

# The Star

Monthly newsletter from  
Congregation Beth Elohim  
in Acton, Massachusetts



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## December 2022 • Kislev/Tevet 5783

- Message from co-president Jaymi Formaggio
- Congregant/chef Barbara Frank Michaelsen shares her CBE story and potato latkes recipe
- CBE Administrator Shoshana Zuckerman tells how to zhuzh up your Hanukkah Gathering!
- Family menorahs, family stories
- What's up at the CBE Early Learning Center
- The People of Chelm Want to Know...
- Calendar
- Lifecycle and milestone events in our community
- Donations
- Resources
- Feedback/get in touch with us

## In this issue...

Do you spell it *Chanukah* or *Hanukkah*? Do you say *menorah* or *channukiah*?? Let's just say that these reflect our rich Jewish diversity. We all have our own favorite ways of celebrating the Festival of Lights. Read on to see how some of our congregants celebrate/cook/party.

We are once again blessed with amazing contributions from our community.

## Message from co-president Jaymi Formaggio

*Jaymi and son Coby light  
Chanukah candles just a few years  
back.*



Each night of Chanukah, we add a candle to the *channukiah*. This is a familiar, almost mundane little ritual. It can feel so small amidst the lights and music and energy of our Christian-majority surroundings. And yet, it is one of our favorite Jewish rituals, witnessing the progression of the holiday, how each night, the light glows stronger and brighter.

In a famous Talmudic argument between Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai, they debate how the candles should be lit. Rabbi Shammai asserts that we should start by lighting eight candles on the first night, then seven, and so on. Rabbi Hillel argues that instead, we should start by lighting one candle the first night, then two, until the last night when all eight candles are lit. His argument continues that in matters of holiness, one should always increase, never diminish. This tradition has endured to our present day.

This custom of lighting the menorah teaches us important lessons about our increasing, and never diminishing, the holiness of our own Jewish community. When one person engages in Torah learning, in social justice, in chesed, they create a small but special light. The next person who joins adds to that light. And so on. The strength of the group grows in a way in which the power of the whole far exceeds the sum of its individual parts. Judaism is a religion of community, a contrast to our American focus on the individual. We recognize that none of us are truly self-sufficient. We can not fully pray without a minyan. Even our home celebrations are set up to include family, friends, and even strangers.

The word *Chanukah* means “dedication”. This Chanukah we hope you will dedicate yourself to not

only do individual acts of good, but lend your support to the community. Be present in learning, in praying, in serving others— amongst others from CBE who are doing the same thing. Together, we can bring a fiery light to our mission. Together, we can increase the holiness of our lives, our community, and our world.

Chag Sameach  
Jaymi

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## Congregant/chef Barbara Frank Michaelsen shares her CBE story and easy potato latkes recipe



**Tell us a little about yourself. How long have you been a member at CBE? Do you have a favorite CBE memory you want to share?**

I am Barbara Frank Michaelsen and I live with my family in Stow. I am the owner of [abcatering](#). My company caters for any of your events anywhere in the New England area. I've been an active member of CBE since 2004. We've catered a good number of CBE events.

We started coming to CBE when I wanted my son, Gus, to attend Tot Shabbat. He had his Bar Mitzvah at CBE. Gus will be getting married next year!

My company served a lot of food for Gus' event. I didn't have to work. My catering company provided the kiddish luncheon as well as dinner that day. My staff took care of the details!

**When did you start cooking and how did it become your career?**



A local organization was looking for a caterer that they could depend on. I wasn't a caterer, but really enjoyed cooking. I teamed up with a friend with more cooking experience than me. We successfully launched abcatering. I learned from her.

Eventually, she moved out of the area, and I was left as sole proprietor and Chief Chef of abcatering. My friend is still available to me for tough cooking questions!

**How and when did you get involved with Mt. Calvary Community Suppers? Can you share any stories about your involvement with this program over the years and the impact it has on the local community? How can someone get involved if they would like to help?**

After Gus' Bar Mitzvah, I felt the need to stay in touch with the community. Leann Shamash, our School Director at the time, introduced me to the Mt. Calvary Church Community Supper organizers. They were just launching the weekly Wednesday community dinner program at that time. There are four 5th Wednesdays every year. Congregation Beth Elohim now hosts those dinners, at a minimum. We have some congregants that enjoy volunteering on a regular basis. Sometimes, a group like Sisterhood might take responsibility for a meal. They will be hosting a dinner in early December. There might be 100 or more dinner guests at a sitting.

