

*"So, let the witness be our writing."*

It was one of many powerful moments in the new Holocaust film 'Who Will Write Our History', shown at the FilmScene. Watching the movie three times (twice in preparation and once on the big screen) made it a tour-de-force every time. As my husband and I were walking back to the car through a blustery Iowa City snowscape, reflecting on the movie and the panel I had the honor to serve on (alongside Professor Lisa Heinemann and our own Susan Simon) made me realize how grateful I am. Grateful to be a rabbi, to be in the United States and to be able to bless people through the power of language.

Many cultures have creation myths where deities wrested our universe from clay or sea; in ours, God *speaks* the world into being – a feat praised in the 'baruch she'amar' prayer in the morning service: 'baruch she'amar v'hayah ha'olam' – 'blessed is God who speaks and the world shall be'.

and the guardians when words are used as the harbingers of falsehood. We have the ability to grant kindness and issue blessing through our words or to cut down, humiliate and hurt people through them (this concern increases exponentially with internet access and an anonymous social media account).

As the winter lull is coming to a close and the rhythms of Jewish (and working) life have geared up again, there have been and continue to be opportunities at the synagogue to engage with sacred text, words, writings, stories and ideas.

For Tu Bishvat and Martin Luther King Day, Hillel Director David Weltman and I got together to do a text study on 'Seeds of Justice' where we looked at the Tree of Life as a template of the human soul and how we can develop our humanity to become more receptive of the biases we hold and work towards greater justice. We intend on doing another study