

THE SHOFAR OF THE DAY

Jewish Scouting Alumni's Triannual Newsletter

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A Scout is Reverent

Seth P. Robert, Guest Contributor

As an Eagle Scout from Suffolk County Council (New York), I attended summer camp at Baiting Hollow Scout Camp. In addition to aquatics at Lake Arrowhead, pioneering at Outdoor Skills, ecology at the Nature Center, meals at the Dining Hall, and many trips to the Trading Post, on Friday evenings we held a Shabbat Service at the Silverman Chapel. Yes, Baiting Hollow Scout Camp had a Jewish Chapel. Although a Scouts' Own Service or Benediction at the conclusion of a Scouting event should be a non-denominational program focusing on our collective desire to be good to all and live by the Scout Oath and Law, the ability of Scouts to be reverent is not limited to non-denominational programs. The Silverman Chapel exists to this day. My son Zachary and I visited the Chapel a few years ago when we were on Long Island near the camp.

Perhaps the creation of our Jewish Scouting Alumni group in Gulf Stream Council will prompt us to conduct a Shabbat service during a Scouting event. Participants do not have to be Jewish to attend or participate, as was the case with the Second Annual Gulf Stream Council Shabbat Dinner hosted a few weeks ago, the annual Passover Seder at our home, or even at the Silverman Chapel years ago. To me, the principle that "A Scout is Reverent" means that Scouts should be respectful to each other's religious principles, be open to learning about other religions, and feel free to practice their own religion in a safe and secure environment.

Recognition Is Just the Beginning

Ian Burton Price, JSA Vice Chair

B'ezrat Hashem, national recognition is a tremendous milestone for Jewish Scouting Alumni, but to me, the most exciting part is what comes next. Recognition gives us credibility, but responsibility gives us purpose. Now that JSA has a stronger foundation, we have the opportunity to become more than a newly recognized alumni group. We can become a real network of alumni who support one another, preserve our shared stories, and strengthen Jewish Scouting wherever we are able.

That does not mean everyone needs to take on a major role or add another weekly meeting to their calendar. Sometimes service starts with one introduction, one story submitted, one Scout Shabbat supported, one unit encouraged, or one younger Scout reminded that they are part of something bigger. One good turn at a time, we can turn recognition into impact.

For many of us, Scouting was never just about meetings, merit badges, or campouts. It was where we learned responsibility, service, leadership, fellowship, and care for our community. Those values did not end when we aged out, changed uniforms, or moved into different seasons of life. They stayed with us and became part of how we lead our families, serve our communities, support our synagogues, and show up for others.

That is what makes JSA so meaningful. It gives us a way to carry those values forward together, not only through memory, but through action. As this community grows, I hope we continue building a place where Jewish Scouts and Scouters feel seen, supported, and connected across generations. The trail did not end behind us. In many ways, we are still walking it together.

Blossom

Matthew Rosen,
JSA Founder & Chair

Since our first winter issue of The Shofar of the Day, Jewish Scouting Alumni has already more than doubled in size and officially become nationally recognized by Scouting America. What began around Hanukkah 2025 as a simple idea rooted in fellowship, heritage, and shared Scouting memories has quickly grown into something truly meaningful.

Over the past few months, we have welcomed new alumni from across the country, launched our national leadership team, expanded our outreach efforts, and even presented the very first JSA recognition award to Bruce Streger for his lifelong dedication to Jewish Scouting.

Watching this community begin to blossom has been incredibly special. JSA was created to reconnect alumni not only to Scouting, but to the friendships, values, traditions, and Jewish identity that helped shape so many of us growing up. Every new member, story shared, Scout Shabbat, article submission, and conversation reminds us that those connections never truly disappeared.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us and for helping build something so positive, welcoming, and lasting for Jewish Scouts and Scouters everywhere. We are just getting started!



SHOFAR SPOTLIGHT

Dalia Silverstein, JSA Secretary

Bridging Faiths and Building Traditions: The Growing Spark of Scout Shabbat

When we think of the Scout movement, "duty to G-d" and "A scout is reverent" are foundational to who we are. While these values are often celebrated at council events through Scout Sunday, having a dedicated space for Jewish youth and families to express that reverence through our own traditions is deeply meaningful. In 2025, my son Yosef and I realized our council hadn't experienced a Scout Shabbat in recent memory. Wanting to celebrate our heritage within the movement we love, we decided to bring this tradition back to life in the Gulf Stream Council.

