



Agudas Achim Newsletter

May 2025

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

Friday, May 2nd 7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice with Ira and Julia
7:30 PM Services -- **via zoom and in person!!!!**

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

And just like that-it's spring and we're back to meeting in person! How exciting! ☺ Ira and Julia will lead services from inside the beautiful sanctuary and this month we will wish a heartfelt mazel tov to Wren Kuckelman, who will be called to the Torah as a **Bat Mitzvah on Saturday, May 3**. Wren, we are so proud of the dedication and maturity you've shown in preparing for this important milestone. We look forward to celebrating with you and your family!

Congratulations are also in order to Rabbi Shinder. On May 1 she is receiving a Doctorate of Divinity from her seminary after 25 years of service to the Jewish people. This degree recognizes individuals for their contributions to religious leadership or scholarship. Certainly 25 years of service to the Jewish community is worthy of recognition but whether or not she was recognized with her Doctorate of Divinity, we certainly recognize her leadership, her kindness, her spirituality and her knowledge. Agudas Achim and the community is lucky to have her with us.

And a sincere thank you to **Ira and Julia Levin**, whose **spiritual leadership and musical guidance** continue to enrich our services and uplift our hearts. Through song and spirit, they lead us with such grace, and we are grateful for the energy and devotion they bring to our community.

Happy spring. We can't wait to see you at services or at the Craft Beer and Spirituality events or....
Shhhhhh.....it's still a secret.....at the one woman show written and performed by Sandra Laub, tentatively scheduled for September 4,

L' Shalom

Judy Siegel, President
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Message from Rabbi Rebecca Pomerantz Shinder

This month marks 77 years since the declaration of the modern State of Israel. The Jewish people have lived on this sacred space since antiquity, and throughout the millennia, we have known what Naomi Shemer penned in 1980 to be, “both the bitter and the sweet” realities of what life on this land can be. “*Al Kol Ehleh, meaning*” “For All These Things,” has been embraced as an expression of a deep desire to protect loved ones, understanding that terrible things may come, praying for God’s grace, alongside the ability to accept the good with the bad.

This month will also mark another combination “bitter and sweet,” for the Pomerantz personal and congregational families. The first taste of bitterness came with the painful illness and death of my 30-year-old bold and dazzling brother, Jeremy Daniel, z”l (may his memory be remembered as a blessing). One attempt to temper that void ever so mildly, was to build a Memorial Garden for him at dad’s previous congregation, Temple Beth El. Another “sting” came when that building was sold and the promise to rebuild a similar space in their new place was never fulfilled.

My father commissioned the creation a sculpture to capture a bit of Jeremy’s essence and right before the Covid lockdown, we planned to build a much more expansive garden to create a space for memory and music, for lectures and gatherings at Temple Beth Shalom, the congregation I have served as rabbi for 20 years - only 1 year less than Rabbi Fred served as yours! One more cause of bitterness, he never saw that wish fulfilled.

Now your Rabbi Fred’s memory is remembered for a blessing, and that space he envisioned will be called The Pomerantz Memorial Garden. As Rabbi Fred’s daughter, as your Rabbinic Consultant and as a neighborhood rabbi, I invite you to join with other members of the Jewish community to a Groundbreaking Ceremony at Temple Beth Shalom in Florida, NY on Sunday May 18th at 3:00 pm. Ira & Julia will sing, my mom will speak about Jeremy, and many other familiar friends will add to what we envision as a sweet way to celebrate and remember. More information with an RSVP will soon follow.

Please join us, Rabbi Rebecca Pomerantz Shinder

UPCOMING SERVICES and EVENTS

Congregation Agudas Achim provides zoom services every month.

email virtualshabbat@gmail.com for zoom link. HINT: It’s the same every month

Live services resume on May 2, 2025

Friday May 2 7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice with Ira and Julia
7:30 PM Services via zoom and in person!!!!

Saturday, May 3 10:30 AM Bat Mitzvah Wren Kuckelman

Wed May 21 Daffodil Garden Re-dedication

Friday June 6 7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice with Ira and Julia
7:30 PM Services via zoom and in person!!!!

Saturday June 21 Craft Beer and Spirituality (CBS) Havdalah, Smoke Joint, Livingston Manor

Friday, July 12 7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice with Ira and Julia
7:30 PM Services via zoom and in person!!!!

A message from the Levins:

It was Rabbi Fred's desire that we would occasionally explore the origin of certain songs within our newsletters. This month, which has much to celebrate, we are inspired by a set of notes that had a mission to unite.

