



Congregation Ahavath Sholom

The Creative Spirit Dwells Here

THE CAS NEWSLETTER

November 2025

Upcoming services and events

Saturday, November 1 at 10:00 AM: Shabbat / Installation followed by Kiddish

Sunday, November 2 at 1:00-3:00 PM: Painting Workshop with Ilene Spiewak (postponed)

Wednesday, November 5 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Monday, November 10 at 5:00 PM: November Board Meeting

Wednesday, November 12 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Monday, November 17 at 12:00 PM: Memoir Workshop with Barbara Janoff
7:00 PM: Photography Workshop with Arthur Hillman

Wednesday, November 19 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Friday, November 21 at 5:00 PM: Kabbalat Shabbat Service

Saturday, November 22 at 10:00 AM: Shabbat Torah Study

Wednesday, November 26 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Note: Unless indicated, all services & events take place at the synagogue at 15 North Street, Great Barrington

This month's newsletter features:

The Installation of Rabbi Jennifer Rudin: Kabbalat Shabbat

Yom Kippur D'var Torah by Marie Rudden

The People's Pantry: CAS Yom Kippur Food Drive

The CAS Sukkah

Notes from the October Board Meeting

News from Rabbi Rudin

Tree work at the synagogue

Berkshire Concert Choir

November Creative Arts Workshops

November Yahrzeits

Donations

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The Installation of Rabbi Jennifer Rudin: Kabbalat Shabbat 10/31/25



Rabbi Jeffrey Eisenstat, Rabbi Jennifer Rudin and Rabbi Barbara Cohen



Yom Kippur D'var Torah by Marie Rudden

Yom Kippur -Nitzavim Torah portion
Deuteronomy 29:9-30:20

The Covenant between G-d and the Israelites centered on their awe-filled worship of a powerful, ineffable spirit who could not be viewed, but was *experienced*. In the Torah portion Nitzavim, Adonai is seen to express disgust over the worship of graven images in wood or gold, especially when some who have honored Hashem now have “hearts that are turning awayto worship the gods of those other nations.” Such people are characterized as feeling immune from G-d’s sanctions: they are “roots of poison weed” ... “following their own willful heart(s)”. And as such, they are condemned to be punished. Further, if a large group of people turn to idol worship, their land will be poisoned, never to become fertile again. This is a desperate situation for a people dependent on the land for grazing their sheep and goats. They will be exiled, a graver punishment than death in the Torah.

I know something about the effect of exile, as do most of us with family who have immigrated here. My *mother’s* father, who lived in Germany, was disowned by his parents when he refused to become a Lutheran minister as they wished, *and* after he was exposed as having a relationship with a woman unacceptable to his parents. Forced to leave his home, he joined the German equivalent of the Merchant Marines and eventually washed ashore here in Maryland, injured. On my *father’s* side, his grandfather was smuggled out of Ireland the night he killed a British soldier who was arresting his family for welcoming a priest into their home for a Communion service-which gatherings were forbidden by British law. My *mother’s* father was seen as being “poisonous” to his brothers and family, while my father’s grandfather was praised as being heroic. But *each* of them, after exile, struggled hard to find their ways as strangers in a strange and foreign land. Each had great difficulty adjusting to his new land.

So, what kind of G-d is this, in this Torah passage? His people experienced or intuited a divinity, I think, determined to keep a wandering people together, to maintain their lives as a community committed to a shared belief. Yet – since the Garden of Eden, humans have struggled to follow the dictates of their own selves, their own spirits, while at the same time they are commanded in the Torah to follow the will of Elohim. Is acceptance possible for those who follow a different message?

I view the portrayal here of people who “felt exempt from G-d’s law” as *a judgement -that they were* arrogant, materialistic and sought mainly to advance themselves, while betraying their people and their G-d. There might be some truth in this assessment, but for me, judging those with “willful hearts” is a matter of great complexity. One needs to discover first the reasons one has for their choices.

