

# The Agudagram

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Agudas Israel Congregation  
77 North Pine Street  
Hazleton, PA 18201  
570-455-2851  
agudasisraelhazleton@gmail.com

## Officers:

Debbie Walko, President  
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## Shabbat Candlelighting

1/7 Parshat Bo- 4:34 PM candlelighting  
1/14 Parshat Beshalach- 4:41 PM candlelighting  
1/21 Parshat Yitro- 4:50 PM candlelighting  
1/28 Parshat Mishpatim- 4:58 PM candlelighting

Tu B'Shevat- January 16-17

WE REGRET TO INFORM THE CONGREGATION OF THE PASSING OF  
LONGTIME MEMBER DOTTY TAUB. FUNERAL DETAILS WERE SENT IN A  
SEPARATE EMAIL. MAY HER MEMORY BE FOR A BLESSING.

## What is Sylvester to Israeli Jews?

Sylvester Night is not a holiday Rochel Slyvetsky for Israel National News  
Israelis, who blithely call the eve of January 1st "Sylvester", and Jews who celebrate "New Year's  
Eve" as the civil year is ushered in, may not be aware of its tragic significance in Jewish history.

Israelis call the night that ushers in the civil new year “Sylvester”. This is the name commonly used in German speaking countries as well as in Poland instead of “New Year’s Eve”, so that it is probably safe to assume that the Catholic name took hold due to early waves of European immigration to Israel.

Growing up in my parents’ home in the immigrant neighborhood of the lower East Side of New York, “Sylvester Nacht” was something akin to the night Niagara Falls froze over and the resultant eerie silence awakened people for miles around. Our house was silent on that night and not because of the carol by that name.

My father's alarm clock woke us at 4 a.m. every day. He rose at that unearthly hour to sit in the kitchen with a faint light glowing and a cup of hot, strong black coffee in front of him studying Talmud to the traditional singsong chant before he went to synagogue prayers (*shacharit*) and then work (we snuggled happily under the covers, knowing that he would bring fresh, crusty rolls home first). My father, who came home from work every evening, went to synagogue for *maariv* prayers, had his dinner, and then sat bent over his Talmud until almost midnight –did not study Torah on “Sylvester” night.

He did not allow us to study Torah either. He explained that this was a silent night, made so by the Eastern European Jews who lived in fear of the yearly pogroms that accompanied the ushering in of the what is the civil new year today. This evening was, once the calendar settled on December 25th as Christmas, calculated to be the night preceding the circumcision of the child born in the “little town of Bethlehem”, therefore a call for the local peasants to engage in drinking, making merry and killing Jews.

Darkness along with the silence before a storm reigned in Jewish shteitls (small villages) that night in an attempt to make it harder to find defenseless victims, barricaded behind the flimsy doors of their huts. Torah study, which was done by the light of candles, was thus impossible.

As opposed to random pogroms and other manifestations of Jew hatred, this was a predictable yearly date.

Torah study that night eventually became forbidden, in memory of the horrors perpetrated on that evening, the same way Torah study is prohibited in a house of mourning and on the Ninth of Av when the Holy Temple was destroyed. Certain Hassidic sects, among them Satmar, refrain from Torah study on the eve of January 6 for the same reason to this day, a vestige of the fluctuations in the Gregorian Calendar.

A “Yerushalmi”, i.e. someone who lived in the Old City of Jerusalem before the State of Israel was declared, once told me that in this part of the world they would barricade their doors on Easter Sunday, knowing that the traditional Christian procession would often end in rioting against the local Jews. Communal Jewish history is made up of commandments, holidays and customs, but also of this type of memory.

It is jarring to hear the term “Sylvester” used casually by the media in Israel and to see the advertisements in Hebrew newspapers and on internet sites for parties and gala celebrations that usher in the civil new year on “Sylvester Nacht”.

Sylvester was Pope from January 31, 314 C.E. to December 31, 335 C.E. His Saint’s Day is the day he was buried, and it falls on December 31 of every year, that is since the civil solar calendar was straightened out (the Jewish calendar is a lunar one).

Not much is really known about him, but he presided over the Catholic Church during an important period in its history. He is thought to have been instrumental in the process that led to the Emperor Constantine’s conversion to Christianity, certainly nothing to celebrate for Jews.

Subsequent Jewish history did not turn this day into one that should be celebrated by Jews. An historical overview of New Year’s Day from a back issue of *News and World Report* makes me almost wonder if the writer spoke to my late father before writing his article. It reads:

On New Years Day 1577 Pope Gregory XIII decreed that all Roman Jews, under pain of death, must listen attentively to the compulsory Catholic conversion sermon given in Roman synagogues after Friday night

services. On New Years Day 1578 Gregory signed into law a tax forcing Jews to pay for the support of a 'House of Conversion' to convert Jews to Christianity. On New Years 1581 Gregory ordered his troops to confiscate all sacred literature from the Roman Jewish community. Thousands of Jews were murdered in the campaign.

"Throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods, January 1 - supposedly the day on which Jesus' circumcision initiated the reign of Christianity and the death of Judaism - was reserved for anti-Jewish activities: synagogue and book burnings, public tortures, and simple murder.

"The Israeli term for New Year's night celebrations, Sylvester, was the name of the 'Saint' and Roman Pope who reigned during the Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.). The year before the Council of Nicaea convened, Sylvester is said to have convinced Constantine to prohibit Jews from living in Jerusalem. At the Council of Nicaea, Sylvester arranged for the passage of a host of viciously anti-Semitic legislation. All Catholic Saints' are awarded a day on which Christians celebrate and pay tribute to that Saint's memory. December 31 is Saint Sylvester Day - hence celebrations on the night of December 31 are dedicated to Sylvester's memory."

Unwittingly, Israelis who party and Jews who stand in Times Square and celebrate in other places in the world watching the civil year come in, are doing the same. I preferred the silence in my childhood home.

*(Note: The eve of December 25th, Nittel Nacht, is also a night traditionally without Torah study, but since Jews have no temptation to celebrate that night and this article is intended to explain why the eve of December 31 is no time to attend parties, it is not discussed here.)*



GET WELL WISHES ARE EXPRESSED TO: BOBBIE KLEMOW, LEANNE TRATTNER, SHIRLEY BRENNER, SHERRI KLEMOW SHELVIN, & EILEEN BRENNER.

SHOULD ANYONE HAVE ANY NEWS TO SHARE WITH THE AIC FAMILY, PLEASE EMAIL IT TO [AGUDASISRAELHAZLETON@GMAIL.COM](mailto:AGUDASISRAELHAZLETON@GMAIL.COM) TO RUN IN THE NEXT AGUDAGRAM!

**SHEILA IS RESIDING AT ST. LUKE'S PAVILION. VISITATION AT ST. LUKE'S IS NOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. PLEASE WEAR A MASK SHOULD YOU LIKE TO VISIT AND REFRESH HER MEMORY OF HER LIFE WITH US!**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEND HER A CARD, YOU MAY SEND IT TO:**

**SHEILA MOYER  
C/O ST. LUKE'S PAVILION  
1000 STACIE DR. ROOM 227A  
HAZLETON, PA 18201**

*May the memory of the righteous endure as a blessing.*

The yahrzeit plaque lights are on in the sanctuary in memory of our departed loved ones.

\*Numbers before each name correspond to the Hebrew date of their passing. The date after each name is the secular day of the yahrzeit. Yahrzeit candles should be lit the evening before this date burning through the day of their passing. Kaddish should be said the evening before and the day of the date of passing.

TEVET

28 Bernard H. Cenower 1/1  
28 Rita Levine 1/1  
28 Joseph Frucht 1/1  
29 Irving Abrams 1/2  
29 Nathan Kline 1/2  
29 Louis Kaminoff 1/2

SHEVAT

1 Henry Klapper 1/3  
1 Anna Moskowitz 1/3  
3 Florence Mitchneck 1/5  
3 Barbara Marcus Kolton 1/5  
3 Edward Albright 1/5  
4 Benjamin Dubinsky 1/6  
4 Jacob Samuel Levin 1/6  
6 Rebecca Sherman 1/8  
7 David Gundling 1/9  
7 Jess Kashinitz 1/9  
8 Esther Perkins 1/10  
9 Reba Klemow 1/11  
10 Bernard Cohen 1/12  
11 David B. Levin 1/13  
11 Abraham Perkins 1/13  
11 Paul Spiegel 1/13  
15 Morris Cohn 1/17  
15 Sylvia Director 1/17

15 Ruth Feller 1/17  
15 Lazur Rabinowitz 1/17  
16 Phyllis Putter 1/18  
16 Isadore Kaufman 1/18  
17 Gussie Rutenberg 1/19  
18 Kurt Adler 1/20  
18 Hanna Sarah Cohn 1/20  
18 David Klapper 1/20  
18 Libby Eklind 1/20  
19 Shirley Berg 1/21  
19 Sarah Siegel 1/21  
20 Jennie Matlow 1/22  
21 Max Aronoff 1/23  
21 Harold A. Taub 1/23  
21 Isaac Weisman 1/23  
23 Edward Gildenberg 1/25  
23 Mildred Gildenberg Jaye 1/25  
24 Rose Davidowitz 1/26  
25 Jacob Klemow 1/27  
25 Sandra Palermo 1/27  
26 Viola Levine 1/28  
26 Morris Narrow 1/28  
27 Abe Aronoff 1/29  
27 Harry Bohorad 1/29  
28 Irving Cohen 1/30  
29 Dr. David Wagner 1/31

*Prayers To Recite When Lighting the Yahrzeit Candle*

“I light this candle to bring peace to the soul of \_\_\_\_\_ (insert Jewish name) ben/bat (son of/daughter of) \_\_\_\_\_ (insert father’s Jewish name).”

