



Agudas Achim Newsletter

July 2023

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

Save the date!

Friday, July 7

7:15 pm Gather in person at Agudas Achim or on Zoom

7:15 pm Levins will open the service with 15 minutes of music

7:30 pm Levins begin welcoming the Sabbath* live and via Zoom*

Rabbi's Message

Reform Judaism; Allowing Jewish Change

What if one doesn't know Hebrew, can you pray the prayers of the services in the language you know? Can we use instrumental music in our services, to better feel a sense of holiness? Can families sit together during a worship service, instead of separating men from women? May children of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother be raised as a Jew? May a girl become a bat (bas) mitzvah? May a woman be called up on a bimah to read the Torah. Can a woman become a Rabbi?

The answers are yes. The changes were not made simply to be au courant, or hip. Not made merely to make matters easier in congregational life. These so-called new answers are not disassociated from the past, but each was decided after reviewing the essence on halacha, Jewish Law. We looked not to codes, what custom had been, but rather we investigated the spiritual and ethical teachings and values inherent in the older laws and customs. We asked, what is the intent and meaning, and how can we best carry it out, today?

Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof, one of the most beloved, distinguished, and influential American Rabbis of the twentieth century, taught that Jewish law offered guidance, not governance. Since Biblical times, the Law has suggested the way, rather than hold us hostage to old customs. Rabbi Freehof would look to Jewish history, as well as to what the Rabbis and our people were attempting to achieve with older ways of doing

things. In determining whether the child of a Jewish father and non-Jewish mother may be raised as a Jew and has Jewish status Rabbi Freehof and Rabbi Alexander Schindler, the President of Reform's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, among other leaders showed that originally, Jewish status was determined by the father in Biblical times.

Didn't King Solomon have hundreds of non-Jewish wives (largely carried out by foreign political considerations) and yet his offspring were declared to be Hebrews-as were others in the early Biblical time. Reform showed that this custom-law was changed after various nations invaded Ancient Israel and Jewish women were forcibly impregnated by foreign soldiers. Now the status was determined by the mother, so that the offspring would have Jewish status. And so, the Reform movement was the first to allow Patrilineal descent since biblical times to determine Jewishness of a child. It's not something new. Judaism has always combined the timeless with the timely, the eternal with the now.

And so, when Rabbi Sally Priesand, fifty-one years ago stood in front of the open ark at the Rabbinic ordination ceremony of Hebrew Union College to become the first woman to be ordained as a Rabbi by a Rabbinic School, she was then that combination of the timeless with the timely.

When Rabbi Nelson Glueck, Rosh Yeshivah, President of Hebrew Union College placed his hands on her shoulders to ordain her as a "Rabbi in Israel," her entire ordination class stood, as did the 1800 people attending to mark the historic significance of the

moment. It was the eternal with the now.

The week of this writing, Tobi Innerfield, our member and our Director of Education, will be ordained as a Rabbi, by the Rabbinic Seminary of America at the Actor's Synagogue in Manhattan.

Tobi follows the lead woman have played at Agudas Achim in the services and ritual at of our congregation. Ellen Singer functioned as a lay rabbi of the congregation for many years. When I joined the congregation, I considered her a colleague. Dimona Galli was sent by the congregation to train by the Union of Reform Judaism to be a para rabbi. Tobi, as Ellen earned a master's degree in Jewish education. All three have been our Directors of Jewish Education. Tobi has been a Torah Reader for the High Holydays, and assists at shabbat services. Moreover, Dr. Bonnie Katz, a highly educated layperson, has been reading Torah at the High Holydays for years, as well as assisting with the services last Yontif, as I was in the process of recovering from covid.

Tobi has demonstrated a command of understanding congregational life, along with a dedication to her students and their families, and to the college students of our congregation. She has worked with Judy Siegel, our first woman president, preparing programs and setting up a monthly Havdalah program which she leads. We wish her God's blessing as she embarks on this new phase of her life.

We will pay tribute to Tobi's ordination with a consecration blessing at our services on July 7th.

Judaism has the capacity to maintain meaningfulness and spiritual connection and customs, while constantly changing and adapting to new circumstances and challenges.

As our leaders have taken us in the past, we shall continue as a congregation, to meet the future with a new heart and new spirit, while honoring that which has proceeded us.

Love,

Rabbi Fred Pomerantz

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

Jewish Community. That is the overriding reason that most people mention when discussing why they support Congregation Agudas Achim. As part of that, the board continues work throughout the year to provide opportunities to connect with other Jews, support the future, and honor the past.

It's not that easy in 2023, particularly in a region that doesn't have a very large base of Jewish people. Yet, Agudas Achim gets it done. There were more than two dozen people welcoming Shabbat in the synagogue last month! Karen and Alan Blocker arranged a beautiful Oneg after services where we sat with cake and coffee, making new friends and rekindling with old ones.

