



Agudas Achim Newsletter

February 2022

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

Save the date

February 4, 2022

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

RABBI'S MESSAGE

After Beth Israel

....." Last Shabbat felt like waiting at the death bed of a loved one, which I have done many times. Then the loved one survives, but the trauma remains. Israelis are hardened to these realities, yet I'm guessing that each incident takes a toll. It's slowly coming clear to Americans. It will only become more intense until the anti-Semitism passing as an anti-Zionism, is opposed. There is No talk about Hamas or Hezbollah atrocities. They do not recognize the fact of all of the Jews were thrown out of Moslem countries after 1948. Close to a million. But why am I going on?

You know all of this. I'm just venting after a service praying for healing. I am remembering that there was an armored car, and soldiers with sub machine guns outside the great synagogue in Rome. Outside the great synagogue in Florence. The synagogue off the main square in Lisbon was shuttered and locked with a grill brought down over the entire front, the guide and onlookers didn't know if/ when it was open. In Istanbul, one had to show passports the day before a visit, while Israeli ex intelligence officers research each proposed visitor. (When one entered the guide conducted a tour of the wide marble bima where blood of those machine gunned was preserved and protected in the stone of the altar.)

In Izmir, the unmarked synagogue, behind huge walls, assembled the community for a bar mitzvah, while four scruffy looking ex-IDF soldiers stood in front of the walls with Uzis slung around their neck. This in the 70's 80'd, 90's. And it all has remained and expanded throughout Europe and the rest of the world. Now, that reality is becoming ours.
Ok

Ok

Sorry. I know that you understand this. Just saying how now in America this is becoming the norm.

In the Catskills there is no police department in the town. Police are a half hour's fast car ride. (There are a few sheriff's cars that patrol one of the largest counties in NY) I'm telling my people that we have to do it alone. Yes, we hire an armed guard for services, but if he is "neutralized," We have to do it alone. There are no exits from the sanctuary, only the front door. We must forge an active shooter plan.

After three security webinars, I understand that we need meeting with the Sheriff and State Police and the local fire chief to review our options and responsibilities. For this we need to form a security committee, separate from our board of trustees. Our President has wonderful connections to the local first responders, but we can't put the responsibility and efforts for all of this on her.

At the Webinars I learned again about all of the federal and state grants that are available for items such as improved lighting. Security cameras in front of each door. Even money available to replace all of the doors with security doors. These may be our only defense until help comes. We need a radio contact with the guard on the porch, if we lock the doors during services. And, there is so much more. We'll probably need to conduct shooting drills, as sister congregations do, online, and at a service. Ok, ok, enough.

Thank you for letting me process all of this. Still, I so remember standing outside of Tree of Life, placing flowers and stones, with my family. As in Europe, every shul in America, must now be protected.
....."

Chevre

The above was part of a letter that I sent to an old friend from Pittsburgh who made Aliyah to Israel, many years ago. As your Rabbi, according to Jewish tradition, I am responsible for your welfare. Not simply leading services, consoling and counseling congregants, performing life cycle events, overseeing education and other such visible events. I am to look after your welfare. This is one of the reasons that I implore any of our members who have experience in filling out government forms, or are willing how to do so, or any who are prepared to volunteer your time to look after the security of our congregation, to email or text Judy Siegel, to tell her of your willingness to do so. This work is not suited for every one. And, many who care do not, now, have the time. I understand. Yet this is not merely meant for those who live close to our synagogue. Much of the work will be on zoom. Though we will need some to assist first defenders make an assessment of our physical plant. If we don't have a printed floor plan of our building, someone will need to sketch one. Much needs to be done. We will start soon building on the work our officers and board have already done for security.

I didn't mention in the letter that I am heartened that here in the USA our government, through the FBI, sent a plane full of the world's best SWAT team, to a Temple in Texas to help a Rabbi and three of his congregants. FBI negotiators kept the hostages alive for eleven hours. The FBI team joined hundreds of local first responders who showed up and were willing to risk their lives for the Jews inside. America is still our best hope. We are still part of the fabric of our beloved country. While anti-semitism is on the rise, others of all faiths have, this week, stood with us in prayer.

We shall prepare security, knowing, if needed, help is on the way.

Love
Rabbi Fred Pomerantz

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.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Hello everyone.

The current slate of officers was re-elected at the Annual Meeting on January 16. Thank you for trusting me and the other members of the executive board with guiding Congregation Agudas Achim through another year. It is sincerely an honor to be part of the history of this congregation.

We discussed a few other things at the meeting; the annual budget, the opportunity to reach new residents of Sullivan County and those that left the area long ago that might want to join our congregation and attend through zoom, a new dues structure and other ways we can grow and stay strong.

Stay tuned for upcoming events; **We're "going live" April 1.** We will have zoom services for those that cannot or choose not to attend but, for those that wish we plan to have live services. Also, we'll have some bar and bat mitzvahs and a spring clean-up at the end of May or beginning of June to give the outside a fresh start for the summer season.

Very soon you will find in either your email box or your mailbox a membership application form. **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. If you are a member, thank you so much for your support. We cannot continue without you.

