



# Agudas Achim Congregation

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January 2020 / Tevet –Shevat 5780

## FROM THE RABBI

*Esther Hugenholtz*

In a commentary on the lighting of the Menorah (golden candelabra in the Tabernacle and Temple) in the Book of Leviticus, the Talmud (Bavli, Tractate Shabbat 22b) offers an interesting interpretation. Leviticus 24:3 orders the Kohanim (Priests) to light the Menorah ‘from evening to morning, before the Eternal continuously’. The Talmud then asks the question: why does the Menorah need to be lit at night? In true rabbinic style, the Talmud answers its own question: “Didn’t the children of Israel, all forty years that they walked in the wilderness, walk exclusively by God’s light, the pillar of fire? Rather, the lighting of the Menorah is testimony to humankind that the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) rests among Israel.”

This is a beautiful text that speaks directly to the experience of Hanukkah and the mitzvah of *pirsumei nisa*, the ‘publicizing of the miracle’ through lighting our *hannukiyot* in our window sills, sharing our light for all the world to see. Hanukkah has now ended, and as we clear away our blue-and-white decorations and scrape (boil or freeze; whatever method you use!) the wax from your

family heirlooms, we are still encouraged to sit with the question that the Talmud poses. What does it mean for us to shine our light ‘from evening till morning’, in the gathering darkness of our times?

Many of us were shocked and heartbroken to hear of the attack on the rabbinic home in Monsey as well as the other antisemitic incidents during the days of the festival. There is no denying that the United States are experiencing an uptick in antisemitic harassment and violence. It is natural for us to feel unsettled by it, to doubt the assumptions that Jews are safe in the United States – the most welcoming and hospitable of nations in much of Jewish history. The impulse to turn inwards is a normal and understandable one. And yet, we are called to shine our light for all humanity. Not in spite of the darkness, but because of it. Shining our light is not meant to drain us; to tap us out; to feel that we must do the hard work of confronting bigotry when we all know that the moral answer is for bigots to confront their own bigotry. Rather,

*(Continued on page 2)*

# 2020

HAPPY NEW YEAR

## FROM THE RABBI

### *Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)*

*(Continued from page 1)*

shining our light is meant to replenish us. As our inner lamps burn bright, we have to trust that God and our Jewish values continue to refill the fuel. We are shining our light because it is our mission as Jews to be a light unto the nations and through that awareness, we will come to re-evaluate and cherish our own Jewishness in powerful ways. The current adversity calls us to be strong, resolute and compassionate, while also acknowledging our pain, grief, anger and vulnerability. This charge continues on long after Hanukkah has ended.

In a practical way, how can we do this important work? Each one of us has to examine our own souls and check in with ourselves to see what we are comfortable with. In last month's Bulletin, our Synagogue President Sue Weinberg, wrote movingly of her decision to wear her *kippah* out and about. Being visibly Jewish – whether through a *kippah* or a Star-of-David necklace or a t-shirt, is a way for us to reclaim what fear and hatred tries to steal from us: the unequivocal right to exist, survive and thrive, and remain tightly woven into America's social fabric. Another way is to support Jewish causes. Give *tzedakah*, donate time, money and resources. Thirdly, build your Jewish home – in both the smallest and broadest sense of the word. Reflect on how you can make your home life a little more Jewish and a little more joyful. Invite friends and neighbors for Shabbat dinner. Take up some Jewish learning or hobby (I am seeking to start a new cycle of our Introduction to Judaism program – come learn with us!) Check out some of the religious or cultural programming at the synagogue. Eat Jewish foods. And last but not least: build community across the boundaries. Invite non-Jewish friends and neighbors into conversations about what being Jewish means. Work to impact our local community for good. Communicate our great humanitarian Jewish values to a broader audience. Volunteer in the community to repair the

world in the small, local steps that are often most effective.

