

The Agudagram

February 2024 Volume 73, No. 5
Shevat/ Adar I 5784

Agudas Israel Congregation
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Hazleton, PA 18201
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Officers:

Richard Kline, Ritual Leader
Debbie Walko, President
Marlene Leonard, Vice President
Richard Rockman, Secretary
Helene Kline, Treasurer
Richard Kline, Financial Officer



Shabbat Candlelighting

February 9- Parshat Mishpatim- 5:12pm candlelighting

February 16- Parshat Terumah- 5:21pm candlelighting

February 23- Parshat Tetzaveh- 5:29pm candlelighting

**March 1- Shabbat Across America-
Parshat Ki Tisa- 5:38pm candlelighting**

**The AIC 2024 CALENDARS WILL BE IN YOUR MAILBOXES
SOON! Be on the lookout!**

**A BIG thank you to Christina for all her hard work, time, and
effort for continuing this beloved Agudas Israel tradition!**

**Lots going to add to your new calendar too! Check out the
events page also your email for updates. Enjoy!**

Hebrew School is held on Sundays at the shul and on Zoom at 10am with Richard Kline.
Interested in learning to read Hebrew for yourself, children, or your family? Let us know and we
can set up fun and interactive Zoom lessons with Sara.

The Virtues of a Virtual Minyan

While saying Kaddish for both my parents, I spent nearly two years in various Zoom services—and found them, in some ways, better than the original

BY

JENNIFER BLEYER for

Table Magazine

FEBRUARY 02, 2024

These are some of the places I recited Kaddish with my fellow mourners: grocery store aisles, airports, restaurants, cafes, subway stations, ATM lobbies, cars, street corners, doctors' waiting rooms, the

beach, the woods, my office, my bedroom, my kitchen, my daughter's gymnastics gym, my son's flag football game, and the middle of Park Avenue with traffic blaring around me. I stopped to say Kaddish while in the midst of cooking, cleaning, working, driving, answering emails, tending my houseplants, doing errands, running in the park, and biking over the Manhattan Bridge. At various points in the compressed period since both of my parents died—my father in March 2021, my mother in November 2022—alarms dinged on my phone throughout the day to alert me that a minyan was about to begin.

Like many before me, I found tremendous solace in saying Kaddish. Yet in any earlier era, I might not have engaged with the ritual thoroughly enough to feel its transformative power. The reason I was able to access Kaddish for roughly 600 days is that I said it mostly on Zoom—a pandemic-born adaptation that I'd argue is in some ways better than the original.

The Mourner's Kaddish is a core part of every traditional Jewish prayer service that, according to religious law, must be recited daily after the death of a parent (or spouse, sibling, or child) for 11 or 12 months, depending on one's custom. Based on the lugubrious drone with which we often hear it in synagogue, one might assume that its Aramaic text translates to something terrifically sorrowful. Yet it contains no mention of death, mourning, loss, or sadness. Rather, it lavishes praise on God and calls for abundant peace to rain down on us. Functionally and perhaps most significantly, Kaddish only "counts" if recited with a minyan, or a quorum of 10. Therein lies much of its magic. "It is hard to overstate the power of saying Kaddish with other people," writes Anita Diamant in *Saving Kaddish*. "The requirement of



a minyan for Kaddish ... turns the prayer into a communalizing force, keeping the mourner among the living—both literally and metaphorically. Indeed, the power of Kaddish comes, in large measure, from the consolations of being in a group that recognizes and embraces the bereaved.”

Everything about losing a parent is startling, and among the shocks is reciting the words of the Mourner’s Kaddish after spending a lifetime until then responding “Amen” to others fulfilling their obligation. Suddenly, the unthinkable has happened to you. When my father died—he was 71 with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a terminal respiratory disease—I found myself expelled from the excruciating, breathtaking, time-stilling, mind-blowingly sacred experience of caring for him at the end of his life into a period of pain and paralysis unlike anything I’d ever imagined. It was hard to do anything *except* to say Kaddish. The prayer, among other things, is a kind of spiritual technology that can help you put one foot in front of the other at a moment of personal obliteration. And because it was still the height of the pandemic when my father died, and most non-Orthodox synagogues had yet to resume meeting in person, there was an abundance of virtual minyanim to which I could turn to say it.

