



Agudas Achim Newsletter

February 2023

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

Save the date

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

Rabbi's Message

Happy New Year

Another Jewish new year on Monday February sixth. Why? It's the new year of the trees. Why? What does this Holyday have to do with our spiritual life and development? How can this Holyday bring us closer to God? What's the lesson?

Once more, Tuvi Shevat is another spiritual center to urge us through stress, and sadness, and uncertainty. The cold, overcast, rainy, winter, in the Land of Israel begins just after Succot, which is after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The short, but sharp winter contains three months of almost constant rain. The fruit trees which were almost dried to death in the long blistering summer are renewed and refreshed by the downpours, and they put out the first blossoms which will eventually become the first fruits.

There is a certainty built into the natural cycle that the blossoms will transform into the fruits that sustained the Israelites in biblical times.

The eighth verse of the eighth chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy in Torah mentions the fruits that

were present in Biblical times. Dates, grapes, olives, figs, pomegranates were saved from the previous year's harvest to be eaten on the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat. Some anthropologists have termed this ritual as sympathetic magic, as if ensuring that the new blossoms would produce fruit again. In fact, the consumption of the fruit from the previous year was an act of faith in the natural order of the world that God gives us. So Tuvi Shevat, the new year of the (fruit) trees urges us, as do the trees to sing our roots deep and to allow the mitzvot, the good deeds we perform to be, metaphorically, as leaves on a tree, which through photosynthesis enriches the arbor as can we enrich the world around us.

Tuvi Shevat is an example of the creativity inherent in Judaism. There were no ritual or special prayers for this festival, other than the eating of the fruits. A thousand years ago, some began to include the partaking of the seven species, including certain grains and vegetables mentioned in the Bible. Later, the Jewish mystics listed an order to eat the fruits that comported with the refinement of elevated souls. (Shell on outside, seed or pit on the inside, those that are entirely edible.) In Israel, it became a day of environmental awareness. In this country, in the seventies, seders for the festival evoked that were

based on Passover seders.

This new year of trees urges us to take hope in the natural flow and order even in bleak times. Just as trees flower after uncertain times, and lead toward sustenance and harvest, so we look for positive signs in our personal journey. And we give thanks even for the fruit that is yet to become. Trust becomes another name for God. Hope and trust intertwine at Tuvi Shevat. Let's explore this further at services on the third.

I look forward to seeing you on zoom.

Love

Rabbi Fred Pomerantz

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Nearly 40 years ago, members of the Livingston Manor synagogue held a meeting downstairs in the social hall. The topic was 'The future of the congregation; where do we go from here?' The Jewish community was waning; services were only offered during the High Holidays and there were only a couple of people 'holding down the fort'. More than 50 people attended the meeting sitting in a large circle around the long tables that were in the room at that time. One by one each person was asked to say what they wanted for the future of Agudas Achim and what role they were willing to play. Nearly everyone there said that they wanted there to be a Jewish presence in Livingston Manor but they were tired of taking leadership roles to make that happen. They were willing to help but they preferred to be Indians, not Chiefs. The last person to speak was a small and energetic young woman who stood up and said "My name is Ellen Singer. I'm married to Don

Simkin, I am new to the community and I want to be a chief!" And with that, she, her husband Don, Bob Freedman and a few others of us, with the guidance of the old guard like Alan Fishman and Lee Siegel, began the journey that has led us to where we are today. It's been quite a journey! Ellen brought with her knowledge and spirit. She taught us the songs that the congregation never knew or had long ago forgotten and helped us grow into a reform congregation. Bob Freedman took on the responsibility of head chief and Alan Fishman handed the financial reigns over to Gary Siegel. We have managed for these 40 years to get things done without drama—no egos, simply dedicated men and women who care. We've had 'spiritual leaders' reconstructionist rabbis and students leading our services. More recently the Rabbinic leadership of Rabbi Pomerantz has led us through some of our most challenging eras. And now, amazingly, we have more household members than we have had in decades with a greater reach and a host of "chiefs" that are helping us grow even stronger and healthier.

