

December is known as a quiet month in the Jewish calendar but to my delight, there's still plenty going on. The center piece of the month will be the Union of Reform Judaism Biennial that a few lay leaders and myself will be attending. Some of you may remember me talking about the Biennial experience in glowing terms two years ago. This time, we are particularly lucky because the Biennial is in Chicago which means we can send a larger contingent.

We will convene at McCormick Center to join 6000+ Jews for five days of learning, praying, networking and upskilling. Having sifted through the sessions, I am excited to attend such topics as 'Eye on the Why – What's Relevant and Meaningful to Families with Young Children' and 'Community Organizing 201 – Using Relational Outreach to Strengthen Your Social Justice Efforts'. Other worthwhile sessions that we hope to attend discuss 'developing a culture of

communities. It is to remind ourselves that the project of Judaism is not just a local project but connected to our brothers and sisters across the nation and in fact, across the world. '*Kol Yisrael arevim zeh la zeh*', the Talmud tells us, 'all of Israel is responsible for each other', and the Biennial is living, breathing testimony to that. It is important to remember that we are part of a greater whole; part of a tradition that shapes ideas and improves lives, that has something important to say about the world we live in and that can add real comfort and compassion to that world.

Life at Agudas Achim centers on bringing that truth into the many facets of our lives. Our new initiative to wear name tags is geared to make the space we create together a little more proactively welcoming and a little less intimidating for visitors, newcomers and those who might not have stepped through the