



**JWB Jewish
Chaplains Council**
Serving Jews Who Serve

a signature program of



**JCC Association
of North America**

Memorial Day

Programming Guide





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In Memoriam

Jewish Members of the U.S. Armed Forces Killed in Action since 11 September, 2001

May the memory of the righteous be a blessing. זכר צדיק לברכה.

Pontell, Darin

Lieutenant JG, Navy, Pentagon
9/11/01 Pentagon, Arlington, Virginia

Smith Eric A.

Chief Warrant Officer, Army, New York
4/2/03 Central Iraq

Evnin, Mark A.

Corporal, Marines, Vermont
4/3/03 Central Iraq

Wershow, Jeffery M.

Specialist, Army National Guard, Florida
7/6/03 Baghdad, Iraq

Bernstein, David R.

1st Lieutenant, Army, Pennsylvania
10/18/03 Taza, Iraq

Fletcher, Jacob S.

Private First Class, Army, New York
11/13/03 Samara, Iraq

Seiden, Marc S.

Specialist, Army, New Jersey
1/2/04 Baghdad, Iraq

Dvorin, Seth J.

2nd Lieutenant, Army, New Jersey
2/3/04 Iskandariyah, Iraq

Wong, Elijah Tai Wah

Sergeant, Army National Guard, Arizona
2/9/04 Sinjar, Iraq

Bruckenthal, Nathan B.

Petty Officer, Coast Guard, New York
4/24/04 Northern Persian Gulf

Schrage, Dustin H.

Corporal, Marines, Florida
5/6/04 Anbar province, Iraq

Sherman, Alan D.

Sergeant, Marines, New Jersey
6/29/04 Southeast of Baghdad

Engel, Mark E.

Lance Corporal, Marines, Colorado
7/21/04 Brooke Army Medical Center,
Fort Sam Houston, Texas

Tarlavsky, Michael Y.

Captain, Army, New Jersey
8/12/04 Najaf, Iraq

Stern, Andrew K.

1st Lieutenant, Marines, Tennessee
9/16/04 Anbar province, Iraq

Harrington, Foster L.

Sergeant, Marines, Texas
9/20/04 Anbar province, Iraq

Cohen, Michael R.

Corporal, Marines, Pennsylvania
11/22/04 Anbar province, Iraq

Shackelford, Michael B.

Sergeant, Army, Colorado
11/28/04 Ramadi, Iraq

Watkins, Glenn J.

Specialist, Army National Guard, California
4/5/05 Baghdad, Iraq

Freeman, Daniel J.

Specialist, Army, Ohio
4/6/05 Ghazni, Afghanistan

Yahudah, Benyahmin Ben

Specialist, Army, Georgia
7/27/05 Baghdad, Iraq

Allen, Howard Paul

Sergeant, Army National Guard, Arizona
9/26/05 Baghdad, Iraq

Jacobson, Elizabeth N.

Airman First Class, Air Force, Florida
9/28/05 Near Camp Bucca, Iraq

Clark, Ryan J.

Corporal, Army, California
6/29/06 Brooke Army Medical Center, Texas

Wolfe, Colin J.

Private First Class, Marines, Virginia
8/30/06 Habbaniyah, Iraq

Paul, Robert J.

Staff Sergeant, Army Reserve, Oregon
9/8/06 Kabul, Afghanistan

Oremus, Michael K.

Private First Class, Army, New York
10/2/06 Baghdad, Iraq

Secher, Robert Michael

Captain, Marines, Tennessee
10/8/06 Anbar province, Iraq

Krissoff, Nathan M.

1st Lieutenant, Marines, Nevada
12/9/06 Anbar province, Iraq

Blum, Aron C.

Sergeant, Marines, Arizona
12/28/06 Naval Medical Center, San Diego

Weiner, Timothy R.

Tech Sergeant, Air Force, Florida
1/7/07 Baghdad, Iraq

Agami, Daniel J.

