



# Agudas Achim Newsletter

## May 2023

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

### Save the date!

**Friday, May 5th**

7:00 PM Gather in person at Agudas Achim or on Zoom

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

### Rabbi's Message

I. On Friday, Shabbat Eve, May 5th, we shall return, in person, to our synagogue and sanctuary, yet the service we share will continue to be available on our zoom link as well. While I have been inspired and blessed by the services, we have experienced in our zoom community since the fall, I look forward, now, to occupy the sacred space of our praying place with those of you who will be able to come in person to worship together in our historic shul.

Yes, Jewish life in America, and around the world, given our experiences during the pandemic, and the availability of a zoom link allowed us to worship in community, when in person gathering was dangerous. And, we have learned that zoom is here to stay in temples and synagogues throughout the world. Every service now needs to be hybrid. (a combination of in person and zoom)

Some, as our sister Reform Temple in Monticello, hold some zoom and some in person services each month. However, there are folks who find it difficult to get to in person services. I want to say, lovingly to you, you are an essential part of our Kehilla congregation) via zoom. You are part of the blessing, always. (Whether you live near or far away.)

And, for those who will gather with us, in person on May 5th, you will reassert with your presence,

the reality of our historic congregation.

Moreover, as your Rabbi I so look forward to being with you again. Shaking hands and hugging reaffirm connections as a caring congregation.

The Torah says that wherever ten souls gather (in prayer) the Holy Presence prevails. Biblical commentaries tell us that of course God can be with us individually or in small groups. Yet, when at least ten gather, all take strength and give strength.

In addition, modern scientific study here and in Israel, has demonstrated that groups of humans gathered project feranomes, and hormones, and minute electrical signals, just as is done by any group of mammals. Therefore, it is easier to achieve prayerfulness in the minyan of souls.

Over against that, the dark woods, and the bright stained-glass windows, and the lush colored fabrics of the Torahs, and the Ark curtains, and even the plush cloth of the pulpit benches, along with the lingering cosmic presence of all who have prayed there, all lift the spiritual presence that can lift us higher and even higher. Our sanctuary is one of the enduring rooms of our life. It is not only a place of Jewish continuity, but also a place of God's presence.

II. Yom haShoah (Holocaust Memorial Day) and Yom haAtzmaut (Israel Independence Day) were recently observed within the same week.

From death, degradation, and de humiliation, to hope, promise and renewal, in one week. From the largest catastrophe our people have experienced, the renewal and rebirth of the ancient Jewish Commonwealth. From "Camps" to kibbutzim. Some, in Israel, have called these two days the new high holidays of our time.

At our service, words alone cannot express the pain and joy of the historic arc of these seven days. Therefore, I have asked the Levins and Sarah to share with us some of the music we Jews use, to mark these times. We say kaddish and cry on the first, just as we sing and dance and rejoice on the second. It's easier to do this with each other.

Let's have at least ten, or more, to mark this arc. These days. This "new" reality of our people. In all of this, if we open our hearts, we will be eased through the lingering prayers of all those who have been part of our hundred-year-old congregation. In this, and in so much else, we are not alone.

Join Us!

Love

Rabbi Fred Pomerantz

## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Whether we have had a rough winter or an easy one, spring brings such joy to Sullivan County. Buds pop on our trees, robins come back and now our doors open live and we can meet in person! May 5<sup>th</sup> is our first "live Shabbat" this year (of course we'll still be offering zoom for our remote members.) We hope you will join us! Zoom is wonderful and we'll have a better set-up this year thanks to Steve Innerfield's efforts. But there is nothing that substitutes for the warmth and camaraderie of old and new friends in the schul. Please join us!

There are some other ways that you will be able to connect this year. See below for more details about the daffodil garden dedication on May 9th and our craft beer and spirituality Havdalah events. We're always working to meet the wants and needs of the Agudas Achim Jewish community so if you have other ideas or would like to be involved in any of these, please reach out.

L'Shalom

Judy Siegel, President  
845-798-0783

## Happy Birthday

Shirley Schwartz 5/3  
Vinny Simkin 5/11  
Jack Strassman 5/12  
Judith Levine 5/14  
Michelle Ordynans 5/14  
Jeremy Gorelick 5/15  
Ron Hirshon 5/17  
Patrice Held 5/18  
Hannah Nadeau 5/25  
Barbara Schmitt 5/26  
Mike Uretsky 5/28

## Yiddish Club

They meet every week. They meet every other Wednesday in the Monticello Library and the opposite Thursday in Temple Shalom in Monticello. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Monticello Library, then on Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup> they will meet in Temple Shalom in Monticello. They meet 10:30 am to 12:00 pm at each place. Everyone is welcome. They try to learn to speak Yiddish, some members have a good knowledge of the language, others know very little but want to learn. You don't have to be Jewish to love Yiddish. They try and have fun. Need information call Richie Chiger at 845-794-7966.