We have an incredible bunch of volunteers helping with this program. I also volunteer at the community supper every 1st Wednesday as their Chief Chef! Anyone interested in finding out more about the Mt. Calvary Community Supper program can contact me at [abcateringfood@gmail.com](mailto:abcateringfood@gmail.com).

**It's that time of year when we are all starting to think about latkes for Chanukah. Word on the street is that you have a special and easy latke recipe. Can you tell us more about this recipe and any tried-and-true techniques for making the perfect golden, flavorful and crunchy latkes?**

When you are caterer, you are preparing dishes for a lot of people. Anything that you can do to reduce the time needed to make a dish is of paramount importance. See my Chanukah latke recipe below, "Chanukah Latkes with No Box Grater and No Onion Tears" as an example. This recipe makes 150 regular size latkes in a minimum amount of time. The trick is in reducing the preparation time. Instead of potato peeling and grating, the recipe calls for already-grated "Shredded Hash Brown" potatoes. Instead of preparing whole onions, I purchase fresh "Diced Sweet Onions". When I can find a prepared additive-free, fresh food substitute for an ingredient, I will take that short cut to reduce my time in the kitchen, while maintaining the quality of the food being served.

**Do you have any special tips, tricks, or words of wisdom for folks who want to get more creative and adventurous in the kitchen with their cooking?**

Sure! A caterer needs tricks to run a successful business. As I said above, look for prepared substitute quality foods to reduce food preparation times. Examples of other prepared foods that I use often in my recipes are grated ginger, basil, cilantro, and garlic. (Some of these you will find in the frozen food section of your supermarket).

Thinking ahead of cleanup saves a lot of time. I cover baking pans with tinfoil to avoid scrubbing. I cover counters and backsplashes with supermarket paper bags or recycled tinfoil from cooking. Wear an apron. The silver dollar size Chanukah latkes recipe has only 5 pans or utensils that need cleanup when you are all done!



## Chanukah Latkes with No Box Grater and No Onion Tears

Barbara Frank Michaelson

Click [here](#) for a pdf of this recipe.

This big batch recipe makes about 150 silver dollar size latkes, but can be scaled up or down for fewer latkes, larger latkes, etc.

5 20 oz. packages of Simply Potatoes hash browns (refrigerated)

4 8 oz. packages diced sweet onions

1-1/2 cups whole eggs (6 eggs)

3 envelopes (1-1/2 boxes) matzo ball mix

1 cup garlic powder

1/4 cup thick-grind black pepper

1/4 cup table salt

In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients thoroughly.

Heat a quarter of an inch of vegetable oil in a large frying pan on medium heat until the oil is hot enough that a drop of water bounces.

To form the pancakes, use a 1-1/2" or 1-3/4" scoop (size 40 if your scoop has numbers). Fill the scoop and press the mix to compact it and to level the top edge. Set the scoops on a tray. When you have enough to begin frying, put the scoops into the frying pan and flatten the tops slightly. Fry until golden on the bottom, then flip and fry on the second side. Remove from oil and drain on paper towels. Periodically scoop out any scraps from the oil and replenish as necessary. Line a cookie sheet (or a disposable aluminum tray) with parchment paper and arrange the latkes on it.

The beauty of this recipe is that the latkes can be covered with aluminum foil and refrigerated or frozen at this time. You can reheat them on the day of the event, just prior to serving. (You won't have your house smelling of food all day!)



Heat your oven to 350°. Defrost the latkes if necessary and remove the aluminum top. Heat the latkes until they start to bubble on top (about 10–12 minutes), then serve.