Specialist, Army, Florida
6/21/07 Northern Baghdad, Iraq

Bitton, Albert

Corporal, Army, Illinois
2/20/08 Baghdad, Iraq

Wolfer, Stuart A.

Major, Army, Florida
4/6/08 Baghdad, Iraq

Rosenberg, Mark E.

Major, Army, Florida
4/8/08 Baghdad, Iraq

Capra, Anthony L.

Tech Sergeant, Air Force, Maryland
4/9/08 Baghdad, Iraq

Yelner, Jonathan A.V.

Senior Airman, Air Force, California
4/29/08 Near Bagram, Afghanistan

Farkas, Daniel

1st Lieutenant, Army National Guard, New York
7/4/08 Kabul, Afghanistan (Camp Phoenix)

Weinger, Robert M.

Sergeant, Army National Guard, Illinois
3/15/09 Jalabad, Afghanistan

Pine, Shawn

Lieutenant Colonel, Army Reserve, Texas
5/20/09 Near Kabul, Afghanistan

Schulte, Roslyn L.

1st Lieutenant, Air Force, Missouri
5/20/09 Near Kabul, Afghanistan

Fairbairn, Aaron E.

Private First Class, Army, Washington
7/4/09 Combat Outpost Zerok, Afghanistan

Walker, Morris L.

Private First Class, Army, North Carolina
8/18/09 Dila, Afghanistan

Sklaver, Benjamin A.

Captain, Army reserve, Massachusetts
10/2/09 Muscheh, Afghanistan

Kane, Jeremy M.

Lance Cpl., Marines, New Jersey
1/23/10 Afghanistan

Zilberman, Miroslav Steven

Lieutenant, Navy, Ohio
4/2/10 Arabian Gulf

Fisher, Zachary M.

Sergeant, Army, Missouri
7/14/10 Lagman, Afghanistan

Noonan, Gebrah P.

Private First Class, Army, Connecticut
9/24/10 Fallujah, Iraq

Malachowski, Jamesz M.

Staff Sergeant, Marine Corps, Maryland
3/20/11 Helmand province, Afghanistan

Schultz, Joseph W.

Captain, Army, Washington
5/29/11 Wardak province, Afghanistan

Soufrine, Eric D.

Private First Class, Army, Connecticut
6/14/11 Farah, Afghanistan

Nuncio, Levi E.

Specialist, Army, Virginia
6/22/11 Kunar province, Afghanistan

Green, Douglas J.

Specialist, Army, Virginia
8/28/11 Kandahar province, Afghanistan

Shapiro, Steven F.

Private First Class, Army, California
10/21/11 Tallil, Iraq

Seidler, Matthew R.

Airman First Class, Air Force, Maryland
1/5/12 Helmand province, Afghanistan

Brodsky, Michael J.

Petty Officer Second Class, Navy, Florida
7/21/12 Kandahar province, Afghanistan

Kantor, Matthew G.

Petty Officer Second Class (SEAL),
Navy, New Jersey
11/1/12 Zabul, Afghanistan

Somers, Daniel A.

Sergeant, Army National Guard, Arizona
6/10/13 Phoenix, AZ

Silverman, Joshua B.

Chief Warrant Officer 2, Army, Arizona
12/17/13 Now Bahar, Afghanistan

Taub, Peter W.

Staff Sergeant, Air Force, Pennsylvania
12/21/15 Afghanistan

Celiz, Christopher Andrew

Sergeant First Class, Army, South Carolina
7/12/18 Afghanistan

אנא ישמע בחיינו הד גבורתם ומסירותם

May the echo of their heroism and sacrifice find resonance in our lives.

Memorial Day

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**Serving Jews
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Background

Memorial Day is a federal holiday in the United States for remembering the people who died while serving in the country's armed forces. The holiday was established as a time for the nation to decorate the graves of the war dead with flowers and was known as Decoration Day in many parts of the country. By the 20th century, Memorial Day eventually extended to honor all Americans who died while in the military service.

