

Happy new year!

FROM THE RABBI

Esther Hugenholtz

The Blessings of the Old and the New

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook was the first (Ashkenazi) Chief Rabbi in the Land of Israel in 1921, prior to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. A mystical and contemplative figure, his contributions to Orthodox Jewish thought and Jewish spirituality as well as his openness towards and appreciation of secular expressions of Judaism make him a unique rabbinic figure. One of his key sayings, beloved across the Jewish world, is 'the old must be renewed, and the new must be made *kadosh* (holy).'

The concept of 'holiness' might be a little abstract to grasp but if you break it down to its Hebrew root word, K-D-SH (*kuf, dalet, shin*, like in the words 'kadosh', 'kiddush' and 'kaddish'), it means 'to set

rituals, that life knows many points of transition, of crossing-over into a new state of being.

I certainly feel that way. 2018 passed in a flurry. It was a year of transition in so many different ways. Now, the future looks different for my family: we are thinking about buying a house in maybe a year or so. We are becoming more and more settled into the Iowa City community. What was once new is now becoming familiar and comfortable.

Paradoxically, it is my increasing familiarity and comfort with our American life, my rabbinate in Agudas Achim and my relationships with the community that create the space to think about *change and innovation*. At a Board level, we are thinking about creating a Strategic Plan and we always welcome input from all of you about where