*Barbara's recipe uses pre-shredded potatoes and diced sweet onions to save time.*



*Judy Budiansky mixing the ingredients by hand. Together she and Barbara prepared 150 latkes for Thanksgiving!*



*Consistency of the mix before frying.*

*Use middle scoop for regular size latkes. See quarter at left for reference.*





*Latkes assembly line: from scoops (top left) to frying pan to finished latkes!*



*If you prepare your latkes in advance, wrap in foil for easy re-heating and store in the refrigerator or freezer.*

*Sara Levine and Marcy Hoban preparing Barbara's latkes recipe for a past CBE event.*



## Zhuzh up your next Hanukkah Gathering!



*CBE's Administrator and party planner extraordinaire, Shoshana Zuckerman, shares some of her favorite Hanukkah Holiday hosting tips (Here Shoshana and her husband Joe are getting ready to host one of their famous holiday parties).*

It's that time of year where we need to start thinking about quickly approaching Hanukkah! As a professional event planner and lover of all things entertaining, I eagerly look forward to having friends and family over for yummy food and festive activities during this winter holiday. For anyone looking for some fresh new Hanukkah ideas, I've compiled a list of my favorite noshes, games and resources to help light up the dark nights. Read on for some fun and creative ways to get into the holiday spirit this year.

**Bring on the Latke Bar**



Is it really a Hanukkah party without having any latkes? In addition to offering traditional latkes with applesauce and sour cream, I like to switch things up every year with a different themed “build your own latke bar”. Below are some mouth watering ways to take your latkes to the next level:

***Bagel Bar:*** Think bagel brunch fixings but using latkes as the base instead of a bagel. If you are feeling adventurous, you can add everything bagel seasoning to your latke mixture. For the schmear, you can use whitefish, chopped liver, egg salad and any assortment of cream cheese flavors. Pro tip: use whipped cream cheese for easier spreading. Lay out your favorite bagel toppings such as lox, capers, cucumber slices, diced red onion and tomato, and dill sprigs.

***Mezze Spread:*** Move over pita chips, latkes are the perfect crunchy vessel for all your favorite Middle Eastern dips and accouterments. Za'atar is a fantastic way to kick up the latke mixture. Get saucy with it and consider serving baba ganoush, tzatziki, tahini, tabouli, and zhug (spicy green herb sauce). Great accompanying garnishes include pomegranate seeds, crunchy roasted chickpeas, diced pistachios, pickled beets, diced Israeli pickles, sumac seasoning, and freshly chopped mint and parsley.

***Nachos Bar:*** Lose the tortilla chips and upgrade your latkes with nacho inspired fixings and flavors. If you want to pack an extra punch, add cilantro and finely diced fresh jalapenos to the latke batter before frying. Diced avocado, crumbled queso fresco, scallions, chopped cilantro, fire roasted corn, black olives, refried beans, charred lime wedges and pickled onions or pickled jalapenos are all fantastic topping options. Try drizzling with pico de gallo, chili lime sour cream, avocado crema, creamy chipotle sauce, hot sauce or warmed queso dip.



After eating loads of salty and sugary food during Hanukkah celebrations, it's important to have some thirst quenching beverage options.

Last year I stumbled upon this inventive and delicious list of [Hanukkah-inspired mocktails](#) that can be enjoyed by folks of all ages.

For friends 21 and up, take a peak at this fantastic list of [cocktails that highlight Hanukkah flavors](#) that are sure to spread extra holiday warmth and cheer during your gatherings.

### Activities Beyond Playing Dreidel

While dreidel spinning will always be a Hanukkah staple, I've added a few new activities to the Hanukkah roster. Each header hyperlinks to some of my favorite ways to entertain and engage family and friends during Hanukkah hangs.

*[How Jew You Do - Chanukah Card Game:](#)* This all-age appropriate game uses conversation-starter cards focused on Jewish themes. Questions fall into the categories of Think cards, Personal cards and Trivia cards. It's an easy and entertaining way to include everyone, learn more about your guests and spark intergenerational dialogues.

*[Pin the Menorah:](#)* Replace pin the tail on the donkey with a menorah and candles for a new family friendly Hanukkah game. I purchased this game from Amazon but more artistically inclined folks could easily draw and make their own version. Who doesn't love wearing a blind fold, getting spun around and then attempting to find the shamash candle?

*[Hanukkah Cookie Decorating:](#)* Making and decorating cookies is a classic winter activity during gift giving season. Why not do it with a Jewish holiday twist? Use a basic sugar cookie recipe for ugly sweater or other [Hanukkah themed cookie cutter shapes](#). Too busy to bake your own cookies – no problem! Check out this [wonderful Etsy vendor](#) who sells DIY cookie kits with everything you need for designing your own sweet Hanukkah treats.

