



## Upcoming Events

**10/1 7:00 PM Erev Yom  
Kippur Services at the  
United Methodist  
Church**

**10/2 10:00 AM Yom  
Kippur Services at the  
United Methodist  
Church**

**10/11 Saturday,  
9:00 AM Sukkah  
Building  
5:30 PM Potluck  
Dinner in the Sukkah  
on the patio of our  
Chavurah House**

**10/17 Friday 7:00 PM  
Simchat Torah  
Services at our  
Chavurah House**

**10/26 Sunday Social  
12:00 Lunch at Wool  
Growers Restaurant in  
Los Banos**

# The Maggid

CONGREGATION ETZ CHAIM

P O BOX 3752 MERCED CA 95344

OCTOBER 2025



## Notes from Rabbi Berlin

Simchat Beit HaSho'eiva

During the First Temple Period (between 1,000 BCE to 586 BCE), on a particular evening during Sukkot, as the sun set behind the gleam of the Holy of Holies on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, a celebration would begin. This ancient celebration is described in the Talmud (the Jewish compilation of law) in the tractate (chapter) of Sukkah 5:1, and it is still remembered today by Sephardic Jews around the world.

On the evening of : השואבה בית שמחתSimchat Beit HaSho'eiva, or the festival of Rejoicing at the Place of the Water-Drawing, water was drawn from the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem and poured on the altar of the Women's Courtyard of The Temple. We can imagine torches blazed against the limestone walls, throwing flickering shadows as musicians filled the air with flutes, drums, and song. The sharp tang of oil smoke mingled with the sweetness of pomegranates piled high in baskets. The fragrance of myrtle sprigs waved in procession, and the faint perfume of incense drifted from the inner altar. Olives waited to be pressed, figs softened in the night air, and the carob pods offered their gentle, cocoa-like sweetness.

Crowds pressed together, shoulder to shoulder. Joyous people leapt and twirl with fire-brands in hand. Children laughed, elders clapped in rhythm, strangers greeted one another as friends. At the heart of it all: water. Drawn from the spring, carried with joy, poured upon the altar in thanksgiving. So jubilant was this celebration that the Mishnah (the earliest part of the Talmud) teaches: "One who has not seen the rejoicing at the water-drawing has never seen rejoicing in all their days" (Sukkah 5:1).

We may no longer gather in those courtyards, but Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews continue to sing, dance, drum, and play live music during the nights of Sukkot. They decorate their Sukkahs with fragrant herbs, rosewater, and fruits.

For those who are unable celebrate Sukkot in their own Sukkah, this Sephardic custom offers us some wonderful traditions we can bring into our homes by letting joy overflow into our own lives and making our homes places of celebration and gratitude. Here are a few ways to bring the spirit of Simchat Beit HaSho'eiva into your Sukkot Festival this year:

- **Welcome a guest.** Share a meal or even a cup of tea, or simply pause to remember the ancestors and loved ones you wish to feel beside you.
- **Engage your senses.** Place herbs, flowers, or fruit where you can see and smell them; add a drop of citrus or rosewater to your table.
- **Give thanks for water.** Lift a glass, notice its coolness and clarity. Feel free to say the traditional prayer when we use water to quench our thirst:
  - o ברוך אתה ה' אלוהינו מלך העולם, שהכל ניה בדברו
  - o Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, shehakol nih'yeh bidvaro
  - o Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, by whose word all things came to be.
- **Fill your home with music.** Play a song that stirs your spirit — and let yourself dance, whether surrounded by others or entirely on your own.

*Rabbi Berlin's article continues on Page 2*

*Rabbi Berlin's article continues below:*

The Sukkah is fragile, open to wind, rain, and stars. So too is joy, unless we make space for it. But when we welcome guests, delight our senses, give thanks for water, and move to the rhythm of music, joy becomes abundant — flowing like living water from a spring.

May this Sukkot be fragrant, musical, and overflowing with blessing.