Before Hanukkah started, a delegation from Agudas Achim attended the Union for Reform Judaism Biennial. There, we got to enjoy a gathering of 5000-6000 liberal Jews; learn at thought-provoking sessions and lectures and worship in a Shabbat service of thousands. It was our place to 'refuel', before shining our light. In lockstep with the successful series on Black-Jewish relations that Professor Darryl Heller taught at the synagogue, we heard speakers address the cause of racial justice and invite us to examine our own biases, including in our community life. We were given tools to build community life in our synagogues across the generations. We were spiritually invigorated through amazing music and warm-hearted connections. This is the treasure-trove of our tradition. These are the things we can bring back to Agudas Achim; the little sparks of light that can grow into a flame.

As we go into the secular New Year, it is important to remind ourselves that we can always begin anew with this sacred work. We can find meaning in being a Jew; even and especially in challenging times. We can feel supported, loved and embraced by our non-Jewish neighbors, friends, family members and spouses. We can remind ourselves that our destinies are all interlinked – that shining and sharing our light is the one way forward in deepest alignment with who we are. We will burn our light brightly against the darkening sky. I am proud, resilient and both a little defiant and very determined to walk this path alongside you. I am here with you; never more certain in my calling to be a rabbi and your rabbi. May we continue to bless each other, support each other and encourage each other throughout the year 2020.

# HANUKKAH PARTY PHOTOS

*Courtesy of Dave Middleton, Janice Weiner, and Beverly Boyers*

[Click here](#) for The Gazette's gallery of photos from our Hanukkah Party.



## SHABBAT SERVICE SCHEDULE

Torah Portion	Date	Service Time	Service
<b>Vayigash</b> <i>(Genesis 44:18–47:27)</i>	Friday, January 3	7:30 p.m.	Sim Shalom (Conservative)
	Saturday, January 4	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
<b>Vayechi</b> <i>(Genesis 47:28–50:26)</i>	Friday, January 10	7:30 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
	Saturday, January 11	9:30 a.m.	Sim Shalom
<b>Shemot</b> <i>(Exodus 1:1–6:1)</i>	Friday, January 17	7:30 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
	Saturday, January 18	9:30 a.m.	Sim Shalom
<b>Vaera</b> <i>(Exodus 6:2–9:35)</i>	Friday, January 24	7:30 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
	Saturday, January 25	9:30 a.m.	Sim Shalom
<b>Bo</b> <i>(Exodus 10:1–13:16)</i>	Friday, January 31	7:30 p.m.	Sim Shalom
	Saturday, February 1	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah

## GIFT SHOP NEWS

*Joanne Margolin*

**GELT IS HALF-PRICE! 75 cents for 2 bags; \$9.00 for a box**

### WARM UP AMERICA

*Connie Berman*

Warm Up America will meet on Sundays January 19 and 26. We have recently received some really beautiful collections of blocks and it will be a joy to begin laying them out in patterns. All have been laundered and many have their tails all tucked.

Thanks to our great contributors. We continue apace; Happy Channukah, Solstice, and New Year, etc.

Hugs all,  
Connie and Fred George



### BEREAVEMENT GROUP

The Bereavement Support Group will meet on January 15 at 12:30.

If you have lost a loved one and would be helped by the support of others sharing their stories, please consider attending.

### ONEG HOSTING

Members are encouraged to host weekly Onegs to celebrate an event or honor a friend or family member, or just because. To reserve your date, contact the office or look for the sign-up clipboard in the kitchenette area.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Sue Weinberg*

December has been a busy month but in a good way. I attended my first (and hopefully not my last) Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) Biennial in Chicago. Agudas Achim had a strong showing with six adults and four kids in attendance.

My personal connection with Judaism is generally more secular than religious, but it was inspiring to attend Shabbat services with over 5000 fellow Jews. A lot of the melodies were familiar, but there were also new ones to enjoy.

I attended several interesting seminars, including sessions on Relational Engagement, Building a Leadership Pipeline, Leading Under Pressure, 8 Principles of Strong Congregations, and What to Stop (strategies to set realistic priorities).

