



Congregation Ahavath Sholom

The Creative Spirit Dwells Here

THE CAS NEWSLETTER

January 2026

Upcoming services and events

Wednesday, January 7 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Friday, January 9 at 5:00 PM: Kabbalat Shabbat Service via Zoom

Monday, January 12 at 5:00 PM: January Board Meeting

Wednesday, January 14 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Friday, January 16 at 5:00 PM: Candle Lighting via Zoom

Monday, January 19 at 12:00 PM: Memoir Workshop with Barbara Janoff via Zoom
7:00 PM: Photography Workshop with Arthur Hillman via Zoom

Wednesday, January 21 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Wednesday, January 28 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Please note: Late January services will be announced by email.

This month's newsletter features:

Hanukkah Havdalah Celebration

May their memories be for a blessing: Barbara Barron and Marty Stransky

The Rabbis of Ahavath Shalom

News from Rabbi Rudin

The People's Pantry: An important update

Notes from the December Board Meeting

January Creative Arts Workshops

January Yahrzeits

Donations

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Hanukkah Havdalah Celebration

Our Hanukkah Havdalah took place on Saturday, December 20th. Although in our temporary location, the spirit of the evening was, as always, a joyful celebration. Filled with candle lighting, songs, games, silent auction items, and a delicious dinner, we were excited to be together as a community and to celebrate this meaningful occasion.



May their memories be for a blessing

Barbara Barron

Early on the morning of December 19th, beloved CAS member Barbara Baron passed away. Her daughter Ruth wrote, "Barbara passed last night at 2.45 am very peacefully. She was surrounded by love and prayers for days and days. I had the rabbi over yesterday afternoon praying for her as well. Her last word 4 days ago was Amen. She knew she was loved and that she wasn't alone. She fought for 7 months. She loved life and all of you. May we all carry a bit of her courage and generosity in our lives." As details for Barbara's funeral and shiva evolve, Rabbi Rudin will pass them along.

The Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County accepted "Kristallnacht" by Barbara Barron for their collection. This art quilt by Barbara Barron was created for an event sponsored by Congregation Ahavath Shalom. It was displayed on November 9, 2011, the 73rd anniversary of Kristallnacht at Shakespeare & Co in Lenox. The piece depicts "The Night of Broken Glass." Dupioni silks, hand-dyed batik fabrics and lucite were utilized. The technique employed was Applique Machine Embroidery.



Martin Stransky

Irene Goldman-Price shared the following, "It is with great sadness that I write to say that Marty Stransky passed away peacefully in his home in mid-November. Marty was a long-time member of Ahavath Sholom, a board member, and for years the Treasurer. He worked many long hours keeping our finances in order and presenting them in an amusing and easily comprehensible manner at annual meetings. He was also an avid bridge player and an even more dedicated gardener, and he was a serious reader of the great books and volumes of history. Marty was a beloved father and grandfather, and the loving husband and caretaker of his wife, Isabelle Weinberg, who has since moved to the New Hampshire home of her son. Notes of condolence can be sent to Marty's daughter, the Reverend Jude Smith, at 346 Slate Quarry Road, Rhinebeck, NY 12572."

From Sandra Flannery: *I am sharing this amazing recipe with the congregation in memory of Marty Stransky who spent years giving his time and energy to CAS.*

Marty Stransky's sweet and sour Brisket recipe

Ingredients:

6 LB first cut brisket- preferably an inch and a half thick
1-3 onions sliced (depending on how much onion you like)
1 package Lipton onion soup mix
¾ cup Ketchup
1 can Whole berry cranberry sauce
12 ounce bag of fresh cranberries

Directions:

1. Brown onions in large pot on stove
2. Remove onions from pan leaving the onion drippings.
3. Brown the brisket on all sides in the drippings
4. Mix all the other ingredients together, including the onions
5. Cover the pan with aluminum foil.
6. Roast at 350 degrees for several hours (2-3)
7. Add water if the meat seems dry.

It is great the same day but better when reheated.

Thank you Marty!

The Rabbis of Ahavath Sholom

[This article was intended to be included in the December newsletter. The editor apologizes for the omission.]

In 1934, the City College of New York invited Mussolini to send a delegation of Fascist students to visit the college. When they arrived on October 9, a group of City College students burned an effigy of Mussolini. Twenty-one of them were expelled. My father was one of them. He subsequently enrolled at New York University where he met my mother, herself an activist. These are the parents I issue from. Both my mother and father came from politically active families in the old country, that is, Russia. They came here to escape the pogroms. My parents identified strongly as Jews, but religion could not have been farther from our family's experience. Attending a synagogue would have been as exotic as spotting a hyena in Kenya. This was the case for their parents as well, as I understand it.

So this past weekend at Ahavath Sholom at the installation of Rabbi Rudin, I looked around at the crowd of people and there I was - part of a congregation. A person who has never been part of any group, I am now part of CAS. I was full-up at the sight of so many treasured people I care about gathered in our beautiful little old shul. How did this happen?