## Jewish Education News

Last year, on a beautiful spring morning in April, Hope Blecher from our temple took a relaxing walk from Bergenfield through Teaneck, about ½ mile from her mom's house. She was enjoying the morning and all the blessings that God and nature had to provide; the warm sun-shiny morning, the sounds of birdsong, trees budding and spring flowers coming up from the now thawed ground. When she was on Window Road, she walked by the side lawn of Temple Emeth, the local Reform congregation, and admired a plot of daffodils smiling up at her. It was only after she passed the Temple, that Hope realized there was a sign by the daffodils. So, she turned around and went back to see. The sign said that this garden was a part of the "Worldwide Daffodil Project", a Living Holocaust Memorial that aspires to plant 1.5 million daffodils in memory of the 1.5 million children who perished in the Holocaust and for children who suffer in humanitarian crises around the world today.

Emails and phone calls started going back and forth among Hope, Judy Siegel our president, myself and others. Before we knew it, our synagogue was to be home of a Daffodil Project Garden. The planting event of 250 daffodils was held on Sunday, September 11th, with about 25 people in attendance. That afternoon, we spoke of remembering those that perished, the children who died, and those who lived.

The Holocaust saw 6 million Jews, our people, murdered just because they were Jewish, along with several million others. We observed Yom HaShoah on April 18th this year, to mourn and remember those that perished. Some ask why this even happened. The dislike of other people comes from within us. If in our thinking, we are superior to someone else, then by extension everyone else becomes inferior. This concept has been the cause of war and the cause of strife among so many. Disliking others, hating others because we perceive them as different... that overwhelming fear of "The Other". On Yom Kippur we gently beat ourselves on the chest as we recite the Viddui, the alphabet of woes... enumerating Xenophobia as one of these sins. No one... No one is better than another.

We need to see each other as the same as us. What we want for ourselves, we want for the other person. In our popular culture Rogers and Hammerstein said in their musical South Pacific, "you have to be taught to hate and fear."

If it weren't for the state of Israel, where would we be? Theodore Herzl set out his vision of a Jewish state and homeland for the Jewish people in the late 1800's; a land where we could live freely. There are those that believe the events of the Holocaust spurred the United Nations to vote to establish the State of Israel. On the 5th of Iyar, the 14th of May 1948, almost three years to the date after the end of the Holocaust, David Ben Gurion spoke at the Tel Aviv Museum, "This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign state. That will open the gates of her homeland to every Jew... we declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Israel, Medinat Yisrael." And yes, there is still strife with neighboring countries, and at this very moment there are internal political difficulties. But over the years, Israel has signed treaties and has developed diplomatic relations with several of its neighbors. Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav stated "God is present whenever a treaty of peace is signed." And our internal disagreements will resolve. Israel is our homeland, a land with God, for us and our children.

It is time to tell our children enough hate. We need to teach them to see the goodness and love within us each of us, that every small act makes a difference. And so, to help us remember the past, we planted a garden. On Tuesday morning, May 9th, Middle Schoolers from the Livingston Manor School District will be walking over to our temple for the Dedication Program of our fully in bloom (we hope) garden of the Worldwide Daffodil Project. We will have one, possibly two Holocaust survivors speaking to the children and those in attendance.

To these children, and to the community we say: 1.5 million Jewish children perished, because of hate. They will live on because you will remember them and the daffodils. Now we are caretakers of the daffodils. Together we will never let their memory die. May we live together soon in perfect harmony. May Israel, every person, every country and all the world live in peace.

The students in the Hebrew School will be learning about Israel and celebrating Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, and this year, her 75th Birthday.

Shalom u'Verachah ~ Peace and Blessings

Tobi Innerfield, Director of Education

### Message from the Levins

As we prepare for our Yom Ha'Atzmaut celebration, we took a look into the story behind Israel's national anthem: Hatikvah, based on a poem "Tikvateinu," or "The Hope." What we didn't know was that it was written in 1886 by a Ukrainian Jewish man, Naftali Hertz Imber, over sixty years prior to the formation of the state.