Many people visit cemeteries and memorials, particularly to honor those who have died in military service. Many volunteers place an American flag on each grave in national cemeteries.

Memorial Day is not to be confused with Veterans Day; Memorial Day is a day of remembering the men and women who died while serving, while Veterans Day celebrates the service of all U.S. military veterans.

Typically, the men and women who died while serving were killed in action they lost their lives during an enemy attack or a specific battle or military operation. There are also service members whose deaths are the result of injuries sustained, both physical and psychological.

JWB Jewish Chaplains Council honors and remembers the men and women who lost their lives in service to our country, whether the violence that claimed their lives happened in a forward operating base overseas, or their battles and struggles continued once they returned home.

Jews & Memorial Day

Judaism has a rich tradition of memorializing loved ones and creating times throughout the year to remember those who died. *Yizkor* services, special services that are held in connection with major Jewish holidays, are a time for communities to gather and recall the memories of loved ones. Jewish tradition has prayers for deceased loved ones, recited annually to mark the anniversary of death and at times of communal remembrance, like *Yizkor* or other events.

In the United States, Jewish communities will often observe Memorial Day for fallen U.S. service members if Memorial Day is near a major holiday that includes a *Yizkor* service, such as Shavuot. Often, Jewish communities will hold communal Memorial Day services in the week prior to Memorial Day, remembering the Jewish men and women who died in service to the United States.

The Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America, a national organization dedicated to advocating for and supporting Jewish men and women who served our country, is one organization that helps the Jewish community recall the original meaning of Memorial Day. Jewish War Veterans (JWV) posts are located throughout the country and they are often instrumental in

organizing Memorial Day programs in the Jewish community. JWV posts often support Memorial Day programming in schools and JCCs by organizing ceremonies, placing flags, or cleaning monuments and memorials to those lost in battle.

The tone of Memorial Day in the United States has changed over time, and events on that day often reflect welcoming the summer season rather than remembering those lost in battle. For Jews who have experienced *Yom Hazikaron*, Memorial Day, in Israel, there is a clear contrast.

Israel commemorates a Memorial Day, *Yom Hazikaron*, the day before celebrating Israel's Independence Day. The mood within the country is very different than Memorial Day in the United States. For 24 hours, from sunset to sunset, Israelis observe a nationwide day of remembering those who died for their country. A siren is sounded twice during that time period and there is a nationwide standstill for the duration of the siren. All radio and television broadcasts are somber and portray the lives and deeds of those who died in service to the country.

Gold Star Families

During World War I, families with a loved one serving in the United States armed forces would hang a flag in their window with a white field, red border, and a blue star for every family member serving in the war. A gold star represented a family member who died during service.

Today, American Gold Star Mothers Inc and Gold Star Wives of America are nationally recognized and government chartered organizations that offer support and advocacy for family members who lost a spouse or child in war. Similar organizations, some with Gold Star in their title, offer support to those who lost parents, siblings and other family members to war.



Army Spc. Daniel J. Agami, of Coconut Creek, Florida, who was killed in Iraq. He was proud of his Jewish heritage and was known to his army buddies as "G.I. Jew."

Ceremonies

A key element of a Memorial Day ceremony is the recalling of those who lost their lives in service to our country. In some communities, this is done by reading a list of names of all service members from that community who died in service, focusing on a specific era. Jewish communities may want to use the list of names of the 61 Jewish men and women who lost their lives in service since September 11, 2001, included in this program guide.

Explanations and outlines for typical Memorial Day ceremonies are found below. Ceremonies can be changed to reflect the community.

Memorial Day Ceremony

1. Posting of Colors:

This is performed by a color guard. The term “colors” refers to the flag of the United States, as well as flags for each branch of service—Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard, used for ceremonial events. For information on contacting military color guards for this ceremony, please see the program resources section.

