



## THE RABBI'S COLUMN: MIRACLES AND WONDERS

**By Mark Sameth**

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*Each year the Pleasantville Clergy Association hosts an Interfaith Thanksgiving Service. As we now prepare for Chanukah – our winter holiday of miracle and light - I thought I would share the brief teaching I brought to last week's Thanksgiving gathering:*

In the Jewish lectionary, the scriptural reading for this week - in synagogues all over the world - is Parashat "Vayeitze" (Genesis 28: 10 - 32: 3). It begins:

10 Jacob left Beer-sheba, and set out for Haran. 11 He came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night, for the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of that place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. 12 He had a dream; a stairway was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and angels of God were going up and down on it. 13 And HaShem was standing beside him and said, "I am HaShem, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac: the ground on which you are lying I will assign to you and to your offspring. 14 Your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your descendants. 15 Remember, I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." 16 Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely HaShem is in this place, and I, I did not know it!" 17

The rabbis wrote extensively about this text's many curiosities. For instance: Why does the "certain place" where Jacob stopped go unnamed? Why are the angels going up and down the ladder rather than down and up? And finally, perhaps most importantly: how could Jacob have gone to sleep in this godly place? How could it not have been obvious to Jacob that the ground upon which he lay down was sacred ground?

The Chassidic Master Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye, a student of the Baal Shem Tov, extended that question to its natural, logical conclusion. One must believe, Yaakov Yosef taught, that *m'lo chol ha'aretz k'vodo*, that "the whole world is filled with God's presence"; and, as we learn from the mystical work Tikkunei Zohar, Yaakov Yosef taught, that "there is no place empty of God." In light of that understanding, how and where could we ever go to sleep? There is no place devoid of God's presence. The work of the spirit is to awaken to that understanding. As we prepared our hearts for Thanksgiving a few weeks ago - drawing attention, as we do every year, to the partial experiences of our lives we call our blessings - the words of Albert Einstein suggest themselves: "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is."

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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One of Webster's four definitions for the word 'Perspective' is, "A mental picture of the relative importance of things." Not only in our community, but in the broader sense as well, we have had two recent examples of perspective.

On Friday night, October 26th, we were joined at PCS for Shabbos services and dinner by Lieutenant Nir, of the Israeli Defense Forces as part of the IDF's annual U.S. visit. During his remarks, the Lieutenant tried to convey a feeling that as Americans, or as American Jews, we think we fully understand, but in reality only can understand in part. A very timely discussion to have, given events that would soon unfold.

As Americans, between the conclusion of the Civil War and the awful day of September 11, 2001, any acts of war in which the U.S. was involved were always on someone else's soil. As much as we might attempt to completely understand truly "defending our homeland," we cannot understand the thoughts and feelings that are ingrained since birth in an Israeli citizen, particularly a soldier.

During dinner, a longtime PCS congregant and former IDF soldier himself, passionately and directly put the Lieutenant's thoughts into a more localized context for everyone to more easily understand. "To get up every morning wondering whether today is the day you will need to defend your country, your town, your block or your home possibly with your very life." We pray for Lieutenant Nir's safety during these days.

Just three days later in the tri-state area, Hurricane Sandy would also remind us of perspective. Seeing the pictures of the catastrophic destruction and damage to familiar areas such as Long Island, Queens, the Rockaways, Staten Island and the Jersey Shore, would also cause us to reflect on thoughts and feelings that we all too often simply take for granted, such as everyday security and well being. Most of us experienced a week or so of downed trees and area power lines, no electricity, no heat, hot water, internet or cable. Juxtaposed against loss of life in the aforementioned areas, or in other cases the loss of homes and all personal possessions, our area made it through the storm relatively well, B"H.

As we enter a season of holidays, whose core significance is giving thanks for our blessings and the recognition, understanding and celebrations of miracles and renewal, it is important at this troubling time for so many, that we keep in mind those small everyday blessings that we often overlook [while looking past them to bigger goals and more lofty aspirations].

During this upcoming season of thanks and miracles, let's attempt to find appreciation in those aspects of life that all of us so often simply take for granted. This year in particular, with all that we've recently witnessed, let us try and be more mindful of expressing our love, affection and appreciation for family and friends, for our health, as well as for our home and community. To everyone, a holiday season filled with only good health, joy, peace, contentment and happiness.

Be safe and enjoy all of Hashem's blessings in these days ahead. A Happy Chanukah to everyone.

