

Congregation Ahavas Achim

P.O. Box 334

Westfield, MA 01086

SEP / OCT / NOV 2025 NEWSLETTER

<http://www.congregationahavasachim.org/>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

High Holy Days:

Mon. 9/22 @ 7:00 pm, Erev Rosh Hashanah

Tue. 9/23 @ 10:00 am, Rosh Hashanah Morning

Wed. 10/1 @ 7:00 pm, Kol Nidre

Thu. 10/2 @ 10:00 am, Yom Kippur Morning
Yizkor (Memorial Service) at conclusion
Neilah/Closing Service @ 5:00 pm
Break-the-Fast Potluck – Social Hall of the Second
Congregational Church, adjacent to WSC

Sat. 9/13 @ 10:00am –Shabbat Morning Service

Sat. 10/11 @ 10:00am –Shabbat Morning Service

Sat. 11/15 @ 10:00am –Shabbat Morning Service

Sat. 12/13 @ 10:00am –Shabbat Morning Service

Sun. 12/21 – Menorah Lighting on the Green and
Hanukah party (more details to follow)

Please contact us at ahavasachiminquiry@gmail.com or
leave a voicemail message at (413) 642-1434 if you want to
say Kaddish or have any suggestions for us.

Hebrew School:

Coordinator: Andy Blumenthal

(Please call him at (413) 569-8399 if you or another
member of our community has expressed interest.)

Yahrzeit

*With great sadness, we remember the following
people on the Yahrzeit of their passing:*

2025

Ruth Fisher	Elul 9	Sep 2
Norma Silver	Elul 16	Sep 9
Eugene Spiro	Elul 16	Sep 9
Irving Friedman	Elul 23	Sep 16
Stanley Wertel	Elul 28	Sep 21
Thornton Pava	Tishri 7	Sep 29
Dora Schachter	Tishri 13	Oct 5
Sarah Milstein	Tishri 14	Oct 6
Doris Beard	Tishri 15	Oct 7
Alvin Fields	Tishri 20	Oct 12
Solomon Karp	Tishri 21	Oct 13
Henriette Rosenak	Tishri 25	Oct 17
Allene Dressler	Cheshvan 6	Oct 28
Ida Bernstein	Cheshvan 7	Oct 29
Edna Newman	Cheshvan 9	Oct 31
Irene Hoffman	Cheshvan 10	Nov 1
Rebecca Pearl	Cheshvan 11	Nov 2
Hyman Bernstein	Cheshvan 12	Nov 3
Myrna Siegel	Cheshvan 12	Nov 3
Gussie Chernick	Cheshvan 17	Nov 8
Judith Schulman	Cheshvan 20	Nov 11
Harold Riklin	Cheshvan 23	Nov 14
Mary Bertrand	Cheshvan 25	Nov 16
Ruth Krosnow	Kislev 3	Nov 23
Morris Pearl	Kislev 7	Nov 27
Herman Blumenthal	Kislev 9	Nov 29

Board Meeting: Meetings are held via conference
calls. Our next meeting is scheduled for October
8th. All are welcome to join. Please let us know if
you are interested so that we may include you in our
call: ablumenthal@congregationahavasachim.org

High Holy Days:

All are welcome to join us at the Interfaith Center. If you have a loved one that has passed and you would like us to read their name during Yizkor (Memorial Service), please feel free to let us know by sending an email request to ahavasachimquiry@gmail.com including their name and Yahrzeit.

Please note that for Non-Member Guests, we ask for a suggested donation of \$75, which includes all 5 High Holiday services. There is no fee for Children 12 and under.

On Yom Kippur, our Break-the-Fast Potluck will once again be held at the Social Hall of the Second Congregational Church, adjacent to WSC, following the Neilah/Closing service.

2025 Ride to Provide:

The Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts is sponsoring this fundraiser for the third year. Please join the Federation, Jewish organizations, and our Western Mass. community by supporting the event with a monetary donation or by signing up to participate. The event will be held on Sunday, September 28, 2025 at:

Lander-Grinspoon Academy
257 Prospect Street
Northampton, MA 01060

For more information on this year's Ride to Provide, please click on the link below:

<https://jewishwesternmass.org/ride-to-provide-2025/>

Happy Birthday!

