



Agudas Achim Newsletter

April 2022

E-mail: agudasachim@hvc.rr.com or Telephone (845) 439-3600

Save the date

April 1, 2022

Gather at 7:00 pm

7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice

7:30 PM Services

RABBI'S MESSAGE

The Eye of Memory

During the Passover Seder this year, when we are gathered with those present around the table, and those very present in our memory, let us set aside a fifth cup of wine, untasted, for the people of The Ukraine. And, when we pour out the ten drops of wine let us be aware of the very real plagues that have beset them. The Seder is about the real world of pain and redemption.

But, we experience this ritual on so many different levels. For some, the predominant memory and emotion is sitting at a card table with the other young cousins holding red wine stained Maxwell House Haggadahs (ot) given out at the supermarket or corner store, and waiting for the four questions, or the after meal searching for the Afikomen, to win the prize. Can you picture who was leading the Seder at the main table?

Other's recollections are from sitting at the main table. Here we see the images of beloved family members as they were over time. Who wanted to speed up the reading? Who wanted to slow down and discuss the text? Who was engaged? Who was bored? Who understood the meaning of the symbols? Who couldn't wait for the food?

How old were you when you first understood the meaning of dipping your finger in the wine to pace a drop for each of the plagues? For some children, it was a fearful time to read or repeat the plagues, and to see the ten drops on the plate. Most young children are not abstract thinkers, and so it was a frightening moment for some to put plagues on the plate from which one would later eat.

No matter if our Seder is brief or extended, to understand the excruciating pain and suffering that came from each of the natural disasters that in Hebrew is called the ten whippings, with death being the last, and then to understand the power of the redemption and deliverance of our slave ancestors, is to know the power of Pesach (Passover).

In our time we could call out a different "plague" now being suffered by the citizens of Ukraine. How we might assist in their deliverance, is to understand a basic message of the Holyday. We (Jews) were redeemed, and now we are obligated to assist in the redemption of others. "Understand the heart of the enslaved, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt." We learned an empathy from that experience that has lasted over the centuries. Let none of us taste the matzah until we have each reached out in some way to assist the refugees and the war torn in that land where viscous aggression is being waged.

It is for this reason that I am asking that a fifth cup be put on our Seder tables this year. The wine in this vessel should not be tasted. Explain it to any children present, discuss it among adults. Let it be a symbol that urges our continues support. We who were refugees from Egypt's brutality, can reach out to these modern fleers, and to those caught in the crossfire, extending the message of Passover.

We remember the faces of loved ones with whom we sat at the Seder over the years. They are with us still. Whether they were engaged, or peripheral, they "showed up." Let us keep faith with them as we "show up" to do the mandate of the festival of unleavened bread.

Love, Rabbi Fred Pomerantz

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Like most people around the world, I think about Ukraine throughout each day. I think about how lucky I am to have the comforts of a roof over my head without the sounds and fears of bombs and sirens outside my window. I think about how remarkable it is that the countries like Poland and Hungary have opened their borders to millions of Ukrainians. I tear up when I picture the lines of strollers that were left at the train station for the frightened and weary mothers with babies or old women walking hundreds of miles to the border. There are dozens of other images that go through my mind all day long. I wonder how these families and individuals will build their lives again, I pray for them and for the whole world to find safety and peace. I often think about President Zelensky. He's already a legend who has inspired people around the world with his strength, his presence, his bravery. He is a modern-day hero in a world that desperately needs heroes.

How can we help? We can send money. We can pray. We can choose not to complain about life's inconveniences when we are so incredibly blessed to be living safe and free. And we can support our synagogues. Events like the invasion of Ukraine remind us that our security and our freedoms are fragile. It's imperative that we support the institutions like Agudas Achim so that they are there to support us when it's needed. It's easy to assume that Agudas Achim will always be here but we won't last without members. Please don't take our survival for granted. We need you.

