

Agudas Achim Congregation

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www.AgudasAchimIC.org

January 2018 / Tevet—Shevat 5778

FROM THE RABBI Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz

"Cold and dark,
Night overtakes day,
Frigid air settles over the earth.
The land waits while Your creatures rest.
Then, a shift.
Small, imperceptible,
The days slowly lengthen
And mornings surrender to light.
Bless this day, God of seasons.
Bless the winter with rest, renewal, and love.
Be present with us as we prepare
For another cycle of seasons
With dignity and purpose.

God of time and space,
May this season be a blessing and a teacher.
Make me like the long, deep night,
A blanket of solace and comfort.
Make me like the returning sun,
A source of quiet hope.
Bless my days with service and my nights with warmth.
Make me like a new day

—Alden Solovy

Dawning from the darkness."

Be present with us as we prepare for another cycle of seasons, with dignity and purpose.

Make me like the returning sun, a source of quiet hope.

As I quote these words from 'This Grateful Heart, Psalms and Prayers for a New Day' written by Alden Solovy, one of the Reform movement's prolific and promising liturgical poets, sunlight is streaming through the window. Light bounces off light, as sun, ice and snow embrace.

Truth be told, I've never encountered cold like this in my life. The lowa climate doesn't only bring new habits (getting dressed takes an age) but also new perspectives. I am grateful for the feats of energy and engineering, for fuel and food in ways I've not had to think about previously in my life.

As our Synagogue President writes in her eloquent contribution, our attendance of the Biennials energized us to think about new beginnings and new initiatives for the synagogue. My Introduction to Judaism class is starting on January 21 (you can still join us) and we have joint Hillel-Agudas Achim Tu Bishvat programming planned on January 30 and 31, as well as Purim festivities in the pipeline. We will

(Continued on page 2)

FROM THE RABBI

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

also be rolling out a new system of Torah reading which will shorten the reading as an active encouragement to both seasoned and new (as well as aspiring) Torah readers to take part. I've also brought back lots of new music from the Biennials so stay tuned for some musical innovation in the future.

The Biennials were a very worthwhile experience for many reasons: acquainting ourselves with new initiatives, liturgies, programming, technologies as well as deepening our learning, spirituality and connection to likeminded Jews. But there was an unintended blessing to the Biennials also. As the congregation's location was printed on my lanyard, a lot of people quizzed me about Jewish life in Iowa. Some had been to Iowa City and knew what a special place it is. However, most coastal participants were surprised to

hear there was Jewish life of such quality in the Midwest. This won't be a surprise for those of you have lived here for decades or who grew up here, but to me it was an interesting dynamic to witness. It taught me a valuable lesson: how we perceive the edge is a matter of perspective. Do we perceive it as the

periphery or as the vanguard? Do we consider the margins as, well, marginal or as a place of potential and innovation? In a Jewish world where our demographics are shifting, I choose the latter point of view. I am confident in our increasing relevance: we have a community that is experienced in and committed to welcoming interfaith families and Jews-by-choice. We have a community that is diverse. We have a community that isn't afraid of asking hard questions in a world that demands it and where we know we can't take our Judaism for granted.

In the temperate, maritime climate of North-Western Europe, a coat with perhaps a scarf would be good enough. You could coast by without making much of an effort. The net result was that you would take the forces of Nature for granted. In Iowa, it's different. Nature is a force you have to respect; you defer to it, you cooperate with it and you embrace it. 'Wrap up warm and enjoy those crisp winter days' people have advised me, and we do when we can. There's an analogy for our Jewish lives here. We may have to work a little harder to make it work; but we cannot take our Judaism for granted. We have been blessed with an incredible opportunity to continue making

Agudas Achim an example in our local community, to make Torah come to life in our own lives, to enjoy the rich depth of our own community and to celebrate and build on what we have.

In the words of another innovative (although ancient) liturgist's reflections on winter: 'Esh uvarad, sheleg

v'kitor, ruach se'arah asah devaro.' – 'Fire and hail, snow and vapor and strong wind do God's bidding.' (Psalm 148:8) It's all about perspective and a transitional moment like the secular New Year allows us to reorient ourselves towards the things that matter. If we stick together, we'll stay warm until the sun returns.

How we perceive the edge is a matter of perspective.