— Jerry Neuburger

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### Pleasantville Community Synagogue Mission Statement

Pleasantville Community Synagogue is a transdenominational, inclusive community, a spiritual home deeply rooted in Torah (study), Avodah (prayer), and Gemilut Chasadim (deeds of loving-kindness). We seek to facilitate lifelong spiritual growth by engaging each member wherever that member may be on life's journey, embracing all generations. We encourage Tikkun Middot (repair of the self) and Tikkun Olam (repair of the world) through Jewish education for all ages, social action, Ahavat Yisrael (love of Israel), and a commitment to the understanding and fulfillment of mitzvot. We are a highly participatory community which relies on the commitment of time and energy from all members and which aspires to become an integral part of each member's life and their family's lives.



## HEBREW SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

**Ronni Metzger, Principal**

The week before Hurricane Sandy hit the northeast, several of the PCS teachers and I went to the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Battery Park in lower Manhattan for an educator's conference. The topic of discussion was *The Hidden Children of the Holocaust*. Several case studies were presented and it was a very informative presentation. We were delighted to learn that our participation in this conference provided entrance to the museum. Rather than return home, we all agreed that it would be worthwhile (and fun) to explore the museum and view the exhibitions and collections. What an incredible experience. The main floors of the museum are a living memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust. It started with Jewish life a century ago, then the war against the Jews, and finally Jewish renewal. There were artifacts, photographs, and historical footage.

We also took advantage of the opportunity to visit two special exhibits: The first on Emma Lazarus with a spectacular view of the Statue of Liberty, and the second on the history of the song "Hava Nagila." We did not leave the museum until after 5 pm. We took a brief stroll on the promenade along the waterfront and had a light dinner in the city. It was a wonderful day for all of us. It was not only an educational afternoon, but it brought the teaching staff together and strengthened our connections to one another.

It was heartbreaking to find out the next week that Hurricane Sandy had caused massive amounts of water to wash over the promenade where we had just walked.

We all felt the impact of the double dose of extreme weather that nature delivered to Westchester and throughout the tri-state area—first the chaos from Hurricane Sandy followed days later by a nor'easter that deposited more than half a foot of snow in our area. Trees were down, cables and wires down, roads were blocked, homes and property were damaged. It was shocking how quickly it got dark and cold. We are finally starting to recover from the feeling of disjointedness, displacement and disorientation.

For days the first thing we asked each other was, "Do you have power?" For some the answer was yes, as they were either lucky enough not to have lost power or had learned from last year's storm and invested in a generator. For others it took up to two weeks to have the heat, light, phones and cable restored. But, as I listened to some harrowing experiences, and in some cases true horror stories, it occurred to me that none of us actually lost "power." We did lose electricity and along with it phone and cable but we did not lose "power." There was great power in the strength of the community; the outreach of neighbors and the local businesses. Friends opened up their homes to those who were in the dark, local health clubs and spas opened their doors to residents offering the comfort of a hot shower at their facilities; PCS invited congregants to come in for light and warmth, and matched up those without heat to stay with those who did.

As we emerge from these dark and cold days, it feels appropriate that we will soon be celebrating Chanukah, the "Festival of Lights." Maybe we should ruminate on the blessing of our community and the power we derive from one another as we light a candle each night of Chanukah.

Chag sameach.

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***Join us for Shabbat dinner and get  
in the mood for Hanukkah!***



**Friday, December 7**

*Pleasantville Community Synagogue will celebrate Shabbat, welcome  
new members and share with old friends in anticipation of  
Hanukkah.*

*Come for services with the PCS House Band at 7:15 pm, Friday, Dec.  
7, and then stay for dinner. As a special treat, we'll have our own  
mesmerizing storyteller delight us with the story of Hanukkah!*

*We will sing songs, tell our personal Hanukkah stories, give out  
goodies to the kids, and enjoy a traditional meal with, of course, lots  
of latkes!*

# BRIGHTEN CHANUKAH FOR ISRAEL

Every child can brighten Chanukah for needy families in Israel by simply giving up one night of presents over the eight nights of Chanukah. That money will be donated to poor children and families in Israel, through the **AMERICAN FRIENDS OF MEIR PANIM**.

**AMERICAN FRIENDS OF MEIR PANIM (AFMP)** has helped bring lasting relief to the poor, encouragement for the less fortunate, new opportunities for struggling families, and hope for children-at-risk. One program of the AFMP strives to ensure that every disadvantaged child in Israel receives at least one hot, nourishing meal every day. Each day, 5,000 hot meals are delivered to these children.