There was a [Reform synagogue’s](#) 7 a.m. broadcast every day on Facebook Live, in which the rabbi led a silent meditation prior to the prayer. There was a daily morning minyan broadcast by the [fancy Conservative synagogue](#) that my father himself had become so loyal to watching every Shabbat during the pandemic because he loved their operatic cantor. There was a minyan every Monday afternoon organized by a network of [youngish Jewish movers and shakers](#), in which Kaddish was preceded by a prayer for healing and everyone took turns naming the sick in their lives.

I often attended a [15-minute Kaddish call](#) on weekday afternoons where more than 100 people popped in from all over the country. In the chat, they would share where they were from and who they were remembering, producing a stream of names evoking a stream of love. Before the cacophonous group-recitation of the prayer, a rabbi would offer a teaching, often refracting the experience of loss through the weekly Torah portion.

Another of my regulars was an [intimate weekly half-hour Kaddish](#) so sensitively facilitated that it felt like a bereavement group. Week after week, new mourners would appear and release the keening cries of fresh loss before a screen full of compassionate witnesses. Others would note the acute sorrows of milestones as they scrolled by during the first year without their loved one—the first Passover, first Father’s Day, first birthday. Still others would note, with a different flavor of sorrow, that their proscribed time within the tender holding space of Kaddish was about to end.

It was only eight months after I finished saying Kaddish for my father that my mother died of cancer, which had been an ominous but controlled presence in her body and our family's life for a dozen years. Just after my father's first *yahrzeit*, her disease escalated and spread. Once again, in what felt like a stunning *déjà vu*, I found myself walking through the valley of the shadow of death. Once again, I had to muster more strength than I knew myself to possess, this time to usher my immeasurably beloved mother to the end of her life. And once again, daily Kaddish was there to catch me in the free fall after she was gone.

Even before my parents died, I understood at some level that we Jews are lucky to have a ritual container for grief, unlike the vacuum in which most Westerners find themselves after a loss—a space devoid of structure, custom, or communal recognition. But whereas the week of *shiva* is widely known and observed to some degree (despite its potential to feel, as [a bereaved mother recently wrote in *The New York Times*](#), like “a cocktail party in hell”), the mourner's near-year of saying Kaddish reflects the actual intensity and duration of grief. It affirms that mourning continues long after the cards and casseroles have stopped coming, after the donations have been gratefully received and after friends and family have ceased reaching out with hushed, sympathetic inquiries of “How are you *doing*?” As the anthropologist Gila S. Silverman wrote in [a 2021 paper](#), “Within a larger social context that still expects people to ‘get over it’ and move on from their grieving fairly quickly, the year of Jewish mourning rituals, and the ongoing opportunities to publicly remember the deceased, send the bereaved a strikingly different message ... that ongoing mourning is accepted, expected, and supported by communal norms, rather than being a reason to seek professional help.”

Still, as a working mother of three children whose Jewish identity is strong but pretty uncategorizable, how likely was I to shlep to a synagogue every day for nearly two years? Not very. What the flourishing landscape of virtual Kaddish did, essentially, was to make the practice accessible and inviting to someone like me. With a low barrier to entry and so many ways in, it brought me the balm that observant Jews have long experienced through the ritual's most healing features: regularity and connection.

Besides easy access, virtual Kaddish had the benefit of giving me a wide-shot view of my place in the scheme of things. Over nearly two years, I gazed at thousands of faces—Barbara from Scottsdale, David from San Francisco, Faye from Rochester, Simon from Chicago, Helen from London, Rebecca from Ashland, and so on. I knew nothing about them except that they were Jewish (presumably) and grieving a loss. I saw the sorrow (my sorrow!) in their eyes, read the names of their mothers, fathers, siblings, and spouses in the chat, and lent my voice to the collective, clanging, everyone's-now-unmuted recitation of words so familiar they seemed

imprinted in our bodies. In this vast borderless crowd, I sensed myself more clearly in the river of time. I could see that we were all holding fast to the same raft that our loved ones had held onto to make it through the rapids.