The human soul is a light from God. May it be your will that the soul of (*insert name*) enjoy eternal life, along with the souls of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, and the rest of the righteous that are in Gan Eden. Amen.

*Neir Adonai Nishmat Adam. Yehi Ratzon Milfanecha, Adonai Eloheinu Veilohei Avoteinu, Shetehei Nishmat (insert name) Tzerurah betzeror hachayim, im nishmot Avraham Yitzchak ve’Ya’akov, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel VeLeah. Tehi Menutchatah kavod, Selah*

Now, we can’t forget about Tu B’Shevat!



Tu B'Shevat is a holiday about the land of Israel and our connection to the land. For those of us who do not live in Israel, Tu B'Shevat is an excellent opportunity to find ways to plant Israel at home, in our lives and hearts. In Jewish tradition, Tu B'Shevat, the New Year of Trees, is celebrated on the 15th (TU=ט"ו) day of the Jewish month of Shevat שבט. This is one of the four New Years mentioned in the Mishnah. Known in Hebrew as "Chag Hallanot" (Ilan-אילן = tree), we honor this day when budding fruit enters a new year of life and *the first blossoms of spring are beginning to bloom* on the trees throughout Israel.

The date for Tu B'Shevat has been used since early Temple times to calculate the age of fruit-bearing trees, a measurement essential for the observation of several different arboreal laws:

- Orlah prohibition איסור ערלה, the practice of not eating any of the fruits for the first 3 years of a new tree's life.
- In the fourth year, the fruits were still considered holy and intended only for use in Temple ceremonies (Leviticus 19:23-25).
- From the fifth year of the tree's life and onward, the practices of first fruits (bikkurim ביקורים), and tithing (ma'aser מעשר), where part of every year's crop is donated to the Temple and the needy of the community.
- Tu B'Shevat also allowed for the proper observance of the law of shmitta שמיטה, when the fruit of the land in the seventh year cannot be eaten, used or sold. Knowing which "year" a given fruit belongs to helps ensure that we only eat fruits that are from "older" trees, that did not ripen during a shmitta year.

The fruit of the trees that bloom before Tu B'Shevat are counted toward the previous year, and those budding after Tu B'Shevat are considered the first fruits of the new "tree year".

These practices are uniquely tied to the land of Israel and highlight the integral connection this land and no other has to Jewish life.

## NEW YEAR OF THE TREES: A LOVE STORY BETWEEN A PEOPLE AND THEIR LAND

By Forest Rain Marcia

Can you imagine living in exile? Knowing that, although you have lived all your life in one place, as have your parents and maybe even grandparents, you belong to a different land?

The Jewish people lived in exile for centuries. Their religion and traditions did not allow them to forget... Maybe, most of all, it was their neighbors who did not allow them to forget that they belonged to a different land.

Jews in exile yearned for Zion, “the sun-drenched land.” Its fruits became something almost mythological. If someone managed to bring them fruits of the Land, it was like receiving a small miracle, something rare and very precious.

Of course, fruits couldn’t stay fresh on such a long trip. Dates, for example, could be brought from the far away land to the people in exile.

This is where the tradition of eating dried fruit on Tu B’shvat began.



Photo by Forest Rain Marcia

Tu B’Shvat is the new year for trees, celebrated according to the Hebrew calendar, on the 15th of the month of Shvat.

This is the new year for the purpose of calculating the age of trees for tithing (See Lev. 19:23-25, which states that fruit from trees may not be eaten during the first three years; the fourth year’s fruit is for God, and after that, you can eat the fruit).

It is customary to celebrate the holiday by eating

fruit from Israel, particularly a new fruit or one of the Seven Species described in the Bible as being abundant in the land of Israel: wheat, barley, grapes (vines), figs, pomegranates, olives and dates (honey) (Deut. 8:8).

In 1904, Professor Otto Warburg proposed establishing a Zionist Fund for the purpose of planting olive trees in Zion on lands redeemed by KKL-JNF. The Teachers’ Association of Eretz Yisrael turned planting trees in to a national tradition, followed by school children throughout the country.

The Jewish people returned to the land, planted trees and made the desert bloom. Technology and dedication realized the promise of a land “flowing with milk and honey”. Hills that were barren became green. The fruits of the land grew more abundant and new fruits were cultivated.

Our trees and their fruit are precious. This land gives much – when it is loved.

