

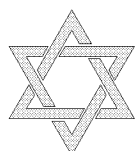
# The Latest News from Congregation Agudas Achim Anshei

## Sfard!

Shalom 5757  
January 1997

Volume 5, No. 3  
Tu B'Shvat 5757

The Adams Street Synagogue



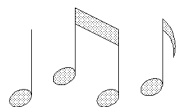
## Tu B'Shvat

Wednesday evening January 22 is the start of *Rosh Hashanah L'Ilanot*, (The New Year For Trees) also known as *Tu B'Shvat*. This is one of the four Jewish New Years. Several agricultural *mitzvot* depend on knowing the age of the fruit trees. The New Year for Trees is the date when the ages of the trees are incremented.

Although *Tu B'Shvat* has been a holiday since biblical times, the *Tu B'Shvat* seder ritual was only created in the 16th Century. It has always been popular among Sephardic Jews. In recent decades it has become more widespread because of its attractive environmentalist and Zionist symbolism.

The Seder expresses appreciation for the environment and for the Land of Israel. The special foods used as symbols at a *Tu B'Shvat* seder include certain fruits, nuts, and grains; plus both white and red wine.

---J. Wagner



## Erev Shirah

Join us for an *Erev Shirah*, an evening of song. On January 11, Adams Street will be filled with the sounds of music beginning at 7:30 PM. Adams Street is hosting the event, which is being cosponsored by *Congregation Shaarei Tefillah* and *Congregation Beth El Atereth Israel*. The evening will feature live music, refreshments, and a lot of fun for the entire family. Come and sing together! Admission is \$5 per family.

## Dr. Marc Brettler



Dr. Marc Brettler of Brandeis University will teach at Adams Street on January 29. He has also taught at Yale University, Wellesley College and Middlebury College; and is the recipient of the Michael A. Walzer Award for Excellence in Teaching. His most recent book, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, was just published by Routledge Press. He has appeared on the television series *Mysteries of the Bible*, and was recently heard on the National Public Radio show *All Things Considered*.

The topic of his talk at Adams Street is "*The Bible as History*". We live in a post-CNN world -- only events that appear on the television, verified by camera footage, are true and important. This idea, however, is modern, and I would like to argue, incorrect from the Jewish perspective. Events can be true, even if they are not entirely historically accurate. We will explore this idea, using various examples from the Bible, and will thus understand in what senses we might appreciate the Bible as history.

This educational event is free, donations are welcome.

## Breakfast Torah Talks

Rabbi Josef Polak will present his monthly special Breakfast Torah Talk at the *shul* on Sunday morning January 26 at 8:45 AM. Refreshments will be served. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated.

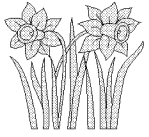
## Lost & Found

SerVICES: Sun. at 8 AM; Fri. eve. at candle-lighting time; Sat. at 9 AM and at 15 min. earlier than Fri. eve.

Weekly Torah Study with Rabbi Yitzchak Rabinowitz, Monday evenings at 8:15 PM

Monthly Shiur with Rabbi Joseph Polak, Sunday January 26 at 8:45 AM

If anyone has any overcoats or jackets in good condition, and no longer has a need for them, please bring them to the *shul* for distribution to the homeless.

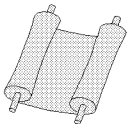


## Flower Fund

The *shul* has received a generous donation from **Mr. & Mrs. Harold Galpern**, children of **Edith and Irving Gilfix**, and **The Galpern Family** to establish the **Edith and Irving Gilfix Flower Fund**. The Gilfix family is one of the founding families of the *shul*.

The fund will provide for flowers for the *shul* for all the *Yom Tovim* throughout the year. When these funds are depleted the Galpern family will see to it that the funding will continue.

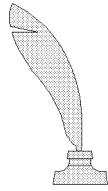
This gesture is indeed a wonderful way to keep alive the memory of two very dear and generous members of our *shul*.



## Yasher Koach

*Yasher*

*Koach* to all congregants who led services recently: **Gregor Schutz, Aryeh Cheses, Aaron Katchen, Rabbi Zalman Gurkow, Steven Harris, Michael Itzhakov, Noam Ohring, Nachman Kalyuzhny, Len Berman, Alex Shamrakov, Lloyd Cohen, Morris Robinson, Jorge Rubinstein, Burt Freedman, Noah Cheses, Bert Grand, Morris Hollander, Jordan Lee Wagner, and Pinchas Zaltsman.**



## From the President

While fishing for a topic for this column, I attended a recent *shul* Torah class by Rabbi Rabinowitz. He related the story of the rabbi who was anonymously giving *tzedakah* to a needy family by periodically coming by and slipping an envelope with money under the door.