Perhaps the most exquisite feature of virtual Kaddish was how it helped maintain and even strengthen my sense of bondedness to my parents. This is an obvious feature of saying Kaddish in general and one that has been well chronicled by many who've said it in the traditional way. Leon Wieseltier in *Kaddish*, Ari Goldman in *Living a Year of Kaddish*, E.M. Broner in *Mornings and Mourning*, and Anita Diamant all describe Kaddish as a connective link, a powerful affirmation of a relationship that continues after the death of the one being mourned. But there's something especially poignant about this act when it halts you during whatever activity is underway in the middle of your day, wherever you are, and asks you to stop, commune with your loved one, and be with others doing the same. Especially when the churn of quotidian life has resumed, a Kaddish group popping up on your phone is a gift, a salve, a whisper, a refuge. It's a perch where the wild tumult of grief can land. It's a golden thread stitching you to the one who is gone.

Not long ago, I logged on to one of my regular minyans just before the end of saying Kaddish for my mom. It was Sukkot, and the rabbi leading the minyan expounded on an idea the holiday underscores—that everything is fragile and impermanent, yet we must rejoice in life in spite of its flipside of loss. One hundred and twenty-seven people were there—127 people who, like me, had lost someone deeply important to them. “I’ve never felt so much presence the way I have the past three-and-a-half years in this minyan,” the rabbi said. “It’s a new kind of minyan for sure, but it’s a minyan.” Someone posted in the chat: “Actually, sometimes it feels more connected than before Zoom!” A flurry of hearts and thumbs-ups flashed on the screen. Then we prayed for peace to shower down from the heavens—for ourselves, for everyone—and all to each other we said: Amen.

As Israel continues to fight a war against Hamas, we must pray for timely and safe resolve and lasting peace.

Psalms for reflection in these difficult times of uncertainty and loss.

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוּמֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עִלְיָנוּ
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תְּבִיל וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

*Oseh shalom bim'romav. Hu ya'aseh shalomaleyenu,
v'al kol Yisrael, v'al kol yoshvey teyveyl, v'imru: Amen!*

**May the one who makes peace in
the heavens make peace upon us, all
Israel, and all who dwell on earth.**

February (Shevat/Adar I) Yahrzeits

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.

SHEVAT

23 Edward Gildenberg 2/2

23 Mildred Gildenberg Jaye 2/2

24 Rose Davidowitz 2/3

25 Jacob Klemow 2/4

25 Sandra Palermo 2/4

26 Viola Levine 2/5

26 Morris Narrow 2/5

27 Abe Aronoff 2/6

27 Harry Bohorad 2/6

28 Irving Cohen 2/7

29 Dr. David Wagner 2/8

8 Morris Chenetz 2/17

9 Reuben Zimet 2/18

10 Martha Buchbinder 2/19

10 Henry H. Cohn 2/19

12 Grace Klemow 2/21

12 David Kaminoff 2/21

12 Bernie Staffin 2/21

14 Harry Brenner 2/23

15 Bernard Bergstein 2/24

15 Rebecca Chaskin 2/24

15 Beatrice Miller 2/24

15 Murray Spiegel 2/24

16 Lillian Frumkin 2/25

17 Jeffrey Bloch 2/26

17 Goldie Kaplan 2/26

17 Isadore Schwartz 2/26

18 Jacob Narrow 2/27

19 Esther Smulyan 2/27

19 Joseph Spector 2/27

19 Sadie Shaiman 2/27

20 Stella Kauffman 2/28

20 Dov Weidenfeld 2/28

ADARI

2 Bertha Casuto 2/11

2 Sam Goldberg 2/11

2 Ben Singer 2/11

2 Douglas Silver 2/11

2 Esther Snyder 2/11

3 David Sugarman 2/12

3 Maurice Williams 2/12

4 Ethel Koplin 2/13

4 Hannah Brown 2/13

4 Marilyn Harris 2/13

4 Gretl Schwabe 2/13

7 William Chercass 2/16

7 Morton Cohn 2/16

NOTE ADAR I AND ADAR II ARE BOTH OBSERVED IN ADAR IN A NON-LEAP YEAR. AS THIS IS A LEAP YEAR, THEY ARE CELEBRATED SEPARATELY. ADDING A LEAP MONTH TO THE JEWISH LUNAR CALENDAR KEEPS THE SEASONS IN THE MONTHS THEY ARE ASSOCIATED WITH. ADAR II IS THE "REGULAR" ADAR FEATURING PURIM!