I also met some old friends from the Scheidt Seminar, a presidential training seminar which I attended in April, it was great catching up with them and sharing stories about our presidencies. We also once again have proof of what a small world it is in the Jewish community. As this was my first

Biennial, I requested and was assigned a Biennial Coach from the URJ board. We communicated prior to Biennial, and he suggested that our congregations meet for dinner at Biennial. When we arrived at the restaurant, it turns out that he and Janice Weiner knew each other from college, and his wife (who unfortunately did not attend Biennial) had been one of Janice's roommates in college. They had not seen each other in 40 years!



Upon our return, I had the honor of attending Janice's swearing-in as an Iowa City City Councilperson. She gave a fabulous speech that drew on her experiences at Biennial. Mazel Tov Janice!

The month concluded with our Christmas and Hanukkah traditions. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day volunteers staffed the reception desk at Mercy Hospital to allow their volunteers to spend the holiday with their families. This is a great tradition, thanks to Jody Braverman and the Tikun Olam committee for arranging it.

On Christmas Eve the synagogue hosted our annual dinner and a movie evening, all who attended enjoyed a nice variety of Chinese and Asian food and the movie "Keeping Up With the Steins".

The month ended with a fabulous Hanukkah party on the last night of Hanukkah. The full menorahs were beautiful, the rabbi led us in singing some Hanukkah songs, and of course there was plenty of food. Our thanks to Oasis for catering the meal,

and special thanks to Doug and Beverly Jones, Latke Makers Extraordinaire, with much assistance from Janelle, Eric, Eli, and Logan Jaskolka, Wendy Levy, Janice Weiner (and Alaska!), and Beverly Boyers, as well as Kineret Zabner for advice.

I hope you all had a happy Hanukkah, and look forward to a happy, healthy, and productive (secular) New Year.

