

THE CAS NEWSLETTER

October 2018

Upcoming services and events

Monday, October 1, 10:00 am: Yizkor for Shemini Atzeret.

Sunday, October 7, 10:00 am: Study session at the home of Rabbi Cohen.

Bagels and coffee included, so a commitment is needed for planning. Please send a firm RSVP by the Thursday before this event to barbaracohen14@gmail.com.

Thursday, October 11, 9:00 am-1:00 pm: People's Pantry at St. James Place.

Generally 2 hour shifts: contact Walter Orenstein at ptpca@roadrunner.com to participate.

Friday, October 12, 5:30 pm: Erev Shabbat service with Rabbi Cohen.

Mon, Oct 15, 5:30 pm: Board Meeting at CAS. Congregants are welcome to attend. Please email Linda Josephs at tjosephs@roadrunner.com for more information.

Saturday, October 20, 10:00 am: Lay-led Shabbat morning service, followed by coffee, tea, pastry and conversation.

Sunday, October 21, 10:15 am: Book Group, "Crossing the Borders of Time" by Leslie Maitland, led by Diana Richter. Please contact Diana Richter at drpjama1@gmail.com for location of this meeting. Check for changes as this group occasionally changes the date or time.

Monday, October 22: Deadline for November newsletter.

Sunday, October 28, 4:00 pm: Reading of "The Concert," a new one-act play by CAS member Linda Josephs. Featuring Deann Halper and Gail Ryan. There will be a talk back with the actors and playwright following the reading.

Articles/Information

- [**Two Conversations**](#)
- [**The High Holy Days: Rosh Hashanah D'var Torah by Freke Vuijst**](#)
- [**The High Holy Days: Yom Kippur D'var Torah by Karen Chase**](#)
- [**A Thank You from the Board of Directors**](#)
- [**Milchidika with Marty: My Bubbe**](#)
- [**The Concert: A reading of a short play by Linda Josephs**](#)
- [**New Joys and Woes Information Board**](#)
- [**CAS Book Group**](#)
- [**Keep Smiling! More photo memories by Don Victor**](#)
- [**October Yahrzeits**](#)
- [**October Donations**](#)

Two Conversations



This is a beautiful photo of Freke, Brenda and our Rabbi at the Mayyim Hayyim Mikveh. It's official!



May Hayyim Living Waters: Brenda, Rabbi Cohen & Freke
Photographs courtesy of Ilene Spiewak

The High Holy Days: Rosh Hashanah D'var Torah by Freke Vuijst

Rosh Hashanah

By Freke Vuijst

When Rabbi Barbara Cohen asked me to speak on Rosh Hashanah, I immediately, without a moment's hesitation, said: yes. All I could think about was: my father would be so proud.

In the car, on my way home from Barbara's house, I held on to that thought, as I had this imaginary conversation with my father, who years ago passed away, and I would remind him of how as a girl I had interrupted his sermon, by proclaiming loudly: THAT is my daddy.

And now, I would be the one giving a sermon. Not in church, but in a synagogue. Not as a Christian, but as a Jew.

Yes, Reverend Jan Vuijst, minister of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, righteous gentile in the years of the Nazi-occupation of Holland, Hebrew scholar, officiator at the weddings of his two daughters who he married to Jewish men in ceremonies for which he used the liturgy of the Reformed synagogue and performed in both Dutch and Hebrew. And finally, the man, who like a biblical patriarch, spread his arms over his family and blessed them with his dying breath, in English, Dutch, and Hebrew.

Yes, this man would be proud of his daughter today. No wonder, I had so readily agreed to the rabbi's request.

But then I read the Torah text. And I groaned. Because as a woman, as a feminist, the story of the casting out of Hagar and her son Ishmael is a painful story to read. Here is Sarah, who we think of as a wise and holy woman, who sends another woman with a child out into the wilderness. "Cast out that slave-woman and her son," Sarah says. She doesn't even mention Hagar's name. Hagar, the woman who she herself presented to her husband Abraham to have a child with. How cruel. How can one woman treat another woman so cruelly?

This story runs counter to all ideals of women solidarity, of women bonding together, of women overcoming their rivalry for a man – or in this case for the status of their sons.

Sarah's cruelty to Hagar made me think of Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*. I had read it many years ago and it had then made quite an impression on me. When I re-read the book, right before the television series was broadcast, I was particularly struck by the fraught relationship between the Commander's wife Serena and her handmaid Offred. One could argue that both women are victims of a patriarchal society.

