



HINDA
INSTITUTE
Everybody Deserves a Second Chance

Kislev 5786

Winter 2025

Rabbi Binyomin Scheiman, Director

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NEW LIGHT ON CHANUKAH - RABBI STEIN

This Chanukah issue is written by and dedicated to our devoted staff. These articles really highlight our multiple programs and the passion of our staff, sponsors and volunteers who make Hinda happen.

We want to welcome Rabbi Dov Stein as the new Hinda Casework and Peer Support Training Coordinator. Rabbi Stein has extensive experience in coordinating as well as facilitating training programs in Jewish Schools, adult education programs and within a variety of universities. He has also taught entrepreneurship within correctional institutions under the PELL Grant. He is the director of Wellsprings Recovery Community where he specializes in addiction counseling and meditation. Rabbi Stein is studying for a chaplaincy degree and Peer Support Certification.

Rabbi Stein writes: *“As the winter nights grow longer, we approach the holiday of Chanukah, the Festival of Lights. Chanukah is a timeless story of hope. A small flame of light triumphantly pushed back the shadows of despair and darkness. This universal message deeply resonates with the mission at the Hinda Institute. We are dedicated to illuminating the path for individuals and families impacted by crisis and the justice system. We believe that, like the Menorah, everyone holds a spark of goodness, and with compassion and support, Hinda helps turn adversity into opportunity, offering a vital second chance and bringing light back into isolated lives.*

It is with tremendous excitement that I join the Hinda Institute team at this special time. I look forward to working alongside you, our community, to ensure that the light of hope shines brightly for those who need it most. Just as we soon kindle the lights of Chanukah, I am committed to contributing to Hinda’s vital work, helping to foster resilience and deliver connection, care, and hope to everyone seeking a new beginning.”



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WISHING
YOU A
VERY
HAPPY
AND
HEALTHY
CHANUKAH

THE YEARLY BATTLE BEFORE CHANUKAH - DAVID, TECH. SUPPORT

Every year Hinda runs a crowd fundraising campaign. The Hinda Institute does not charge for any of its counseling, chaplaincy or casework services and this campaign is essential for supporting our services. Most of our clients and families are at points of their lives where they are experiencing extreme poverty. Nonetheless our entire Hinda community devotedly gathers together to help. This year we had 19 amazing volunteer teams who worked tirelessly. Most importantly, we also have compassionate and generous donors who matched donations 4x and who understand the critical work we do and its impact on the community. David describes how he works behind the scenes to manage the campaign.

David writes: *"I have had the privilege of working with Hinda since 2020, supporting our classes, emails, and campaigns. Each year, our fundraising is the lifeline that allows us to provide counseling, therapy, legal help, holiday meals, and simply a listening ear for families in need."*

This year, with a raised goal of \$300k, I was worried if we could reach it. The phonathon was full of energy—teams working from home and volunteers gathered at the Hinda headquarters, with pizza and determination. Still, by Sunday night we were only at 80%. Rabbi Scheiman reminded us, "All is in the hands of Hashem. We do our part, and He will do the rest." By Monday evening we were at 93%. With little time to spare, I sent one more email and was deeply moved when those who had previously given, gave again! At 8:59 PM, we were at 99%—and then, with one final call, we crossed the finish line. I typed in the donation with trembling fingers, and at 9:59:45 we hit our goal, qualifying for the match. Thanks to our matchers, donors, and volunteers, we can now expand our work and continue lifting families with hope, purpose, and closeness to Hashem."

GIFTS FOR KIDS - JENNA, INTERN

Jenna writes: *"I am an intern this year at the Hinda Institute. I have learned a lot about the real challenges people face finding housing, employment and mental health support post incarceration. There is a severe lack of support for individuals attempting to reenter society that perpetuates lifelong punishment long after people have served their time. I was unaware of the tremendous stigma, discrimination and restrictions which create almost unsurmountable barriers to reentry. The suffering of families and children due to our ineffective and inequitable justice system has really spoken to me. I was therefore so honored to help organize gifts for the children who unfortunately are now caught in this vicious cycle."*

VOLUNTEERS MAKE AN IMPACT - SANDY, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Chanukah at Hinda would not happen without our loyal volunteers who shop for, prepare and deliver Chanukah packages as well as the gifts for children. They also help with our famous Hinda holiday celebrations. No one should be alone or isolated on Chanukah. Volunteers also correspond with and visit with our clients within institutions and support their families, offering legal advice and advocacy. Please consider volunteering to make a real difference in the lives of families in crisis and in need of urgent support.