L'shalom,  
Sue

## FROM THE STACKS

Frank Salomon

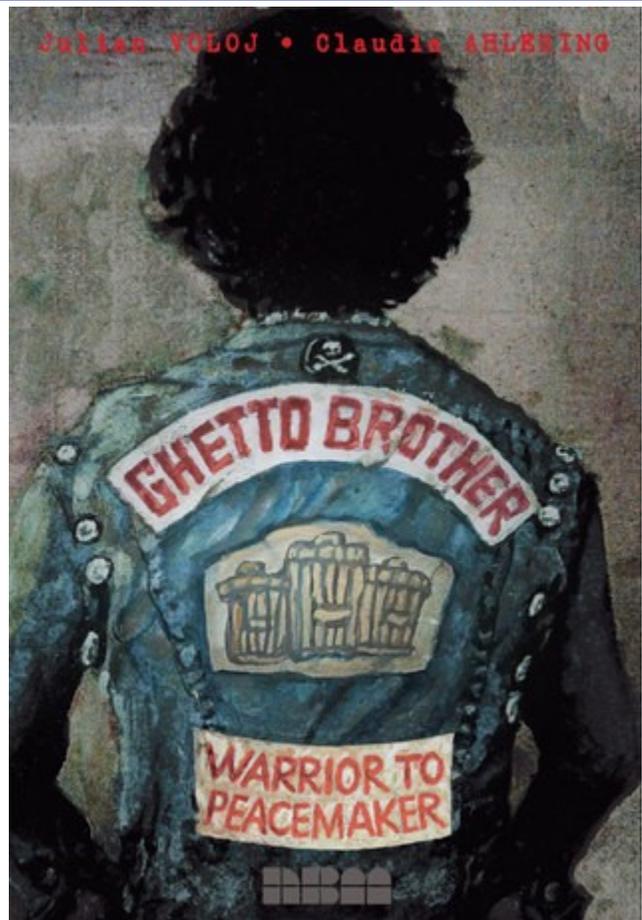
### **GHETTO BROTHER: WARRIOR TO PEACEMAKER,**

by Julian Voloj and Claudia Ahlering

Here's the South Bronx of the early 1970's: building fires smolder, heroin traffic festers, gangs rope adolescent boys into an ethos of hair-trigger violence. The protagonist of this graphic novel is Benjy Meléndez, growing up Latino, the son of a Puerto Rican couple who run a bodega on some of the meanest streets. Benjy's peers called him "Yellow Benjy" because he has a Chinese girlfriend. And Benjy himself feels unsure about who he is as a Latino, because his parents have what seem to him such strange religious customs. As he tries to become manly, kids around him coalesce into the Ghetto Brothers, a 2,000-member gang (so they remember) glowering and always ready to shed blood in their skirmishes with Black gangs. To Benjy, Ghetto Brother colors mean everything: courage, fame, loyalty. Then an obscure territorial scuffle leads to the murder of another Benjamin, known as "Black Benjie." Nobody is safe after that.

But among Yellow Benjy's and Black Benjie's people, an outsider named Joseph Matumaini urges a higher political cause. (These are the years of the Black Panthers as well as Hell's Angels, both groups charismatic to the Bronx kids.) Benjy Meléndez's destiny hinges on a tense meeting, where the Ghetto Brothers, Black Spades, Mongols and Immortals scowl at each other across the basketball court of a heavily guarded community center. Their shaky truce evolves into what the authors remember as a Latin-Black cultural renaissance – that is, the hip-hop era. This short-lived time of hope frames young Benjy's floundering efforts to become a better, bigger, calmer man.

So how is this a Jewish story? In two ways. One is a Bronx legacy. Before the neighborhood "changed," it had been a Jewish space, and even amid the urban collapse of the 1970's a few crusty old Ashkenazim were hanging onto their turf and their shul. (It's the one Jack Kugelmass documented in his book and film *Miracle on Intervale Avenue* in



1979.) They were interesting to Benjy, and as he gradually made contact with them, something good came of it.

And the other way is that as all this is happening, other Jewish Bronxites were keeping the testimony. It's through them we know Benjy's story. This book is a keepsake of their stubborn faith as teachers, social workers, and documentarians staying in place in one of America's harshest places. Remembering what the word ghetto meant to us, Rita Fecher, teacher, and the photographer Henry Chalfant later helped bring the borough's rough-edged creativity into wide recognition. And that makes *Ghetto Brothers* into an affecting memento of what cultures can do for each other.

Find *Ghetto Brother: Warrior to Peacemaker* on the Featured this Month shelf in the Braverman Library during January. After that it will be in the Becker Learning Center at 974.7/Vol.

## TIKUN OLAM NEWS

### **All-month: Donate or Pledge! Eastern Iowa Community Bond Project**

In our very community, families have been and still can be separated by immigration court proceedings. When someone is detained by ICE, the bond for them to be released from custody can be \$1,500 to \$7,000 - \$5,000 is very typical. The result is that many immigrant families who cannot afford that bond are separated from each other - parents are kept in jail - are unable to see their children, and can lose their income and job. This all happens even before the court has determined these families' right to stay.

Enter the [Eastern Iowa Community Bond Project](#), which supports immigrant families navigating these court proceedings. They put up the payment for these bonds to reunite families while they await the

determinations to be made in their immigration proceedings. The committee urges you to contribute to this worthy cause.

### **1-13 to 1-15: Cookies Needed for "Vote Truth to Power!" Johnson County Interfaith Coalition**

Regardless of political party or persuasion, it is important to go vote! On Thursday, January 16th, at the [Kingdom Center \(611 Southgate Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52240\)](#), there will be a voter registration drive organized by the [Johnson County Interfaith Coalition](#). They are asking for two volunteers to provide 2-to-3 dozen cookies for the event. They can be delivered between January 13 and 15 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. to the Congregational United Church of Christ ([30 North Clinton Street, Iowa City, IA 52245](#)).

