



Agudas Achim Newsletter

March 2022

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

Save the date

March 4, 2022

7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice
7:30 PM Services

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Purim: What Does It Mean?

At its origin in the third century BCE, The Book of Esther. The central text of Purim was written as a Greek-Hebrew farce. The Book of Esther was an elongated sordid comedy. The "old queen" Vashti, better translated as, former queen, was commanded to dance in the buff before a banquet of all of the princes and satraps of the 120 provinces of the Persians and the Medes, by the drunkard king, Ahasuerus. Vashti refuses, she is banished, (some would say, killed) and a search is begun for a new queen. In a story line that might be compared to the search of the prince for a consort in Cinderella.

The difference is that rather than being Prince Charming, Ahasuerus is an oaf. The story becomes ribald, as rather than using a glass slipper to find the future queen, contestants are paraded into the king's quarters in a manner not suited to be described in a synagogue bulletin. Haman is the classic villain. He becomes the personification of evil. The Book of Esther, at first, showed the triumph of good over evil in a humorous, then an ominous manner. The Jews, defeated the forces set forth by Haman. They were saved from destruction. Esther becomes Queen. Her uncle Mordecai is appointed to the high government office that Haman coveted. And so, the Book of Esther written almost a millennium after it was to have taken place, became in later years an anthem of Jewish survival.

Until modern times Purim was considered a minor holiday. It has become two things. On one level, it is a

children's holiday, full of singing, and noisemakers, and pastries. On the adult level, it is in some places, an inebriated Mardi Gras, a release before the weeks of spiritual preparation of Passover.

Yet in our times, that is, post Holocaust, and after the establishment of the modern, State of Israel, it is understood as an anthem of Jewish Survival. Never again, is the understood implication. The Book of Esther is the only book of the Bible where God's name is not mentioned. Today, it's power and that of Purim itself, is in the strength of the folk festival into which it has evolved. On one level, families rejoice with their children. On another level others understand truths far more profound; of the necessity to oppose evil, especially the evil which will always be fomented against us, along with the eternal need for vigilance and action.

We read the Book of Esther in the synagogue on Purim. It begins with the tale of the drunken banquet. It has many hidden meanings. In this time of synagogue shootings and other attacks some of the obscure messages emerge. As the children sing, those who understand prepare to defend those children, and to protect much more. The jokes and festivity are a temporary balm for dangerous realities that endure. And, we remember with the Prophet, Jeremiah, that "Hope is something that you do."

In Celebration

Rabbi Fred Pomerantz

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Hello everyone,

We are heading into March and preparing to 'go live' in April. It's funny how that is exciting and a little overwhelming. It's been very cozy sitting in the comfort of our homes and sharing Shabbat services. Now the leadership is tasked with the mission of providing a meaningful remote experience while providing a parallel but different experience for those who attend in person. We have limited individual resources but unlimited passion and spirit. We are committed to providing the best of both worlds so that we can remain relevant and so that relevance can grow. I would ask that anyone with thoughts, ideas and preferences that wants to put in even a little time to execute some of their own thoughts' ideas or preference, reach out to me. It just takes a little bit of time to be a part of making a forever difference to this congregation. No guilt, no pressure, but if you want to be a part of the direction we are heading, drop me a note.

Also, you should have received notices regarding membership. If you are already a member, thank you. As I said last month **YOUR MEMBERSHIP KEEPS US ALIVE!** We continue to maintain our open-door policy welcoming members and non-members and we are proud to maintain our dues at one of the lowest levels in the country. If you are not yet a member, I hope you will consider joining.

L' Shalom,

Judy Siegel, President
Jsiegel523@gmail.com
845-798-0783

Congregation News

GET WILL WISHES

It was nice to see Ben Halpern on the zoom during February services. He shared his recent health difficulties and how grateful he is to still be here with us. The congregation is also grateful and wishes Ben a speedy recovery and a long and healthy future.