Our first gathering was intimate, drawing 12 attendees. But this year, on May 8, something incredible happened.

Our Second Annual Scout Shabbat grew to 32 participants, nearly triple the size of our first year. More beautifully, while our inaugural event was focused on Jewish Scouts and Scouters, this year we opened the doors to families of all backgrounds. Seeing so many non-Jewish Scouting friends join us, with most experiencing their very first Shabbat, was incredibly humbling. It perfectly captured the true spirit of the Scout Oath and Law: a room full of diverse young people and leaders, unified by mutual respect, curiosity, and a shared commitment to being reverent. For those who couldn't make the date but sent messages of support, your spirit was right there with us.

Our incredible hosts, Rabbi Yosef and Rebbetzin Clara Rice, opened their home and hearts to us for the second year in a row. Between the beautiful words of Torah wisdom and a massive, delicious kosher feast (featuring home-baked challah with dips, multiple salads, brisket, chicken, steak, kugel, vegetables, and a dessert buffet), absolutely no one left hungry. The warmth at that large table proved that our "little Scout Shabbat baby" is growing into a powerful force for community bridging.

The evening also brought a wonderful full-circle moment for our family and regional leadership. Bruce Streger, the National Jewish Committee on Scouting (NJCS) Southern Region Chairman, traveled hours from the north to support us, just as he did last year. After providing the patches complimentary for our inaugural event, he generously subsidized them by nearly 40% this year. They were a hot commodity, with many people purchasing them to commemorate the occasion, including a few who couldn't even attend the dinner. These patches carry extra weight as the NJCS celebrates its historic 100th anniversary this year. Before the night ended, Bruce presented Yosef with his "Etz Chaim" (Tree of Life) award, the final of two religious emblems that a Scouts BSA youth can earn. There are three for Cub Scouts and a bonus one for any Scout who earns them all during their Scouting youth. There are even a few that an adult can earn, and I look forward to earning my first one with Matthew as my inspiration and coach.

Right after, the tables turned for a wonderful surprise. Bruce was missing the beginning of the NJCS Annual Meeting to attend our Scout Shabbat, where he was actually up for two major awards. Our own Matthew, Jewish Scouting Alumni (JSA) Founder and Chair, already had the "Inspirational Founding Award" ready for him and realized this was the perfect time to step up and surprise him right there at our Shabbat table. Bruce was instrumental in helping launch our new JSA group, making it the perfect setting to honor his tireless legacy. The momentum surrounding the event has been incredible, with several of our attendees officially signing up to join the JSA both leading up to and following that memorable night. It was also incredibly meaningful to have one of our District Executives, as well as a JSA supporter, Eroy Burns, in attendance to celebrate with us.

Stepping into my new role as Secretary for the JSA, milestones like this remind me exactly why this organization matters. We are here to connect alumni, support our youth, and show how seamlessly Jewish culture aligns with the core values of Scouting. Looking ahead, Rabbi Yosef is already floating the idea of hosting two Scout Shabbats a year to keep up with the overwhelming enthusiasm. We are also in the early stages of planning our first JSA anniversary celebration for this coming December, so keep your eyes open for more information on that.

Thank you to everyone who made this night unforgettable! Together, as an alumni network and a Scouting community, we are proving that no matter our specific faith traditions, we are all Scouts, we are all reverent, and we are stronger together. Looking back at that crowded, joyful Shabbat table, the ancient words ring truer than ever: *Hinei mah tov u'mah naim* (how good and pleasant it is when we dwell together in unity)! To everyone who cooked, traveled, attended, and supported this beautiful tradition: *Yasher koach* (more power to you and a job well done)!

During the evening, Rabbi Yosef asked everyone to share just one word to describe what they were looking forward to most as we head into the summer. Bruce Streger's response captured the heart of our entire mission in a single word: *B'yachad* (together). We cannot wait to continue that fellowship at our anniversary party this winter. Until then, *L'hitraot* (until we meet again)!

Yours in Jewish Scouting,
Dalia Silverstein

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