I, myself, have been called “willful” during some pivotal experiences in my life. At seventeen, I struggled, with guilt and some heartbreak, over my decision to leave Catholicism. I had attended Catholic schools from grades 1 to 12, but during high school, had begun to question the dogmas of my religion. Studying European history led me to understand the corruption of many of the popes, the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition and the vicious arrogance of the Crusades. More personally, I felt oppressed, unable to stretch my wings to claim a future that mattered to me. Women within my patriarchal religion were judged when they made choices of their own, if they did not seem dedicated *solely* to the needs of their husbands and children. My high school chemistry teacher told our class that women should learn science in order *only* to better support their scientist-husbands. Expressing one’s sexuality was also censored: at a school-sponsored dance, I was scolded by a nun- chaperone for “talking too loud” and being “flirtatious.” Essentially, the message seemed to be that one’s life was to be committed to overcoming original sin, and that Eve- and all women- were essentially guilty of temptation, of seduction. I did admire liberation theology and the few priests, the Berrigans, who fiercely opposed the Vietnam War. But I longed for something less programmed than rote and repetitive learning, the memorization of the contents of the Catechism. I had begun to search for something that felt more deeply spiritual, more accepting and reflective of my whole self.

By senior year, I dreaded the rote-sounding prayers recited over the school’s loudspeaker in homeroom, at the beginning of each schoolday. One late April morning, our principal, a nun, entered our homeroom classroom, furious that not everyone was joining in the prayers. “Who resents being made to pray?”, she asked angrily. (It was not the best approach to restless teenagers who were simply looking forward to their upcoming graduation. And she was clearly setting some of us up.) Three of my friends and I raised our hands; we were promptly expelled. Our archbishop was called, who then phoned each girl’s parents. A disaster. I would have much preferred a private discussion of my response with the principal, and an eventual discussion with my parents of what lay behind my changed beliefs. I admit that there was some defiance in my response, and some enjoyment when the school’s lay faculty protested the expulsions, which were then revoked. Nonetheless, I felt that I was being true to my self as I

had changed, with much struggle, over some years. I was willful, but I never believed that my response was “poisonous” nor that it would undermine the faiths of my classmates.

Much later in my life, during the second year of my residency in Psychiatry, I became pregnant. This was not planned, and I struggled hard with what to do. Having my child would complicate my life considerably: I was just starting to learn things that were deeply important to me. But my husband then was 14 years older and desperately wanted this child. And I soon realized that having this baby was deeply important to me, too.

When, at three months, I told my training director that I was pregnant, he seemed flabbergasted. “You will be more tired than you can possibly imagine,” he told me. “It is best for you to wait until the end of this program to have a child. Come back in two weeks and let me know your decision.” My decision? I had told him that I was pregnant—was he suggesting that I get an abortion? He clearly felt, when I continued with my pregnancy, that I was willful: “not a team player”. When two fellow residents in my year, some months after, announced their pregnancies, he *clearly* decided that I had indeed been “a poison root”. But I have never regretted my decision. My son Daniel, now 46, has been a joy to me, as has my second child Adrienne, born several years after my training. I finished my residency despite this director’s disapproval and later trained as a psychoanalyst.

About being willful. I admit that there have been times when being strong-willed has NOT worked out for me or for my family. And yet, it has given me strength at other moments to become my deeper self.

However- I *can* become angry when frustrated. I *can* defend myself excessively when I feel hurt or judged. These traits are not constructive, nor creative. It has taken years to recognize and to work on them. I am still learning. I am grateful for my family and friends who have lovingly supported me for decades in this necessary learning. And I reflect on this today, on Yom Kippur.

About necessary learning: in a Torah portion just after the one today, it is said that one does not need to always struggle to find the divine: “It (the spirit) is very close to you, it is in your mind and in your heart to observe it...” It continues: “I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life.”

I have at times sensed the Spirit, been mysteriously inspired by an ineffable force- in nature, in music and in worship. I have learned that G-d is a spark, holy, creative, but also fierce. And I see that I am made in G-d’s image: B’tzelem Elohim. I have found a loving and supportive community of worship here. Like the unexpected choices of some of my ancestors, my choice to convert, to become a Jew, may seem apart from some of my family traditions, but for me it means that now, at 74, I feel whole. Baruch Hashem.

The People’s Pantry: CAS Yom Kippur Food Drive



Dear Rabbi Rudin, Susan Weinstein, and the entire Congregation,

We can't thank you enough for your incredibly successful High Holiday Food Drive! You filled the shelves of the Pantry and you made it so easy by sorting – wow! For a small congregation you have a big heart!!

