



# Congregation Ahavath Sholom

The Creative Spirit Dwells Here

## THE CAS NEWSLETTER

## July 2020

### Upcoming services and events

All previously scheduled CAS events have been cancelled until further notice.

**Our Wednesday get-togethers and Shabbat services and events continue on a regular basis via Zoom!**

We hope in the days ahead everyone in our Berkshire community stays healthy and safe.

### This month's newsletter features:

- Ahavath Sholom Annual Meeting
- Milchidika with Marty: *She cut the sandwich on the diagonal*
- Vote Forward!
- Housatonic Valley Art League Online Exhibit
- July Yahrzeits
- July Donations
- CAS Advertisers and Sponsors

## Ahavath Sholom Annual Meeting

The Ahavath Sholom Annual Meeting was held using Zoom on June 28th. After Rabbi Barbara Cohen's opening remarks, during which she reminded us that she is starting her 16<sup>th</sup> year as our spiritual leader, a review of the past year was presented by Alison Adams-Weinberg. Our successful High Holy Day services at the Berkshire Community Center, Elul in the Pool at Linda Josephs' home, the BiddingForGood fundraising auction, the People's Pantry (now coordinated by Rabbi Cohen, with assistance from Linda Josephs), the book group (now led by Helen Radin), the reinvigorated Nominating Committee (led by Irene Goldman-Price, Joan Burkhard and with the assistance of Michele Waldman) the Chanukah party at the synagogue, and our response to Covid-19 and our use of Zoom were all mentioned.

The February special meeting of the Board and the RSL (Ritual and Spiritual Life Committee), the survey of the CAS facility by Michele Waldman and a representative of the Great Barrington Police Department, and Linda Josephs' talk with a security firm about safety options were all discussed. Dan Burkhard, who researched suggestions made at the meeting, organized the installation of crash bars on the synagogue doors in May. A number of security issues and fire safety concerns were addressed by this addition to the synagogue.

Harold Schrager introduced the members of the RSL Committee. He discussed our many Zoom services and events, including the Rabbi's Wednesday coffee group, Shabbat services on scheduled Saturdays, candle lighting on select Friday evenings, and the continuation of Rabbi Cohen's scheduled study sessions. Harold also discussed potential ideas and plans for the upcoming High Holy Days, most likely through meaningful and innovative online events.

Treasurer Marty Stransky gave a financial report. He began with the figure of our total expenses for the year and explained that regular dues payments cover only about a half of these expenses. General contributions, Yahrzeit and Yizkor donations, event proceeds, newsletter ads, Chai dues donations, HHD income, and year-end appeals make up the deficit. This year the congregation received a loan from the federal government for payroll protection due to the Covid-19 situation; CAS will not have to repay this loan after the necessary paperwork is submitted. Marty was applauded for his initiative and hard work in pursuing this financial relief. As a result of all these factors, the congregation will conclude this year in the black, but concern was voiced for next year, as the effects of the pandemic continue to be felt.

Linda Josephs reviewed committee activities. She reported on our limited fundraising possibilities due to Covid-19, but mentioned the CAS Theatre Company's upcoming presentation on Zoom as a potential fundraising event. An online photography workshop by Arthur Hillman in October and a memoir writing workshop by Barbara Janoff in November, were cited as upcoming events in our continuing Creative Arts Workshop program. Advertising continues with minimal ads in the Shopper's Guide and the Local Yoke! The Nominating Committee will be meeting to address a vacancy on the Board of Directors.

A proposed by-law revision defining the composition of the Nominating Committee was presented and approved.

A vote was also taken on the reelection of three board members (Alison Adams-Weinberg, Ellen Axelrod, and David Scribner) whose terms were expiring. They were all approved for new three-year terms. Thanks were given to Ann Dorfman, who will be leaving the board, for her thoughtful work and many contributions. In conclusion, Rabbi Cohen thanked the members of the Executive Committee, the RSL Committee and all the other individuals, in many different roles, who contribute to the day-to-day functioning of the congregation.

