



Agudas Achim Newsletter

January 2023

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

Save the date

Friday, January 6th

7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice

7:30 PM Services

Post services zoom gathering with Levins and congregants attending

Rabbi's Message

Light in a Dark Time of the Year

On the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the New York Times the newspaper published three separate front pages. The first was the actual front page published on paper's first day, a hundred prior. The second front page was the normal front page of the day. The third front page was a projection of what the leading stories might be in a hundred years on the Times' next hundredth year anniversary. It contained wild projections. However, at the bottom of the page was a small box which contained the shabbat candle lighting time for that day, a hundred years hence. When asked why he, an Irish Catholic editor included the candle lighting time in the hundred-year projection, he answered that one thing that he could count on happening in a hundred years was that Jewish women would be lighting sabbath candles.

I was astounded by the implication of his answer. A holy continuum that runs through our time. Light is a symbol of the Divine. Light is a symbol of holiness. The affirmation comes from each private abode, Jewish women, through time have affirmed

the world, and blessed the home of their family through continuing this historic act of kindling candles as did their fore-bearers. An act of beauty, and history, and hope.

This projection of the Times caused me to picture a chain of living tradition in my own family. I saw the images of my granddaughter, Hannah, my daughter, Rebecca, Sandy, my mother, Marcia, my grandmother, Yetta from my memory, all lighting candles in my presence. Pictures in my life that I had seen. I imagine my great grandmothers Elizabeth and Tema, two Jewish woman from wildly different cultural backgrounds, both nevertheless lighting shabbat candles, all of them using the same historic prayer. This is the living chain of tradition that we honor and strengthen.

Some have not, for a variety of reasons, developed the custom of lighting the candles on Friday night. It can be a grounding experience. One can feel the power of bringing light into the world. If one doesn't know the Hebrew of the prayer, it's sufficient for now to simply light the candles, and offer even a silent prayer of thanksgiving. Once the habit is established, one can begin with the prayer in English. The Hebrew benediction is available in transliteration online.

Aside from the historic implication, the kindling

on Shabbat can be a very personal, private moment. Many take a moment before the ritual to offer a silent personal prayer. Tradition says such prayers are granted because of "the merit of Jewish women." Just as the candle shine of Chanukah can inspire us through the darkness of the solstice, the candle shine of Shabbat can lift our personal spiritual life throughout the year.

Just as the Irish Catholic editor of the Times knew that there would be a Jewish continuum, let each of us find a personal way to be part of that extension of our Jewish faith.

At Agudas Achim, we are part of the history of our congregation that began almost a hundred years ago. What can each of us do to secure the next century? Find a way. I invite you to do so.

Love,
Rabbi Fred Pomerantz



BIRTHDAY PLANNING

Our building turns 100 years old next year. Want to help plan for the party? Have some ideas? Drop a note to virtualshabbat@gmail.com and be a part of the story

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

I love where I live. Writing this newsletter, I'm looking out my window as the snow is falling and the evergreens are fully draped with heavy snow. It's a perfect winter scene. On the first weekend of Chanukah a number of us had the opportunity to participate in the lighting of a 9-foot menorah that was designed by a new member of our Agudas Achim family, Hope Blecher and built by her husband Ray Croney. At the same time, we closed out the Shabbat with a service led by Tobi Innerfield with music provided by Sarah Weber. As the menorah was lit, the scene was made complete by the snowflakes dropping from the dark sky. It was a little bit of magic.

But, for me, more than the snow and the music and the fabulous menorah, it was the community. 30-40 members of the Sullivan County community took time out of their day at 4:30 in the afternoon and stood in the cold to show support for the lighting of this menorah. The Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce, the Liberty Town Supervisor, the Local Newspaper editor, the Sullivan County Visitor's Association, the Sullivan County Sheriff and mostly members of the community attended with enthusiasm as Chanukah and Havdalah were explained and celebrated. In a world where antisemitism is on the rise, and there is often hate and discord it is life affirming and gratifying to be a part of a community that shows that kind of support. May it always be so.

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

Jewish Education News

The beginning of the new (secular) year is a quiet time. No Jewish holidays (*Tu B'Shevat* this year comes out in February) and the sometimes-stressful Thanksgiving, Chanukah season is over. Things often look crisp, fresh and clean in January. White snow on the ground, resolutions being made, seed catalogues arriving in the mail. While on the outside, the world seems to be at rest, it is a nice time to look about at all that is happening, all there is, and see blessings and the miracles around us. My children have always said that I look at life through Jewish eyes, and I must admit that I do. So, this month, I would like to give you a chance to look at the world through my eyes.

Let's have a little fun quiz. Since we spend a lot of time indoors in January, here are some things we see from/in our homes. What is Jewish about...?

...houses/homes?

It is nice to spend time within the warmth and comfort of our homes, so we think of the mitzvah of *Shalom Bayit* (peace within the home) and a *mezuzah* on the doorposts. We have a home, some people don't, so we can help (giving *tzedakah*), supporting Habitat for Humanity (doing *tikkun olam*). There is Agudas Achim – which is called a *Beit Keneset*, *Beit Tefillah* and *Beit Sefer* (House of Gathering, House of Worship and House of Study), and the blessing of family to share our homes.

...birds?

We look outside and see birds playing in the snow, eating at bird feeders or flying south. On the fifth day of creation, God created birds that could fly. It was the dove that brought an olive leaf to Noah, so the concept of *Brit* (a covenant, partnership with God). Beauty of birds, bird watching (*hoda'ah*, appreciation), keeping bird feeders filled (*tza'ar ba'alei chayim*, kindness to animals).

...cookies?