*All my best,
Laura Gratz
Board President*



The CAS Sukkah



Notes from the October Board Meeting

- We have received a grant of \$1500 from the Hadar Institute to support the setting up of a Caring Committee that will serve members of the congregation in need. ("The Hadar Institute is a center of Jewish life, learning, and practice that builds vibrant egalitarian communities in North America and Israel. Our vision for Jewish life is rooted in rigorous and nuanced Torah study, gender equality, meaningful Jewish practice, and the values of kindness and compassion.")
- The Finance Committee reports that current income is slightly below this same time last year. At this point it looks like our deficit for the fiscal year will be around \$24,000 which will need to be addressed with a vigorous fundraising campaign.
- We had a successful High Holidays but there were some security concerns about the South Berkshire Community Center because it is not possible to cordon off certain public use areas. Also, the cost of using the Center will likely increase next year, so consideration should be given either to moving services to the synagogue or another suitable venue.
- The synagogue basement has serious mold and dampness issues. We are now awaiting a cost estimate from Laureyns United on possible remediation.
- The invasive Japanese knotweed behind the building has been treated with herbicide. Some additional tree removal and cabling also need to be done. Strong Oak Landscaping of Canaan, CT has offered the synagogue a *pro bono* reduction of \$800 toward the total cost of \$3400. The Board voted to authorize an expenditure of \$2600 to pay for the work.
- The Mike Weaver Helping Friends Forever Foundation, which raises money to buy AEDs for non-profit groups, has donated a defibrillator to the synagogue in memory of Harold Rudin. Molly Souede has volunteered to train us in its use.
- A file cabinet is being donated to the synagogue by Debbie Slater.

News from Rabbi Rudin

Caring Community at CAS: A New Hadar Initiative

We're delighted to share some exciting news — Congregation Ahavath Sholom has been awarded a grant from Hadar (NYC) to create a Hadar Community Group right here in our own community!

Hadar Community Groups are grassroots, peer-led gatherings that bring people together around the core Jewish values of Torah (learning), Avodah (prayer and song), and Hesed (acts of kindness). Across the country, these groups are nurturing spaces for meaningful connection, spiritual growth, and vibrant Jewish living — and now, we're part of that inspiring network.

Here at Ahavath Sholom, our Hadar grant gives us the chance to build something truly special — a Caring Community. Led by Rabbi Rudin and Susan Hicks, our group will gather at least eight times a year, bringing together members to share in song, study, volunteer projects, and cooking. Together, we'll weave a network of care and connection — supporting one another in times of joy and in times of need.

If you'd like to be part of this new chapter in our community's story, we'd love to have you join us.

 Contact Susan Hicks at tsbhicks@gmail.com to learn more.

Let's create spaces of support, hope, and belonging, and join a national grassroots movement working toward a vision of a flourishing, compassionate world.

Joining Voices at Hadar's Rising Song Intensive in NYC

Rabbi Rudin, Susan Hicks, Debbie Slater, and Joan Burkhard will be attending **Hadar's Rising Song Intensive** this December in New York City.

What is Rising Song Intensive?

From **December 8–11, 2025**, at **Yeshivat Hadar, NYC**, Hadar hosts a powerful immersive musical experience. Guided by an extraordinary faculty lineup of composers, facilitators, and scholars, participants explore and expand their capacities for communal song, prayer, and spiritual leadership.

This year's theme, *"Pathways into Song,"* invites participants to engage with multiple entry points into sacred musical community.

Why this matters to us

For our community, this is a chance to deepen our musical practice, bring renewed energy into our worship spaces, and learn from some of the leading voices shaping Jewish song today. The learning and inspiration our team brings back will inform our services, classes, and collaborative moments of song.

If you're curious about joining them — whether for a single day or the full intensive — this is a beautiful opportunity to sing, learn, and grow together.

Stay tuned for their reflections and expect some new melodies and practices to find their way into our community soon!

A Conversation with Professor Seth Greenberg: Reflections from Jerusalem

On **Sunday, November 9 at 11:00 a.m. (EST)**, **Congregation Ahavath Sholom** will host a special **Zoom conversation with Professor Seth Greenberg**, speaking live from **Jerusalem**.

Professor Greenberg will share his insights on how the **events of October 7** and the **war that followed** have shaped and transformed **Israeli society** — offering a thoughtful, firsthand perspective on this moment in Israel's history.

The program will include a **45-minute talk**, followed by an opportunity for **questions and discussion**.

 **Date:** Sunday, November 9

 **Time:** 11:00 a.m. (EST)

 **Where:** Zoom

 **RSVP:** Please email **Rabbi Rudin** to receive the Zoom link.

We extend our **deep gratitude to Debbie Slater** for helping to bring Professor Greenberg to our community.

