



# ב"ה Adams Street

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The Latest News from Congregation Agudas Achim Anshei Sfarad

## Bulletin

### Ninety Years Old and Still Going Strong

*By Beryl Gilfix*

Did you realize that the shul you attend is celebrating its 90th birthday this year? Built in 1912, the Adams Street Shul was dedicated on Chanukah that year, with scores of local rabbis, musicians and local notables, including the mayor, taking part in the dedication festivities. The local newspaper noted that "Small in numbers, and of limited means, the Jewish members of the community have always zealously observed their religious tenets.... The Hebrew residents of Newton have decided to erect a synagogue, where their religious life may be cemented and its future assured."

Some things haven't changed much in 90 years. Our founding members could not have predicted the future of their little building or the little community surrounding it. But we like to think they would be pleased and proud to see

that we remain, "small in numbers and of limited means," but still carrying on the traditions they loved. The synagogue has been restored to its original state (except for the ceiling paintings of flowers and some of the abstract designs which decorated the sanctuary in the early years), with some welcome improvements such as updated plumbing, a full kitchen, and air conditioning.

The Adams Street Shul has accumulated several honors in its years, including registration on the National Register of Historic Places. It is also a recipient of a plaque from the Combined Jewish Philanthropies Centennial Plaque Project, which honors our synagogue as the only Jewish building of historical significance in Newton.

We hope that you will remind your friends and relatives about this anniversary year. We welcome their support and your support and loyalty as we move toward the future.

### January Calendar

#### Candle lighting:

1/3:	4:06 PM
1/10:	4:13 PM
1/17:	4:21 PM
1/24:	4:29 PM
1/31:	4:38 PM

#### Shabbat Services:

##### Friday evenings

1/3:	4:00 PM
1/10, 1/17:	4:15 PM
1/24, 1/31:	4:30 PM

##### Saturday mornings

at 9:00 AM

##### Saturday afternoons

1/4:	3:45 PM
1/11, 1/18:	4:00 PM
1/25, 2/1:	4:15 PM

##### Sunday Mornings

at 8:00 AM

### Adams Street Celebrates Chanuka, 2002



*The shul's annual Chanuka party was held on November 30th, with a full house of adults and children who enjoyed hot latkes, music and entertainment. Rebbetzin Malkie Gurkow began the night with an Aleph-Bet game for children of all ages.*

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### Adams Street Shul's 90th Anniversary Celebration on March 2, 2003

Save the date! Fund raising dinner to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Adams Street Shul, with special tribute to the shul's immediate past president, Dr. Leonard Berman, on Sunday, March 2, 2003: Watch your mail for announcements in the next few weeks!

### Special Lecture: "Secular-Religious Interaction Among Jews in Israel"

Mr. Jeremy Bob, graduate student in law and international affairs at Boston University, will speak on "Secular-Religious Interaction Among Jews in Israel" on Sunday evening, January 12 at 8:00 PM at the Adams Street Shul.

Until recently, Mr. Bob was the political analyst and speechwriter for Ambassador Alon Pinkas, Consul General of Israel in New York. He worked in conjunction with the Department of Media and Public Affairs throughout the current conflict in Israel, and was on the editorial staff of Israel Line, the daily news service of the Israeli Consulate. Mr. Bob previously served as an analyst and writer for the Permanent Mission of Israel to the UN, where his articles appeared in the Mission's publication, Israel Communicate. Mr. Bob earned a BA, with honors, in international relations from Columbia University, and studied Jewish law and philosophy at Yeshivat Shaarei Mevaseret Zion in Israel.

# Tu B'Shvat: The New Year of the Trees

This article was adapted from "Man Is a Tree" by Rabbi Shraga Simmons on [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com)

This year, Tu B'Shvat falls on January 17-18. The source for Tu B'Shvat is the opening statement of the Talmudic Tractate Rosh Hashana: "The Academy of Hillel taught that the 15th of Shvat is the New Year for the Trees." What does this mean? Tu B'Shvat is technically the day when trees stop absorbing water from the ground, and instead draw nourishment from their sap. In Jewish law, this means that fruit which has blossomed prior to the 15th of Shvat could not be used as tithe for fruit which blossomed after that date.

