

Singing 'Olam Chesed Yibaneh' ('the world will be built on love') at a Neshamah Carlebach concert with almost five hundred Jewish educators, cantors and rabbis is a very special treat that Sonja Spear, our Hebrew School Principal and I got to enjoy. A small delegation of us had the privilege of attending the NewCAJE (Conference of American Jewish Educators) gathering in Hartford, Connecticut for five days of learning, singing, workshopping, praying, schmoozing and networking. My motto for the intense five days became 'party late, pray early, learn lots of Torah in between.' There were song and comedy sessions deep into the night, regular minyanim early in the morning, a cornucopia of fully catered kosher meat (pastrami, brisket, corned beef, salami, turkey – and those were just the cold cuts) but most importantly, an ocean of experience and methodology to dip into. I sat at the feet of seasoned educators who shared tips for children's Shabbat services, Holocaust education, envisioning

The value of these kinds of conferences for a geographically isolated community such as ours is a price above pearls. We at Agudas Achim are part of a larger Jewish context that can inspire, influence and support us, and through technology – be it travel or internet – we can connect in ways unimaginable to our forebears. The American Jewish world offers us a plethora of options for Judaic enrichment – like the denominational biennials and NewCAJE, but also like Limmud Midwest or spiritual retreat centers and many others. As some of our children return from summer camp, we are intimately familiar with how powerful and formative these experiences are. And how important it is to Jewishly recharge our batteries.

At the same time, we should not underestimate ourselves. In only six weeks or so, we are going to come together for the High Holiday services. The