Sandy writes: *"Abby asked me to write a little paragraph about volunteering for the Hinda Institute. We couldn't do it without our team! For me, volunteering for the Hinda Institute is very meaningful. Of course, volunteering for any organization can fill a person with gratitude that they are able to be on the giving side of life. It is nice to know that the group that I volunteer with can help support families impacted by prison. We help pack holiday packages that are delivered directly to the families' homes and remind them that they are part of the Jewish people and not judged or forgotten. When the receiving family includes children, we add special holiday gifts especially for them. It adds value to our holiday also; to remember that even if we are missing loved ones in our life for whatever reason, that we are still connected to a caring, giving nation. And being connected to a group that travels throughout Illinois to visit Jewish prisoners to give them warmth, hope and strength is a powerful way to volunteer."*

BRINGING LIGHT TO THE DARKEST PLACES BRINGS MOSHIACH - CHAPLAIN RABBI CHAIM SCHEIMAN

Rabbi writes: *"I visit Cook County Jail (CCJ) weekly. Every year on Chanukah, I go to CCJ with my father to light the Chanukah Menorah. We also bring pastrami sandwiches, juice boxes, Chanukah cookies (a huge, huge treat) and most importantly, hope and joy to those stressfully awaiting trial within a place of darkness and despair. Due to our tireless advocacy, we can also now bring real matches and visit multiple divisions. When Jews see the Chanukah lights, I can visibly see how it lifts them up and reminds them of home and their loved ones. Chanukah is a moment of spiritual opportunity and Jewish Identity. This year, a client finally changed his mind about identifying as a Jew just in time to light the menorah and eventually put on tefillin. A client whose father had passed away finally had the opportunity to say kaddish with a Jewish minyan on Chanukah. I felt moved when he cried and reminded myself why I am grateful for the opportunity to be chaplain and to support and inspire people in the darkest places. That's what Moshiach is all about."*

HINDA HERO - IT TAKES A VILLAGE AND A LOT OF LOVE - RABBI BINYOMIN SCHEIMAN, OUR DIRECTOR

Hinda runs four support groups weekly. The largest and most successful is run by Rabbi Scheiman. His commitment, love and support for his clients is the lifeblood of Hinda and is the secret to our miraculous recidivism rate of only 0.01% last year.

Rabbi Scheiman writes: *"I meet with Mel weekly. He is also part of my weekly support group and joins our monthly classes. Mel overcame a lifetime of trauma and is rebuilding his life in ways I could never have imagined. Mel is on SSDI and it is difficult for him to afford rent and other basic necessities. Just before Chanukah, Mel's roommate went rogue and the landlord evicted the roommate. I was amazed by how Mel was able to manage this challenge so calmly and strategically. It is a real testament to the work we do at Hinda. But now Mel was in trouble, he couldn't pay his rent. Mel also depends on SNAP benefits. He was simultaneously worried about food security. Chanukah was coming and Mel was facing hunger and homelessness in a small Illinois town.*

Our support group kicked in with action, love, support and compassion. A friend in our support group David who does extensive nonprofit work in Illinois dropped off food by my son in Carbondale. I then delivered food to Mel on my prison route. Another member of the group who is struggling himself gave \$1800 through Hinda to help with Mel's rent. Mel used \$1000 so far but was determined to be self-sufficient and find a job to pay everyone back. Seeing this group's empathy never ceases to amaze me."

LAUNCH OF PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM REPORT - ABIGAIL, PROGRAM AND DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

Abby writes: *"Our Peer Support Program is launching this January with 20 participants. The program meets Illinois accreditation standards and includes over 100 hours of training as well as clinical support and comprehensive wrap around services. This program offers a fantastic opportunity for future employment and mental health support in our community. Thank you to our generous sponsors: the Walder Foundation, the Jewish United Fund, and the support of our Partners the Tikvah Healing Center, as well as our hardworking staff and facilitators."*

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AT HINDA: A YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY - KARLENE, EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST

Last year we helped over 90 individuals find employment at Hinda. This is a new all time high, and largely due to Karlene; our employment specialist. Karlene is a real professional, both compassionate and strategic.

Karlene writes: *"This year, the Hinda Institute's Employment Services team continued its mission of helping clients rebuild confidence, strengthen skills, and explore career pathways. The work is hands-on and deeply personalized. Resumes were reviewed and rewritten, often through several rounds, until each one clearly displayed the client's strengths.*

Clients identified new career paths, evaluated their goals, and received guidance through every step of the job-search process, from finding openings to preparing for interviews. Support extended beyond the practical. Many clients relied on the motivational and emotional encouragement offered throughout their journey. Clients also learned to use various software tools to stay competitive, and when technology became a barrier, staff stepped in to help update resumes directly. When promising opportunities arose, referrals were sent to employers to help clients get connected. The impact of these efforts is best seen in clients' stories. One client, worried about a background check, was guided to highlight work experience gained while incarcerated, helping close employment gaps and showcase strengths. Another client, an older job seeker, worked intensively on resume revisions and successfully transformed years of retail experience into a compelling profile that led to a high-level fast-food management role. And one longtime client, after years of perseverance, brainstorming, resume updates, and interview preparation, recently celebrated a major turning point with multiple interview invitations. At Hinda, employment services are more than job preparation. They are a pathway to renewed confidence, stability, and opportunity. This year, that pathway helped clients take meaningful steps toward their next chapter."

UPCOMING COURSES

Wednesdays 7:00 to 8:30 PM

Check out hindahelps.com/courses for more details.

- **January** - Leadership & Survival: Planning Your Life
- **February** - The Second Sentence: Understanding Post-Incarceration Syndrome and the Way Forward
Author - Sheila Bruno
- **February** - Addiction Panel: Resilience & Recovery
- Living with Addiction

In the News

Hinda Chanukah Party - December 14 at 4:30 PM



HINDA INSTITUTE

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