For every child at Pleasantville Community Synagogue that makes a donation of \$18.00 (or more) to **AMERICAN FRIENDS OF MEIR PANIM**, a Chanukiah with his/her name on it will be hung up in the halls of PCS acknowledging that child's mitzvah.

Simply fill out the form below and place it along with your check payable to AMERICAN FRIENDS OF MEIR PANIM in Ronni Metzger's office by Sunday December 16, 2012.

American Friends of Meir Panim is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, registered under EIN Number 20-1582478.

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Instead of receiving one night of Chanukah gifts, I want to donate money to **AMERICAN FRIENDS OF MEIR PANIM**, and make a difference for less fortunate children.

1<sup>st</sup> child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ (donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_)

2<sup>nd</sup> child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ (donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_)

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is a check payable to "AMERICAN FRIENDS OF MEIR PANIM" for the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.



# PCSers Speak

By AMY GUTENPLAN

*On Friday, I will be getting on a bus. I am not sure where this bus will be going, but I know when I get there, I will find a mess - a tragic mess. By Friday, the water will be gone, but the aftermath of its powerful destruction will remain. We are prepared to walk up 14 flights of dark stairs to check on the elderly who are trapped without elevator service, and possibly without heat. We will bring each of them a meal, perhaps an extra blanket and a few minutes of conversation; for not only are they cold and hungry, but also, they are alone. We will become their support systems, for they are now isolated from their community.*

Hurricane Sandy has come and gone. In Westchester, our lives are finally getting back to normal. We still see a few maintenance crews working to remove the last of the fallen trees and we watch the last Con Edison trucks leave. We now have time to reflect on how we managed the weeks without power. In times of difficulty, we seek out community. It might have been a community of neighbors sharing refrigerator space, or an on-line community sharing information and strategies. And we need to remember that our synagogue, Pleasantville Community Synagogue, reached out to us. We all received emails, offering a warm place to spend an afternoon, or a place to charge our necessary devices. We had lunch after Saturday Shabbat services and checked in with one another. We felt the comfort and security of this community.

PCS proved to be our community in time of great need. But we need to develop this community in times of calm. We should be meeting one another at Friday night Shabbat dinners, at the Progressive Dinner, at Monday evening yoga. It is important for us to know one another, so that in both times of need and in times of calm, we are not alone, we have one another, we have our community.



## A HANUKKAH CELEBRATION at HEBREW SCHOOL!

### **HANUKKAH PARTY** **at PCS on** **December 9, 2012 from** **11 am to 1 pm** **during Hebrew School!**

Hanukkah is just around the corner! We will be celebrating the festival of lights here at PCS with a morning filled with fun. The students will be participating in making crafts, singing songs and of course, eating latkes! We will all gather around the *hanukiah* and recite the blessings as we light the candles.

The festivities will take place during class, from 11 am to 1 pm.

From 9 to 10 am, the Bet and Gimel classes will be singing Hanukkah songs at the Atria Senior Center in Briarcliff Manor. Their parents are driving to and from the facility. It would be wonderful if the students from the older grades could join us for the hour!



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Victor Chiarizia, Father of Maria Levine	December 14
Louis Israelow, Father of Marvin Israelow	December 14
Margaret Sperling, Mother of Edward Sperling	December 14
Pauline Alt, Grandmother of Audrey Rabinowitz	December 15
Jay Polansky, Father of Debra Schor	December 18
Michael Fineman, Nephew of Roberta Berman	December 22
Max Gitelson, Father of Rhea Wolfthal	December 23
Ruth Hersh, Mother of Karen Sanders	December 24
Joyce Goldman, Mother of Dorian Goldman	December 25
Frederick Berman, Father of Roberta Berman	December 25
Nathan Blackman, Father of Jonathan Blackman	December 26
Milton Turkel, Father of Jeffrey Turkel	December 26
Irving Epton, Father of Arli Epton	December 26
Fanny Goldman, Grandmother of Dorian Goldman	December 27
Fay Singer, Mother of Sharon Friedman	December 27
Julius Strauss, Father of Fredric Strauss	December 28
Samuel Weiner, Father of Shelley Weiner	December 29
Alexander Gordon, Father of Bernard Gordon	December 30
Marvin Levine, Father of Richard Levine	December 31



### **To All PCS Members:**

**If you or another member suffer personal tragedy or loss or are otherwise in need of help, please immediately call Rabbi Mark at 769-2672, and Michael Gold at 238-9219.**

## **NEWSLETTER ACCEPTS ADS!**

The PCS Newsletter is published monthly, online, from September through June, and it is emailed to every member family as well as to prospective members and some Jewish organizations.

