



Congregation Ahavath Sholom

The Creative Spirit Dwells Here

Friday, 6 March, 2026 ~ 17th of Adar, 5786

Parashat Ki Tisa

At the very beginning of Parashat Ki Tissa, we learn about a census. Moses and the Israelites are in the desert. Unbeknownst to Moses, they will soon receive the Ten Commandments, and in preparation for the journey that will follow this revelation, God instructs Moses to count all the men who are twenty years or older. Moses is told to collect a half-shekel from each man. In order for a man and his family to be counted as part of the community, the money must be paid. The text goes on to explain that these funds will be used to support the Tent of Meeting.

This raises an interesting question. Just last week we read that these same people were asked to contribute gifts from the heart for the construction of the Mishkan. Yet no one says, “Nope, I’m not giving my half-shekel—I just gave last week.” So what can we learn from this text?

Last week, when significant gifts of time, talent, and resources were needed for the construction of the Mishkan, God did not levy a tax or establish a fixed dues amount. Instead, God asked for gifts from anyone whose heart was moved to give. Through Moses, God was developing a relationship-based community.

That community provides for the basic needs of its people. As members of the Israelite community, people receive food to eat, land upon which they can erect shelter, protection from enemies, and a leader they can depend upon. This week, the requirement of the half-shekel comes with three promises: first, that when it is paid it provides protection from future plagues; second, that it guarantees enrollment in the Israelite community; and third, that the money will support the service of the Tent of Meeting—the place where God dwells among the people.

I believe we can learn a great deal from this parashah. It offers an example of giving that is grounded in relationship, where the needs of the individual and the needs of the community are both honored, and where financial contributions are not linked to status or special favor. In his commentary, Rashi explains that every person gave a half-shekel because the soul of every person being counted is of equal value; no soul is worth more than another.

I’m proud that at CAS we have created a culture where every member is valued, no matter how much they contribute—where every soul is equally precious, and where we work to meet the social, spiritual, and educational needs of everyone in our community.

Cafe Kehilah, Wednesday March 11,
2026 on Zoom at 10:00 AM
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/6378313156>



Lay Led Service in Housatonic, Saturday
March 14, 2026
10:00 AM

RSVP Today! Space is limited.

Email casoffice15@gmail.com, indicate your choice of entree and whether you will be paying by check (mailed to CAS 15 North Street, PO Box 464 Great Barrington, MA 01230) or through the CAS [donation link](#) (please indicate that this is a payment for the Seder).

CONGREGATION
AHAVATH SHOLOM
COMMUNITY SEDER 2ND NIGHT
APRIL 2 2026
500 PM
HOUSATONIC

Menu Crudite Roasted Salmon with Green Herbs Or Sweet Potato Spinach Quinoa Gratin Potato Kugel Fresh Vegetable Dessert	In an effort to keep the cost of the Seder at a minimum, we ask each attendee to contribute an assigned item to the meal. Some will be homecooked dishes, while other items – such as wine, matzah, or other store-bought essentials – are perfect for those who prefer not to cook. Assignments will be made upon receipt of your RSVP. Please RSVP to casoffice15@gmail.com and include your choice of entrée by March 23rd. Cost per person: \$36.00
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JOIN OUR GEFILTE FISH CLASS

For beginners and experienced gefilte fishers

SUNDAY, MARCH 22
@ 4:00 PM

ON ZOOM

You will need:

2 medium yellow onions, peeled
2 celery stalks
3 large carrots, peeled
1 fennel bulb
6 black peppercorns
2½ teaspoons salt, or to taste
1½ pounds boneless, skinless salmon, whitefish or striped bass fillets, cut into 2-inch pieces
½ pound boneless, skinless trout, pike or carp (or a mixture of two), cut into 2-inch pieces
10 chives
3 tablespoons chopped parsley, tarragon, dill and/or a combination
3 large eggs, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
4 to 6 tablespoons matzo meal
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 head radicchio or endive, or both, for serving
Prepared horseradish, for serving

A FOOD PROCESSOR IS A MUST!

"Music is Breath, Song is Life"

JOEY WEISENBERG IN CONCERT

Sunday, May 17, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre
at SHAKESPEARE
& COMPANY

We invite you to join Congregation Ahavath Shalom for a memorable afternoon filled with song, inspiration, and spirituality. Experience a vibrant, participatory celebration as we welcome multi-talented Joey Weisenberg, the founder and director of Hadar's Rising Song Institute, making his debut appearance in the Berkshires.

Tickets available February 1st at Eventbrite