Do we perceive it as the periphery or as the vanguard? Do we consider the margins as, well, marginal or as a place of potential and innovation?

FROM THE PRESIDENT **Kathy Jacobs**

Currently the question of

who is, or is not, a Jew, is no

longer evident. Much of the

discussion considered how,

due to the current rate of

change, it has become

difficult to keep pace with

world events.

In December the Rabbi and I attended both the Conservative and Reform Biennial conferences, and the real gem sandwiched between them, the URJ's Shallat 2-day seminar for new presidents with new rabbis. All three programs were well worth the time and travel expended.

The USCJ conference reflected the results of Conservative movement's self study, rebranding effort and new website, https://uscj.org. The new

logo and tag line "Making Meaning Together" are smart and to the point, supporting the USCJ's aims to ground messages in Jewish values and use language that adds meaning.

Much of the self study is centered around the issue of Jewish identity. Currently the question of who is, or is not, a Jew, is

no longer evident. Much of the discussion considered how, due to the current rate of change, it has become difficult to keep pace with world events. Both Reform and Conservative movements in the US are concerned that Israel may create rules that might not align with specific American cases of identity. Jeffrey Goldberg, Editor in Chief of The Atlantic, addressing the USCJ plenary session, pointed out that for Conservative Judaism this is problematic in that Halachic thinking may result in technical solutions. Postethnic Judaism, he asserted, offers both challenges and opportunities about what Jews should do. Goldberg advocated a responsive discourse that embraces identities and encourages pluralism.

At the Reform movement's Biennial, Rabbi Rick Jacobs, URJ President, also spoke of the divergence of Israel's position on Jewish identity,

and the reality of American Jews that has resulted from intermarriage and the number of Jews by choice. That being said, both the USCJ and URJ, again assert their support for Israel.

The plenaries and learning sessions at the URJ conference were wonderful and I'm still working through the biennial materials being shared on the URJ social media platform *The Tent*. I look forward to sharing relevant materials with board chairs

> who also have access to the tent. But the most wonderful experiences of the Reform movement's conference were worshiping in a congregation of nearly 6000 Jews with a choir comprising 100 Cantors.

Despite the magic of the URJ Biennial, the Shallat seminar was by far the most wonderful experience of my travels. In addition to the opportunity to work in partnership with my

Rabbi on transition matters, leadership development and the value of reflection and mutual review, we were treated to an advanced look at a leadership training resource, Sacred Partnership: a Resource and Discussion Guide. The opportunity prompted us to explore our relationship as one that elevates the work of leadership to a level of holiness through Jewish values of mutual respect, trust, honesty, listening and communication, transparency, confidentiality, flexibility, and reflection.

Good news: the next URJ Biennial, December 11-15, 2019, will meet in Chicago, https://urj.org/urj-biennial-2019. I was fortunate to be able to afford to attend the current conferences; I hope more board and Congregational members can attend all or part of the conference in Chicago.

SHABBAT SERVICE SCHEDULE

Torah Portion	Date	Service Time	Service
Shemot			
(Exodus 1:1—6:1)	Friday, January 5	7:30 p.m.	Sim Shalom (Conservative)
	Saturday, January 6	9:30 a.m. 11:00 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform) Children's Service
Vaera			
(Exodus 6:2—9:35)	Friday, January 12	7:30 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
	Saturday, January 13	9:30 a.m.	Sim Shalom
Во			
(Exodus 10:1—13:16)	Friday, January 19	6:00 p.m.	Family Chavurah Mishkan T'filah
		7:30 p.m.	IVIISIIKAII I IIIAII
	Saturday, January 20	9:30 a.m.	Sim Shalom
Beshalach			
(Exodus 13:17—17:16)	Friday, January 26	7:30 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
	Saturday, January 27	9:30 a.m.	Sim Shalom

FEDERATION MEETING

The Iowa City Jewish Federation will hold a membership meeting at the synagogue on January 28, 2018 at 10:30 a.m. to develop plans for the future. More information will follow.

Contact David Roston (319-321-5646) with questions.

LIFE MILESTONES

The congregation extends its condolences to Claudia Corwin and family on the death of Claudia's mother, Ethel Corwin.

