

# Bringing More Light Into The World

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**December** ends the secular year and initiates a time to complete our end-of-year giving--*tzedaka*. Please consider donating to the Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din that supported you as you prepared and then joined the Jewish people. Your end-of-year contribution funds the essential operations of the Bet Din.

<https://scbetdin.com/Donate>

## Christmas Dilemma for a New Jew by Anthony Wermers

They say, “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!” From wreaths hanging in the mall to our local radio station becoming, “Your Home for the Holidays.” Yet, amidst the Christmas-centered festivity, finding a place for our Jewish identity can be far from wonderful. When December rolled around, after my conversion, I was excited for my favorite season, but I was also conflicted. I had devoted so much energy to the exploration of Jewish holidays, theology and history, so much that was new. When a familiar time came around, I wasn’t sure how to handle it. After all, this year, for the first time I was a real Jew for Christmas. My family supported me in my journey, but they also celebrated Christmas. They wanted me to feel seen, but their traditions, decorations, and music weren’t going to change. And, to be honest, I didn’t want them to!



They were comfortable, familiar, and fun. Thus, I found myself in a two-part, December Dilemma. I felt unsure of how to handle Christmas-centered events without feeling uncomfortable or guilty for “wavering” from my Judaism. I wondered how I was going to incorporate my new Jewish identity into the traditions and gatherings already formed in our family holiday schedule. Flustered and a little defeated, I moved on and started planning December, trusting that my pathway through the holidays would become clear

As we decided on party dates and menu items, I began to separate Christmas as a religious experience and Christmas as time with my family and friends. I saw these parties weren't so different from the Jewish holidays, I had worked so hard to grow accustomed to--food and family. It was as simple as that! It's a mitzvah to honor our parents, and by extension our family. Becoming a Jew, we enter The Tribe, but we cannot forget our own tribe. We bring with us traditions, food, and family. While our family may not become Jews alongside us, those who support us are a part of our tribe and in that, they become a part of the Jewish story. In honoring where we come from and where we have chosen to go, we honor our heritage and our truth. So dare to dreidel with Dasher and Dancer! Incorporate Jewish traditions and Hanukkah into your family events and establish yourself as a new Jew, it will help make the next year feel more familiar. Allow yourself some leeway this holiday season, and you might just find that it really can be the most wonderful time of the year.

## ***Latkes with a Twist--Jalapenos***

12 pieces (2 per person)

### **Ingredients:**

2 Large russet potatoes, peeled  
1 Egg yolk  
½ cup Matzo meal  
1 Jalapeño, seeded and finely chopped  
1 tsp Kosher salt  
Olive oil for frying



### **To Make:**

- 1) Using a box grater, coarsely grate the potatoes into a medium-size bowl. Add the egg yolk, jalapeño, salt, and matzo meal; mix well and let cool in the refrigerator for five minutes to allow ingredients to bind.
- 2) Remove bowl from refrigerator and drain off any excess liquid
- 3) Over a medium flame, heat ½ cup olive oil in a 10-inch skillet until

hot but not smoking. Take 1 heaping tablespoon of the potato mixture at a time and place into the pan, being careful not to crowd the latkes. Cook each latke until golden brown on both sides (approximately five minutes total).

4) Transfer latkes to a paper-towel-lined plate, add additional salt if desired. Add ¼ to ½ cup of olive oil (if needed) to pan and repeat process with remaining latke mixture.

**Celebrate Hanukkah**, first night, Sunday, December 18 at sunset

## Music to Enhance your Jewish Life by Toyasha Sebbag

Music is the universal language of longing, liberty, loss, love...life; a way to communicate expressions that cannot be captured with words. To stay connected to today's Israel of various peoples, cultures, religious traditions, and politics we can listen to the energizing sounds of Israeli music.

