

FROM THE RABBI

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz

When I was in rabbinical school, I remember a rabbi teaching me a valuable lesson: that Judaism is the project of building up a 'memory bank'. This applies to individuals, of course, as we build up our memory banks of Jewish life experiences, as well as the collective of our people. The image of building up a memory bank, whether it's through the Pesach Seders that we experience at home or through the collective narrative of the Exodus, has stayed with me. It makes the act of memory conscious and intentional. It asks of us to consider what we deposit in our own memory banks: happy memories, or hard ones, recent memories or those enveloped in the mists of time. And every once in a while, we get to withdraw a memory from our memory bank, finding renewed meaning in it.

Today (February 1) is my six month anniversary of starting officially as the Rabbi of Agudas Achim

Our communal Chanukkah celebration was special too, including our first experience of Midwestern snow. However, some of my most precious memories is seeing the community come together, to celebrate *simchas*, to volunteer and to support our members in need. Becoming embedded in the community as a new rabbi includes officiating at funerals and *shivah minyans*, conducting hospital visits and receiving congregants at my office with a listening ear and a cup of hot tea. I've gotten 'stuck in' as the Brits like to say with the B-Mitzvah education and building one-on-one relationships with our teens is particularly precious. I learn as much from them as they teach me. Speaking of learning: the Introduction to Judaism Program has launched and we have a good crowd of a variety of adult learners joining us. If you're interested in sampling some of that, come talk to me.