If you provide professional or business services in the area, the PCS newsletter might provide some extra, valuable visibility. To arrange for your ad to appear in the newsletter, here's what you need to know:

### **\* Deadlines:**

Ads should be submitted by the 15th of the month. They can be emailed to Judy Chinitz at judyhope@optonline.net or cristina@lightbodymusic.com.

### **\* Ad Specifications:**

Ads will be published in one size only: one-quarter page, which is approximately 3 1/2 x 4 3/4 inches. The artwork should be provided by the advertiser.

### **\* Advertising Rates:**

The cost per ad (for 10 issues - no bulletin published in July and August) is \$100 for 1/4 page. Note: Checks preferred. Can be mailed to Pleasantville Community Synagogue, PO Box 148, Pleasantville, NY 10570 with "newsletter ad" in the memo section. To pay by credit card, please call the synagogue office at 914-769-2672.

# Yoga classes are taking a break!

We look forward to getting together again in January. Stay tuned!

For information and to register for the January session,  
call or email Susan Safraneck at 914-420-6329/LaraSue22@aol.com



## PCS COMMITTEE CHAIRS

All the Committees of The Pleasantville Community Synagogue are eager for your participation and suggestions. If you'd like to get more involved in the life of the PCS community, this is the way to begin! Below are the names of the committees, their chairs, and contact information.

### Adult Education

David Felder  
[info@shalomPCS.com](mailto:info@shalomPCS.com)

Emma Reisman  
[info@shalompcs.com](mailto:info@shalompcs.com)

### B'nei Mitzvah

Ed Sperling  
[edsperling@gmail.com](mailto:edsperling@gmail.com)

### Building Committee

Richard Levine  
[rlevine@shalomPCS.com](mailto:rlevine@shalomPCS.com)

### Jewish Education

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### Spiritual Life

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### Fundraising

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### High Holidays

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### Human Resources

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### Membership Engagement

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### Membership Outreach

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### Israel Action Committee

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Seth Rutman  
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**We appreciate the thoughtfulness of those who support the Pleasantville Community Synagogue by remembering and honoring their friends and loved ones through their generous contributions.**

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NAOMI AND GREG NOVAK, IN MEMORY OF NAOMI'S MOTHER,  
MIRIAM "MIMI" WALL

### **ED SPERLING FUND**

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DORIAN GOLDMAN AND MARVIN ISRAELOW

**THANKS TO ALL THE PCS CONGREGANTS WHO DONATED SO GENEROUSLY TO THE FAMILIES OF STATEN ISLAND.**

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### ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

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The PCS Newsletter is published monthly, online, from September through June. Articles and photos should be submitted by the 24th of the month. They can be e-mailed to Judith Chinitz, Editor, at [judyhope@optonline.net](mailto:judyhope@optonline.net) or dropped off at the newsletter box in the Synagogue office.

Pleasantville Community Synagogue \* 219 Bedford Road \* Pleasantville, NY 10570

phone (914) 769 - 2672

fax (914) 769 - 1795

# FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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## General Fund

Finances any need of the synagogue considered necessary by the Board of Trustees. All unspecified gifts are credited to the General Fund.

## Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Supports various individuals, organizations and/or programs at the discretion of the Rabbi.

## Building Fund

To preserve the beauty and functionality of our physical plant, and to build reserves for future expansion.

## Hebrew School Emergency Scholarship Fund

Provides scholarships to children who would like to attend our Hebrew School and may not currently have the financial resources to do so.

## Kiddush Fund

Your donation provides lunch after services on Shabbat morning: salads, bagels and pastry.

## Ed Sperling Fund

Pleasantville Community Synagogue is collecting funds for Ed Sperling to help pay for equipment necessary and vital for his continued recuperation and rehabilitation.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO PLEASANTVILLE COMMUNITY SYNAGOGUE

Send acknowledgement to: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

In honor/  
memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Fund: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me an acknowledgement of this gift.

Yes

No

PLEASE NOTE: To help our bookkeeper, please issue separate checks for dues or other special events. All donations should be made payable to Pleasantville Community Synagogue (please indicate which fund in the memo section of your check).