You can also buy [undecorated sweater-shaped sugar cookies](#) online or at your local supermarket. The Acton Roche Brothers carried these sweater cookies last year. Get creative making your own assortment of white, yellow, gold and blue colored frostings and sprinkles.

If you like a little friendly competition, come up with cookie prize categories such as: most hideous, most creative, most realistic, most beautiful etc. Home Goods usually has a good assortment of small Hanukkah gifts like soap, bath bombs or holiday mugs you can award to the category winners. (see our happy contest winners below).

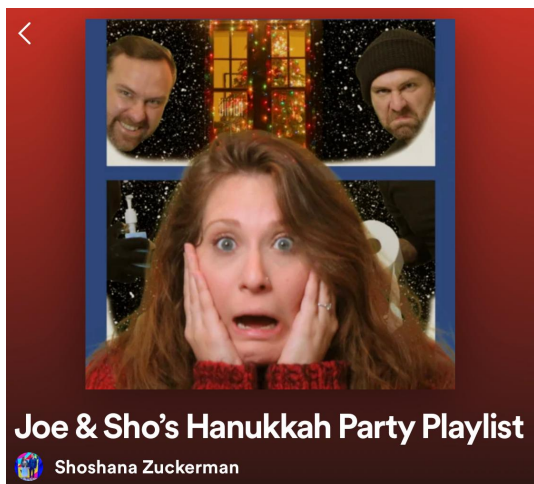




### The Perfect Playlist

A catchy and theme appropriate playlist for background music is a must-have whenever I have guests over. I've spent wayyy too many hours searching for and listening to Hanukkah music so that others don't have to. Over the past few years I've curated a [Spotify Hanukkah playlist](#) of songs that

span a variety of musical genres. The playlist includes classic favorites, covers and newly discovered holiday hidden gems. Click on the link above or scan the QR code below. Happy Listening!



In the famous words of Adam Sandler, “ Put on your yarmulke, here comes Chanukah. So much fun-ukah, to celebrate Chanukah.” May your Hanukkah celebrations be filled with extra light and joy this Holiday season.

## Family menorahs, family stories



Thank you Gary and Judy Budiansky for your menorah submission! They received this lovely menorah as a wedding gift 55 years ago (wow!!). It is a 1965 design by artist Ellen Lord, produced by Austin Productions in Brooklyn. Its stone-like finish suggests the walls of Jerusalem.

## What's up at the CBE Early Learning Center

### Building Safety and a Special Surprise!

On Friday, November 18th the Acton Fire Department was at CBE for our scheduled annual building inspection. As a special surprise, Bob Ferrara helped coordinate an exciting visit with a full brigade of firemen, a fire truck and an ambulance. ELC students started their morning



outside getting to see a fire ladder in action, sitting inside a fire truck and viewing the inside of an ambulance.



*All eyes were up to the sky watching a special demo of a fireman expertly climbing up a fully extended ladder!*



*ELC friends patiently waited in line for a turn to sit inside the fire truck.*



*The cold was no bother on this brisk Friday morning. ELC toddlers were fascinated watching a fireman model how to use a hydraulic ambulance stretcher.*



*For years the “People of Chelm” column has challenged The Star readers with questions drawn from the long and rich history of Jews and Judaism. We are delighted to continue this tradition, with abundant thanks to Bob Ferrara and Waky.*

*Illustration by Maurice Sendak.*

**QUESTION:** We all love Hanukkah and the winter Holiday Season, especially the younger ones among us. And this year, the eight days of Hanukkah even include Christmas day. Quite beyond the gift giving custom that has evolved, the Hanukkah festival celebrates the recapture and rededication of the Jerusalem Temple by the Maccabees over two thousand years ago. There is also the inspiring tradition of the candles lit in the recaptured Temple miraculously burning for eight days. Why then is Hanukkah a “minor” holiday? Is it because 1) the Maccabee kings were not descendants of King David, 2) this triumph over the tyrant King Antiochus is not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, 3) the Jewish rebel victory was short-lived, or 4) the Talmud never discusses this celebration.

