly with the re-opening ceremony at the Jewish Chapel on Friday, 7 November, and it was fitting that several members of the Class of 2005 gathered with the West Point Jewish Community to celebrate our beloved "home-away-from-home."

## LTC ISAAC GREENBERG SUMS IT UP PERFECTLY:

*The Jewish Chapel at West Point was always more than a synagogue — it was a sanctuary that prepared us spiritually and morally before we graduated and went on to lead Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. This weekend, eleven Jewish alumni from the Class of 2005 returned to celebrate our 20th Reunion — a powerful reminder of the bonds that continue to unite us. How fitting that we gathered for the reopening of the Jewish Chapel just before our Class Memorial Service.*

*It was within those walls that we learned to carry our faith into the most austere environments, often serving as lay leaders to bring Judaism and community to others far from home. The Chapel remains a place of faith, reflection, and enduring connection — one that shaped us as cadets and continues to bring us together as leaders, friends, and proud members of the Long Gray Line.*



*Back at our home away from home.*



*Isaac Greenberg presents West Point with a generous check from the Class of 2005.*



*Dave Rokhlin is back in the house! This time accompanied by his husband, Tony.*



*Dave and Tony on the Plain.*



*A family legacy on the Hudson - Brittney Brengel '07 (left), and her sister Rachel '11. Their father, Russ Berkoff, is a 1981 grad.*



Ben and Heiko (future classes of 2035 and 2036) bring on the ruach.



Isaac and his two boys at the Wall of Graduates in the Chapel.



LTC Megan Williams and husband Austin Reed (who visited West Point for the first time during reunion weekend!)



Ramona Fastow Jones, Adam Sasso, and Ivan Hodes catch up on the last 20 years



Smiles in the Mess Hall.



The Brengel Family.



The Greenberg Family.



The Greenberg Boys with their #1 Fan, USMA Superintendant LTG Gilland.



The Greenberg Family in front of a painting donated by Isaac and his family in honor of Rabbi Carlos Huerta.



The Greenberg Boys take in the football game.

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

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

# THE NACHAS PAGE

## BRANCH NIGHT

On December 3rd, the Class of 2026 gathered in Eisenhower Hall to "open envelopes" and find out which branch they would be joining upon graduation this spring. There were some big smiles among our Jewish firsties!



COL Ben Wallen with Aidan Djavadi, Catherine Brodsky, Wyatt Cyprow, and Roni Chajmovic.



Bradley Demeritt



Charlie Aronov



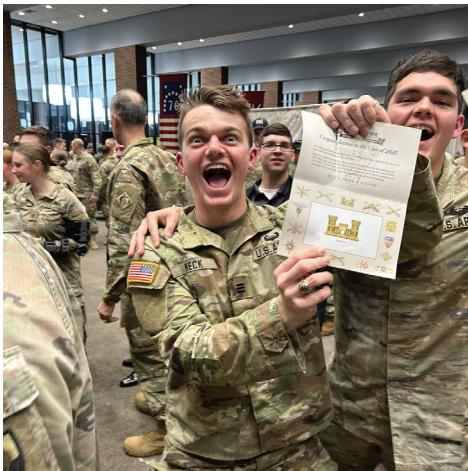
Claudia Brodsky



Angelina Pfister



Jacob Crossman and Kiran Goldstein



Colby Keck



Dr Frank Luntz and CDT Angelina Pfister



Ez Bardales



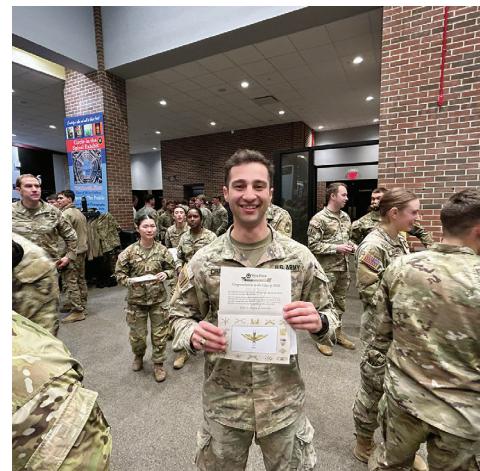
COL Ben Wallen with COL (Ret) Glenn Goldman, Cadets Lucas Schwed, and Sam Steinhart.



Leah Magee



Lucas Schwed



Roni Chajmovic



Ryan Toomey



Wyatt Cyrow



Catherine Brodsky



*Celebrating the first night of  
Hanukkah with the Hillel of Rockland  
County Community College along  
with West Point staff and faculty.*