PLEASE REMEMBER THE MITZVAH OF GIVING TZEDUKAH TO YOUR SHUL OR THE SHUL OF YOUR LOVED ONE WHO HAS PASSED, ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR YAHRZEIT IN THEIR MEMORY.

REFLECTION WHICH MAY BE READ WHEN LIGHTING A YAHRZEIT CANDLE FOR YOUR LOVED ONE: "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

JANUARY DONATIONS RECEIVED

<u>Yahrzeit Memorial Fund</u>		<u>Endowment Fund</u>
Donation Received From	In Memory of	In Memory of Ida Miller <i>Bruce & Kate Miller Sherri Klemow Shevlin</i>
Renee Barson c/o Jeff Barson	Albert Barson, husband	In Memory of Albert Rosen <i>Bruce & Kate Miller Marilyn Bergstein</i>
Michele & James Banker	Aronld Sukenik, father	
Barry & Karen Chaskin	Bertha Gelb, aunt	
The Family of Martin Cohn, c/o Joe Cohn	Elizabeth "Mama Betty" Bohard, grandmother	
Richard Koller	Faye G. Director, mother	
Faye & Richard Bishop	Harold Taub, friend of father	
Herma Jaye Aiken	Ida Gildenberg Kline, aunt	
Rhoda Wolff	Isadore Kaplan, grandfather	
Dorothy Markoff	Isadore Kaufman, father	
Michele & James Banker	Larry Klemow, cousin	
Danielle Klemow Young	Larry Klemow, father	
Sondra Levinson	Lazur Rabinowitz, grandfather	
Lisa Gordon Matyas	Lillian Chaskin, grandmother	
Faye & Richard Bishop	Max Aronoff, friend	
Jacqueline C. Matlow	Morris Cohn, grandfather	
Ilene, Bob & Lauren Levin-Dando	Rita Levin, mother	
Beryl Brown	Ruth Litwack, aunt	

GET WELL WISHES ARE EXPRESSED TO: BRUCE MILLER, JIM LEONARD, LEANNE TRATTNER, SHIRLEY BRENNER, EILEEN BRENNER, & BONNIE YANUSKIEWICZ.

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



AIC NEWS/ EVENTS

1. Agudas Israel Members are invited to an **"Intro to Judaism Class" on Zoom with Rabbi Miriam Spitzer** of Temple Israel Scranton. Rabbi Miriam T. Spitzer, Temple Israel, Scranton, PA 18510 rabi@templeisraelscranton.org "Shalom. I am teaching an intro to Judaism course on Zoom. It is appropriate for anyone who wants to know more about Judaism, Jewish or otherwise, and it is a good introduction for those considering conversion. I have a number of people who know quite a bit about Judaism coming to fill in gaps in their knowledge. Non-members are welcome. You/they can call the office to register. There is a non-member charge of \$75.00. The class meets at 7:00 on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Thursdays of the month and I have done the first two classes already.

2. **JCC Leisure Lunch- Tuesday, February 27 at noon at Perkins. Contact Christina to RSVP by Feb 25th.**

3. **Shabbat Across America March 1**, 5:30 service, 6:30 dinner- \$18 per person- Shabbat Across America Shabbat dinner will be held at the Kingston JCC Friday, March 1. This is a full Shabbat dinner prepared for the whole community to share together and is also a national and global initiative to bring Jews together for a special Shabbat meal. This year, the program is especially meaningful as it will also be showing solidarity and support for Israel in these trying times. This is a Glatt kosher catered meat event by Around the Table Catering . Reach out to Sara to RSVP and for more info: sararw531@gmail.com or call/text 5702390626