Yet, none of this, however, brought me closer to an understanding of this Torah passage. It seemed to me that this tale of human foibles did not contribute to any understanding of the human heart, or of the role we should play.

And then it occurred to me: there is another voice in this story. God's voice. And the contrast between what God says and the drama that the story narrates is quite astounding. God does not admonish Sarah for being jealous of Hagar and her son. He – and forgive me, but out of habit, I use the masculine - does not comfort Abraham for having to make the difficult decision to cast out his first born son.

God has one message which he repeats three times. Once when Hagar has fled before Ishmael's birth, because she had a fight with Sarah. He says it a second time when Abraham is conflicted about Sarah's demand that he cast out Hagar and Ishmael. And he repeats it a third time—through an angel—when Hagar, in fear of her and Ishmael's imminent death in the desert, weeps in despair.

All three times: God has the same message. Don't despair, because I have a plan for this boy. I will make him a great nation. And so it happens, Ishmael and his mother are saved. The boy grows up to be a strong man. He marries. And has 12 sons. And later, much later, Ishmael and Isaac, the two brothers, stand shoulder to shoulder when they bury their father.

Once I focused on God's message, the story of the casting out of Hagar was no longer just a cruel story. It became a story of transcendence, of God telling people that there is a bridge to him, regardless of our origins.

God's care for Hagar is really extraordinarily. Twice this woman – not Jewish, an Egyptian, a stranger, as her name says – is commanded by God to believe. When she is in despair in the desert, God opens her eyes—in fact, he commands her to open her eyes, to believe, to trust that God will fulfill his plan for her son. He changes her perception.

As some of you know, a few weeks ago, Brenda Butler and I converted to Judaism. Without going into our personal reasons, I can say that for both of us, it was a very meaningful ceremony. There was water involved, as there is in Hagar's story when God has struck a well for her, since we went into the Mikvah.

And though I did not feel like God "rescued" me, as he had Hagar, I do feel that God's relation with Hagar has something to say to me personally. God reaches out to "the other," he opens the door, he creates a positive outcome. He is there for all of us ---- whoever we are, wherever we come from.

The High Holy Days: Yom Kippur D'var Torah by Karen Chase

CHAIM SOUTINE'S DVAR TORAH

You think my name is Karen but it's not.
It's Chaim. Chaim Soutine and I'm a painter.
You think it's two thousand and eighteen but it's 1922.
You think I have been asked to give the Dvar Torah today.

Ya ya ya! You are correct this time!

I came here to your schul from Paris, that's where I live now. But I'm from Smilovichy, about an hour from Minsk. My father is a mender – lower than a tailor! - and I'm the 10th of 11 children. Before I say more, let me try to describe my paintings because I think that's why you asked me to come here today. You want to know what they look like? I try to tell you. I make landscapes and some portraits but my still-lives – ugh that label! oy, still-life – them, I like the most. A naked fowl strung up, a hanging beef carcass, a few silver herrings on a plate. This is what I like: I want to make dead objects alive through my drippings and my dashes. Glistening paint scarlet carcass of beef – background of thick blues, white speckles, oh the brush strokes – cosmic, yes?!

In Smilovichy, my hometown, so many Talmudists! Violence from within and without. Pogroms, from without. But within, in our shtetl, once when I was little, I saw a shochet bleed a goose and the sight still scares me. Not scare - worse than scare.

As a boy, I was forbidden to draw, against my pious father's wishes, but I did anyway. When I gave my drawing of an old man, my neighbor, to him, his sons beat me up. My mother sued them and with the 25 rubles she won, she sent me to Vilnius to art school. Of course, my father disapproved. So, during one long ago Yom Kippur, he atoned for what he saw as my sin, atoned for his household just like Aaron.

*Aaron shall sacrifice the ox
as offering for his sins.
He shall atone both for himself and for his household,
by slaughtering his offering for sins.*

Leviticus 16:7-11

Now I should tell you people that my paintings, they are my offerings.

After Vilnius, after art school there, I moved to Paris. I was 20-years-old.

So. Today is Yom Kippur and many of you are fasting. Often, I fast too. I spend my meager money on paint rather than food. I take myself to the butcher and buy a beef carcass to paint. I starve myself before I begin the painting to sharpen my visions. I fast. Is this so different from what you are doing today?