Like our own families, Agudas Achim is spread out all over the country and as time goes on it gets more and more difficult to develop and maintain a meaningful relationship. Congregating at the synagogue provides a chance to connect and be a part of your community. Personally, I often find it hard to make the choice to attend services on Friday night instead of grabbing a dinner with friends in a local restaurant or just relaxing at home but every time I make the effort, I am so happy that I do! It's fulfilling and satisfying to schmooze a little with other members of our community. Come and try it! Agudas Achim continues to provide the community that so many of us crave..... come check it out!

L'Shalom

Judy Siegel, President
845-798-0783

Jewish Education News

A story in the Talmud tells us that Rabbi Assi and Rabbi Ammi came to a place where there was not a Schoolmaster. They asked the head of the community to summon the town's watchmen, and the night watchers were brought into their presence. "They are no profit to a city," the Rabbis said, "they are only an expense." "And who do you call watchmen?" the Rabbis were asked. "The schoolmasters" they responded. "A town without schools will not be guarded by God." This simple story tells us the importance of having a Jewish school in your community. Our school may be small, but we hold a special value to the congregation, to the students we serve, and to the greater community.

Last month during Shabbat services we gave honor to a Torah that we obtained from the newly shuttered Port Jervis Reform Synagogue. When we look around, we see the nearest Reform congregation to us does not have a religious school. Think about the linkage of these two things for a moment and consider the value of what we do here. In May we held a community event in which the members of our congregation, the community, and children from the Livingston Manor Central School came to our Congregation Agudas Achim to learn. Not only did they hear an amazing set of personal testimonies giving life to the stories of the Holocaust, but then the students came inside our sanctuary for a quick tour... the first time most of those young people had seen the inside of our building and very possibly the first time most of them had been inside a Jewish sanctuary. In December, Congregation Agudas Achim was a presence at the Parkville Hanukkiyah Dedication. This is what educational programming can do – it strengthens us from within and without, linking us to our community, and to the generations that came before and to our Jewish future. The first weekend in August we will be calling a young man up to the Torah for his Bar Mitzvah. As this school year ends, we look forward to next year when we will have 2 more B'nai Mitzvah students. Through the support of our Rabbi and our Leadership, we remain a vital resource for Jewish learning in our region. Our Jewish Community may be small, but we have made the choice to have the right kind of watchmen at our gates.

An old tradition of our sages says that when children first come to school, they should be given honey along with the letters of Aleph Bet (Hebrew alphabet). In this manner, it was taught, the children would learn that the words of Torah are as sweet as honey, so they never turn away from them. We should all avail ourselves of the opportunities to learn. Torah and mitzvot should be studied lishmah, for the sake of learning. Imagine how we would all act towards one another if words of Torah were on our minds and in our hearts; the kindness and the love we would show to ourselves and our neighbors. For those so inclined, technology has now enabled us to seek learning through podcasts, websites, and zoom. Just as modern technology now allows us to worship together in the cold and snowy winter months when our building is closed, so technology can help you on a personal learning journey.

Speaking of my own personal journey for a moment, as a child I had minimal exposure to Hebrew school, only a year or two, and girls were not permitted to be Bat Mitzvah in that shul. It wasn't until I was 27 years old that I became an adult Bat Mitzvah and from that point on I have always endeavored to learn. I received a graduate degree in Religious Education from Hebrew Union College (HUC-JIR) in 2001. My heart was filled with a Jewish spirit, and my education continued. It is with great joy, and with gratitude to Rabbi Pomerantz who helped me along this path, and most especially with gratitude to the Divine Presence that I share with you that in June I was Ordained by Rabbinical Seminary International as Rabbi.

Israeli Politician and Educator Zalman Aran spoke about lifelong learning, saying: "Education is an unfinished symphony." Whether Jewish learning is 'music to your ears', or 'as sweet as honey', it can bring you great joy at any phase of your life. I invite you all to continue your personal Jewish Journey, and to reach out to me if I can be of any assistance.

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

UPCOMING SERVICES

***Services continue to be virtual throughout the year. Email virtualshabbat@gmail.com for the link. In additions, services are in person from May through the High Holidays**

Friday, July 7th

7:15 PM Gather In person at Agudas Achim or on zoom
7:15 pm Levins will open the service with 15 minutes of music
7:30 PM Levins begin welcoming the Sabbath* live and via zoom*

A zoom link will be provided for anyone that prefers not to attend in person. HINT: it is the same every month

Friday, August 4th

7:15 PM Gather In person at Agudas Achim or on zoom
7:15 pm Levins will open the service with 15 minutes of music
7:30 PM Levins begin welcoming the Sabbath* live and via zoom*

Rosh Hashanah Services

Friday, Sept 15	Ere of Rosh Hashanah
Saturday, Sept 16	Rosh Hashanah Morning Services

Yom Kippur Services

Sunday, Sept 24	Kol Nidre
Monday, Sept 25	Morning Services
	Yizkor
	Afternoon Services
	Community Break Fast

NOTE: First Friday Shabbat services will be deferred to Sept 15

Michele and Chip Hemmer have proudly made a donation in honor of the marriage of their son Brad to Samantha August. The couple will be married on July 2, 2023 in Cleveland, Ohio and currently reside in Chicago. Congratulations, Brad and Sam!