# Chanukah Retreat: *A Rededication to Your Soul*

**Sunday, December 2nd**

**10:00 AM – 4:00 PM**

**WJCS Headquarters  
845 North Broadway – White Plains, NY**

**Presentations include:**

*Jewish Mindfulness Meditation*

Rabbi Mark Sameth

*Jewish Dreamwork*

Rabbi Jill Hammer

*Jewish Yoga*

Robin Wald

*Living a Spiritual Practice*

Rabbi Les Bronstein & Cantor Benjie Schiller

*Mussar*

Rabbi Pamela Wax

*Sacred Chant and Movement*

Eva Sax-Bolder

*Spirit Dreams: The Joseph Cycle*

Rabbi Molly Karp

**Cost: \$54-\$118 (*sliding scale available*)**

**Bring your lunch.**

**Pre-Registration required by Nov. 26th.**

**Contact Ruth Rosenblum, LCSW**

**914-761-0600 ext. 148 or [rrosenblum@wjcs.com](mailto:rrosenblum@wjcs.com)**



Sponsored by The Jewish Spiritual Healing Center, a program of WESTCHESTER JEWISH COMMUNITY SERVICES, which receives funding from UJA-Federation.





# CHESHVAN - KISLEV 5773

## December 2012 - PCS Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>25</b> No Hebrew School	<b>26</b> Yoga Class at PCS, 7:15 pm	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> Children's Service PCS House Band Birthday Blessings  4:09pm-4:27pm - Candle lighting	<b>1</b> 9:00am Morning Meditation, ; Shabbat Service, Parashat Vayishlach  5:39pm-5:40pm - Havdalah (72 min) ...
<b>2</b> Kita Zayin, 11 am <i>No Hebrew High School today</i>  Pre- and Post-Adoptive Parent Group at PCS - 6 pm *	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Ask the Rabbi, 4th grade, 4 pm	<b>7</b> Shabbat/Hannukah Dinner PCS House Band Children's Service 4:08pm-4:26pm - Candle lighting	<b>8</b> 9:00am Morning Meditation, ; Shabbat Service,  1st Night of Hannukah Parashat Vayeshev  5:38pm-5:39pm...
<b>9</b> PCS Hannukah party Hannukah 2 Kita Zayin, 11 am  Executive Committee meeting, 7:30 pm	<b>10</b> Hannukah 3	<b>11</b> Hannukah 4	<b>12</b> Hannukah 5	<b>13</b> Hannukah 6  Board meeting, 7:30 pm	<b>14</b> Hannukah 7  Rosh Chodesh Tevet 4:09pm-4:27pm - Candle lighting	<b>15</b> 9:00am Morning Meditation, 10:00am Family Education Shabbat Hannukah 8 Parashat Miketz  5:39pm-5:40pm - Havdalah (72 min)
<b>16</b> 8th Day of Hannukah  Hebrew High School/Rabbi's Comparative Religion Class, 11:30 am	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> Children's Service  4:12pm-4:30pm - Candle lighting	<b>22</b> 9:00am Morning Meditation, ; Shabbat Service, Parashat Vayigash  5:42pm-5:43pm - Havdalah (72 min)
<b>23</b> Asara B'Tevet  No Hebrew School	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> No Hebrew School	<b>28</b>  4:16pm-4:34pm - Candle lighting	<b>29</b> 9:00am Morning Meditation, ; Shabbat Service, Parashat Vayechi  5:47pm-5:48pm - Havdalah (72 min)
<b>30</b> No Hebrew School	<b>31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>  4:21pm-4:39pm - Candle lighting	<b>5</b> 9:00am Morning Meditation, ; Shabbat Service, Parashat Shemot  5:52pm-5:53pm - Havdalah (72 min)

Note: Times and dates of events may change after the newsletter has come out. To get the latest information on any possible changes, please check the calendar on our website: [www.ShalomPCS.com](http://www.ShalomPCS.com). Future months are also on the website.

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## **SAVE THE DATE:**

***Sunday, December 2: "Kumi Ori" Contemplative Retreat (at WJCS, White Plains) with Rabbi Mark and other teachers, 10 am - 4 pm***



***Friday, December 7: PCS Chanukah/Shabbat Dinner, Service, and Program, 7:15 pm to 9:00 pm***

***Sunday, December 9: PCS school-wide Chanukah Celebration, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm***

***Saturday, December 15: Monthly Family Education Shabbat, 10 am to Noon, followed by Celebratory Lunch***