In 1888, a Jewish Russian Palestinian immigrant married the words of "Tikvateinu" to a melody inspired by a folk melody "Carol cu boi," also an inspiration for Smetana's, "The Moldau".

In the light of our current reality, it strikes us how important it is to re-emphasize that the poet was from the Ukraine and the composer was a Jewish-Palestinian immigrant. Right from its inception, this song has channeled the deep yearning for people longing for a homeland, a longing to peacefully belong.

Rabbi Fred shared that Hatikvah was, "written to buck Jewish spirit in a terrible time of pogroms and constant attack." Returning to Israel at that time was far from a reality. "It was written as a whisper of a dream and a distant hope to the embattled Jewish community. It's a Jewish anthem sung in the early kibbutzim, before and after WWI, in the death camps of WWII, on refugee ships trying to break through the British blockade and yes, in the war of Israeli independence, and in all the wars since."

***Hatikvah: "As long as the Jewish spirit is yearning deep in the heart, with eyes turned toward the East, looking toward Zion, then our hope -- the 2,000 year--old hope -- will not be lost: To be a free people in our land, The land of Zion and Jerusalem."***

"These words," Rabbi Fred said, "don't begin to touch the feeling engendered by its melody- like our own national anthem, beyond the words."

Hatikvah has indeed been a touch-stone for Jewish people around the world and has truly given us hope in the darkest of times. In fulfilling our hope, "To be a free people in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem," we must remember the commandment: "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him." (Ex. 22:20)

The current infringement of this commandment is particularly heart-breaking for many of us. We have understood our struggles, as Jews in Israel, as standing up for our right to exist in the face of overwhelming odds and animosity. As a people who have suffered atrocities, we don't like to think we can act in a similar manner. This is, of course, a human plight. Israel, like our country, can shine a great light, as well as casting a deep shadow.

We know Judaism as a deep well of evolving wisdom, one that is finding a way of honoring our unity within diversity. We are each dignitaries, responsible for how we represent it. We keep our convictions flexible so that what we bring into the arena of our collective experience is loving and offers assistance to one another and those around us. So, as we sing Hatikvah, we sing to the hope of our collective souls, where peace is not just a dream but a living reality."

The Levins  
(Ira Levin & Julia Bordenaro Levin)

## UPCOMING SERVICES

\*Services continue to be virtual throughout the year. Email [virtualshabbat@gmail.com](mailto:virtualshabbat@gmail.com) for the link. Doors will open in May of 2023 for those who are able to attend in person.

### Friday, May 5

7:00 PM Gather In person at Agudas Achim or on zoom  
7:30 PM Levins begin welcoming the Sabbath\* live and via zoom\*

### Friday, June 2

7:00 PM Gather In person at Agudas Achim or on zoom  
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, July 7

7:00 PM Gather In person at Agudas Achim or on zoom  
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

## DAFFODIL GARDEN DEDICATION

We will be dedicating the Agudas Achim Daffodil Garden on Tuesday, May 9 at 9:00 AM.

In the fall we planted 250 daffodil bulbs as part of the daffodil project ([daffodilproject.net](http://daffodilproject.net)) which is supporting daffodil gardens around the world honoring the 1.5 million children lost to the Holocaust.

The ceremony will include a presentation by Marlene Wertheim and Eva Bocskor, both children of the holocaust and important members of our community. The LMCS 8<sup>th</sup> grade class and their teacher, Julie Buck will also be in attendance. All members of the community are invited and welcome to attend.

### **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](http://congregationagudasachim.org)) and click donate now

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### **JOIN US IN ISRAEL!**

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](http://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 on 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](mailto:virtualshabbat@gmail.com) We would love to hear from you.

### **HOPE ful information**

Thanks to Hope Blecher for sharing your writings with us. Please visit her site at:  
<https://medium.com/@hopedoc1/here-i-stand-6c16437dc647>

## *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 has set on Saturday evening.

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

Spring Schedule Save the dates!  
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!



**Tuesday, May 9, 2023, at 9:00 am**

An educational community gathering to:

~Dedicate the Agudas Achim Daffodil Garden~

~Honor the 1.5 million children lost in the Holocaust~

~Meet and learn from a survivor of the Holocaust~

We will meet at Congregation Agudas Achim,

Livingston Manor, NY



[Home - The Daffodil Project](#)