CHANUKAH is the time of light. We light the Chanukah candles at the darkest time of year when the nighttime hours are the longest. As we read the newspaper headlines about anti-Semitism around the world and here in NYC, as well as attacks on Israel both physically and politically, we can feel like we’re in times of darkness.

OUR ANSWER always has to be “light”. Light of education, light of inspiration, light of community, light of commitment. “Aish” means “fire” in Hebrew – a source of light. Our mission at Aish is to ignite and spread the light of our beautiful heritage – especially in times of darkness.

THIS YEAR has been a year of light for Aish in New York. Towards the end of 2018 we opened a great new location in the Lower East Side, a booming area for Jewish Young Professionals, and we “re-ignited” Aish NY’s YP (Young Professional) Division.

OUR AMAZING YP team, led by Rabbi Moshe and Liat Mayerfeld who live at our Lower East Side location, are so dedicated to the mission that their home is literally open 24-7 to Jewish Young Professionals.

IN 2019 we accomplished some amazing things including:

- Hosting Weekly Shabbat Dinners
- Meaningful Holiday Events throughout the year including our High Holidays Experience where we offered explanatory Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur Services in Midtown Manhattan for over 150 Young Professionals
- Regular Torah learning classes with our amazing educational staff
- Building a core group of Young Professional Leaders who are now organizing their own events and bringing new participants to Aish programming.
- Launching “Aish NY Give” where hundreds of young professionals volunteer for various Jewish and non-Jewish charities across the city.

AND THIS is just the tip of the iceberg. We have great plans for 2020, including trips to Miami, Poland, and Israel. And we plan on opening up a 2nd “Aish Hub” in Brooklyn! Stay tuned!

THANK YOU and all of our partners for helping us make this happen. Our Aish NY team looks forward to partnering together to inspire and connect Jews across New York to the beauty, relevance, and meaning of their Judaism.

HAPPY CHANUKAH!!

Rabbi Elliot Mathias
AISH NY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
IN 2019, AISH NY HAD OVER 1,000 UNIQUE PARTICIPANTS
join our Young Professional programming! Between Social Events, Educational Programming, Shabbat Meals, and Holiday Celebrations – Young Professional New Yorkers have made Aish NY their home!

2019 STATS

**613 ATTENDEES AT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING**
447 Unique Participants

**520 SHABBAT MEAL GUESTS**
320 Unique Individuals

**150 ATTENDEES TO HIGH HOLIDAYS EXPERIENCE**

**500 ATTENDEES AT SOCIAL/HOLIDAY EVENTS**
349 Unique Attendees

“6 MONTHS AGO, a friend invited me to a Shabbat dinner out of the blue. She said we were going to a Rabbi’s house with an awesome back garden - I had no idea what to expect when I made my way to the Lower East Side and walked into the Aish Hub. The house was alive with an incredibly festive Shabbat energy. From that moment, the Mayerfelds welcomed me into their family and home and not just on Shabbat but any night of the week.

Since that night, I’ve participated in many Aish events and grown close to this community of special people. Whether it’s learning with Liat, Rosh Hashanah explanatory services, or eating pizza in the Sukkah, I love knowing I have a place to go that fosters independent thinking and challenging conversation on subjects that I care about like Judaism and the history of Israel. The Aish LES Hub has an open door policy and has quickly become a place I feel at home.”

Alix Roberts  AISH YOUNG PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANT
HIGH HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE

IN SEPTEMBER, Aish NY ran an innovative High Holidays Experience for Young Professionals in NYC. Hosted at the James Nomad Hotel in Midtown Manhattan, 150 Jewish Young Professionals attended an Explanatory High Holiday experience over Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. Led by Aish NY’s amazing educators, the program made the High Holidays accessible to Jews of every background.

Participants left feeling that the Prayer service was relevant and meaningful. Our promo video for the High Holiday experience, seen by over 5,000 people, starred Aish NY students having honey poured over them to promote a “different type of High Holiday experience”.

IN 2019, WE LAUNCHED “AISH NY GIVE”, our social action and volunteer initiative. So many Jewish Young Professionals are passionate about making the world a better place and helping others less fortunate than them. As these are core Jewish values, Aish NY Give creates opportunities to support our fellow New Yorkers.

In December, “Give Week” was organized, providing over 200 opportunities to volunteer for various charities across New York City. The week culminated in a Friday Night Dinner to bring together the volunteers.


**Challah Bake**

One of our student leadership highlights in 2019 was a Challah Bake in September, completely organized, promoted, and paid for by Shir Cohen, one of our Aish NY Young Professionals! Over 30 young women participated in the challah bake.

**Project 207**

Project 207 is a completely participant run division of Aish NY, led by 3 young professionals - Matt Miller, Dori Light, and Jennie Templeton. Matt, Dori, and Jennie have been involved with Aish NY since we launched in October 2018, and they decided in 2019 that they wanted to expand the reach even further. They created Project 207 which meets every week with Aish NY Rabbi Ari Soshtain. Their goal is to build a core group of young professional leaders who commit to regular programming and engaging others. They have already organized an additional event with the Clarion Fund's Raphael Shore, and have future plans to organize Friday night dinners and other events in 2020.
AISH NY offers sophisticated and meaningful Jewish educational opportunities for NY Jewish Executives and Aish partners. Our “Executive Learning Program (ELP)” includes exciting monthly events, as well as individual and small group Torah learning with our Aish educators. Over 70 NY Executives study regularly with our Aish staff.