## **Milchidika with Marty: *She cut the sandwich on the diagonal***

Because of the Corona virus, I have been reluctant to do our weekly food shopping in the local supermarket and have been buying many things online and, so far, have been pleasantly surprised at the quality.

Last night I barbecued a steak that we bought online from the Omaha Beef Company and I commented to Isabelle, "This was one of the best steaks that I ever eaten. Further, did she realize that she was married to a steak connoisseur, as well as a roast duck connoisseur, and most importantly a pastrami connoisseur."

I began to wonder, when did I become such a food critic. I do not remember ever having steak at home when I was growing up. My parents were not poor, “they macht a leben” but steak was not in the budget.

If my mother prepared a meat dish, it usually was something swimming in gravy. There was always a basket of rye bread sitting on the kitchen table, and after finishing the meal, you dunked pieces of bread in the gravy to sop it up and wipe the plate clean.

Our dinnerware was what was known as “Depression Chinaware” which were blue glass dishes, cups and bowls that were mass produced very inexpensively. Each time my parents went to the local movie theater during the 1930s the management would give the patrons a free glass dish or a cup to induce them to see the film. Those free dishes soon became our daily dinner ware.

I remember that our drinking glasses were the glassware that originally contained the Yahrzeit candles which seemed to be continuously burning on the kitchen counter, to remember a departed “Tante” or “Oncle”.

Juice glasses were the small glasses that once contained a shrimp cocktail. A “schanda”.

My parents lived in a two bedroom apartment in Astoria, they shared one bedroom and rented out the other bedroom (my room) to an uncle who I resented; for having not only to give up my room, but also to give him the nice big, comfortable bed, while I slept on a cot. I am sure a psychologist could do a whole study on that one.

I had a cousin who lived nearby whose father was a doctor. They lived in a big corner house, which contained his office. The house had a huge front porch and a big garden. Boy did I envy him because he had his own room, full of toys, electric trains, and most importantly his own big bed.

Occasionally, I would make a play date with him, which also involved his mother making lunch for the two of us. I was so impressed at lunch time. First, they had white china plates, and blue water glasses. Better than Yahrzeit glasses, and besides that, the water glasses were square not round.

In addition, I was always impressed by my aunt who always seemed to wear a beautiful dress on just an ordinary day, while my mother walked around in an old worn “schmatta” house dress.

But lunch was the big thing. She would ask, “What would you like for lunch?’ We had a choice. The system in my house was my mother might buy a package of bologna that week, but that was it. When the bologna was finished, she would then buy a package of cheese. But we never had two different things in the refrigerator at the same time.



So, having been asked what we would like for lunch, my aunt further asked, “Would we like white bread or white toast?” We only had rye bread at home.

She then asked, “Would we like a triple decker sandwich?” I did not know what that was until she explained that it was three pieces of bread, with something different in between each layer.

So now I was going to have a triple decker, bacon and tomato sandwich on white toast which was all held together with toothpicks. Not only toothpicks, but they were colored toothpicks.

But the final touch was that she cut the sandwich on the diagonal. My mother always cut it straight across, I never had a sandwich cut on the diagonal and held together with colored toothpicks.

As to how I became a roast duck and a pastrami connoisseur is the topic of another story.

## Vote Forward!

During one of Ahavath Sholom's Wednesday online gatherings, it was suggested that one way to affect the upcoming elections was to write letters to potential voters. A friend of mine has just written letters through an organization called "Vote Forward." I plan on joining her in this effort.

Here's some information about "Vote Forward" from their website:

### About Us

Vote Forward is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization. Our mission is to empower grassroots volunteers to help register voters from under-represented demographics and encourage them to vote. We build tools to enable Americans, wherever they may be, to encourage fellow citizens to participate in our democracy.