Chag Sameach,

Rabbi Andi Berlin

## Other Planned Community Events

December 20 - Chanukah Party

January 31 - Tu B'Shvat Potluck

March 7 - Purim Party

April 4 - Community Passover Seder

May 3 - Annual Membership Meeting and 2026/ 2027 Board Elections

**November - April**

**1st Fridays:** 7:00 Formal Lay Led Services with Torah Reading

**3rd Fridays:** 6:30 Potluck and 7:30 Lay Led Kabbalat Shabbat Services  
at our Chavurah House on Parsons Ave

*Remembering is  
a message from  
the heart*



### IN MEMORIAM



PLEASE INCLUDE THE NAME(S) OF MY  
DEPARTED LOVED ONES DURING YIZKOR/MEMORIAL SERVICE

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
(please print phonetically)

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A YIZKOR/MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTION TO CONGREGATION ETZ CHAIM IS ENCLOSED

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

Mail to Congregation Etz Chaim, P O Box 3752, Merced CA 95344

## President's Notes



L'Shana Tova!

I hope this message finds you starting the new year, 5786, with both happy memories of the past year and plans for doing better this year in the areas of your life where you have missed the mark. If ever there were a time to reflect and make amends, this is it, as you know. I hope to see you at Yom Kippur, but not only at Yom Kippur.

This week we have been very lucky to have Rabbi Berlin lead High Holiday Services. On Rosh Hashanah, I really enjoyed her story of Isaac from the perspective of Rebekah. I find her services warm and inclusive, and her messages touching and thought-provoking.

To lighten the mood after Yom Kippur's deep introspection, we have two fun holidays coming up; the first, Sukkot, provides two opportunities. Please come to the Chavurah House patio to build the sukkah on Saturday, October 11, at 9am. The congregation has the building supplies (i.e., PVC pipes), but you are invited to bring any decorations you think will add to the structure. Children are especially welcomed and encouraged to help decorate! We'll test the sukkah's hardiness as we dine in and around it during the Sukkot Potluck, which will start promptly at 5:30pm to enjoy the last of the daylight before the 6:30pm sunset. Join one or both events that day. For the potluck, please RSVP to Belinda at [bbraunstein@ucmerced.edu](mailto:bbraunstein@ucmerced.edu) by October 9th .

The second holiday, Simchat Torah, is one I never experienced before coming to Merced. Imagine my surprise the first time I saw our Torah fully unwound a few years ago, with more than a dozen people in a large circle around the room very carefully supporting it before it was rewound! What a sense of ownership and community! Wow. The Simchat Torah service and celebration will be at the Chavurah House on Friday, October 17, at 7pm.

Several members of the congregation have mentioned wanting to go out to eat more, so on Sunday, October 26, you adventurous ones are invited to a noon lunch at the Wool Growers Basque restaurant in Los Banos. RSVP to Belinda at [bbraunstein@ucmerced.edu](mailto:bbraunstein@ucmerced.edu) by Oct. 22 so we can make a reservation and plan carpools. We'll meet at the Chavurah House a few minutes before 11am to jump into cars and hit the road by 11:00.

B'shalom,  
Belinda Braunstein

### Tributes

*Anytime you are celebrating a special event, let us share in your joy. We welcome tributes in honor or in memory of loved ones, births, weddings, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, and honoring special events. Send your Tributes to PO Box 3752 Merced CA 95344*

Rachel Hadley - In loving memory of her grandmother, Mildred Moore

*May her memory be a blessing*

*זכרונה לברכה*



# ROSH HASHANAH 2025

The Erev R.H. oneg awaits!



Erev Rosh Hashanah crowd



Rosh Hashanah lunch at Coconut Café



Rabbi on shofar



Tashlich discussion @ Fahrens Park



After Tashlich service





# High Holy Days Services 2025/5786

Congregation Etz Chaim  
Fireside Room, United Methodist Church  
899 Yosemite Parkway, Merced \*\*  
**LED BY RABBI ANDI BERLIN**

## ROSH HASHANAH

MONDAY  
SEPTEMBER 22

7:00 p.m. Evening Service

TUESDAY  
SEPTEMBER 23

10:00 a.m. Morning Torah Service  
followed by a Tashlich Service  
on the Bridge at Rahilly Park,  
and no host Luncheon with the Rabbi