We don't know how this will end or how the people of Ukraine will begin rebuilding their lives. There are towns that are gone. People that are gone. Businesses that are gone. A region forever changed. Yet, there is a glimmer of hope that the countries around the globe will continue to unite behind their neighbor and stand up against evil. It would be a different world entirely if more people stood together to stop Hitler before he gained so much ground. They didn't. But today people and nations are working together to try to stop this horror. Today there is hope that a foundation for a brighter future exists. I am happy to celebrate the strength and the greatness of individuals and nations playing out in front of our eyes. Let's pray that the strength of the good prevails for Ukraine and all the earth.

We can help too. Listed below are two opportunities to give aid. If you can, please be a part of the solution for our brothers and sisters in the Ukraine. As said by former Russian Ambassador Michael McFaul "If you have done something, big or small, to help Ukrainians in their fight against Putin, I applaud you. And now I'm asking, please do more."

Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine emergency relief fund

They will match donates 3X <https://www.charityextra.com/ukraine/54603>

"With over 25 years of experience the FJC has the unfractured and ability to execute this project with speed and efficiency"

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (Hias.org)

At services last month, Bob Freedman reminded us that many of the Jewish settlers in Livingston Manor came here through HIAS after fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe. This organization has provided comfort and aid for 130 years

L'Shalom,

Judy Siegel, President
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845-798-0783

Jewish Education News

Students in the Hebrew School are learning about Passover, our people's freedom from slavery and the importance of remembering and retelling this story. The families in our school will be participating in an in-person Passover Program on April 3rd.

The Passover Seder is one of the most, if not the most observed Jewish rituals in the entire year. As Alan and Jo Kay tell us in their book, "Make Your Own Passover Seder", Passover is the time that brings together family, friends and even strangers to celebrate our history as a people. It is a time to remember the history of our people and times past. It is often at the seder table that changes are apparent, the absence of one family member or another, the addition of new family member because of birth or marriage. It is a time to create new memories and experiences. It is a time to bridge the past with the present and the future.

As each of us are planning for Passover, we are preparing for those elements that make Passover unique for each of our households. A Passover seder contains certain elements which are consistent no matter where in the world one travels, the seder plate, the retelling of our Exodus from Egypt, the four questions, the four sons (children), the 10 plagues, Elijah's cup, singing Dayenu, to name a few. Yet, each Passover Seder is different, whether it is a family recipe for Charoset or a new tradition to make the 10 plagues interactive or child friendly. There are a huge assortment of Haggadahs to choose from. I own at least 30 different Haggadot in ranging from a feminist Haggadah "The Ma'yan Passover Haggadah" to a Marc Chagall illustrated Haggadah, to 'The Family Participation Haggadah' and even a reprinting of "The Amsterdam Haggadah of 1695."

Whatever you do to make your Passover seder yours, you are creating the memories that will carry to your children. It is those memories that they will hold dear when it is their turn to make the seder for their own families. "Pathways through the Haggadah" so articulately states, '...the story of the Exodus was told and retold from generation to generation. Fathers would tell it to their children, that they, in turn, might recount it to their children.' We use varying customs in our own seders, the songs, traditions, rituals, stories that were passed down through the generations. Each is a part of the collective memory of our people, yet all uniquely special. It is the Passover seder that for so many help to establish a solid Jewish identity.

Shalom u'Verachah ~ Peace and Blessings
Tobi Innerfield, Director of Education

Happy Anniversary

Joe & Heidi Leunisen-Rivera 4/16
Joseph & Dimona Galli 4/30

Happy Birthday

Jack Rajlevsky 4/7
Ray Croney 4/10
Wendy Schwalb 4/20
Jerry Frey 4/22
Diane Leunisen 4/22
Ariana Burd 4/24
Jenna Blank 4/30

Message from the Levins:

We are very much looking forward to joining together in song and prayer on April 1st. We are working with Rabbi Pomerantz to create an offering that will prepare us and set the tone for our upcoming Passover celebrations. As our neighbors in Ukraine continue to fight for their emancipation from tyranny, let us renew our strength, and stand for the freedom we have inherited from our ancestors. We look forward to bolstering this strength, together. Ira and Julia, The Levins