Cookies bring back memories of good times, the recipes from mom, dad or grandma (*zicaron*, memory and *mishpachah*, family). We make cookies for our guests (*hachnasat orchim*, hospitality, welcoming guests) and we bring cookies to sick friends or family (*bikkur cholim*, visiting the sick). Saying a blessing before we eat cookies (*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam borei minei m'zonot*. Blessed are you Adonai our God, ruler of the Universe, who creates all kinds of foods).

...trees?

Outside we see trees whose leaves have already fallen and evergreens. On the third day of creation, God created trees. It is our task to take care of the trees (*brit*, covenant, partnership with God and *tikkun olam*, repairing God's world). We call the Torah an *Eitz Chaim*, a Tree of Life. We think about planting seeds, saplings, or trees, and are reminded of the holiday *Tu B'Shevat*, the New Year for Trees and the story of Honi and the Carob Tree, from the Talmud, *Ta'anit 23a*. Saying blessings before we eat foods that come from trees (*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam borei p're ha'eitz*. Blessed are you, Adonai our God, ruler of the Universe, who created the fruit of the tree).

I could go on. What's Jewish about soup? (Chicken soup for *Shabbat*), or frogs? (One of the Plagues remembered at *Passover*), or apples? (Apples and honey at *Rosh HaShannah*).

(Continued on page 4)

Want to know the Jewish connections with other things? Many of these examples and blessings came from the book, What's Jewish About Butterflies? (*This book makes a great gift for families with Jewish children.*) What do you think of when you look around? We have so much and have so much to give. I am thankful for all of it, and therefore must say:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam oseh ma'aseh b'reishit.

Blessed are you Adonai our God, source of creation and its wonders.

Happy Secular New Year

Shalom u'Verachah ~ Peace and Blessing,

Tobi Innerfield

Director of Education

UPCOMING SERVICES

Services will be virtual until spring of 2023. Email virtualshabbat@gmail.com for the link

Friday, January 6th

7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice

7:30 PM Services

Post services zoom gathering with Levins and congregants attending

Friday, February 3rd

7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice

7:30 PM Services

Post services zoom gathering with Levins and congregants attending

Friday, March 3rd

7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice

7:30 PM Services

Post services zoom gathering with Levins and congregants attending

HELP NEEDED ... FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR HOME!

The wonders of zoom have allowed us to reach friends and family all across the world and have allowed organizations like Agudas Achim to provide services throughout the year. Every month a volunteer provides the screen sharing for the entire congregation so that we can read through the services and the song sheets. In order to keep providing that service we need at least one more person to help. Someone with a computer and a basic knowledge of zoom that will commit to just a couple of hours a month is needed. We really need you-please reach out if you would be willing to help round out the team.

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.

DONATIONS....please consider.

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:

Security
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

FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITY

CD Trips, LLC (Owned and operated by Gary and Judy Siegel) is running a trip to Israel in December 5-14 2023. They will donate a portion of each ticket booked by anyone that mentions Agudas Achim to them at the time of booking. Check out the trip at cdtrips.com and click Iconic Israel

HELP US PRESERVE OUR HISTORY!!!!

Do you have a story to share now? Some photos of the synagogue or people that attended Agudas Achim? Some knowledge or memories of these and other Livingston Manor families? Please send me an email and share your piece(s) of history. Send the request on to family and friends. Be a part of preserving our history for the future.

Havdalah Service

What is Havdalah?

Havdalah is the Jewish religious ceremony that marks the symbolic end of Shabbat and ushers in the new week. This beautiful, brief ritual (Less than ½ hour) involves lighting a special Havdalah candle with several wicks, blessing a cup of wine and smelling sweet spices.

Havdalah takes place after the sun is set on Saturday evening.

Although Havdalah is weekly, Tobi Innerfield will be sharing, via Zoom, a Havdalah service once a month.

Winter/Spring Schedule Save the dates!

Saturday, Jan. 21 @ 7 pm
Saturday, Feb.18 @ 7 pm
Saturday, Mar.18 @ 7 pm
Saturday, Apr.22 @ 8 pm
Saturday, May 20 @ 8:30 pm

Use this Zoom Link to come into the Havdalah.

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/71950737639?pwd=yDFMo4a1KYbcnHNgZSr1BUQRmrU621.1>

(Note: This is a unique Zoom link, and is NOT the link that we use for Shabbat services.)

Meeting ID: 719 5073 7639 Passcode: OveXyi

To heighten your personal Havdalah experience, it is suggested that you have some sweet-smelling spices with you...cinnamon, cloves or allspice. Some people will take an orange and stick whole cloves into it.

We look forward to your joining us on Zoom!
RSVP not required!

Happy Anniversary

Carl Tishler & Bonnie L. Katz 1/28
Charles & Sara Herbstman 1/29

Happy Birthday

Jackie Chiger 1/1
Diane Fishman 1/1
Lewis Skolnick 1/1
Steven Fishman 1/5
Sherry Silver 1/6
Alan Blocker 1/7
Marta Pomerantz 1/17
Jerrold Ehrlich 1/21
Mary Jane Schneider 1/22
Alli Hemmer 1/23

Thank you for your donation

Teri Banerjee
Ron & Alice Lindholm

In honor of Dr. Bonnie Katz

Marvin & Susan Katz

In memory of Louis Blecher

Hope Blecher & Ray Croney

In memory of Seymour H. Eidman

Michael K. Eidman

Cemetery fund

Steven & Diane Fishman

Hebrew School Fund

John Katzenstein

Congregation News

We send our sympathy to the following families:

Hilda Kellman – in the loss of her husband – Bruce Kellman
Richard & Wendy Schwab – in the loss of Richard's mother – Barbara Schwalb
Martin & Helaine Weiner – in the loss of Martin's brother – Charles Weiner, also the uncle of David & Wendy Weiner
Tamera Reynolds Zwerling – in the loss of her mother – Sylvia Reynolds