CRAFT BEER AND SPIRITUALITY

July 15th 3:30-5:00

Join us at The Smoke Joint (630 Old Route 17, Livingston Manor) as we move toward the end of Shabbat with the extraordinary music of Ira and Julia Levin, samplings of some of the best local beer and spirits and the spiritual beauty of a Havdalah ceremony.

This is a free event building community awareness and connections. Stop on by!

HIGH HOLIDAY/ Yahrzeit

We will once again provide an opportunity to have the names of the loved ones that have passed scrolled on our zoom feed. Please send those that you would like listed with a donation to

Congregation Agudas Achim, PO Box 714, Livingston Manor, NY 12758

Suggested Yahrzeit Donation(s)

\$18 ____ \$36 ____ \$100 ____ \$180 ____ \$250 ____ \$360 ____
\$500 ____ \$750 ____ \$1000 ____ Other \$ ____

We offer our sympathy

We are sending our condolences to Steve & Suzanne White and family, as we hear the news that Steve's mom Joan died on May 31st.

We are sending our condolences to Les Mattis and the family on hearing the news that his wife, Rose Brown died on June 7th.

NEWSLETTERS

We are limiting the number of hard copy mailings we provide each year. If you have an email address on record you will continue to see the monthly newsletter in your in box. IF YOU WANT TO RECEIVE A HARD COPY MONTHLY LET US KNOW. Either email us at virtualshabbat@gmail.com or write us a letter to Congregation Agudas Achim, PO Box 714, Livingston Manor, NY 12758. Hard copies will continue to be sent on to those that do not have an email address on file.

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

JOIN US IN ISRAEL!

CD Trips, LLC (Owned and operated by Gary and Judy Siegel) is running a trip to Israel 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 PRESERVE YOUR STORY AS PART OF 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 to family and friends. Be a part of preserving our history for the future.

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.

ZOOM

We are continuing to work to provide the best experience we can for those that attend services in person and those that are on zoom. With that in mind, some changes were made last month that made the zoom experience less than perfect. Please know that we are aware we're working on it and we expect to have all sound issues resolved for the July service.

Message from the Levins

We are gearing up for our in-person Havdalah Experience on Saturday, July 15th at The Smoke Joint, in Livingston Manor. While we won't be waiting to see the traditional three stars in the sky, we will be gathering to engage all of our senses, lift our spirits, and offer blessings. It's an opportunity to sing together, celebrate and set the tone for our joy and tranquility for the coming week.

Traditionally, the custom of this sacred ritual is mentioned throughout the Psalms*, in the book of Isaiah (12:2-3) and in Esther (8:16). Havdalah, which means "separation," distinguishes Shabbat from the rest of the week. It is a loving, lingering "Jewish goodbye" to what has been referred to as our *neshama yetera*, or the 2nd soul bestowed to us during our weekly Menuha, or Shabbos rest.

On a personal note, I was inspired to share Havdalah with Julia on our very first date and it became a sacred practice for us in our home after we married. It was the seed planted as a foundation for our future together and we look forward to sharing this meaningful, if not mystical, ritual with you.

From the braided challah on Friday night to the braided candle of Havdalah, we are woven together, in all of our splendorous diversity, into a unified whole. *And did we mention music and "spirits"?*

Feel free to bring your own personal Havdalah set if you wish, otherwise, we will have all things necessary. If you are unable to come in person, our education director (and soon to be ordained Rabbi!), Tobi Innerfield, has already been sharing Havdalah services once a month online, via Zoom. Check the dates for those as well!

The Levins
(Ira Levin & Julia Bordenaro Levin)

Happy Anniversary

Richard & Wendy Schwalb 7/12
Ronald & Susan Elinoff 7/16

Happy Birthday

Rachel Schmitt 7/5
Joseph M Galli 7/9
Dayra Lederer 7/9
Simon Hirschhorn 7/12
Carl Tishler 7/12
Marian Kleinman 7/21
Heidi Leunisen-Rivera 7/24
Daniel Hemmer 7/28
Jacques Nadeau 7/28
Sarah Nadeau 7/28
Amy Lavine 7/30
Hope Blecher 8/1

Thank you for your donation!

Marian Kleinman

Cemetery fund
Diane Stein

In honor of the marriage of their son
Brad and Samantha August
Michele & Chip Hemmer

Rosh Hashanah Prayer Book
In memory of Howard White
Steve & Suzanne White

Sabbath Prayer Book
In memory of Leonora Sherman
Karen & Alan Blocker