CONGREGATIONAL UPDATES

- Sprucing up; Put it on your calendar...we'll be having a garden work bee on June 12th at 1 PM. Bring some gardening gloves and tools and join the fun!
- We'll be hosting a table at the Livingston Manor Trout Parade
- Spring opening: though we had hoped to open our doors 'live' in April, the decision was made to push that opening back one month. Join us May 6th for the first time we open our doors since December of 2019! We will have a virtual service as well.
- We're reaching out...we will have a table at the June 11th Trout Parade so that we can introduce Congregation Agudas Achim to the community. If you would like to join us and be part of the outreach, drop us a note at virtualshabbat@gmail.com



Sasha is so excited to be celebrating her Bat Mitzvah at Agudas Achim. She is the daughter of members Samantha and Tom Fairman. Sasha is so grateful her immediate family and friends are flying or driving in to celebrate with her. For her Bat Mitzvah project, Sasha and her friend, Miller made different candles and are selling them to raise money for the Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum. Sasha enjoys rock climbing, doing aerial silks and learning Jiu Jitsu. Sasha loves playing video games, piano, and hanging out with friends and her cousins!

Want to be involved?

Are you interested in becoming involved in the direction of Agudas Achim? Just let us know! Send me an email or text or write to virtualshabbat@gmail.com

We would love to hear from you.

UPCOMING SHABBAT SERVICES

April 1, 2022	Gather at 7:00 7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice 7:30 PM Services
May 6, 2022	Gather at 7:00 7:30 PM Services Levins begin welcoming the Sabbath LIVE SERVICES beginning at 7:30 PM A zoom link will be provided for anyone that cannot or prefers not to attend in person. HINT: it is the same every month
May 7, 2022	Bat Mitzvah of Sasha Fairman (page 4)
June 3, 2022	Gather at 7:00 7:30 PM Services Levins begin welcoming the Sabbath LIVE SERVICES beginning at 7:30 PM A zoom link will be provided for anyone that cannot or prefers not to attend in person. HINT: it is the same every month
June 4, 2022	Bar Mitzvah of Harlan Kuckelman

DONATIONS

Our in-person contact (and thus our fundraising efforts) is limited. Our philosophy has always been to maintain low dues and keep an open-door policy so that anyone can join us in person when available or now virtually. But that philosophy depends on generous donations from people like you. Please consider donating to Congregation Agudas Achim ... no amount is too large or too small! You can donate and designate it to one of the following:

Building fund
Cemetery fund
Endowment fund
Mailing costs
Mitzvah fund
Tzedakah fund

or consider making a donation in honor or memory of a friend, a loved one or someone you care about with a lasting memorial donation by purchasing an honorary:

Chair \$36
Rosh Hashanah Prayer Book \$36
Yom Kippur Prayer Book \$36

BEST WAY TO DONATE:

By Check: mail to PO Box 714, Livingston Manor, NY 12758

By Credit Card website (congregationagudasachim.org) and click donate now

HOPEful INFORMATION

Thank you to one of our newest members Hope Blecher for allowing us to share the blog she writes for Hadassah. Here is her most recent article. Her March 16 blog is included below as well.

Why, as a Jew, I celebrate Read Across America Day 2022

Hope Blecher

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/why-as-a-jew-i-celebrate-read-across-america-day-2022/>

Why I chose March 16 as my son's birthday

Hope Blecher

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/why-i-chose-march-16th-as-my-sons-birthdate/>

MEMBERSHIP

Thank you to those of you that have become members or maintained your membership this year. We have a number of new members and most members have renewed. Every one of you is valued and treasured.

WANT TO BE INVOLVED?

Are you interested in becoming involved in the direction of Agudas Achim? We really don't ask too much of your time but anything you want to give will be appreciated. Just let us know! Send me an email or text or write to virtualshabbat@gmail.com We would love to hear from you.