Last year Tu B’Shvat seemed to me a holiday of sad stubbornness.

My beautiful city of Haifa, scarred with black patches of land that once were green.

Hills that were covered in trees were bare. The arson-terrorism that brought fires to my neighborhood, city and in other places across the country caused scars that will take years to heal. Thankfully no human lives were lost during the fires. Many homes were lost or terribly damaged. It is difficult to comprehend the loss of memories, family heirlooms, treasures that survived so many other attacks...

Enough anguish is caused by the loss of things that can be replaced with money. How can you replace the irreplaceable?

Last Tu B’Shvat new trees and flowers were planted in Haifa. Experts say it will take some 30 years for the trees to grow back to something like



what we had before the fires. Their knowledge will guide the replanting to facilitate speedy, healthy new growth, in a way that is best for the land.

The green will spread before the trees grow. New plants will cover the ugly scars terrorism left behind. Our city, that was lovely in its green urbanity by the sea, will be lovely once more.



This Tu B'Shvat the evidence of the fires is still remains.

The green is coming back but it takes decades for trees to reach their full growth.

Tu B'Shvat should not have to be used to heal the land after an attack but it is fitting that it was. Ours is a love story between a people and their land, between a land and its people.

Hate so ferocious that it is willing to burn us out of our homes, killing the fruits of the land and make it barren where it was once green, is not enough to disconnect the People of Israel from Zion.

Exile could not make the People of Israel forget

Zion. Terrorism, even terrifying fires, cannot make us give up this land. Like countless times before, we will rebuild, plant new plants and grow better and stronger than ever before.

People can be killed. Trees can be burned. True love lasts forever.

## DECEMBER DONATIONS RECEIVED

### December Donations

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Herma & Ronald Aiken

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Faye & Richard Bishop

Faye & Richard Bishop

Faye & Richard Bishop

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Aunt, Ida Gildenberg Kline

Uncle, Samuel Gildenberg

Father, Arnold Sukenik

Uncle, Philip Klemow

Cousin, Larry Klemow

Father, Abe Bishop

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Husband & Father, Myron Brenner

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Mother, Sophie Levy  
Mother, Jean Warshofsky  
Father, Henry Rockman  
Mother, Phyllis Rosen  
Father, Max Schwartz  
In memory of Larry Klemow, Harry Klemow & In honor of  
Richard Kline "for leading the most inspirational Shabbat  
Services on Zoom"  
Grandfather, Isadore Kaplan  
  
Father, Larry Klemow

David & Sharon Shafritz  
Rhoda Wolf  
Curt Wright & Laura  
Klemow Wright

We greatly appreciate donations for yahrzeits, life events, and other celebrations!  
They truly keep the shul running and show how strong our congregation is.

**Thank**

We are especially grateful this month for the  
generous donation from Steve Rosen.

**You**

If you'd like information about making a donation,  
please email us at [agudasisraelhazleton@gmail.com](mailto:agudasisraelhazleton@gmail.com) or  
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You may also use our specific PayPal link sent in emails.





## JANUARY PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



town sponsors, donors and those individuals who made the commitment and stepped up to carry on our beautiful traditions. I appreciate the effort and inspiration of those who helped me through not-so-easy times since I became President.

Change is not easy and with new safety guidelines to follow, I am extremely proud to say we did it! We have maintained and grown spiritually and intellectually despite the many challenges we faced which tested us to gain new insights in Judaism. This shows the strength of our longing commitment and determination to stay healthy and pray together.

It took a great deal of time and hard work throughout the year to get to this point; let's keep it going forward.

We are a small but mighty family who cherishes our rich history and traditions. Our commitment and strength is vital to preserve and continue the history of Agudas Israel

and keep the heritage of our ancestors alive. We need more of members to pay it forward with their effort, time and energy to ensure our future. As I said during Hanukkah, "our miracle of light comes through our people's dedication to keep us alive and moving forward in to 2022." Our special light will continue with your help.

While I look forward to our weekly Shabbat zoom services, there is no substitute for in-person handshakes and interactions. At this time, Zoom allows us to pray, sing and socialize. I can't wait for us to join together inside our chapel and sanctuary since it feels so good to be back in our spiritual home!

I hope to see you all in the very near future at our services, events, activities and programs. Stay safe and be well!

All the best,

*Debbie Walker*

May the new year bring you an abundance of amazing opportunities, beautiful moments, and joyful experiences. May your positive actions & attitude inspire others. May you be brave enough to take on and overcome rewarding challenges. May you find yourself in high spirits & excellent health. May you love with all your heart and find peace in even the most turbulent of times. May the love you give always find its way back to you multiplied. And may you forever be filled with the hope & strength necessary to make your dreams a reality.

-Zero Dean -