Hear this from today's Torah portion:

*And he shall take some of the ox's blood,
and sprinkle with his fingers on the surface
of the altar-cover, on the east side.
Before the altar-cover, let him sprinkle
with the blood upon his fingers seven times.
And he shall slay the goat of offering
for the people's sins, and bring the blood
inside the altar-curtain,
and he shall do with its blood-sprinkling the blood
upon the altar-cover as he stands before it.*

When I paint a carcass, I douse it with blood to keep the color alive. For me, blood is paint, paint is blood. Am I purging the memories of my torn fierce boyhood – the pogroms - in Smilovichy? Atoning and purging on this day is what we are doing. You do it your way, I do it mine.

*And the cattle offering for sins,
and the goat offering for sins,
whose blood had been brought in
to make atonement for the holy place,
let him convey outside the camp,
and they shall burn their hides,
their flesh parts, and their waste.
The one who burns them shall wash his clothes,
and bathe his flesh with water,
and afterward, he may reenter the encampment...
for on this day atonement shall be made for you,
to make you clean from all of your wrongdoing.
before THE FOUNT OF LIFE,
you shall be clean.*

Fifth Aliyah

Sometimes I buy back paintings that someone has purchased from me. I slash them, I burn them. They are my sacrifices, my offerings.

Me, am I so different from my father, the devout mender, the man who follows the Talmudists prescriptions? I break those rules. But on this day, on this Yom Kippur, I question how alike we were – in the sacrificing, the purging, the seeking. These acts run deep in us Jews, however we do them.

When I arrived in Paris, on the first night, I lay down in bed and fell into a deep sleep. I dreamt -- a fence swings open to a field full of stacked up canvases, strewn about canvases, musty, ripped, twisted canvases. I wander for hours.

The ground is soft, the sky faded. New-mown hay! That's what the air smells like. The easy dirt gives under my feet. As I pass water lily ponds, I smell a smell and my eyelids droop. Drawn towards the boozy odor, I move through a patch of woods. How long have I been here? Blue poles slant every which way. I traipse across a maze of red and yellow vines. Have I ever been anywhere else?

Dizzy, now I'm down on the forest floor. Yellowish dusk turns to evening. Fat glittery stars swirl across the thick painted navy night. In my dream, I fall asleep. Then, in the dream, I dream another dream.

At the butcher, rolled loins, the flayed steaks. "I want that food!"

The bloody carcass, the smelly fowl, the enticing herring. My dreams torpedo across the studio. I wrestle a ray fish to the ground, slowly wake up.

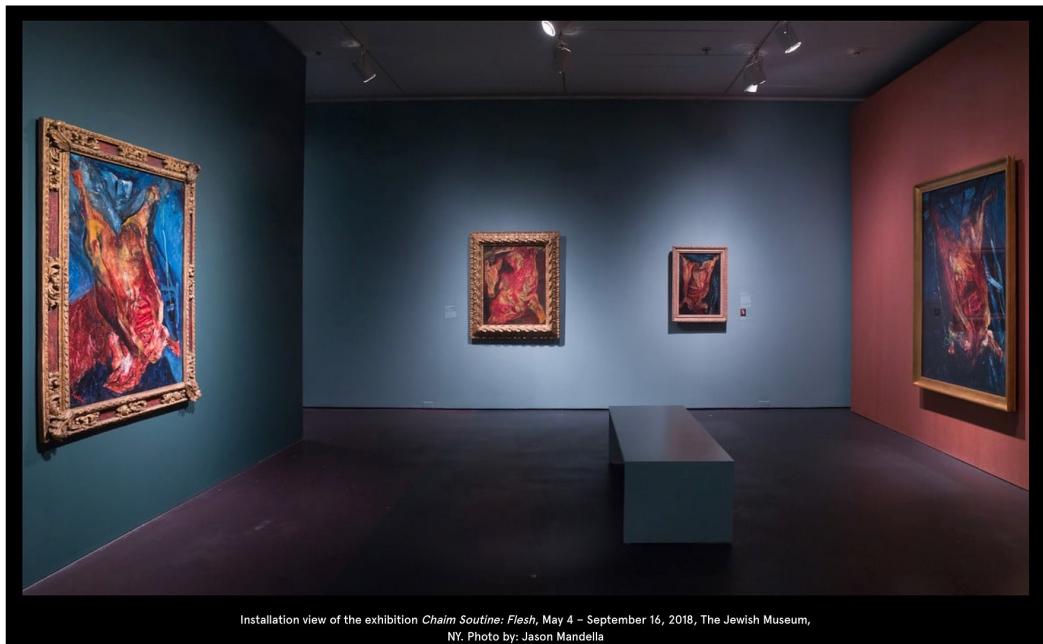
Today is Yom Kippur.