SCHOOL NEWS Sonja Spear

Religious School

When I was a kid, my elderly relatives used to pinch my cheek and say, "How did you get so big? You used to be just this high!" They would hold their hands about three feet off the floor, roughly the height of a large dog. Hey, I'm short, but I'm not tiny! I remember being outraged. I had been this old for months and months. Why were they surprised?

Now that I've been running the school long enough to see little kids turn into big B'nei Mitzvah students, I am starting to sympathize with my elderly relatives. (Now that I think about it, they weren't really all that old. Hardly older than I am now.) Every time I see these kids, I want to say, "How did you get so big? I remember when you were this high!" One of these days, I may do it, just to see them roll their eyes.

Watching the kids grow up — and being amazed at how fast it happens, every single time — is one of the privileges of my job. So, instead of going through the school class by class, I would like to share with you a moment in which I saw the kids grow.

A stranger visited the Hebrew School on a dull, ordinary day because he wanted to say Kaddish for his father. He noticed the Becker room and wondered if it had been named for a distant relative. He didn't know his extended family, he told me, because there had been some kind of rupture before he was born. With his father's passing, he felt the loss of family. He was looking for roots.

I invited him to say *Kaddish* for his father during our fifteen-minute service. But, I admit, I wasn't completely confident about how the kids would behave. Usually during the service they sing, but they also clown around and let off steam. Would they respect a stranger's grief?

I visited every class and talked to them about the *mitzvah* of supporting a mourner in saying *Kaddish*. I warned them that this would be a different kind of service. "Why is he here?" they asked. "He has to travel for work," I answered. "But if you're Jewish, you have a home in any synagogue. Can we help him find a home here?" This was greeted with silence. The silence of consent, or the lull before the storm? I wasn't sure, but it was time to start the service.

Those kids stood, sat, and prayed with hardly a wiggle. Afterwards, those sitting closest to our guest shook his hand. Parents filtered into the service until we had a *minyan*. The community came together for fifteen minutes and then dissolved again as the kids went home for dinner.

This is my favorite moment because it speaks to the reason Agudas Achim has a school: to teach the next generation how to form a Jewish community. For the Hebrew School students, I'm sure learning all of those prayers can seem weird and arbitrary. But on that day, they used those prayers to come together to help a stranger. I could see them growing into their adult selves. Pretty soon, sooner than they can imagine, I'm going to be looking up at them and wondering how they got so big.

WARM UP AMERICA Constance Berman

Warm Up America will meet January 14 and January 28 at the synagogue, ten to noon.

SISTERHOOD NEWS Beverly Jones

Winter Tea

We are pleased to announce that Rabbi Hugenholtz will be hosting our annual Sisterhood Winter Tea at her home, 217 Monroe St., Iowa City, on Sunday, February 18, starting at 2:00 p.m. This really will be a winter TEA. Rabbi Hugenholtz is an aficionado of tea, and will be leading a discussion on the different varieties of tea. Come relax, schmooze, and enjoy a respite from the winter weather, as we enjoy the flavor and aroma of a variety of hot teas. Refreshments will be provided by the Sisterhood Board of Directors.

Sisterhood Dues

It's not too late to join Sisterhood for 2017-2018. Your Sisterhood dues help to enhance the synagogue and aid the Jewish community. We help the Religious School, the Library, and the Kitchen when special purchases are requested. We provide gifts to the B'nai Mitzvah students and help support the Confirmation Class. We help provide scholarships to Jewish summer camps. We maintain the Gift Shop where your Judaica needs can be conveniently met.

Please send your check for \$36.00, made out to Sisterhood, to our Treasurer, Joni Caplan, 520 Brookland Park Drive, Iowa City, IA 52246. If you prefer a payment format other than by check, please contact sisterhood@agudasachimic.org.

Tikun Olam Martha Lubaroff

Mercy Volunteers

Thanks to all who volunteered to help out at Mercy Hospital: Carrie Norton and friend Marty Stein,
Dick and Nancee Blum, Miriam Gilbert, Lorraine Dorfman, Janice Weiner, Jeffrey Aizenberg, Mel & Diane
Sunshine, and David & Martha Lubaroff. This is a mitzvah that we perform every year.

Donations

We donated \$100 to the synagogue in Puerto Rico that was so damaged. We matched donations made by Jody & Janie Braverman.