Happy Birthday

Andrew Weiner 3/5
Jessica Ellen Schwalb 3/10
Brad Hemmer 3/19
Lynne Freedman 3/21
Jerry Burd 3/24
Ethel Hirshon 3/31

OPTIONAL OPT OUT

Would you prefer to 'opt out' of the hard copy newsletter and just receive an email version? Email us at virtualshabbat@gmail.com and let us know.

SPRING OPENING

We are moving forward with plans to provide the first live services beginning Friday, April 1, 2022. We will continue to provide services via zoom for those who are out of town and for those that are still more comfortable joining us from the comfort of their homes.

Jewish Education News

“Purim Day, Purim Day, Gladsome, joyous holiday. Happy throngs, singing songs, masked, dance and play.” These words, the chorus of a popular Purim song reflects the joyous mood and feelings that we have on Purim. It is a day of celebration. The Talmud tells us, “When a person enters the month of Adar (the Hebrew month in which Purim falls), joys increase.” (Ta’anit 29a) We are celebrating because long ago in Persia, Queen Esther, the beautiful Jewish Queen of King Ahasuerus, was responsible for saving the Jewish people from destruction by Haman.

Purim is our official “party day.” On Purim, we all go to temple dressed up in costume (This year virtually, on March 4th). We read from the Book of Esther called the Megillah and retell the story of how Queen Esther saved the Jewish people. Students in our Hebrew school have been learning about Purim, and the values that this story teaches. One should stand up for what is right, just as Queen Esther did. She did not have to go to the King, but she did and by doing so, changed the fate of our people in Persia. Students will be making and enjoying ‘Hamantaschen’, the triangle shaped pastry.

If we look at the calendar, Purim is usually 4 weeks after Tu B’Shevat. However, this year Tu B’Shevat was January 17th, and Purim this year is not until March 16. That is an 8-week separation; but there is a reason for this difference. The Hebrew calendar is primarily a lunar calendar, which means the months are determined by the new moon. The secular calendar follows the Gregorian calendar, which is a solar calendar that is based on the earth’s rotation. There are 12.4 lunar months in every solar year; this means that the lunar calendar will lose about 11 days off the solar calendar every year. Purim is always on the 14th of Adar, and Passover is always on the 15th of the Hebrew month Nissan. Since they are fixed dates, Purim & Passover (as well as all our other holidays) would fall earlier and earlier until they came during winter, then autumn, summer and back to spring. To make up for this problem, an extra month is periodically added to the Hebrew calendar, a leap month. Rabbi Hillel II in approximately 358 C.E. used astronomical and mathematical calculations to align the lunar year with the solar year over a 19-year cycle. Seven times during the 19-year cycle, the month Adar II, is added to the Hebrew calendar. The formula for these 7 times falls nicely into the phone number 332-3332. (The 3rd year + 3 more = 6th year, + 2 more = 8th year, etc.) Which corresponds to the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th and 19th years of the cycle. We are currently in the 2nd digit of the phone number. So, expect the next leap month, or Adar II to be in 2 years, which will be 2024 (5784). “Oh, today we’ll merry, merry be. Oh, today we’ll merry, merry be. Oh, today we’ll merry, merry be, and nosh some hamantaschen.” Chag Sameach.

Shalom u’Verachah ~ Peace and Blessings

Tobi Innerfield, Director of Education

Message from the Levins:

Happy month of Adar! Mirroring the celebration in the parsha for the week, we too, will be celebrating, albeit, in our online Mishkan! We are excited to join everyone for our upcoming Purim gathering. Our collective joy can bridge the gap of the distance between us, as we continue to make our way back to being face to face, or mask to mask, in our beloved temple.

We will be singing some of our favorite Purim standards as well as a Spiel that will be *Fab*-ulous! Our favorite place for hamantaschen in NYC has closed after many decades, so we will be on a treasure hunt for another bakery. Since we will meet before the actual holiday, perhaps you will have recommendations for us!

We hope this finds you all warm and well.

Love and Shalom, Ira and Julia/ The Levins

UPCOMING SHABBAT SERVICES

March , 4, 2022

7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice
7:30 PM Services

April 1, 2022

Gather at 7:00
Levin's 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 6, 2022

Gather at 7:00
7:30 PM Services
Levin's 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

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.

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:

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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