2. Pledge of Allegiance and U.S. National Anthem

3. Opening remarks:

These remarks may include a brief history of Memorial Day, an overview of your JCC’s connection to Memorial Day, military personnel and veterans, and an introduction to any special guests.

4. Musical selection:

The songs chosen for this ceremony should reflect the mood of the event. Patriotic songs, such as “America” (My Country, ‘Tis of Thee), “America the Beautiful”, “Star Spangled Banner” (the national anthem), or “God Bless America”, are appropriate for the ceremony.

5. Speaker:

Speakers can include military chaplains or other officers to speak about the experience of loss in the military and Memorial Day.

6. Remembering the fallen:

Reading the names of men and women who died in service is a powerful part of a Memorial Day ceremony. Your community may read the list of Jewish service members who died in service since September 11, 2001 or a list that is specific to your location and recalls those from your city or town who died in service.

7. Closing:

The ceremony ends with the retiring of the colors by the color guard. Any closing remarks should happen before the colors are paraded out of the room.

Text Study

Babylonian Talmud Sotah 14a

Rabbi Chama son of Rabbi Chanina said: "What is the meaning of the verse: 'You shall walk after Adonai your God' (Deuteronomy 13:5)? The meaning is to walk after the attributes of the Holy One...The Holy One comforted mourners, as it is written, 'And it came to pass after the death of Abraham that God blessed Isaac his son' (Genesis 25:11), so you should comfort mourners. The Holy One buried the dead, as it is written, 'And [God] buried [Moses] in the valley' (Deuteronomy 34:6), so you should bury the dead."

Observations and Questions

This text teaches about one of the ways humanity can be God-like, by burying the dead.

1. *How does this extend to the Jewish community on Memorial Day?*
2. *How does this text relate to Judaism's practices of mourning and remembering those who died?*
3. *How does it relate to Memorial Day?*

Tosefta, Gittin 3:18, Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 61a

We support the poor of all nations along with the Jewish poor, visit the sick among all nations with the sick among the Jews; we bury and mourn the dead of all nations along with the Jewish dead, and we comfort those mourning from all nations for the sake of peace.

Observations and Questions

A community may feel that because they have not lost someone to war, it is hard to connect to the sense of loss felt by many on Memorial Day. This text obligates Jewish communities to a responsibility to all people, no matter their faith, in the interest of peaceful existence.

1. *What is the role of the Jewish community in remembering all fallen service members, not only Jewish service members?*
2. *What might this look like in your community?*
3. *What are ways your community supports its members, regardless of race or religion, in times of need?*

Friendship

by Chaim Goury (translated from Hebrew by Rabbi Harold Robinson)

The autumn night falls In the Southland,
Kindling the stars in the hush of the eve.
The breeze rustles outside the threshold,
While on the roadway the dust settles down.

Years have gone by hardly noticed,
How the seasons have passed in our fields.
Years have gone by; there are few of us left,
So many are no longer among us.

They are gone from our midst,
All their laughter, their youth and their splendor.
But we know that a friendship like that
We are bound all our lives to remember;
For a love that in battle is forged
Will endure: for while we live we remember.

The friendship we carried without words
Was stubborn and gray and all silence.
Despite terror and horror of night,
The friendship remains burning and clear.

Friendship has bound us together;
So again in its name we smile and march on,
For those friends who surrendered their lives
Have left us their lives to remember.
They are gone from our midst,

All their laughter, their youth and their splendor.
But we know that a friendship like that
We are bound all our lives to remember,
For a love that in battle is forged,
Will endure: for while we live we remember.