A \$100 donation was made to the Iowa City Mosque, which needed funds to improve their cemetery.

TALMUD STUDY GROUP

On hiatus until January 21, the Talmud study group meets at **9:00 a.m. on Sundays!** Everyone is invited. No Hebrew language skill is required. Materials will be provided. For more information contact Rabbi Portman at irportman@gmail.com.

ERIC JASKOLKA TALK



Eric Jaskolka:

How Jews Created the Comic Book Industry

Sunday, January 21, 11:00 a.m. Agudas Achim

Eric Jaskolka, local congregant and Guinness World Record holder for the Largest X-Men Memorabilia Collection, will be speaking about the Jewish influence on the pop culture phenomenon of comic books.

Eric Jaskolka is a husband and father first, a superhero second! He began collecting and reading comic books in 1989 and collecting action figures in 1990. He focused on X-Men because of what they represented and their connection to Judaism. Over time the collection and interest grew to what it is today: over 8400 comics, 3000+ trading cards, and 8000+ toys, statues and collectibles.

TU BISHVAT SEDERS

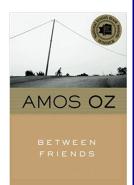


FROM THE STACKS Daphne Lison

"Between Friends", by Amos Oz

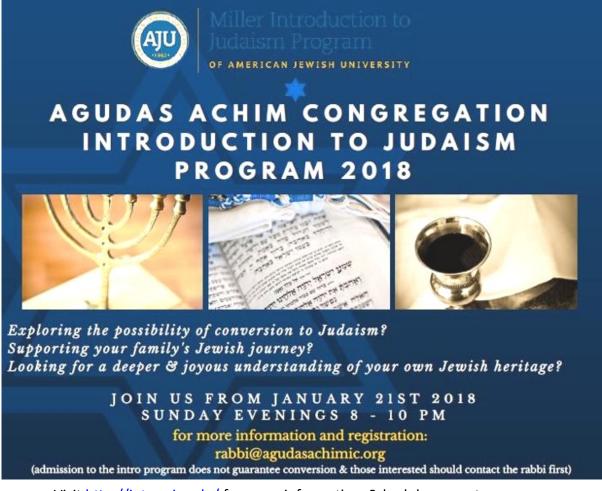
An unexpected bonus of helping at Aqudas Achim library is the joy of re-discovering favorite authors. So, when Amos Oz kept turning up, I started hauling (even more) books home to read.

One of these was "Between Friends", a prize-winning collection of 8 short stories published in 2014, and set on a meticulously recreated, although fictional, fifties-era kibbutz (Oz lived on Kibbutz Hulda from 1954-1986). Each story in this book can be read and savored as a separate entity; however, it simultaneously relates to all the other stories - characters reappear, gaining in depth and dimension. The brash joker of the



kibbutz is perhaps not quite as light-hearted as he appears to be, the upstanding kibbutz secretary has his own weakness; others sharing this regimented society also come to life with great warmth and humanity.

Amos Oz's compassionate and poetic clarity, his keen and poignant observations of human foibles and frailties and his uncanny ability to convey an immediate and palpable sense of person and place stand out. I was just a small child living far from Israel at the time described, but the impression I received of the kibbutz rooms and areas Oz describes, was strong enough to make me think I had actually lived there. "Between Friends" is a compelling read.



Visit http://intro.aju.edu/ for more information. Schedule on next page.

INTRO TO JUDAISM 2018 SCHEDULE

All classes 8:00 p.m.—10:00 p.m. in Agudas Achim's Becker Room.