## YOM KIPPUR

WEDNESDAY  
OCTOBER 1

7:00 p.m. Kol Nidre Service

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER 2

10:00 a.m. Morning Torah Service  
1:00 p.m. Healing Service  
2:00 p.m. Open Discussion  
4:00 p.m. Lesson  
5:30 p.m. Yizkor (Memorial Service)  
6:30 p.m. Neila (Closing Service)  
7:30 p.m. Havdalah, Kiddush and  
Break-the-Fast Potluck

- It is traditional at this time of year to make donations in memory of loved ones. Please fill out a **Yizkor Card**. You may mail your card and donation to P.O. Box 3752, Merced 95344-3752 or give to Rachel Hadley or Belinda Braunstein no later than Kol Nidre. Other donations will also be gratefully accepted throughout the High Holy Days.  
\*\* Please contact Greg Friedman for ZOOM link information  
\*\*\* For our **Break-the-Fast**, please bring a main dish, and either a side dish or dessert - enough to feed your group heartily (these people will be hungry!)
- Tzedakah (food or clothing) for the less privileged in our community is welcome at any service



Think we can build a better sukkah than this?



**Let's try on Saturday, October 11th!**

**9:00am: Sukkah Building**

Bring creativity!

**5:30pm: Sukkot Potluck**

Bring food!

**All will be on the Chavurah House Patio**

RSVP to Belinda at [bbraunstein@ucmerced.edu](mailto:bbraunstein@ucmerced.edu) by Oct. 9th.



## Jewish Federation of Central California

On September 7th board members from the Jewish Federation of Central California came to Merced with a fantastic lunch and to share information about the upcoming Jewish activities and programs that are available in the Central Valley.

They are offering a Jewish Film series with a wonderful selection of monthly movies from October to May, and they have concerts, lectures and guest speakers all lined up for our enjoyment. These activities are open to all of us.

To read about upcoming activities, please go to their website at [www.jewishfederationcentralcalifornia.org](http://www.jewishfederationcentralcalifornia.org) and sign up to receive their weekly newsletter.

While you are on their website, please consider joining the Federation by making a donation that you are comfortable with.

Thank you,  
Carol Madruga

### ***2025/ 2026 Annual Dues are DUE***

***\$500.00 per Year per Family Unit***

***Please mail your Dues payment to:***

***Congregation Etz Chaim***

***P O Box 3752***

***Merced CA 95344***

**Weekly Shabbat Challah Deliveries**

**will resume after Simchat Torah**

**Contact Rachel Hadley (rhadleyfam@gmail.com) for more information,**

**or to be added to or removed from the deliveries list**

**(Merced area deliveries only)**

Welcome to our Puzzle Page  
Sudoku

				2				
			9		7			
				8		5		
	1				3		6	
5		9				3		8
	6		7				2	1
		3		7		2	5	6
			1		9	4	3	
				3	6	1		

## HARD

	3		2		5		9	
9		1				3		2
	5						4	
1				2				8
				6				
		7	1	9	3	2		
		9	4	7	2	6		
		6	9	5	1	7		



## October Yahrtzeits

Herman Braunstein  
Peggy Braunstein  
Ethel Brodie  
Jerry Colnic  
Mireille Csapo  
Evelyn Tepperman Good-  
stein  
Jessie Welsh Hofmann  
Marilynn Holman  
Marla Kramer  
Francis Lesser  
Gesa Lewis  
Joseph Matlin  
Mildred Moore  
Elbert Myles  
Sheldon Newman  
Sarah Penn  
Frieda Rosenbaum  
Robin Winkelstein  
George Wolf

## Birthdays

Jacob Friedman	10/6
Vanessa Hofmann	10/24
Aidan Mook	10/28
Leah Wight	10/31



## Campership

**Amazon.com** donates to our Campership Fund when we make purchases by accessing them through the Amazon link on our webpage  
([www.jewishmerced.org](http://www.jewishmerced.org))

**Please try to use it!**



*Those we remember in the  
year of their passing:*

*Honora Helene Falk 12/2024  
Stefanie Lotker 01/2025  
Raissa Moore 05/2025*

**זכרונם לברכה**

*May their memories be a blessing*



John Hofmann and Greg Friedman have donated gallons of blood in the Congregation's name.  
Any Congregant can access blood via the credit accumulated under the Congregation's name.