As our Passover celebrations and the counting of the Omer remind us, the journey is just as important as is the destination, and there is always hope for what is to come. May brings blossoms and green, that draw us back outdoors to revel in Spring. There's a sense of renewal and as our creek flows with the strength of a river, we are reminded of a song that draws from a centuries-old folk melody that has traversed time.

This 16th century melody gained popularity in Renaissance Europe as it was adapted and wandered within songs of Poland, Romania, Scotland and Ukraine. It finally gained a lasting foothold, fittingly, in Smetana's, "Moldau," as well as the prayerful song that we have come to know as "Hatikvah."

"Hatikvah" (Hebrew: הַתִּקְוָה, lit. 'The Hope')

"As long as in the heart within, The Jewish soul yearns,
And toward the eastern edges, onward, an eye gazes toward Zion.
Our hope is not yet lost, the hope that is two-thousand years old,
To be a free nation in our land, The Land of Zion, Jerusalem."

In the 1870's, Naftali Imber, a Jewish poet from Austrian Poland, (now part of Ukraine) penned a poem of "profound hope and longing" which Shmuel Cohen would set to a melody that he knew from Romania -the same melody that Smetana was inspired by for his symphonic set, entitled, "*Má vlast*" or "*My Homeland*." And yes, "Hatikvah," the song that resonated so powerfully with the Jewish farmers, that it helped spread the message of homeland throughout the Zionist communities. These notes were destined to serve.

Hatikva's relevance and inspiration were challenged vehemently each decade. There were times that it was not allowed to be played yet "The Moldau" could be performed and those notes continued to slyly provide unification. Hatikvah became so undeniable that it was sung in the camps of Auschwitz and eventually embraced by the newly established State of Israel in 1948. But even so, "Hatikvah" was not officially recognized as the national anthem until November of 2004.

As we intone this prayerful song together, we can reflect on how many souls have been swayed by the yearning of this melody; heartened and aligned with these holy words. We can feel the significance of its impact on Israel, our communities, in our own lives as it has wended its way into our time.

We, too, wind like rivers that converge. We each have something vital to offer, individual voices that harmonize and gain strength within our congregation. May our own melodies of life continue to have a lasting significance that resonates deeply in our communities. May our hope continue to thrive as we serve from a loving space that offers a sense of unity to the Jewish people and to the world.

Much love from us both, Julia and Ira

Jewish Education News

I think back to my childhood and remember the songs my mother sang about the very young the State of Israel. These Israeli pop songs were about the cultivating the land, fighting for Israel's sovereignty, and having hope. Songs like "Dona, Dona" (which came out in the US in the 1950's) and little later on "Dreamer" by Lorre Wyatt, or "Bashana ha ba-ah". I could hear my mother singing along with her friends, the women of Hadassah in our small kitchen. These songs had a clear message. One of hope for the newly established land of Israel, like Israel's national anthem, "Ha-Tikva", The Hope.

Another song, written in the 1970's became popular within the various Jewish Youth movement across the country during the past 40 years. *Gesher Tzar Me'od*, says, "The world is a very narrow bridge, but the most important part is not to be afraid." However, when Rabbi Nachman of Breslov wrote these words some 200 years ago, he said that you should not make yourself afraid. A subtle, but important difference. Yes, we all have things that we have to deal with. However, we are walking on a bridge that connects to the other side. How important our own positive words and thoughts are when we are on our journey.

We recently celebrated the holiday of Passover. It took the Israelites a while for them to believe that they really were going to be freed from Egypt. They saw the plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians, however, they lived their entire lives as slaves. They needed time to believe...in God and themselves. They needed to learn that they did not have to be afraid anymore. After Pharaoh told us that we could leave, we still journeyed, and we came upon the Sea of Reeds. God parted the sea for us, and we walked across. Where did we look? At our feet, as we crossed the muddy, rocky bottom? Or did we look forward and upward? Was our attitude one of positiveness and hope as we took these steps across the bottom of the sea. We as a people faced many challenges along the way. Our journey through the desert lasted 40 years until we reached the promised land.

Today, approximately 3500 years after we first came to the promised land, Israel, we still feel as though we are walking across a narrow bridge. Israel will be celebrating its 77th birthday, Yom HaAtzmaut in May (Iyar 5), and there is still strife. Our people are still being held hostage in Gaza for over 560 days. Yet as the song says, we will not make ourselves afraid. We still have hope. We must not forget, we must believe in God and in our future.

The students in the Hebrew School will be learning about Israel, and will be celebrating Israel's 77th birthday.