4. **Zoom Class on "The Song of Songs" with Cantor Ramón Tasat DATE TBD** Contact the AIC office if interested. The Song of Songs is considered one of the five megillot (scrolls) read on major festivals. It is chanted during Pesach/Passover. It is also sung as an introduction to the Shabbat evening since the Sabbath serves as a renewal of loving vows between God and the Jewish People. Pained by loneliness? Exhilarated by the arrival of the Spring? Have you ever fallen in Love? This book is for you. Can't wait to discuss it together.



yearning for home | songs of land, love & loss

Elizabeth Shammash
mezzo-soprano

Ramón Tasat
tenor & guitar

Michael Langlois
pianist

EMERSON AVENUE SALON

5. **March 3rd virtual concert with Cantor Ramon, "Yearning for Home"** The concert is free! Donations appreciated! Watch on youtube or the host's website below.

<https://www.youtube.com/>

[@emersonavenuesalons7910](https://emersonavenuesalons.com/)

<https://emersonavenuesalons.com/>

6. **Pesach Seder with Cantor Ramon, "Our heart is imprisoned in Gaza"...DATE TBD** Join Us at the Table! Join us at Agudas Israel for an evening together as we celebrate the Jewish emancipation from Slavery to



Freedom. We will portrait the heroes of the terrible Shabbat of October 7, 2023 and remember the hatufim, the 136 Israeli hostages taken captive by Hamas in Gaza since.

SUNDAY MARCH 3, 2024
7:30 – 8:30PM EST

FEBRUARY PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear members and friends, Enjoy the gift of beautiful warmth and sunshine we are experiencing this February in Hazleton! We appreciate everyone's patience in the delay of sending out calendars. Christina will send an email shortly when the calendars are being mailed out. After proof-reading the draft, it is well worth waiting for! Christina did an amazing job with her unique technical skills in putting it all together.

I was very taken by Trevor Noah as he talked about the power of music, while recently hosting the 2024 Grammy awards. He said, "When you look at it, music is made up of four key elements: rhythm, beats, melody, and harmony. I've been thinking about that one a lot this past year, harmony - different notes coming together in a moment to make something more beautiful. So much divides us right now, but music is about uniting us through our differences. It's black kids and white kids rejecting segregation in 1950's, and instead blending R&B, country and even gospel into rock 'n' roll. Music isn't the harmony of sound, it's the harmony of human beings, of different races, genders, religions, identities, sexual orientations, knowing we are different but rejecting division to find moments of joy and unity and harmony, and that's what music is all about." He then ended the evening by saying, "Tonight, united we celebrate the world of music where everyone of us, no matter where we are from, is united in the shared experience and it brings us together like no like nothing else can. And that's why music must be our safe space. When that's violated, it strikes at the very core of who we are. We felt that at the Bataclan Concert Hall in Paris, the Manchester Arena in England, the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival in Las Vegas, and on October 7 at the Super Nova Music Festival for Love in Israel, where over 360 music fans lost their lives, and another 40 were kidnapped. That day, and all the tragic days that followed have been awful for the world to bear as we mourn the loss of all innocent lives.

We live in a world divided by so much and maybe music can't solve everything but let us all agree, music must remain the common ground upon which we all stand together in peace, and in harmony, because music has always been one of humanity's greatest connectors. Think about it- every song, honoring or hearing tonight moved somebody no matter where they were from or what they believe; it connected them to others who were moved in the same way. Take the string quartet - as individuals the sound is really good, but together they achieve something beautiful, that they could never do apart. These musicians are Palestinian, Israeli and of Arab descent, are here together - and now is the time for us, for humanity, to play together, to come together with empathy and with love." I have these similar feelings every Shabbat when we come together in our chapel, sanctuary, and on Zoom; we feel connected with those around the world who are also singing songs and praying for peace and harmony. This is especially true now as we conclude our services by singing Hatikvah "The Hope", the national anthem of the state of Israel. Please come and join us at our services to feel this connection together with us!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debbie Walker".