The recipient was curious to know who his benefactor was. One day while at home, the recipient noted the envelope being slipped under his door as the rabbi and his wife came by to perform their *mitzvah*. He promptly dashed out of the house, chasing his benefactors to learn their identity. In order not to embarrass the recipient by revealing themselves, the couple fled and finally escaped by hiding in a fiery furnace (miraculously, they survived with only the rabbi's feet being somewhat burned).

This story raises a number of interesting questions. Is it better to give *tzedakah* anonymously or not? And what are the basic rights and obligations of donor and recipient in the relationship characterized by the giving of *tzedakah*? In our story, it was assumed that the recipient's motive for chasing the rabbi was frivolous. However, suppose the recipient was sincerely motivated by an intense desire to thank his benefactor and show his appreciation? In that case, which should take precedence -- the desires of the donor or recipient? In our story the rabbi was motivated by a sincere desire to avoid embarrassment of the recipient. However, in our times donors frequently request anonymity for personal reasons to avoid publicity -- either out of modesty or perhaps out of a desire to avoid becoming a target for various and sundry fundraisers. Experienced fundraisers, however, usually prefer their donors not to be anonymous, since they feel that publicizing the names of donors encourages others to give. Therefore, there appear to be arguments on both sides of the issue.

In any event, if the rabbi in our story suddenly found himself in present-day Newton, he would truly become bewildered by the way *tzedakah* has evolved in our modern society. *Tzedakah* has become more impersonal, more organized, more institutionalized, more large-scale and more public -- all simultaneously. Our dollars are being competed for by a staggering variety of charities, all worthwhile. Our mailboxes are deluged daily by mail from all sorts of worthy causes. One particular twentieth-century phenomenon consists of large umbrella fundraising organizations like CJP or United Way. Just as today's donors buy shares in mutual funds instead of individual stocks or bonds, today's donors frequently give to these large umbrella fundraising organizations which are the mutual fund equivalents in the world of *tzedakah*.

In this vein, our *shul* has now instituted a *tzedakah* fund. Our aim is to be less impersonal than the large umbrella fundraising organizations and to give to recognized charities with an emphasis on local causes and issues. I can also tell you that some of our *shul* members and residents in the local Jewish community exist on pretty meager resources. As a result of welfare reform some of our Adams Street family may become truly in need. In that case, the *shul* Tzedakah Fund will be used in a way that our rabbi of the story would instantly recognize and that would certainly please him.

*Leonard Berman President*

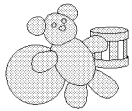
# What's Nu?

The *shul* wishes a speedy complete recovery to **Audrey Berman, Frances Mielman, and Lillian Mielman.**

We would also like to thank **Vadim Bodner** and **Alex and Ina Gekht** for producing the excellent Russian edition of our monthly newsletter.

Has someone celebrated a birthday or anniversary? How about a graduation, birth, or other *simcha*? What about a new job, a publication, or other achievement? We love to report *nachas* about congregants. Please call our new Publicity Committee Chairman, Steve Anapolle, at 736-1929, to report news.

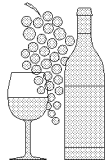
## Children's Shabbat



The next **Children's Shabbat Program** will be held on Saturday morning February 1 starting around 10:30AM (after the Torah Reading begins upstairs). The event includes age-appropriate Sabbath prayers, games, singing, storytelling, a snack, and other fun activities.

We are looking for more people to take turns as event leaders. Please call Jordan Lee Wagner at 332-2507 for more information.

## Seudah Sponsors



A *seudah* is a festive meal. Adams Street congregants enjoy a *kiddush* together each Saturday at mid-day, and a congregational *seudah shlishit* (Third Meal) every Saturday evening. This is a great opportunity to honor someone, celebrate a *simcha*, or memorialize a loved one. To sponsor a *kiddush* or Third Meal, or to rent **The Elmer Lippin Social Hall**, call Albert Kalman at 899-0293.

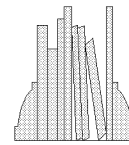
## Heritage Happiness



Many thanks to **Ms. Reva Stern and an anonymous friend** for enabling us to produce a splendid *Chanukah* celebration at **The Heritage at Vernon Court**, an assisted living facility in Newton Corner.

The program included a movement workshop by **Nechama Cheses**, storytelling by **Jordan Lee Wagner**, a **Yachad** presentation, a sing-a-long, *dreidel*-playing for chocolate *gelt*, and candlelighting. Attendees also enjoyed holiday music and traditional cooked-in-oil foods such as *latkes* with applesauce and *sufganyot*.

Heritage resident **Anna Shiff** presented the *shul* with many beautiful winter hats that she had knitted for the children in the congregation. Many thanks to Nechama Cheses for her presentation, and to **Rabbi Zalman Gurkow** for donations of supplies.