Date	Session			
1/21	Introduction: From Creation to the Edge			
1/28	Bible: The World of the Bible			
2/4	Bible: The World of the Bible			
2/11	Jewish Diversity: Heart of Many Rooms			
2/18	Jewish Diversity: Heart of Many Rooms			
2/25	Calendar/Purim: The Great Wheel of the Jewish Year			
3/4	Pesach/Passover (Concepts)			
3/11	Pesach/Passover (Seder)			
3/18	NO CLASS			
3/25	Shabbat			
4/1	NO CLASS (due to Pesach)			
4/8	Shabbat: A Palace in Time			
4/15	Prayer: When Do I Bow?			
4/22	Prayer/God: Encountering the Holy			
4/29	God: Encountering the Holy			
5/6	Talmud: Arguments for the Sake of Heaven			
5/13	NO CLASS (due to Mother's Day)			
5/20	NO CLASS (due to Shavu'ot)			
5/27	Talmud: Arguments for the Sake of Heaven			
6/3	History: The Jewish Middle Ages			
6/10	Kashrut: The Original Soul Food			
6/17	NO CLASS (due to Father's Day)			
6/24	Kashrut: The Original Soul Food			
7/1	NO CLASS (due the 17 th of Tammuz)			
7/8	Relationships: Marriage, Love & Kosher Sex			
7/15	Life Cycle: Birth to B'nei Mitzvah			
7/22	NO CLASS (due to Tisha b'Av)			
7/29	Death: Time to Mourn			
8/5	Holocaust: Out of the Darkness			
8/12	Israel: Dreaming of Deliverance			
8/19	Tikkun Olam: The Jewish Mission to Heal the World			
8/26	High Holidays: Starting Over			
9/2	High Holidays: Starting Over			

DONATIONS

RABBI DISCRETIONARY FUND

Rody Gessner & Michelle Edwards: In memory of

Lillian Edwards

Michael & Joanne Margolin: In memory of

Lillian Margolin

Alan Mutnick: In memory of Ben Ross Mutnick

Bob & Donna Rodnitzky: In memory of Ann Rodnitzky

Jonathan & Pamela Sabin and family: In memory of

Michael Allen Sabin

Joel Shilyansky & Dr. Sonia Sugg: In memory of

Esther Sugg

David Skorton & Robin Davisson: In memory of

Pauline Skorton

Nancy Sprince: In memory of Benjamin and Sari Sprince

GENERAL FUND

David & Joni Caplan

Caplan Family Foundation

Fred Gerr & Renee Anthony

Phillip Horwitz & Catherine Bradley

Richard Levine: In memory of Bernice Levine

Paul & Esther Retish

Mark & Jayne Sandler: For the speedy recovery of Paul

Retish and In memory of Ann Estin's mother.

CEMETERY FUND

Julia Gelfand & David Lang: In memory of Lawrence

Gelfand

Miriam Gelfand: In memory of Larry Gelfand Richard & Goldene Haendel: In memory of

Aaron Braverman

Sam & Marj Kuperman: In memory of Boris Kuperman

Mel & Diane Sunshine: In memory of Joseph Sunshine

FINE ARTS FUND

Helen Goldstein: In memory of Jonathan Goldstein

LIBRARY FUND

Arthur & Miriam Canter: In memory of

Gertrude Rosenbaum

Rhoda Vernon: In memory of David Vernon

PORTMAN PROGRAM FUND

Sue Weinberg & Robert Armstrong

SIM & SARA STRAUSS MEMORIAL FUND

David & Penny Strauss: In memory of Sim Strauss

Stephen & Susan Strauss: In memory of

Marjorie Osdoba, Sim Strauss, and Belle Strauss

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Robert & Vida Brenner: In memory of Kenneth Allweiss,

M. David Allweiss and William Brenner

Kathleen Jacobs: In memory of Patricia Smith Werner

JANUARY YAHRZEITS

Phyllis Bills Merrel Goldberg Rose Goldman Kent Braverman **Betty Brodsky** Sari Goldstein James Terrell Bryant Lewis Goodsell William Chazanoff Joseph Greenberg Charles Henry Clements **Irving Gussin** Mary Jessie Clements George Elisha Hall Leah Halle Jacob Haravon Collins Anna Lea Dvoretzky Charles Hecht Lillian Edwards **Doris Hoffman**

Anna Federbusch Pauline A. Kerber Marlene Garfin Boris Kuperman Webster Gelman Louis Landweber **Ruth Ginsberg** Sam Levey

Susan Schechter Max Levy David Silversteen Ruth Levy **Betty Mangers** William Simon Meyer Markovitz **Edie Singer** Edna Irene McGinnis **Betty Snider** David Mover Benjamin Sprince Mary S. Naylor **Isaac Strauss** Hannah Pauline Scheer Isadore Tepper Berg Larry Tepper Rebecca Markovitz Posner Janet Whitebook **Rose Widiss** James Robin Nathan Rodnitzky Celia Wolf Nathan David Zabner