So what relevance does this have for us in the 21st century? In various places, the Torah compares a person to a tree: "A person is like the tree of a field..." (Deut. 20:19) "For as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people." (Isaiah 65:22) "He will be like a tree planted near water..." (Jeremiah 17:8). Why the comparison? A tree needs the four basic elements in order to survive -- soil, water, air, and fire (sun). Human beings also

require the same basic elements. Let's examine these, one at a time:

## SOIL

A tree needs to be planted firmly in the earth. The soil is not only the source through which nourishment is absorbed, but also provides room for the roots to grow. This is true of a person as well. The Talmud explains: "A person whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds is likened to a tree whose branches are numerous, but whose roots are few. The wind comes and uproots it and turns it upside down. But a person whose good deeds exceed his wisdom is likened to a tree whose branches are few but whose roots are numerous. Even if all the winds of the world were to come and blow against it, they could not budge it from its place." (Avot 3:22)

A person can appear successful on the outside, with full branches and a fancy car. "But if the roots are few" -- if there is little connection to one's community and heritage -- then life can send challenges

that are impossible to withstand. "A strong wind can turn the tree upside down." A person alone is vulnerable to trends and fads that may lead to despair and destruction.

But if a person -- irrespective of wealth and status -- is connected to community and heritage, then "even if all the winds of the world were to come and blow against it, they could not budge it from its place." Humans require a strong home base, where values and morals are absorbed, and which provides a supportive growth environment. In a world rife with negativity; we need a "filter," a safe haven to return to and refresh. A community provides an impervious shield -- the "soil" where we can be ourselves, make our mistakes, and still be accepted, loved and nourished.

## WATER

Rain-water is absorbed into the ground, absorbed through roots and carried throughout the trunk, branches and leaves of the tree. Without water, the tree will wither and die. The Torah is compared to water, as Moses proclaims: "May my teaching drop like the rain" (Deut. 32:2). Both rain and Torah descend from

## Ongoing Classes

### at Adams Street

All classes are free and open to the public.

**Sunday:** Talmud Study, with Rabbi Gurkow (9:15 AM).

**Tuesday:** Studies in Tanya, with Rabbi Gurkow (7:30 PM)

**Wednesday:** Parshat Ha-Shavua (Weekly Torah Portion), with Rabbi Beryl Kelemer (8:00 PM).

**Friday:** Mitzvot Study, with Rabbi Gurkow (between Mincha and Maariv)

## Support Israel

A new website, [www.onlyisrael.com](http://www.onlyisrael.com), is dedicated to making products from Israel available over the Internet. 10% of all sales are distributed to Israeli charities.

Jews all around the world are now shopping for Israeli products as much as possible. During these times when Jewish businesses in Israel are being boycotted by governments and agencies around the world, we have a sacred duty to support our brothers.

## Kiddush Sponsorship

Did you know that for as little as \$36, you can sponsor a Shabbat kiddush at the shul? Consider sponsoring a kiddush in memory of a loved one, or to celebrate a special milestone in your family. Contact Harvey Lipsky for kiddush sponsorship information.

Thank you to the following persons, who recently sponsored kiddush:

Tzvi & Debbie Rubinstein;

R. Zalman & Malkie Gurkow, IHO of Sheila (Avigayil Hannah) MacArthur;

Lloyd Cohen and Zissi Cohen, IMO wife and mother, Basha Deena Cohen;

Jordan Wagner, IMO his grandmother, Sylvia Wagner;

Nachman Kalyuzhny, IHO his new grandson, Leonid Benjamin;

Ann Burack, IMO her father, Harry Grand.

### Refuah Shleimah Wishes to:

Al Kalman (Avraham ben Shifra)

## Shul Directory

### Shul main office:

(617) 630-0226 Fax: (617) 244-4667

Rabbi Zalman Gurkow

(617) 559-0394

[rabbi@adamsstreet.org](mailto:rabbi@adamsstreet.org)

### For information on the status of the eruv

(781) 446-9797

### To report *yahrzeits* or special occasions (when you might need an *aliya* or to say *kaddish*)

Ritual Chair Tzvi Rubinstein

(617) 244-3775

[ritual@adamsstreet.org](mailto:ritual@adamsstreet.org)

### To sponsor Kiddush or a festive meal

Harvey Lipsky (617) 354-8426

[kiddush@adamsstreet.org](mailto:kiddush@adamsstreet.org)

### For membership information

Membership Chair Elinor Levy

(617) 965-2471

[membership@adamsstreet.org](mailto:membership@adamsstreet.org)

### For donations

Development Chair Aryeh Cheses

(617) 527-7967

[president@adamsstreet.org](mailto:president@adamsstreet.org)

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<http://www.adamsstreet.org>

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the heavens and provide relief to the thirsty and parched. The Torah flows down from G-d and has been absorbed by Jews in every generation. Torah gives zest and vitality to the human spirit. A life based on Torah will blossom with wisdom and good deeds.

Deprived of water, a person will become dehydrated and ultimately disoriented, even to the point where they may not be able to recognize their own father. So too, without Torah, a person becomes disoriented -- to the extent they may not even recognize their Father in Heaven, the Almighty G-d of Israel.