New Life-Saving Gift in Memory of Harold Rudin

We are honored to share that the **Friends of Mike Weaver (Mike Weaver Helping Friends Forever Foundation)** have generously donated a **defibrillator (AED)** to **Congregation Ahavath Sholom** in memory of **Harold Rudin**. The foundation's mission is to raise funds to provide AEDs to nonprofits and families in need, helping to make communities safer for everyone. mwhfff.org

This gift is especially meaningful: **Melanie Weaver**, a neighbor and dear friend of Rabbi Rudin, developed a close friendship with Harold over time. Her advocacy and the foundation's support have brought this life-saving device into our congregational space as a tribute to Harold's memory.

In the coming weeks, we will offer training sessions for members of the congregation to learn how to use the defibrillator. We encourage everyone to participate — knowing how to respond in an emergency could be a critical act of *hesed* (kindness) in our community.

Stay tuned for dates and times. We are deeply grateful to the Friends of Mike Weaver and Melanie Weaver for this gift of safety, remembrance, and community care.

Rabbi Rudin is Here for You

Rabbi Rudin encourages all members of our community to **reach out during moments of joy, sadness, or illness**. Whether it's a celebration, a life transition, or a challenging time, the Rabbi is here to support you.

You can always contact Rabbi Rudin at **508-333-1991**.

Remember — **we can't support you unless we know what's happening in your life**. Please don't hesitate to reach out.

Tree work at the synagogue

You have probably been witnessing the felling of one of our beautiful, but quite rotten, maple trees. One has come down in advance of the Installation, as it would have leaned on the tent. The other will be removed sometime in the next few weeks. We are also cabling the birch trees at the back of the lot to extend their lives. The Japanese knot wood has been sprayed and will be removed as well. We have cleaned up the area on the right side of the building and removed tree branches which shaded the back of the building. The weeping cherry tree will get a pruning, and we hope will recover in the Spring.



The Berkshire Concert Choir

Berkshire Concert Choir
November 15th and 16th
Seatings at 3:00, 4:30 and 6:00 PM
Zion Lutheran Church
74 First St, Pittsfield, MA 01201

This concert of **SACRED PLACE** offers the audience an intimate and immersive concert experience performed by singers in the round. Inspired by Jewish heritage, and with the guide of a labyrinth, the program journeys inward as we consider the universality of our connection to the earth and to each other. The music, including Eric Whitacre's *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, Alex Berko's *Sacred Place* and Stephen Paulus's *Hymn to the Eternal Flame*, features guest artists Jamecyn Morey (violin), Julian Muller (cello) and Aaron Likness (piano). Congregation Ahavath Sholom Members, Joan and Dan Burkhard will perform with the choir.

Advanced ticket purchases are strongly recommended as seating is limited.
Tickets can be purchased on the Berkshire Concert Choir website or from Joan and Dan.