Morris L. Ziskind

Belle Rosenbaum

Gertrude M. Rosenbaum

JANUARY 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
10:00am - 12:00pm NO Sunday School	Office closed		4:15pm - 6:15pm NO Hebrew School	7:00pm - 8:00pm Calendar Meeting	Office Closed	9:30am - 12:00pm Shabbat Moming Services
	4:15pm - 6:15pm NO Hebrew School				7:30pm - 8:30pm Shabbat Evening Services	11:00am - 12:00pm Children's service
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10:00am - 12:00pm NO Sunday School	4:15pm - 6:15pm NO Hebrew School 7:00pm - 8:00pm		4:15pm - 6:15pm NO Hebrew School		Office Closed 7:30pm - 8:30pm	9:30am - 12:00pm Shabbat Moming Services
	Sisterhood board meeting				Shabbat Evening Services	
9:00am - 10:00am Talmud	15	16	17	18	19	20
Study Group 10:00am - 12:00pm NO	4:00pm - 5:00pm Tikun Olam Meeting 4:15pm - 6:15pm NO		4:15pm - 6:15pm Hebrew School 6:00pm - 7:00pm Adult	7:15pm - 8:15pm Ritual Committee Meeting	Hillel-Challah for Hunger Sele Office Closed	9:30am - 12:00pm Shabbat Morning Services
Sunday School	Hebrew School		Ed Meeting 7:00pm - 8:00pm		6:00pm - 7:30pm Family	
			Executive		Chavurah 7:30pm - 8:30pm	
21	22	23	24	25	Shabbat Evening Services	27
9:00am - 10:00am Talmud Study Group	4:15pm - 6:15pm Hebrew School		11:30am - 1:00pm Free	7:00pm - 8:00pm Board Meeting	Office Closed	9:30am - 12:00pm Shabbat Morning Services
10:00am - 12:00pm Sunday School	32100		4:15pm - 6:15pm Hebrew School	Meeting	7:30pm - 8:30pm Shabbat Evening Services	Shabbat Morning Services
11:00am - 12:00pm Eric Jaskolka Talk — How			7:00pm - 8:00pm Social Committee Meeting			
Jews Created the Comic Book Industry						
8:00pm - 10:00pm Introduction to Judaism						
28	29	30	31	1	2	
9:00am - 10:00am Talmud Study Group	4:15pm - 6:15pm Hebrew School	6:00pm - 7:00pm Tu Bishvat Hillel Seder	4:15pm - 6:15pm Hebrew School	7:00pm - 8:00pm Calendar Meeting	Hillel Challah for Hunger Sale	9:30am - 12:00pm Shabbat Moming Services
10:00am - 12:00pm Sunday School		7:00pm - 8:00pm Erev Tu B'Shevat service	7:00pm - 8:00pm Brix Tu Bishvat Event		Office Closed	11:00am - 12:00pm Children's service
10:30am - 11:30am Federation Meeting					7:30pm - 8:30pm Shabbat Evening Services	
8:00pm - 10:00pm Introduction to Judaism						

NEW HISTORY BOARD

Jane Zukin has put up a new installation in our synagogue history display case, focusing on Jewish family life from the 1920s to the 1940s.



"As tiny scales join to form a strong coat of armor, so little donations combine to form a large total of good"

From the Talmud

Should you desire to make a contribution, may we suggest any of the following synagogue funds:

Braverman Talmud Torah	The Rabbi Portman Program Fund
Building Fund	Prayer Book Fund
Cemetery Fund	Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
Fine Arts Fund	School Fund
General Fund	Sim & Sara Strauss Memorial Fund
Garden & Landscaping Fund	Sisterhood Mitzvah & Memorial Fund
High Holiday/Cantor Fund	Synagogue Assistance Fund
Lauren Reece Flaum Terrace Fund	Tikun Olam Fund
Library Fund	Torah Enhancement Fund
Louis Ginsberg Youth Fund	Kadima Fund
Marcus Scholarship Fund	
Contribution in memory of	
Contribution in honor of	

STAFF			
Rabbi	Esther Hugenholtz	Youth Director	Bennett Shapiro
Interim Administrator	Karen Brady	Office Secretary	John Wertz
Principal	Sonja Spear	Custodian	Amos Kiche
BOARD OF TRUSTEES			
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