## JANUARY YAHRZEITS

Kenneth Allweiss  
Mildred Bar  
Phyllis Bills  
Kent Braverman  
Betty Brodsky  
William Chazanoff  
Charles Henry Clements  
Jacob Haravon Collins  
Anna Lea Dvoretzky  
Lillian Edwards  
Anna Federbusch  
Ruth Ginsberg  
Sari Goldstein  
Lewis Goodsell  
Irving Gussin  
George Elisha Hall  
Leah Halle

Doris Hoffman  
Pauline A. Kerber  
Louis Landweber  
Sam Levey  
Max Levy  
Pinchas Levy  
Ruth Levy  
Betty Mangers  
Meyer Markovitz  
Zisi Leib Mazur  
David Moyer  
Mary S. Naylor  
Waverly C. Ormond  
Hannah Pauline Scheer Berg  
Rebecca Markovitz Posner  
Ann Rodnitzky  
Nathan Rodnitzky

Belle Rosenbaum  
Gertrude M. Rosenbaum  
Judy Rosenstein  
Mel Schneider  
Toby Schuman  
David Silversteen  
Irene Simon  
William Simon  
Edie Singer  
Sim Strauss  
Isadore Tepper  
Larry Tepper  
Janet Whitebook  
Rose Widiss  
Nathan David Zabner  
Morris L. Ziskind

## MERCY HOSPITAL VOLUNTEERS

The *tikkun olam* committee wishes to thank all the volunteers who staffed the Mercy Hospital desk this past Christmas Eve and Day! We also wish to thank Jody Braverman, who organized the entire effort. Jody writes, "Thank you to everyone involved in the Tikkun Olam project at Mercy. May we continue to "repair the world" through our acts and contributions." Hear, hear!



### Agudas Achim Congregation Tikkun Olam Committee Volunteers at Mercy Hospital December 24 & 25, 2019



#### Thank You to All Our Volunteers:

Participants: Miriam Gilbert, Lorraine Dorfman,  
Martha & David Lubaroff, Liz Goodman, Ellen Lewin,  
Jeanne Cadoret, Carrie Norton, Mel & Diane Sunshine,  
Janice Weiner, Mark Greiner  
Alternates: Landon Elkind, Susan Enzle  
Organizer: Jody Braverman



Jeanne & Carrie



Mark & Janice



Miriam & Lorraine



Martha & David



Liz & Ellen



Diane & Mel

### SISTERHOOD NEWS

*Beverly Jones*

#### Happy New Year!

The Sisterhood Board of Directors wishes everyone a very happy, healthy, and safe New Year. May the year 2020, and the entire new decade, bring us peace, joy, and happiness.

### SYNAGOGUE DIRECTORIES

We'll be sending out drafts of our members' directory listings the week of January 6.

Please look them over and let us know as soon as possible if you'd like us to edit, add, or remove any information from your listing.

### INTERVIEW WITH RABBI HUGENHOLTZ

KWWL recently interviewed Rabbi Hugenoltz about the recent increase in antisemitic incidents.

[Click here for the interview.](#)