*He shall make atonement,
for the sanctuary's holy place-
and for the Tent of Meeting
and for the altar, he shall make atonement
And this shall be for you
an everlasting law: to make atonement
for the Israelites from all their sins,
on one day of the year.
And it was done as God commanded Moses.*

POSTSCRIPT.

Yes, it's me, Karen here.

A few months ago, in May, an exhibit of Chaim Soutine's paintings opened at The Jewish Museum in New York City. I saw it recently. Although I had always loved Soutine's paintings, this collection made me dizzy, I loved them so much. When the possibility of my giving a Dvar Torah came up, I read the Torah portion and it harkened back, or rather forward, to Soutine's paintings. Thus, this commentary.



Installation view of the exhibition *Chaim Soutine: Flesh*, May 4 – September 16, 2018, The Jewish Museum, NY. Photo by: Jason Mandella

A Thank You from the CAS Board of Directors

The Congregation Ahavath Sholom Board of Directors would like to thank the many members of our community for their time and efforts in producing the wonderful High Holy Days services. It takes a major commitment by an enormous number of people, from committee chairs and committee members, to an amazing number of congregants, to the many community members who just "help out" when things need to get done. To all of you, our sincere thanks for your help and commitment. This is what makes CAS such a special place.

Milchidika with Marty: *My Bubbe*

I recently heard an old Catskill Mountain comedy routine about a grandmother who tended to drive her car too fast and was also a pretty sharp lady.

One day she was driving 70 miles and hour in a 40 mile an hour zone when a policeman stopped her car and pulled her over. The routine went something like this:

Policeman: "Ma'am do you know you were driving 70 miles an hour in a 40 mile an hour speed zone?"

Bubbe: "I know."

Policeman: "Ma'am let me see your driver's license."

Bubbe: "I don't have a driver's license and besides that I'm legally blind."

Policeman: "Legally blind and no driver's license?"

Bubbe: "Yep."

Policeman: "Let me see the registration for this car."

Bubbe: "I don't have any registration, besides the car is stolen."

Policeman: "Stolen? Who did you steal it from?"

Bubbe: "How should I know, I murdered the owner of the car."

Policeman: "Murdered the owner of the car?"

Bubbe: Yep, I murdered the owner of the car and chopped up his body and it's in the trunk."

The policeman was really confused with all this and thought he better call police headquarters and get some backup. A few minutes later an older, experienced police sergeant arrived on the scene and approached my Bubbe's car.

Police sergeant: "Ma'am please let me see your driver's license."

With that, my Bubbe handed over her driver's license to the police sergeant.

Police sergeant: "Ma'am this driver's license looks perfectly fine. The policeman said that you were also legally blind, but you look perfectly OK to me. Now, let me see the registration to this car."

With that, my Bubbe handed over the registration for the car.

Police sergeant: "This registration is up to date and looks OK to me. Besides that, the policeman said there was a dead body in the trunk of your car."

With that my Bubbe handed over the keys to the trunk and told the police sergeant to look in the trunk himself.

The police sergeant came back and said, "There's no body in the trunk and everything in there is nice and neat. I don't understand my policeman. Everything he said is wrong and none of it makes sense."

Bubbe: "I don't understand it either. Can you believe that he also said that I was driving 70 miles an hour in a 40 mile an hour zone?"

The Concert: A reading of a short play by Linda Josephs

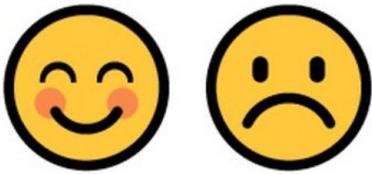
Congregation Ahavath Sholom will present a staged reading of *The Concert* by CAS member Linda Josephs at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 28, 2018 at the synagogue. The short play features actors Deann Halper and Gail Ryan.

As Ann and Beth go through their recently deceased parents' belongings a 25-year-old secret is revealed, one that could change their lives forever. "The Concert" is a short play based on two true stories.

Following the reading of the play there will be a talk back with the actors and the director/playwright. Donations are welcome, and complimentary wine and cheese will be served.