The project began as an experiment conducted by Scott Forman () in Alabama in 2017. Encouraged by the success of that test, Scott and a small group of friends and fellow Opower alumni built this platform to empower volunteers to take easy and effective action. We believe our democracy depends on everyone participating, so we volunteered our time and expertise to achieve that goal.

#### **Proven Effective**

In multiple randomized trials, voters who received a letter were significantly more likely to vote.

#### **Easy and Fast**

We give you a template. Just print, complete, fold, sign, and mail.

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You can send letters no matter where you live.

I plan on sending out at least 100 letters through this platform. You print out the letters, add any comment you would like to include, and provide the postage. If you would like to join this effort, please register online at <https://votefwd.org/>

Arthur Hillman

## Housatonic Valley Art League Online Exhibit, *Our Berkshires*

The Housatonic Valley Art League, one of the Berkshire's oldest art organizations, is putting on its traditional summer Art Show with a couple of new twists. The show will be held solely online on HVAL's web site and has as a theme *Our Berkshires*. This is the first time HVAL has ventured into an online exhibition presentation and the first time since the mid 1970s that it won't be having a brick and mortar show in either Sheffield or Great Barrington, MA.

HVAL came up with the *Our Berkshires* theme to give artists a chance to celebrate and interpret something beautiful and special in all our lives during these times of pandemic and crises. The show's jurors, prominent artists Ann Getsinger and Julie Shapiro, chose the work and presented awards. Ahavath Sholom member Arthur Hillman received an honorable mention award for a photograph taken at Mass MoCA in North Adams.

The "Our Berkshires" show will be on display from July 6 through July 31. To view it, just go to HVAL's website, [www.hvart.org](http://www.hvart.org).

## July Yahrzeits

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

Kol Haneshamah

|                 | Original date  | This year's date |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|
| Isador Felber   | Tammuz 12 5766 | 7/4              |
| Paul Edelman    | Tammuz 13 5778 | 7/5              |
| Donald Victor   | Tammuz 14 2776 | 7/6              |
| John Armstrong  | Tammuz 22 5763 | 7/14             |
| Renee Millimet  | Tammuz 26 5747 | 7/18             |
| Ella Schaeffer  | Tammuz 27 5762 | 7/19             |
| Leo Mayers      | Av 03 5769     | 7/24             |
| Shirlee Robbins | Av 05 5775     | 7/26             |
| Doris Soman     | Av 06 5773     | 7/27             |
| Joan Sussman    | Av 8 5766      | 7/29             |
| Jessica Berson  | Av 10 5779     | 7/31             |

## July Donations

**In gratitude for Barbara Cohen's zoom meetings**

Barbara Janoff

**With thanks to Rabbi Cohen for officiating at the wedding of our son Matthew Leibowitz to Danielle Frank and for making it such a special occasion**

Hal Leibowitz

**In honor of Pride Month and our LGBTQIA friends**

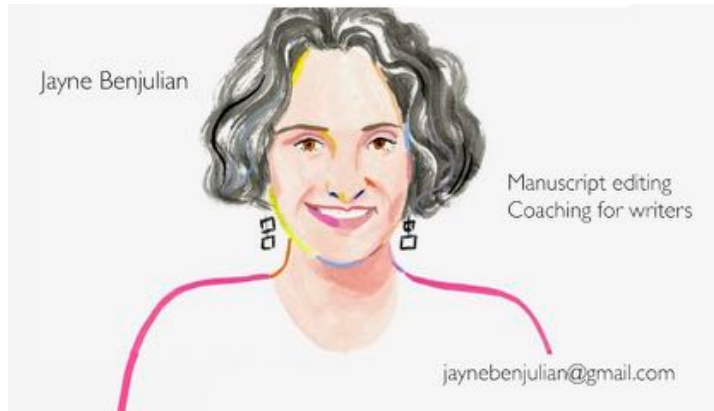
Ilene Spiewak and Brenda Butler

**In memory of Joan Sussman and Don Victor**

Arthur and Louise Hillman



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