Please join us on May 3rd for the Bat Mitzvah of Wren Kuckelman, and for the Bat Mitzvah of Adele Levy on July 12th. I look forward to seeing you there.

Love,

Rabbi Tobi Innerfield
Director of Education



Bat Mitzvah of Wren Kuckelman
Saturday, May 3, 2025 – at 10:30 am

Wren lives in Brooklyn, New York and has one dog, named Gary, and two cats, named Mo and Ziggy. She goes to a Jewish Day School and loves hanging out with friends and playing basketball.

CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILY OF HELAINE WEINER

We send our sympathy to Martin Weiner and family on the passing of his wife Helaine.

WANT TO HOST A SHOW? AN OPPORTUNITY

We have the opportunity to host Sandra Laub's one woman show "Picking Up Stones: An American Jew Wakes to a Nightmare in the Catskills." In early September. One, possibly two people have volunteered to work on a committee to bring this outstanding production to the community, but we will need more than that. If anyone is interested, please reach out to Judy Siegel at jsiegel523@gmail.com.

SAVE THE DATE

We will be celebrating the Life of Rabbi Fred Pomerantz at our August Shabbat service. If you would like to share in planning that celebration, please reach out to Judy at 845-798-0783 or email virtualshabbat@gmail.com

INVOLVEMENT

The future of Agudas Achim is in your hands! If you would like to be more involved in big or small way, we welcome you. Feel free to reach out at virtualshabbat@gmail.com

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
Monica Frey 6/1
Ilene Samath 6/1
Wendy Uretsky 6/2

**Our 3rd
Year!**

Havdalah Service

If you haven't been to Rabbi Tobi's Zoom Havdalah,
you don't know what you are missing. Warm, spiritual, welcoming and musical.
What a wonderful way to spend 15 minutes.

Havdalah is the Jewish ceremony held at the end of Shabbat.
Join us and be part of our growing Zoom community.

Spring Schedule! Save the dates! (Notice Time Change)

Saturday, May 17th @ 8:30 pm

Saturday, June 14th @ 8:30 pm

Use this Zoom Link to come into the Havdalah.



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

Meeting ID: 719 5073 7639 Passcode: OveXyi

By phone: 1-646-931-3860

Or use this abbreviated link: <http://bit.ly/3XWsL2I> or this QR Code:



To heighten your personal Havdalah experience, you may choose to have 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!

" Happening around Sullivan County"

The worldwide Daffodil Project is based in Atlanta, GA. Participation by Congregation Agudas Achim occurred as a result of Hope Blecher taking a walk near her childhood home. There she passed by a small daffodil garden and paused to read the sign. She contacted the co-founders, Andrea and David, and then obtained approval from the board at CAA and the project took root in Sullivan County. Coincidentally, the cofounder, David Feldman, has family ties to Liberty, NY and he was present when 500 yellow daffodil bulbs were planted at Creekside Park, Liberty, NY.

Part of the partnership agreement with the garden hosts is to hold an educational event within two years of planting the garden. Over the past two years, students in Livingston Manor Middle School have met two survivors of the Holocaust. The youth have listened to their journeys as firsthand witnesses. They have participated in respectful Q and A sessions. The teachers have been instrumental in this curriculum topic.

The mission of the Daffodil Project is to build a Living Holocaust Memorial by planting 1.5 million daffodils around the world in memory of the children and in support for children who continue to suffer in the face of genocide and humanitarian crises in the world today. Currently, there are daffodil gardens in Livingston Manor, Hurleyville, Liberty, Parksville, and Monticello. This fall, two more gardens will be planted.

A: Honoring Survivors and Their Rescuers Through the Generations will be on display at Temple Sholom in Monticello. Should you have items for the exhibit, stories to share, or wish to present, please contact Hope Blecher Croney, hope@hopescompass.org There will be musical performances in July and August, with an artist on location in September. Some of our congregants and community members have already lent their stories and items to the exhibit.

B: Come one, come all to plant daffodil bulbs this fall.

Save the dates as we gather to participate in planting 3000 yellow daffodil bulbs at Morningside Park in Fallsburg at the end of September and again at the Sullivan County Government Center in Monticello on Friday, October 17, 2025. These gardens are part of the worldwide Daffodil Project, www.daffodilproject.net with the first in our county at Congregation Agudas Achim.

C: Sullivan County will become home to a few Little Free Libraries. If you have children's books in decent condition that you would like to donate, please contact Hope. Books in English, Hebrew, Spanish, and Yiddish would be greatly appreciated.