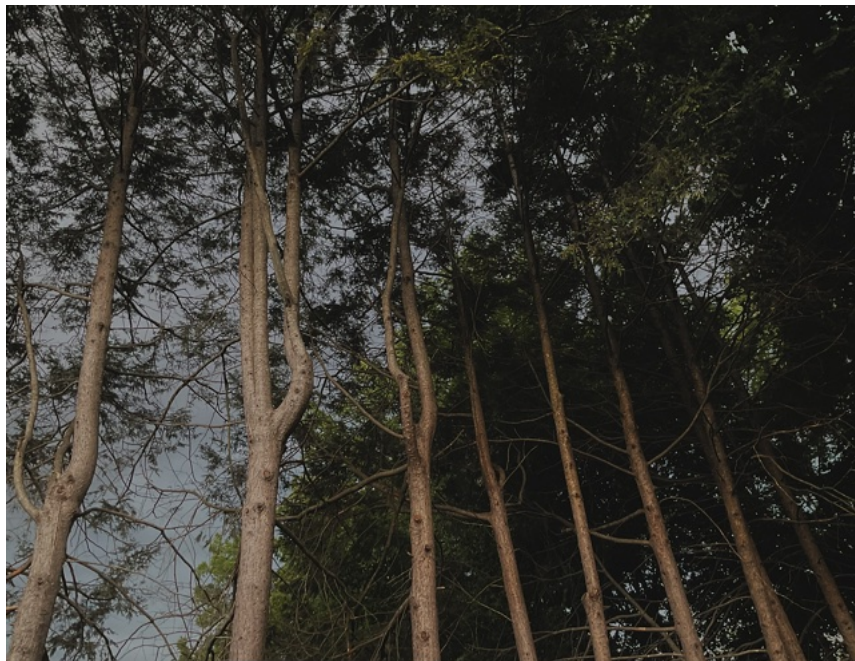
November Creative Arts Workshops

The next **Memoir Writing Workshop** is scheduled for Monday, November 17th at noon via Zoom. Shared readings and short writing exercises. Each of these sessions is stand-alone. Please RSVP to Barbara Janoff at bjanoff1@gmail.com. Suggested donation to CAS is \$10 to support our Creative Arts Programs.

Barbara Janoff Ph.D. is retired from the Fashion Institute of Technology, State University of New York in Manhattan, where she taught writing and literature. Her poetry and essays have appeared in a number of journals, including Communication Arts, Women's Work: The Journal of the Columbia College Women's Center and the Berkshire Review.

The next **Photography Workshop** will take place on Monday, November 17th, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Participants in the workshop can submit any images they would like discussed, regardless of subject matter or content, using phone or camera. They can also share their screen with the group. These workshops are stand-alone sessions, open to all. Please RSVP to arthurhillman54@gmail.com. Suggested donation to CAS is \$10 to support our Creative Arts Programs.

Photographer and printmaker Arthur Hillman has been exhibiting his prints for more than 60 years. He has delivered a variety of lectures and presentations on photography and printmaking, juried many exhibits, and was a founding member of the Berkshire Photography Group. He is Professor Emeritus, Photography, Printmaking and Design, Bard College at Simon's Rock.



Photograph by Caroline Forsman from the October CAS Photography Workshop

Yahrzeits

Much of our experience of divine goodness, grace and love has come to us through those whose lives have touched our own.

	Hebrew Date	Secular Date	This Year
Joseph Kogan	Cheshvan 10 5752	10/18/1991	11/1
Henrietta Slote	Cheshvan 20 5775	11/13/2014	11/11
Clyde H. Beigh	Cheshvan 22 5781	11/9/2020	11/13
James Orenstein	Cheshvan 26 5779	11/4/2018	11/17
Thomas Josephs	Cheshvan 26 5769	11/24/2008	11/17
Arthur Rothstein	Cheshvan 27 5746	11/11/1985	11/18
Anshel Tessler	Cheshvan 28 5721	11/18/1960	11/19
Frank Rawitz	Kislev 6 5743	11/22/1982	11/26
Mildred Hillman	Kislev 7 5753	12/2/1992	11/27
Miriam Brecher	Kislev 7 5759	11/26/1998	11/27
Faye Paikin	Kislev 7 5742	12/3/1981	11/27

Donations

In honor of the Installation of Rabbi Jennifer Rudin

Barbara Janoff and David Birch
Carole and Gerry Clarin
Deborah Slater

High Holy Day donation

Amy Graubard

In memory of LeRoy Brecher

Stephanie Sloane

In memory of Mildred Hillman

Louise and Arthur Hillman

In memory of David Kline

Cynthia and Ronald Naiman

General Contributions

Anonymous
Joan and Dan Burkhard
Karen Chase and Paul Graubard
Sandra and Bill Flannery
Linda Josephs
Lee Schwartz
Allison Adams-Weinberg and Steve Weinberg

Year-end Gift

Linda Geffin

In support of the Creative Arts Workshops

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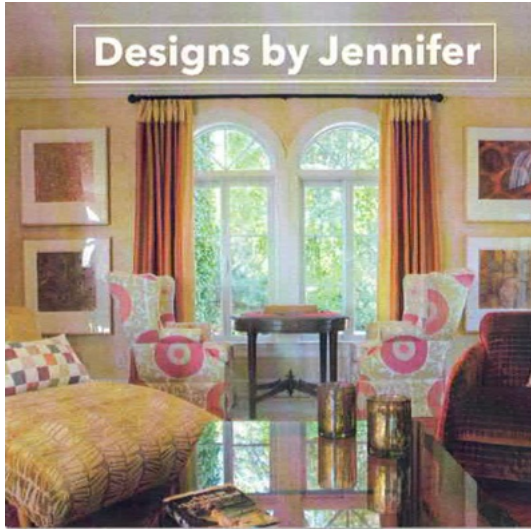


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