In 2024 we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the synagogue. If you are reading this you are part of that history. Do you have stories or photos of either the synagogue or family members that you want to share? Do you have friends or family with photos or stories? Send them to us! I'll be asking for this information throughout the year so that we can collect as much of the history as we can. Now is the time! We won't have another moment like this in our lifetime.

L' Shalom,

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

Jewish Education News

The Jewish holiday Tu BiShevat, which falls out on February 6th this year, is deeply entwined in our Jewish texts. "The fifteenth of Shevat, Tu BiShevat, is the new year for tithing the first fruits of fruit trees." (Midrash Rosh Hashana 1.1) "Every year you shall set aside a tenth part of the yield, so that you may learn to revere your God forever." (Deuteronomy 14:22-23) "What is the reason that the new year for tithing trees is in Shevat? By then most of the rainy season has passed and the sap has risen, but the ripening has not yet begun." (B. Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 14a with Rashi).

From this we learn that Tu BiShevat was considered a new year for trees, and it was the date for determining which trees in Israel were mature enough for their fruit to be harvested when the time came that year. If fruit could be harvested, so too can a tax, or tithe, be given.

Throughout our texts we read of the sacredness of trees. For example, in the beginning of Torah, in Genesis, God placing people in the Garden of Eden to take care of it. Towards the end of the Torah, in Deuteronomy, where we are told that even in war, we shall not destroy fruit bearing trees. There is over a hundred references to trees and plants in our sacred texts. The oldest olive tree in Israel located in Shefar'am, is estimated to be over 100,000 years old. Can you picture in your mind this ancient tree? How large and how extraordinary it is. Last year, this tree was selected by KKL-JNF to be Israel's National Tree.

Students in the Hebrew school will be learning about Tu BiShevat and will be planting parsley seeds, not trees. In two months, the parsley will have grown enough for them to put sprigs on their Passover seder plate.

"Happy is the one ... who delights in the law of the God... He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither." (Psalms 1: 1-3) Happy Tu BiShevat!

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

Thank you for your donation

John Johnston
Gail & Sidney Leibovich
Ron & Tedda Lindeman

In memory of Sylvia Goldman Reynolds
Roberta Klein

Welcome New Members
Michael & Dayra Lederer
Amy Parsons & Ashby Barton

Message from the Levins

To continue the bright start to 2023, we'll soon be coming together online to celebrate one of our favorite holidays, the birthday of the trees, ***Tu BiShvat***.

The holiday arrives as the olive trees are blooming in Israel, but those of us in winter weather, can still derive strength and hope from the barren trees of winter. They offer us an opportunity to see more depth in the environment around us. This reminds us to look beyond the normal setting and remember that there is always more to take in from everything around us. Adorned with snow, they bolster us with beauty when the cold winds blow and remind us to remember our own fortitude as we anticipate Spring and the renewal of the cycle that we all share.

While it is hard to plant trees or start our gardens just yet, it is a wonderful thing to enjoy a Tu BiShvat Seder with friends or to at least savor a variety of tree fruits, nuts and a glass of wine or grape juice!

Let us give thanks for the members of our living family that provide us with the air we breathe, nourishing foods, and the living symbol of our torah. We look forward to celebrating with you soon!

Ira and Julia / The Levins

UPCOMING SERVICES

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

Friday, February 3 rd	7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice 7:30 PM Services Post services zoom gathering with Levins and congregants attending
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Friday, March 3 rd	7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice 7:30 PM Services Post services zoom gathering with Levins and congregants attending
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Friday, April 7 th	7:00 PM Social Time with your beverage of choice 7:30 PM Services Post services zoom gathering with Levins and congregants attending
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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. Call Judy at 845-798-0783 if you would like to be a screen sharer.

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

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 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, 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
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

LEADERSHIP BOARD

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If you are interested in becoming a part of the leadership board to help in the decision-making process, please reach out to us at virtualshabbat@gmail.com