Birthday wishes go out to the following:

Charlie Newman	September 3 rd
Anna Blumenthal	September 5 th
Erica Rosenthal	September 11 th
Michael Davenport	September 27 th
Leslie O'Donnell	September 28 th
Zack Wright	October 7 th
Susan Mackler	November 28 th

Happy Anniversary!

Dave & Ellie Wright	September 4 th
Andy & Sue Blumenthal	October 9 th
Tim & Geri Johnson	October 10 th

Rabbi's Message:

Dear Ahavas Achim and Westfield Jewish Community,

I recently read Laura Liebman's "Once We Were Slaves," a book which unearths, through deep historical research, the lives of a pair of siblings, Isaac and Sarah, through the late 18th century and early 19th century. They were born enslaved, in Barbados, to a free, Jewish father (Abraham), and enslaved mother (Sarah Esther) of African ancestry. Liebman describes the siblings and their family across time and space, as they become free, convert officially to Judaism, and marry into wealthy Jewish families, ultimately settling in New York City. They were able to pass enough (as white, and as lifelong Jews) that their African heritage and enslavement was hidden from their Jewish descendants. I have struggled to describe this book because it would be easy to call it a family history. However it is painful and uncomfortable to speak of "family," and purposely mean people who enslave and rape other members of the "family," usually not acknowledging the enslaved people as part of the family.

Throughout the book, Liebman reveals so many ways, explicit and invisible, that slavery was normalized and racism was an operative force throughout the social contexts of the Atlantic world during this time period- including within Jewish communities. Jews, if they had the economic resources, held slaves in the same proportions as non-Jews.

This is painful history to contend with. As a child, my main understanding of Jewish history focused on how Jews were on the right side of history, as either victims of injustice or allies to those who were oppressed, especially around fighting racism during the civil rights movement. This story highlights the ways some of our ancestors were products and producers of the racism and oppressive norms of their time.

Yet I also find it fascinating and humbling to consider the diversity of paths our ancestors have taken and the survival strategies they have employed. These stories complicate and expand my understanding of who Jews have been and who Jews are today. I found myself wondering about what factors pushed Abraham not only to acknowledge Sarah and Isaac as his children, but

support them in seeking their freedom and empowering them towards lives in wealthy Jewish circles. Plenty of evidence suggests that this was a highly unusual choice. Similarly, I wondered about how and why Sarah and Isaac embraced Judaism, especially when the Jewish communities didn't always embrace them.

Confronting the moral complexity of our people's history does not have to undermine the beautiful, valorous, and inspiring deeds of our ancestors; instead, it provides an opportunity to reflect on the ways that we too are embedded in our own times, with all our current society's moral failings. This is an appropriate spiritual project for the season of Elul and the High Holy Days. How can we find courage and motivation to recognize injustice now, especially as we find ourselves embedded in profoundly unjust social systems- like paying taxes that support initiatives against our own values?

One way that I personally find meaning and motivation in these scary times is through learning- through reading about histories that contributed to where we are now (like Leibman's book I mentioned above), and through learning about the experiences of those in our community, near and far. Learning helps me re-commit to working for a world where the human dignity of each person is honored, and all life can flourish in safety and in health.

It is so easy to feel hopeless and overwhelmed by the horrors and injustices playing out every day. I know many of us feel the weight of it, and many of us still try to act meaningfully for justice in various ways. I welcome the opportunity to hear from you about

how you are understanding the issues we are facing in this moment, and what actions and practices you engage to affirm your values.

I am sad that I won't be present for our High Holy Day services, due to my work at Amherst College. However, I will be joining you monthly, including an Elul Shabbat service in September and a Sukkot service in October. If you ever want to be in touch, please don't hesitate to reach out. I look forward to learning and growing with you, the community of Ahavas Achim, as we enter the New Year.

Rabbi Shahar

Hebrew Free Loan Association:

The Hebrew Free Loan Association of Greater Springfield offers interest-free loans to Jewish individuals and families whose needs are urgent and who may not qualify for personal loans from a bank or other financial institution. For more information, go to:

<https://hebrewfreeloanassociation.org/>

Facebook:

Congregation Ahavas Achim is now on Facebook!

Please click on the following link to find us:

<https://www.facebook.com/AhavasAchimWestfield/>

Once you find us, please "Like" our page. Feel free to post comments or any pictures that you would like to share with us. You will also be able to find announcements and listings for our services and events. If you have any questions, or would like us to post any announcements, events or pictures for you, please email them to: Carol and Nate Rosenthal - ncrose@comcast.net