It started with Barbara Cohen years ago. She officiated at a wedding I was attending at Dream Away Lodge where she said some fascinating things which I don't remember. When Paul suggested we go to a service at Ahavath Sholom, I was curious. Barbara's quirky, spontaneous thinking was exciting - I was drawn to listening to her. It had nothing to do with Jewishness or Religion, although it was replete with Jewishness and the Great Spirit. We ended up joining the shul.

Over the years, she invited me deeper and deeper into the congregation, which I doubt was by design. She even asked me to do a Dvar Torah for Yom Kippur. When I told her I wanted to deliver it as if I were the painter Chaim Soutine, not as me, she was all in. Not only that, we agreed that she would be part of the Dvar Torah, putting Chaim Soutine's words in context. Her inventiveness was far-reaching.

And now we have Rabbi Rudin. Talk about miracles! Her first service was a relief. She is completely different from Barbara. Perfect. The way she expresses her connection to prayer opens a big, wide path to travel on, and I am traveling it. I won't list all the things she is bringing us - there are too many. Our congregation is thriving with all she brings. After she gave a study session on prayer, I was inspired to write a poem which echoes my pathway to congregation.

At night my soul leaves

my body and
in the morning, it
returns. To exist fully, it

needs more than my body, so
up it goes into the stars, for
sustenance. I open
my eyes and pray -

*You have returned within me, my
soul with compassion.*

*Modah ani lefaneka melechai
chai vekayam shehehezarta*

I get out of bed,
join the revolution.

Karen Chase

From Rabbi Rudin



A Special Gift

Dear Members of Congregation Ahavath Sholom,

I am writing to share meaningful and uplifting news with our community.

A generous donor, who wishes to remain completely anonymous, has stepped forward with a truly transformative gift to Congregation Ahavath Sholom. This gift will enable us to undertake critical work to remediate the mold in our building, eliminate the underlying source of dampness, and potentially make changes that increase accessibility so that our space can better serve all members of our community.

The gift will be made in two parts: an initial gift of \$100,000 in 2025, followed by an additional \$100,000 in 2026.

The Executive Committee and I will work closely with the Building Committee to develop a thoughtful and responsible plan for this work. That plan will be shared with the community for input and then brought to the Board for approval, ensuring transparency and collective stewardship at every step.

Our tradition teaches, *"A little light dispels much darkness."* In moments when challenges feel heavy, acts of generosity such as this remind us that hope, care, and commitment to community endure. This gift is not only an investment in our building, but an investment in the future of Ahavath Sholom and in the values of shared responsibility and generosity that define us as a kehillah (community).

I know you join me in expressing immense gratitude for this remarkable gift and for the spirit of communal giving it represents. May this act of generosity inspire us all to continue strengthening our congregation together.

With deep appreciation and gratitude,
Rabbi Rudin

January Shabbat Service Schedule

The Executive Committee and Board continue to work diligently to determine the steps needed for us to return to our building for services and programs. We appreciate your patience, support, and understanding as we move through this process.

January Services:

- **Friday, January 9:** Kabbalat Shabbat services at **5:00 PM on Zoom**
- **Saturday, January 10:** No services
- **Friday, January 16:** Zoom candle lighting at **5:00 PM**

Late January services will be announced by email.

Save the Date: Annual CAS Tu B'Shevat Seder - Sunday, February 1 | 11:00 AM

Join us for our Annual CAS Tu B'Shevat Seder, celebrating *Tu B'Shevat*, the **New Year of the Trees**. This holiday invites us to honor nature, renewal, and our responsibility to care for the earth through learning, song, and shared ritual. A central part of the Tu B'Shevat seder is tasting fruits that represent the **Four Worlds**, a kabbalistic framework that reflects different levels of our physical and spiritual lives:

- **Fruits with a hard outer shell and edible inside** (*Assiyah – the World of Action*):
Examples include **oranges, bananas, walnuts, or coconuts**.
- **Fruits with a soft outside and a hard pit inside** (*Yetzirah – the World of Formation*):
Examples include **peaches, plums, cherries, olives, or dates**.
- **Fruits that are entirely edible, with no shell or pit** (*Beriah – the World of Creation*):
Examples include **grapes, figs, berries, apples, or pears**.
- **Fruits that hard both inside and out** (*Atzilut – the World of Spirit*):
Often represented by **spices**.

What to bring:

- Fruits from one or more of the Four Worlds
- Wine and/or grape juice (Red or White)

More details to come—we look forward to celebrating together!

Journey Through the Siddur Exploring Kabbalat Shabbat & Havdalah

Join us for a meaningful learning experience as we continue our *Journey Through the Siddur*. In this two-part Zoom series, we'll explore the structure, themes, and rituals of **Kabbalat Shabbat** and **Havdalah**, deepening our understanding of how Jewish prayer marks sacred time.

Whether you are new to these prayers or looking to enrich your practice, this exploration offers insight, discussion, and connection.