L' Shalom,

Judy Siegel, President

Jsiegel523@gmail.com

845-798-0783

Message from the Levins

One of our favorite holidays is Tu Bishvat. We often feel it is strange to honor the birthday of the trees in January, especially in a winter climate. Spring or autumn seems more appropriate, just as the trees are dressed for the party and ready to celebrate. The trees, of course, are our teachers, reminding us that there is beauty in stark times. The psalms remind us, too, as we've boldly paraphrased in a song:

"Be like the trees, planted by the streams-bringing forth the fruit in the season of our dreams. Let your roots go down into the cool riverbed, let the waters all go crazy on the surface overhead. Your leaves will never wither, you'll succeed in all you do. And you will bring the shade to everyone surrounding you."

We are very much looking forward to coming together to strengthen one another. It is heartening that the torah portion, when we gather, is Terumah, which tells us that the Israelites are called on to offer their treasures and talents to build the Mishkan: the portable tabernacle in the wilderness. It is in the process of building something together in gratitude that the people become a nation.

Likewise, our coming together, as a treasured community, even in our portable Zoom services, allow for us all to use our individual presence and talents to create a space for sacred nurturing.

Julia and I are, as always, looking forward to being with you and Rabbi Fred for our next service. Stay warm!

Blessings and gratitude, Ira and Julia

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.

Upcoming Shabbat Services

February 4, 2022	7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice 7:30 PM 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

Jewish Education News

New Year's Resolutions frequently happen when we turn the page of the calendar from December to January. For example, we often hear of people resolving to lose weight, start exercising or being more organized. Resolutions can also be seen through Jewish eyes, and it's not too late to make a resolution. One can resolve to go to our zoom (and soon to be in-person) Shabbat Services, be involved or more involved in their child's Jewish education. One can decide to make contributions to charity by giving tzedakah, or go out of their way to help others by doing mitzvot. The students in the school learn about tzedakah, and they are learning about various middot, Jewish values such as visiting the sick (Bikkur Holim), treating each other with respect (Derekh Eretz), take care of God's world (Tikkun Olam) and much more.

We have the opportunity to resolve to become more involved, caring Jews. On Tu B'Shevat, the new year of the trees. A day when we think about planting trees in Israel and a time when we think about taking care of the world. We learn in Torah that God gave Adam and Eve the Garden of Eden. It was up to them to take care of all that was in it. So, as they were commanded to take care of this part of God's world, we too try to take care of our world. We think about Tikkun Olam, and ways we can fix the world. One such way is Bal Tash-hit, not to destroy or waste. So, we recycle, shut lights when leaving a room, reuse unneeded items in other ways, donate unwanted clothes to coat or clothing drives, walk instead of drive, plant one tree when cutting down another, and so much more.

Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. fought for equal rights for all people. He saw an injustice and worked to right it. Jewish theologians and activists Abraham Joshua Heschel and Eugene Borowitz marched alongside King in Selma, Alabama. When I went to HUC, I remember Dr. Borowitz telling us, the students in his class, how he was arrested for marching. These men, along with hundreds of other men and women saw the necessity help make a difference in this world. Our students learn that we as Jews are involved in this world, and not just as spectators.

When someone we care about is ill, or society is hurting we say Mi Shebeirach, the Jewish prayer of Healing. After the events at Colleyville this past Shabbat (as I am writing this), we need to heal as individuals, and as a community. It is appropriate and right to ask God for healing.

Planting trees on Tu BiShevat, taking care of the world, giving Tzedakah, marching for justice and saying Mi Shebeirach can all be considered Tikkun Olam. It is up to each one of us to resolve, especially now, to do what we can to repair the world that God gave us, through acts both small and large, acts of caring and love. To understand that this is a sacred obligation. It is our holy task to strive, to work towards making this world a better place. As we learn in our text Pirke Avot, "We are not obligated to complete the task, but neither are we free to ignore or abstain from it."

Shalom u'Verachah ~ Peace and Blessings

Tobi Innerfield, Director of Education

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.

Happy Anniversary

Dr. Charles & Sara Herbstman 1/29 (50th)
Ron & Ethel Hirshon 2/3

Happy Birthday

Becky Denman 2/2
Dan Berkowicz 2/4
Karen Blocker 2/5
Vivian Ehrlich 2/9
Michael Lederer 2/9
Richard Chiger 2/13
Kayla Rivera 2/15
Hope Schwartz 2/17
Alan Rajlevsky 2/19



for the donation

Ben & Olga Halpern

Celebrating 50th Wedding Anniversary

Charles & Sara Herbstman

DONATIONS

Our in person contact (and thus our fundraising efforts) are 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



SUGGEST A BOOK

Do you have books that you have read that you would like to suggest to others? We're starting an Agudas Achim Book List. Please include the name of the book, the author, 1-5 star review and send your suggestions to virtualshabbat@gmail.com

Congregation News

We send our sympathy to Judy Levine and her family in the loss of her husband, Jonathan who died on January 5th.

We send congratulations to Charles & Sara Herbstman celebrating their 50th Wedding Anniversary on January 29th.