Ponder your response – and find the answer further along in this email.

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## What's happening at CBE this month?

Visit our [online calendar](#) for up-to-the-minute programming.

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## Lifecycle and milestone events in our community

*Mazel tov to Linda and Denis Friedman on the wedding of granddaughter Madeline Friedman to Joseph DeLuca, November 5, 2022*





Has your family celebrated a recent simcha or milestone? Send us a photo along with a caption (limited to 80 words) so we can include your simcha in our next newsletter. Email [communications@bethelohim.org](mailto:communications@bethelohim.org).

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## Donations

The congregation thanks our members, their relatives and friends, and the larger community for donations received during the month of November. If you do not see your donation, please look for it in our next newsletter, or contact [communications@bethelohim.org](mailto:communications@bethelohim.org).

### **Amy Naparstek Israel Scholarship Fund**

Gary & Judy Budiansky

Jeff & Sandy Haber

### **Building Fund**

Arlene & Alan Weiss / In memory of Fran and Kenneth Nathanson, aunt and uncle of Arlene Weiss

### **Cantoral Fund**

Michael & Emily Blumberg

Judy and Gary Budiansky / In appreciation of Cantor Sarra's wonderful contributions to our services

Arlene & Alan Weiss / In honor of Sarra for all her hard work to make our High Holy Day services meaningful; In memory of Bernie Goodman, beloved brother of Rachel Spierer and uncle of Cantor Sarra

### **Choir Fund**

Arlene & Alan Weiss / In memory of Aileen Hammerman, mother of Shelley and mother-in-law of Rick Green; In honor of Judy Kramer and the choir

Caroline Flink & Family / In memory of George William Thomas, beloved father of Henry Thomas.  
Bob & Kathie Becker / In memory of Arielle Sokol; In memory of George Williams Thomas  
Norton & Sara Weiss / In memory of George Thomas  
Robert & Deena Ferrara / In memory of George Williams Thomas, father of Henry Thomas and father-in-law of Jai Gluckman Thomas  
Robert & Deena Ferrara / In memory of Ethan Sokol's beloved sister  
Robert Grappel & Lynda Cohen  
Jeff & Sandy Haber

### **Darchei Shalom Fund**

Acton Coffee House

### **General Fund**

Fred & Doris Goldstein / In memory of Therese Gibbs, mother of Rita Grossman; In celebration of the marriage of Linda and Denis Friedman's granddaughter. Maddy, to Joe.  
Karen Pollak / In memory of George Thomas, father of Henry Thomas and father-in-law of Jai Gluckman Thomas  
Lois & Harold Torman / In memory of Henry Thomas' dad  
Bob & Kathie Becker / In memory of Therese Gibbs  
Michelle & Chris Siegert / In honor of Stan (the Man) McMiller. Thank you, Stan, for keeping our synagogue so tidy - we appreciate it!  
Rachelle Horwitz-Martin & Robert Martin / In memory of Arielle Sokol, Ethan Sokol's sister  
Robert & Deena Ferrara / In honor of Stan the Man McMiller on his fifth anniversary as our wonderful Building Custodian  
Sandy Roschelle & Peter Darlow / In memory of Irving Roschelle, father of Sandy Roschelle  
Arlene & Alan Weiss / In memory of Tina Kaplan; In memory of Fran and Kenneth Nathanson, aunt and uncle of Arlene Weiss; On the yahrzeits of Selma and Jerome Nathanson, parents of Arlene Weiss; In honor of the Interim Search Committee; In honor of the wedding of Shoshana Zuckerman and Joe Williams  
Peter Galland / In memory of Sheila A. Galland  
Benjamin Navetta / I grew up a CBE member, and am now getting married under the Benders' traveling chuppah!