### AIR

A tree needs air to survive. The air contains oxygen that a tree needs for respiration, and carbon dioxide for photosynthesis. In an imbalanced atmosphere, the tree would suffocate and die. The Torah (Genesis 2:7) states that "God breathed life into the form of Man." The Hebrew word for "breath" -- neshema -- is the same as the word for "soul" -- neshama. Our spiritual life force comes, metaphorically, by way of air and respiration.

We use our senses of taste, touch and sight to perceive physical matter. (Even

"hearing" involves the perception of sound waves.) But "smelling" is the most spiritual of senses, since the least "physical matter" is involved. As the Talmud says (Brachot 43b): "Smell is that which the soul benefits from, and the does body not."

In the Holy Temple, the incense offering (sense of smell) was elevated to the once-a-year Yom Kippur offering in the Holy of Holies. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 93a) also says that when the Messiah comes, he will "smell and judge" -- that is, he will use his spiritual sensitivity to determine the truth about complex matters.

### FIRE

A tree also needs fire -- sunlight -- to survive. The absorption of energy from the light activates the process of photosynthesis, a chemical reaction that is essential for the growth and health of the tree.

Humans also need fire -- warmth -- to survive. This is the warmth of friendship and community. People absorb the energy of peers, friends, family, neighbors and associates -- and channel that into identity and actions. All the essential obser-

vances and ceremonies of Judaism are based on family and community -- from the celebration of birth, through the attainment of maturity, marriage, education, and even death.

The power of community is illustrated in the following Talmudic story: An old man was planting a tree. A young person passed by and asked, "What are you planting?" "A carob tree," the old man replied. "Silly fool," said the youth. "Don't you know that it takes 70 years for a carob tree to bear fruit?" "That's okay," said the old man. "Just as others planted for me, I plant for future generations."

### A TIME TO GROW

This year on Tu B'Shvat, as you're enjoying that slab of carob, ask yourself: Am I getting the spiritual food and shelter I need to survive, or is my tree being blown down by the forces of information overload and rampant materialism? Am I part of a strong Jewish community, providing a warm and nurturing environment? Or am I cast into the pale bleak anonymity of urban life and cyberspace? Am I looking to future generations knowing that I am providing them with the proper foundations for their lives?

## Adams Street Celebrates Chanuka, 2002



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We were treated to a musical duet featuring our own Len Berman on flute and Jordan Wagner on guitar, and the music continued with Tzvi Rubinstein on his world-famous accordion. The highlight of the night was lighting the menorahs, and, of course our annual raffle and a lively public auction, led by Nechama and Aryeh Cheses.

"Yasher koach" and special thanks to Sheila (Avigayil Hannah) MacArthur,

who devoted many hours coordinating this successful event. Todah rabbah also to: Tzvi Rubenstein, Jordan Wagner, and Len Berman for the music; Al Landsman and Noah Cheses for help with set-up; Tali, Nechama and Aryeh Cheses who ran the raffle and auction; Malkie Gurkow for planning and running the children's program; Audrey and Len Berman, Nechama and Aryeh Cheses, Sybil Binder, Sarah Lesser, Chaya Ester Vaks, and Barry

Cohen who collected prizes from local businesses for the raffles; Victor Gvirtzman for photography; and the Tuesday Tanya class for helping with the clean-up.

We also thank the following businesses that donated prizes: Andrew's Catering, Adolph's Sports, Auburndale Shoes, Bread & Circus, The Butcherie, Edward the Tailor, Francesca's Salon, Games & Gizmos, Handler's Market, House of

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# Community Shabbat Dinner

## At the Adams Street Shul February 7, 2003

Join us for a Friday night dinner with friends and family and forget about the cooking and dirty dishes!

Mincha begins at 4:45 p.m. Dinner served immediately following Kabbalat Shabbat Services

Cost: \$20 per adult, \$10 per child  
age 5-10; no charge for children  
under age 5  
(\$60 per family maximum)

Call Robin Walker at **617-969-9016** to register

Make checks payable to: Adams Street Synagogue

Mail to: **Robin Walker, 47 Clinton Street, Newton, MA 02458**

**HURRY! Reservations and checks must be received by February 1, 2003**

### Adams Street Celebrates Chanuka, 2002

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Party Favors, Indulge Candy & Gift Shop, The Israel Bookshop, Joe's Barbershop, JP Licks (Jamaica Plain), Kolbo's Gifts, Linens N' Things, New England Mobile Book Fair, Pastry Land Bakery, Present Company, Radio Shack (Braintree), Rami's, Randy's Car Wash, The Roundabout Gift Shop, Rubin's Deli, Rosenfeld's Bagels, Ruth's Kitchen, Swartz's Hardware, Sol's Barbershop, Staples, Star Market, Ta'am China, Trader Joe's, and Tuler's Bakery. Visit the shul's web site ([www.AdamsStreet.org](http://www.AdamsStreet.org), then click on "Recent Events") to see more photos from the Chanuka party.



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