Dr. Doron Kima, Senior Lecturer at the Jonathan Wohl School of Music at Ono Academic College in Israel and founder and music director of Prelude for Peace – a group of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian musicians and instruments consisting of nay, oud, violin, cello, and piano – explains the wide-ranging influences on Israeli music: Eastern European klezmer, Hassidic, Russian folk music, traditional Arabic music, Yemenite, Moroccan, Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), Greek, Ethiopian, pop, and rock.

Some distinctive musical styles that developed throughout the years are Shirei Eretz Yisrael (land of Israel songs) to strengthen ties with the land of Israel as opposed to Diaspora (characterized by dance rhythms that often have strong off beats and asymmetric meters) and Mizrahi music, a musical style that combines Turkish, Greek, Arabic, and Israeli elements. YouTube is a great vehicle to explore Israeli music to find your favorite artist and songs. Anyone in the passenger seat of my car will be listening to famous modern-day Israeli artists such as Eden Pessia Ben Zaken, Eyal Golan, Moshe Peretz, Netta Barzilai, Omer Adam, Sarit Hadad, and Shlomi Shabat.

As a final tip, click the links below to hear these amazing artists. Here's my list.

Eyal Golan אייל גולן - <https://youtu.be/9PTH36IPuzg>

Eden Ben Zaken עדן בן זקן - <https://youtu.be/byYBGEE8NCM>

Haim Israel חיים ישראל - [https://youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy\\_nwFHG6auPveys25J13Fb4k9yHghpH02ZM](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_nwFHG6auPveys25J13Fb4k9yHghpH02ZM)

Moshe Peretz משה פריץ - [https://youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy\\_mxBbNSHg1fDjU3y9aG-STUAedxVMDu3xU](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_mxBbNSHg1fDjU3y9aG-STUAedxVMDu3xU)

Netta Barzilai נטע ברזילי - [https://youtu.be/HiPR30\\_iTKs](https://youtu.be/HiPR30_iTKs)





## Give the Gift of Learning

### What's Next: A Post-Conversion Course for New Jews.

Designed to deepen your connection to Jewish life and community, boost your confidence, and answer questions that surfaced after you converted, this five session workshop series, offered by Zoom, includes experiential learning and text study in a supportive environment for people who have recently chosen Judaism. Topics include Shabbat, righteous giving, keeping kosher, prayer, and Jewish ritual objects inside and outside the home.

Taught by Dr. **Muriel Dance**, a Jewish chaplain, professor of English, and current Executive Director of Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din. She has taught adults at Universities, Colleges, and synagogues, and adult education programs. She loves teaching adults.

There is fee for the series from \$54/72/90 depending on your capacity. There's also financial aid available if money is a barrier. Register here: <https://scbetdin.com/event-5020341>

We  
congratulate  
Jill Housen  
and Amanda  
Gray

The Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din is proud to announce that two former candidates, **Jill Housen, SCCBD DEIB Consultant**, and Amanda Gray, are co-leading a workshop for the Rising Tide Network (makvaot all over the world) on: February 7th, 4 pm PST.

**Exploring Implicit Bias in Mikveh and Creating a Welcoming Experience for All**  
This workshop focuses on the challenges for people, who do not identify as white and are



joining the Jewish people, with a special focus on their mikveh experience.

“The process of joining the Jewish people, across the board, is anxiety-ridden. When you’re someone who doesn’t ‘look like’ what people often think a Jew ‘should’ look like, there’s a whole other layer of anxiety and concern that goes along with becoming part of the Jewish community,” writes Jill Housen, the DEIB consultant to the Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din.



Workshop leaders will help participants assess their implicit bias, gain tools to counteract these reactions, and explore how to make the mikveh feel more welcoming to people of color who are coming to the mikveh for conversion. We will consider 1) how mikva’ot present themselves on their website and social media, 2) volunteer and staff diversity, 3) personal care products available in the mikveh bathroom, 4) poems, prayers, liturgy and kavanot, and 5) decorating reception and bathroom areas of mikveh.

Let me know if you would like to attend

## Hag Hanukkah Same'ah



### A Bet Din that Welcomes All People Interested in Converting to Judaism

**Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din**  
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