IN 2019, MONTHLY EVENTS INCLUDED:

- An intimate briefing with DANNY DANON, Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations, hosted by Carol and Jerry Levin
- A screening of “KABBALAH ME”, a documentary by Aish NY’s Board Chair Steven Bram, documenting his personal search into Jewish mysticism
- A presentation on “WHY THE JEWS: A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF ANTI-SEMITISM”, hosted by Eileen and Jerry Lieberman
- A pre-High Holidays program titled “ROSH HASHANA UNLEASHED”, hosted by Liz Lange
- A MUSICAL EVENING Exploring the Kabbalistic insights of Grateful Dead music

“AS A BABY BOOMER whose uninspired Jewish education growing up solely focused on preparing for my Bar Mitzvah, adult learning with Rabbi Saj Freiberg in Aish’s Executive Learning Program is an inspiring highlight of my week.

Our Scholars and Sages including Hillel, Rabbi Akiva, Rashi and more are brought alive from session to session as we discuss and debate how they studied each and every word. I find our studying so relevant to living today as a moral person.

Learning in AISH’s ELP is special.”

Jerry Lieberman NYC BUSINESSMAN AND PHILANTHROPIST
AISH NY’S MISSION IS TO MAKE JUDAISM relevant and engaging for as wide an audience as possible. Today thousands of people can be engaged and educated via various media channels. Aish NY is spending real time and resources exploring these avenues to spread our unique Jewish educational content throughout New York and beyond.

A RABBI WALKS INTO A BAR
In conjunction with the production company PIRO, led by two Aish Executive Learning Participants, “A Rabbi Walks into a Bar” is the pilot of a soon to be made philosophical series for serious thinkers. Starring Aish NY’s Rabbi Adam Jacobs and international lawyer Stephen Margetts, the 40 minute pilot juxtaposes thinkers from opposite sides of the philosophical spectrum: a ‘nihilistic existentialist’ and a spiritual Rabbi.

THE ONLINE TRAILER ALREADY HAS OVER 12,000 VIEWS!

"THE SECRET CHORD" PODCAST
Aish NY launched a new podcast in 2019. The Secret Chord explores spirituality through the lens of great music. Each week a different artist is highlighted and surprising insights are discussed. Learn about the light that can shine within darkness from Bruce Springsteen; or Kabbalah and the nature of harmony from Crosby, Stills and Nash. If you love music and meaningful ideas, this is the journey for you.

"THE SECRET CHORD" HAS OVER 3,000 Downloads IN JUST THE FIRST 4 MONTHS SINCE LAUNCHING
The Chanukah Menorah should ideally be placed in a window facing the street in order to publicize the miracle. These tiny flames flicker proudly and proclaim our Jewish identity to our families inside the home as well as to the world outside. These candles proclaim that Am Yisrael chai, the Jewish people live. The mission of the Jewish people is to be a ‘light unto the nations’. Think about how we as individuals and as a community can be a shining example to those around us.

The Custom is to add one more candle each night. This is because the longer the oil in the Temple burned, the greater the miracle became. The Sages say, “One who does not increase decreases”. Our relationship with Judaism should be something dynamic and growing. Each new candle introduces a fresh and hopefully deeper appreciation of the Chanukah story and by extension the miracle of Jewish survival. Think of a way we can enhance our relationship with our heritage.

A Unique property of a flame is that one can use it to light many more, and when it does so its own light is not diminished. We never lose by sharing; in fact, we gain more from giving than from taking. Giving to others helps make the world a better place and in doing so everyone gains. Think of an extra act of giving we can do with no ulterior motive.

The Word Chanukah is related to the Hebrew word for education, chinuch. Jewish education is not just about imparting information; rather, we are educating our children to play their unique role within our community and the world at large. The lights in the Temple were kindled until they were able to burn by themselves. Judaism sees fostering independence as a primary goal of education. When people are empowered to make informed choices, their decisions are much more meaningful. What is the most important value we would like to impart to future generations?

The Torah likens man’s soul to G-d’s candle. Judaism views mankind as being created in the image of G-d. Like animals we possess earthly bodies; however, our souls are a spark of the Divine. While the body is nourished by food, the soul draws its sustenance from good deeds. Like the flicker of a flame, the soul strives to reach higher and higher and is a source of light, warmth and comfort to all who draw close to it. We nourish our bodies at least 3 times a day. Think of something we can do to nourish our souls daily.

The Torah likens a mitzvah to a candle and Torah to a light. Judaism views mitzvot as opportunities of infinite value. Each mitzvah is an act that can connect us to G-d and enrich our lives forever, regardless of what else we do or don’t do. Rather than being all or nothing, Judaism is a journey where every step counts. Think of a mitzvah to take on or learn more about during these days of Chanukah.

The Maccabees were a small band of committed people unwilling to resign themselves to defeat even when all seemed lost. They placed their faith in G-d and took action even though it seemed futile. This is symbolized by the miracle of the oil - they lit the candles even though they did not have enough fuel. Their trust in G-d meant that they realized although they had to try their best, ultimately all success is in the hands of Heaven. Think about the darkest times in Jewish history and draw courage, strength and inspiration from their acts of bravery and determination. What message would our heroes have for us and our personal challenges?

The Hebrew word “Chanukah” means “dedication”. Chanukah celebrates our dedication to Judaism itself. The war of Chanukah took place in Israel between the Seleucid Greeks and the Jews, (165 BCE). But this was not a simple war over territory. The Greeks had outlawed the study of the Torah, circumcision, and other laws. The Maccabees rose up against them, a tiny group of Jews vs. the entire Greek empire, in defense of Jewish life and practice. What aspects of our Jewish identity are we willing to stand up for even when unpopular?