CRISIS IN UKRAINE

Below is an excerpt of a note sent to Lori-Rae Silvers from a member of her family. They went to Vienna with 27 YU students to help aid the Jewish Ukrainian refugees. They prefer that this not be shared through social media. Instead, please read and appreciate the tremendous support that the Jewish Community provides behind the scenes and that Countries like Vienna are providing to their neighbors

We are in Vienna, helping refugees in the Jewish community. Here is a summary of our first day:

Getting out of the airport was slow. Moving 27 kids and a few adults is slow if you wait for everyone every time. We had 60 huge duffle bags filled with donated and purchased goods. They had ordered 4 large vans which aren't nearly enough. Everyone went ahead and I called Two uber XLs to bring the rest of the luggage. We went to get Covid tested first. They gave us the option of throat or nose. We went last and heard that the nose was a "brainer" so we opted for throat. It was a "gagger" but not too bad. When I got tested the tester said to me the number on my test ended in 770. I said what?!?. He repeated it. I don't understand but he was definitely referring to Chabad. (NOTE: the address for the Chabad Headquarters is 770 Eastern Parkway)

We then went to our hotel in the 2nd district (out of 23) where almost all 8000 Viennese Jews live. My uber driver told me a lot of "Yiddish" live there. After breakfast we walked to the main shul in Vienna where we meet the community leaders. They told us about the hundreds of refugees pouring into Vienna daily and how the Jewish community has opened its arms wide. Three hotels which shut during Covid were opened and free rooms are provided to the refugees. Several kosher restaurants are providing meals to the refugees. Medical and psychological attention is provided, job marts have been set up and the kids are put into school and baby-sitting services provided. It is costing the community \$100,000-\$200,000 per week and growing, small compared to Poland which had over a million refugee, but significant for this community.

We spoke to some of the adults. Most of the adults and kids did not speak English. But a number of them were from and spoke Hebrew which worked fine. We spoke to one 31-year-old guy named Alex who arrived a week ago from Odessa. He called Odessa the California of Ukraine, hopping hip and chilled. Two weeks ago, he was partying every night. Neither of

his parents can leave - his mother is a surgeon in an army hospital and his dad is fighting. But his parents forced him to leave (he had to sneak out).

I also spoke to the two women at the front desk of the hotel. They are volunteers who serve 4-hour shifts. Both were Russian speakers with Russian parents. One was a young artist born in Austria, the other an older non-Jewish Parisian who read about the hotel in the newspaper and volunteered.

After spending two hours in the hotel, we all took the subway to dinner. The refugees are all provided subway cards and dinner is held in different restaurants or cafeterias each night. Tonight, dinner was served in the cafeteria of an old age home. We took two Subways about twenty minutes to get there. We picked up trays like in a college caf and had chicken soup, stuffed cabbage, schnitzel, tomato salad for dinner. We all made sure not to sit with each other but to sit with a refugee family and engage. We sat with an older couple that arrived from Kyiv last Thursday. They were initially stuffed in an apartment with 10 other people but somehow the Jewish community heard about them and extracted them and put them in the hotel. He had lost his medication and a doctor was brought in and a new prescription written. They had a daughter who left Ukraine earlier but they have not been able to track her down yet. When we asked them how they were doing they said they're more or less ok but at the end of the day they're going back to a hotel room in a foreign country and not their own home. By the way, this couple was in their mid-60s- not an easy age to be going through this...

The students brought lots of games and activities to dinner and set up a play room where many of the kids had fun. They also set up an area to give away Purim costumes and other gifts. Tomorrow they will be setting up a pop-up Purim store for the refugees with all the costumes and holiday paraphernalia they brought over.

Earlier in the day we I walked to Chabad which is close to our hotel. We met a Ukrainian woman who looked despondent. She had five kids who were bored and antsy but she looked almost shell shocked. We tried to engage in English which she didn't speak and managed to speak a little in a Hebrew but she was not interested in interacting. She didn't seem to trust us or want to engage. Her kids wanted to play with mommy but we couldn't break through. It was sad.

That's all for now. Will update again.

LEADERSHIP BOARD

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If you are interested in becoming a part of the leadership board to help in the decision making process, please reach out to us at virtualshabbat@gmail.com