New Joys and Woes Information Board



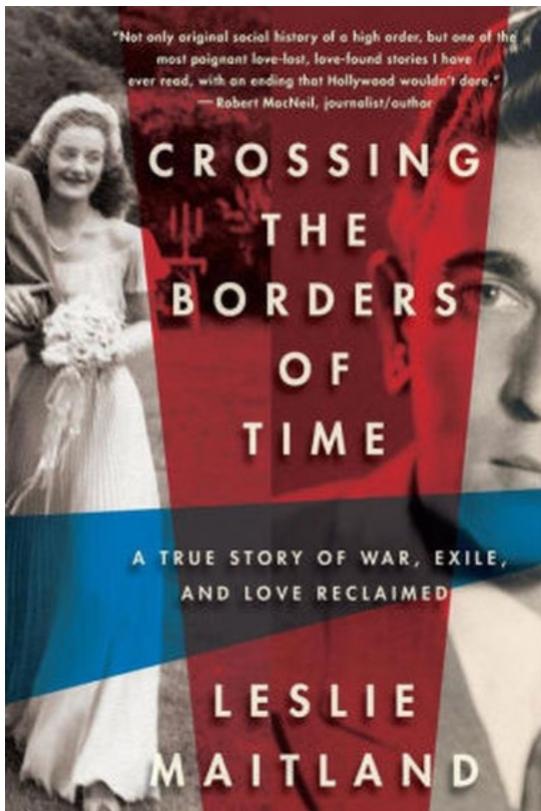
This information board is a way for CAS Members ONLY to share happy events, losses, and medical events with fellow congregants.

- It will be voluntary and confidential.
- Access is by CAS password ONLY.
- When there's a new event (to view), our Sunday weekly email will remind you to check the "protected" Members' website page.
- Follow-up responses are voluntary and only between the reader and the member posting the event.
- If you need the password and are a CAS member, please contact ahavathsholomgb@gmail.com.
- Members are always encouraged to contact Rabbi Barbara Cohen with any personal matters they wish to discuss.

CAS Book Group

On Sunday, October 21 at 10:15, the CAS Book Group will discuss *Crossing the Borders of Time* by Leslie Maitland. Investigative reporter Leslie Maitland grew up enthralled by her mother's accounts of forbidden romance and harrowing flight from the Nazis. Her book is both a journalist's vivid depiction of a world at war and a daughter's pursuit of a haunting question: what had become of the handsome Frenchman whose picture her mother continued to treasure almost fifty years after they parted? It is a tale of memory that reporting made real and a story of undying love that crosses the borders of time. Diana Richter will lead the discussion.

Please contact Diana Richter at drpjama1@gmail.com for location of this meeting. Check for changes as this group occasionally changes the date or time.



Keep Smiling! More photo memories by Don Victor



Steve Bannon, Sheldon Rothberg and Arthur Stavisky

1990



Leo and Claire Mayers

2005



Simon Weinrib

1990



Rabbi Bob Gluck and some young friends

1993

October 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

James Mitsuda Tishrei 22 5769	10/1	Sylvia Satler Heshvan 05 5739	10/14
Sidney Yurmark Tishrei 23 5728	10/2	Harry Pevzner Heshvan 07 5720	10/16
Herb Moskowitz Tishrei 23 5759	10/2	Rose Uttal Heshvan 09 5661	10/18
William Pozefsky Tishrei 23 5707	10/2	Joseph Kogan Heshvan 10 5752	10/19
Joseph Richter Tishrei 25 5722	10/4	Beverly D. Shimmin Heshvan 10 5761	10/19
Harry Aaron Orenstein Tishrei 25 5757	10/4	Irv Rubinstein Heshvan 18 5739	10/27
David L. Miller Tishrei 25 5769	10/4	Ethel Emily Branstein Lipson Heshvan 19 5748	10/28
Florence Lipshitz Tishrei 28 5767	10/7	Henrietta Slote Heshvan 20 5775	10/29
Baruch Gans Tishrei 30 5701	10/9	Meyer Friedman Heshvan 21 5708	10/30
Melvin Katsh Heshvan 02 5761	10/11	George Tickner Heshvan 21 5724	10/30
Walter Brill Heshvan 03 5741	10/12	Ralph Zenowitz Heshvan 21 5760	10/30
Mildred Pevzner Heshvan 03 5776	10/12		

October Donations

High Holy Day Donations

Lisa Chamberlain
Joseph B. Gellert
Robert Knight

In honor of the conversion of Dr. Brenda Butler
Dorothy Rose

In honor of Brenda Butler and Freke Vuijst

William and Sandra Flannery
Arthur and Louise Hillman

Other donations

Joel Cohen and Cathy Elkin Cohen
Harriet Leonard
Dan and Loretta Rothstein
Harold Rudin
John Slote and Nancy Cohen