Discussion Questions

1. *How does this poem recall those who lost their lives in battle?*
2. *How is that relationship forged in battle different from a family member or other friend?*
3. *How might that impact the way a person remembers the fallen service member?*
4. *This poem was read during the dedication of the Arlington National Cemetery memorial for Jewish chaplains killed in action. It was written by an Israeli poet. In what ways is this poem a universal message for all who serve a country's military? In what ways is it portraying a Jewish point of view of memory and remembrance?*

Programming Ideas

Family Events

Many communities use Memorial Day as a kick off to summer and will hold outdoor events for families that weekend. If your JCC typically has that type of event, try adding things that encourage people to remember the meaning of the day. Ideas for this include:

- Displaying a list of names of those who lost their lives in service
- Creating an exhibit about Memorial Day, with posters and signs that include some history on the day, patriotic images, or information about people who died in service
- Beginning the event with a moment of silence in recognition of Memorial Day

General Programming

Note: The weekend surrounding Memorial Day is a time when many people travel or may not be available. While having a program on Memorial Day is ideal, it may be necessary to have it earlier in the week.

Ongoing author or film series can focus on military service, Memorial Day, or the families of those who serve. More information on finding authors and films can be found in the Program Resources section (page 11).

JCCs can invite Gold Star family members to speak about their experiences and what it means to carry on the legacy of their family member. JCCs can work with organizations like Honor and Remember that present flags or/other meaningful items to these families to show appreciation to the family. See the program resources section for more information on Honor and Remember.

Discussion Questions

These topics and questions can be used with groups of varying sizes and panel discussions.

Memorial Day and Yom Hazikaron

1. *What are similarities and differences between the United States' observance of Memorial Day and the observance that takes place in Israel?*
2. *Why do you think Memorial Day has shifted in meaning and observance for the majority of Americans?*
3. *If service in the U.S. military was compulsory, would Memorial Day look more like Yom Hazikaron?*

Honoring the Fallen

1. *What can Jewish communities do to honor fallen service members?*
2. *What are some ways Jewish communities can acknowledge and support Gold Star families?*
3. *How can Jewish traditions of mourning and commemorating a death apply to Memorial Day?*
4. *What are some ways to bring Jewish tradition into a secular holiday?*

Social Action

Local Jewish War Veterans posts and other veterans' organizations often organize social action programs on or near national days of honor, such as Memorial Day. Teaming up with these groups is one way to honor those who served and show support of veterans and fallen service members.

Flag and wreath ceremonies:

Local veterans groups may go to a veterans' cemetery and place flags on the graves of service members who died in war. They may also participate in a wreath laying ceremony at a memorial for all who died during a specific war.

Cleaning war memorials:

Smaller memorials often exist in communities, commemorating the service men and women from that town or area that died in war. Groups may gather to clean the memorials, make necessary repairs around them and place new flags or wreaths.



Jewish Chaplains Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery

Program Resources

Color Guard, Honor Guard, military bands, and speakers may be requested for events.

If your JCC is located near a large military base, contact the public affairs officer for that base. JCCs can also contact the public affairs office for the National Guard for their state.

Gold Star Children

A documentary about children whose mother or father was killed or died while serving in the United States military. More information about the film and a trailer at goldstarchildren.org

Honor and Remember — honorandremember.org

An organization dedicated to establishing and promoting a nationally recognized symbol and reminder to Americans of the lives lost in service to the United States. The organization designed a flag, advocates for legislation on accepting and recognizing this flag, and presents the Honor and Remember flag to immediate family members who lost a loved one in military service.

Jewish Book Council — jewishbookcouncil.org

This organization, in addition to being a resource center on the American Jewish literary scene, often features authors writing about the military and veteran experience.

The following organizations offer resources to families and communities of fallen heroes:

TAPS—Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

taps.org

American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.

goldstarmoms.com

American Widow Project

americanwidowproject.org

Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.

goldstarwives.org

Snowball Express

snowballexpress.org

For information on contacting Jewish military and VA chaplains, please contact Janine Acevedo, JWB program associate at 212-786-5090 or j.acevedo@jcca.org.



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Connect with Us

For more information contact
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