## Book Notes

This month we are pleased to note the following additions to our library:

*Mikraot Gedolot*, donated by **Tzvi and Deborah Rubinstein** in memory of their grandparents, **Avraham Moshe, Henni, Yosef, Chaya, Fischel, Peshe, Elias, and Irma.**

*Teshuvah -- A Guide For The Newly Observant Jew*, by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, donated in memory of **Sylvia and Sam Wagner.**

*A History of the Jewish People* by Marx & Margolis, donated in memory of **Sol and Celia Schwartzapfel.**

We also belatedly report the donation of *The Jews of Boston*, in honor of **Ellen Smith**; and several books and educational materials for teaching Hebrew donated by **Arthur Brown.**

More classic Jewish works are being translated all the time. There are fine English translations now available of the Chofetz Chaim's *Mishneh Berurah*, Rabbi S. R. Hirsh's *Horeb*, *The Nineteen Letters*, and *Collected Writings*, the Ramban's (Nachmanides') *Commentary on the Torah*, and the halachic portions of the *Ben Ish Chai*. In addition, Rav Moshe Feinstein's *Iggerot Moshe* is being translated and the first volume of the series is available. This volume deals with caring for the sick.

Potential book donors, please contact Jordan Wagner, acting librarian, at 332-2507 for more information.

The synagogue wishes to thank the following for their generous donations:

*Victor & Galina Partensky*

*Arnold Reif*

*Gordon & Alpern*

*Ann Burack*

*Rakhil Partensky*

*George & Shirley Kaplan*

*Sheldon & Marilyn Binder*

*in memory of  
Abraham Binder  
and Hyman Taylor*

*Mrs. Norma Lurie*

*in memory of  
Irene & Sam Fried*

*Bertram & Pauline Grand*

*in memory of  
Louis Vineckoor*

*Norman & Marietta Jaffee*

*in honor of  
Doron Cheses*

*Ann Burack*

*in memory of  
Harry Grand*

*Sidney & Claire Stecker*

*in honor of  
the 96th birthday of mother,  
Rebecca Sternberg  
and for her speedy recovery*

*Elisabeth & Eliot Rosenfield*

*Mikhail Iskakov*

*Dr. & Mrs. Leonard Berman*

*Gerald Regosin*

*Harold & Sara Galpern*

*in memory of  
Edith and Irving Gilfix*

\*\*\*

#### Eruv Fund

*Inez K. Smith*

*Bernard & Carol Wagner  
in honor of*

*Leorah Rubinstein*

\*\*\*

#### Library Book Fund

*Lillian Greene*

*in memory of  
Arnold Greene and  
Bessie and Daniel Ezer*

\*\*\*

#### Tzedakah Fund

*Burt Freedman*

*for the speedy recovery of  
Dina Ganz*

\*\*\*

#### Endowment Fund:

*Mrs. Eliot B. Shoolman*

*Michael Joel*

*Jeanette Bram*

*Carl & Phyllis Zimble*

## Hanukah Happiness

Over sixty people enjoyed *latkes* and doughnuts, live music by **The Closet Klezmer Band**, and good company in **The Elmer Lippin Social Hall** at the Adams Street Shul's Annual Chanukah Party on Sunday afternoon, December 8th.

Special thanks to the following people who helped make the afternoon a success: **Len Berman** (who arranged for the band); **Al Kalman** (who arranged the donations for the raffle); **Leonid Dub**, **Vladimir Bodner**, and **Al Landsman** (who cleared out the social hall); **Ina Gekht**, **Ludmilla Dub**, **Olga Landa**, **Helen Kroner**, **Michael Walker**, **Eliana Walker**, **Luba Shamrakova**, **Boris Krasik**, and the entire **Cheses Family** (who helped with food preparation, decoration, selling raffles and clean up); **Matt Kramer** and **Jordan Wagner** (publicity).

Also, thanks to the following merchants who donated raffle prizes: **Tuler's Bakery**, **Shalom Hunan Restaurant**, **The Butcherie**, **The Israel Book Shop**, **Stop & Shop**, and **Star Market**.

## Heritage Shabbat



Each month we enjoy an intergenerational early *Kabbalat Shabbat* celebration with our friends at The Heritage. The Heritage is an assisted living facility for senior citizens. All members are invited to join us for services, refreshments, and socializing. The next two events are Friday January 10 and Friday February 7 at 2:00 PM. The Heritage is located on Vernon Street (off Centre Street) in Newton Corner, less than a mile from the *shul*. For information, call Jordan Lee Wagner at 332-2507.

**Congregation Agudas Achim Anshei Sfard**  
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