Dates: Sundays, January 11 & January 25

Time: 11:00 AM

Location: Zoom

All are welcome. Come ready to learn, reflect, and engage.

The People's Pantry: An important Update

A few weeks ago, Susan Weinstein alerted our congregants to a critical need of the Great Barrington Food Pantry. ICE has picked up shoppers at other food pantries, so the People's Pantry is stationing 2 people at a time to stand outside the building and, like a lifeguard, keep watch for any sign of ICE's arrival. Each month they offer a training session outlining what to do should ICE appear. You sign up for an hour-long shift on a Monday or Thursday. You are called a "line ally." Even though taking a line ally shift is a teeny drop in the bucket, it helps to join the fray.

Here is a link to the food pantry. <https://www.thepeoplespantrygb.org/take-action>. And you can email Kai Cimmino at info@signupgenius.com with any questions.



Notes from the December Board Meeting

- Due to concerns about mold in the building, we will hold services in alternate nearby locations until further notice. Members of the Board are currently looking into various abatement options. The torahs have been temporarily removed from the building.
- The Security Committee noted that current measures undertaken to protect the congregation effectively align with the Federation's ten action items for synagogue safety.
- The Religious and Spiritual Life Committee encourages feedback from members of the congregation, both positive and negative. The Committee aims to meet the needs of the community and to support the rabbi, while balancing innovation with Jewish traditions. Recent meetings have addressed issues connected to scheduling, services, and the role of music.
- The financial condition of the synagogue remains sound, though we still need to pursue fundraising efforts. Members should be encouraged to consider the synagogue in their estate planning.
- The Development Committee will soon begin work on promoting next spring's concert by Joey Weisenberg, founder of the Hadar Institute's Rising Song Initiative, at Shakespeare and Company. Rabbi Rudin and several members of the congregation recently participated in the Institute at the Hadar convention in New York.
- The Rabbi will begin exploring the possibility of a CAS trip to Israel, planning for which would be expected to take 8-12 months. Interested members are asked to get in touch with her.
- Susan Weinstein read a letter addressed to Rabbi Rudin and the congregation from the Rev. Carol Killian of the United Church of Christ, Pittsfield (and an active CAS member) which concluded: "So as you light your Hanukkah candles and I my Advent candles, I pray that we will each add our prayers, our light, and our love to this world, so in need of our kind of religion, a religion that is kind, a religion that honors all people, a religion that calls us to be better than we were before . . . and that is no small thing."

January Creative Arts Workshops

The next **Memoir Writing Workshop** is scheduled for Monday, January 19th 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.



Photograph by Nick Morrison at Unsplash.com

The next **Photography Workshop** will take place on Monday, January 19th, 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.



In Loving Memory Photograph by Barbara Barron from the 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
Solomon Brook	Tevet 13	12/25/2023	12/25
Leonard Traines	Tevet 15 5784	12/27/2023	1/4
Rose London Orenstein	Tevet 23 5731	1/20/1971	1/12
Bella Axelrod	Tevet 25 5721	1/13/1961	
Robert Scheinmann	Tevet 25 5729	1/15/1969	1/14
Louis C. Lasker	Tevet 25 5742	1/20/1982	1/14
Rhoda W. Lasker	Tevet 27 5747	1/28/1987	1/16
Rabbi Jacob Axelrod	Tevet 28 5746	1/9/1986	1/17
Arthur John Rothstein	Tevet 29 5752	1/5/1992	1/18
Herbert Budnick	Tevet 29 5774	1/1/2014	1/18
Al Alson	Shevat 3 5777	1/30/2017	1/21
Rosemary Edelman	Shevat 4 5773	1/15/2013	1/22
Frances Letofsky	Shevat 07 5769	2/1/2009	1/25
Larry Hillman	Shevat 09 5722	1/14/1963	1/27
Lawrence Cohen	Shevat 11 5765	1/21/2005	1/29
Dan Bongini	Shevat 12 5765	1/22/2005	1/30
Alice Slater Stahl	Shevat 12 5772	2/5/2012	1/30

Donations

In honor of my husband's 82nd birthday
Carole Clarin

In memory of Barbara Barron
Susan and Tom Hicks
Arthur and Louise Hillman

In memory of Rosa Richard
Lawrence Richard

In memory of Marty Stransky
Arthur and Louise Hillman

In memory of Larry Hillman
Arthur and Louise Hillman

In support of the Creative Arts Workshops
Lauren Behrman
Ross Bettinger
Caroline Forsman
Bruce Frishkoff
Linda Geffin
Arthur Hillman
Barbara Janoff
Carol Killian
Stephanie Sloane
Michele Waldman

In honor of the Hanukkah Celebration
Lisa Thomas

End-of-year/Annual Appeal

Anonymous
Lisa and Eric Chamberlain
Rabbi Jeffrey Eisenstat
Elaine Friedman
Marilyn and Robert Gellert
Karen Chase and Paul Graubard
Nettie Hammond
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