### **Gerson Stutman Beautification Fund**

Beth Schrager & Jeffrey Handler / In memory of Therese Gibbs, mother of Rita Grossman

### **High Holiday Appeal**

Linda & Denis Friedman  
Ed & Nancy Kleiman  
Arlene & Alan Weiss / In honor of CBE staff and volunteers who bring the light and joy of Judaism to our community  
Bob & Kathie Becker  
Barry & Jo-Anne Nyer  
Neal Silverman  
David & Susan Pinsky  
Emily & Michael Blumberg  
Gary Kushner & Lori Lotterman  
Glenn & Maida Fund  
Maureen Parker



Mindy & Jeff Fishman

Sandy Roschelle & Peter Darlow

Susan & Andrew Gruskay

Jaymi & Joseph Formaggio

Chuck & Lauren Pollak

Beth Schrager & Jeffrey Handler

Gary & Judy Budiansky / In memory of Irving and Gertrude Budiansky

Michael Biales & Sarah Coletti

Ron & Joanna Honig

Ethan Sokol & Kristine Fong / In memory of Arielle Sokol

### **Jason Goldfarb Youth Fund**

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton / With gratitude for welcoming us and educating us more about Judaism!

### **Library Fund**

Arlene & Alan Weiss / In honor of Waky becoming a bubbe

### **Rabbi Lewis Mintz Fund**

Jeff & Sandy Haber

Gary & Judy Budiansky / In honor of our Rabbi Emeritus

### **Rabbi Discretionary Fund**

Gary & Judy Budiansky / In memory of Arielle Sokol, Ethan Sokol's sister

Arlene & Alan Weiss / In honor of Rabbi David

Michael & Emily Blumberg

Jane and Ken Friedland / In honor of the Bar Mitzvah of Finley Forseter

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## **The People of Chelm Want to Know...**

**ANSWER TO QUESTION POSED ABOVE:** The best answer as to why Hanukkah is not a major holiday is that it is not mentioned in the Torah. Only the holidays mentioned in the Torah - like Pesach and Shabbat – are generally deemed major holidays and may require cessation from ordinary activities. The Books of the Maccabees are not part of the Hebrew Bible although these books are included in the Catholic Bible. The Books of the Maccabees describe the retaking of the Temple in a revolt against Greek rule by led by Judah Maccabee in 165 BCE, more than 300 years after the last of the Davidic line was king in Jerusalem. Judah Maccabee and his family were not descendants of King David or of David's tribe of Judah, but the Hasmonean dynasty that the Maccabees founded did rule in Jerusalem for over a hundred years.

After the Romans under Pompey conquered Jerusalem in 63 BCE, they installed client rulers who came to be called the Herodians, a line of kingship that included Herod the Great. Though the Hebrew Bible (or Tanakh) is silent on Hanukkah, the first Book of Maccabees describes the eight-day rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem but nothing about the miracle of the oil. Only the Talmud, written centuries after the event, contains the

story of the one-day supply of oil miraculously lasting eight days.

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## Resources

[CBE's Chesed Committee](#) | Contact us in a time of need  
[18 Doors](#) (formerly InterfaithFamily of Greater Boston)  
[Anti-Defamation League incident reporting](#)  
[CJP \(Combined Jewish Philanthropies\)](#)  
[CJP SeniorDirect](#)  
[Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life](#)  
[Hadassah of Nashoba Valley Facebook](#)  
[Hadassah of Northern New England](#)  
[Hebrew College](#)  
[Jewish Bereavement Support Group](#)  
[JewishBoston.com](#)  
[Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston](#)  
[Jewish Family Service of Metrowest](#)  
[Keshet](#) | A national organization that works for full LGBTQ equality and inclusion in Jewish life  
[Mayyim Hayyim | Living Waters Community Mikveh](#)  
[Oneinfifty.org](#) | BRCA awareness, education, and support  
[Synagogue Council of Massachusetts](#)  
[Yad Chessed](#) | Emergency financial assistance to Jewish individuals and families in need  
[Yerusha.com](#) | A Website for Older Childless Jews

Visit the [Resources](#) page on our website for our complete resource list.

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## Feedback/get in touch with us!

Let us know what you think!

Do you like the new format? What about the content? If there is an individual or effort you'd like to see featured, please let us know!

Please also don't hesitate to let us know if you had any issues with downloading, reading, or if you had any issues accessing your email version of *The Star*.

For all of the above, please write to [communications@bethelohim.org](mailto:communications@bethelohim.org).

Until next time,

*The Star* editorial and design team —

Gary Budiansky, Maida Fund, Rick Green, Beth Schrager, Lauren Solomon, Shoshana Zuckerman





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