## DONATIONS

### RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

**Robert & Vida Brenner:** In memory of  
M. David Allweiss and William Brenner

**Jeanne Cadoret**

**Richard Levine:** In memory of Bernice Levine

**Alan Mutnick:** In memory of Benjamin Ross Mutnick

**Jonathan & Pamela Sabin:** In memory of  
Michael Allen Sabin

**David Skorton & Robin Davisson:** In memory of  
Pauline Skorton

**Jeffrey Whitebook:** In memory of Janet Whitebook

### BUILDING FUND

**Richard & Goldene Haendel:** In memory of  
Victoria Haendel

### CEMETERY FUND

**Richard & Phyllis Braverman:** In memory of  
Rosalie Braverman

**Michael & Joanne Margolin**

**Paul Robin:** In memory of Herman Robin

### FINE ARTS FUND

**Helen Goldstein:** In memory of  
Jonathan A. Goldstein

### GENERAL FUND

**Jody & Janie Braverman:** In memory of Jean Breggin  
and Rosalie Braverman

**Jeanne Cadoret**

**Kathleen Jacobs**

**Tyler Katz**

**Steven & Barcey Levy:** In memory of Ruth Levy

**Harriet & Stephen Swartz**

**Jeff & Janet Weingarten**

### HIGH HOLIDAY/CANTOR FUND

**Jeanne Cadoret**

### LAUREN REECE FLAUM TERRACE FUND

**Jose & Susan Assouline:** In memory of Simon  
Assouline, Barbara Goodsell, Lewis Goodsell

### LIBRARY FUND

**Jeanne Cadoret:** In honor of Ellen Caplan

**Linda Kerber:** In memory of Pauline Kerber

### RABBI PORTMAN PROGRAM FUND

**Jeanne Cadoret**

**Caplan Family Foundation**

**Richard Levine:** In memory of Bernice Levine

### SIM & SARAH STRAUSS MEMORIAL FUND

**David & Penny Strauss**

**Stephen & Susan Strauss:** In memory of  
Belle Strauss & Marjorie Osdoba

### SISTERHOOD MITZVAH & MEMORIAL FUND

**Miriam Canter:** In memory of  
Gertrude M. Rosenbaum

### SYNAGOGUE ASSISTANCE FUND

**Jeanne Cadoret**

### TIKUN OLAM FUND

**Jeanne Cadoret**

**Lea Haravon Collins & Steve Collins:** In memory of  
Aristide Haravon

**Kathleen Jacobs:** for JCIC membership

**Kathy Ormond:** In memory of Waverly C. Ormond

**Paul & Esther Retish**

### TORAH ENHANCEMENT FUND

**Caplan Family Foundation**

## JANUARY 2020

Wed	1	<b>Office Closed - Happy New Year!</b>		Sat	18	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
Fri	3	Shabbat Evening Services	7:30 PM	Sun	19	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
Sat	4	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM			Warm-Up America	10:00 AM
Sun	5	MahJong Group	2:30 PM			MahJong Group	2:30 PM
Mon	6	Sisterhood Board Meeting	7:00 PM	Wed	22	Free Lunch	11:30 AM
Wed	8	Sisterhood Book Group	1:00 PM			Education Committee	6:00 PM
Thurs	9	Executive Committee Meeting	5:30 PM	Fri	24	Shabbat Evening Services	7:30 PM
Fri	10	Shabbat Evening Services	7:30 PM	Sat	25	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
Sat	11	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM	Sun	26	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
Sun	12	Sisterhood Book Group	1:00 PM			Sunday School	10:00 AM
		MahJong Group	2:30 PM			Warm-Up America	10:00 AM
Mon	13	Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM			MahJong Group	2:30 PM
Tues	14	Membership Committee	7:00 PM	Mon	27	Hebrew School	4:15 PM
Wed	15	Ritual Committee	7:30 PM			Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM
Thurs	16	Board Meeting	7:00 PM	Wed	29	Hebrew School	4:15 PM
Fri	17	Shabbat Evening Services	7:30 PM	Fri	31	Shabbat Evening Services	7:30 PM

### HEBREW AND SUNDAY SCHOOL

**Sunday School** resumes on January 26.

**Hebrew School** resumes on January 27.

### HANUKKAH STORYTIME AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY



**“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<br>___ Building Fund<br>___ Cemetery Fund<br>___ Fine Arts Fund<br>___ General Fund<br>___ Garden & Landscaping Fund<br>___ High Holiday/Cantor Fund<br>___ Lauren Reece Flaum Terrace Fund<br>___ Library Fund<br>___ Louis Ginsberg Youth Fund<br>___ Marcus Scholarship Fund | ___ The Rabbi Portman Program Fund<br>___ Prayer Book Fund<br>___ Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund<br>___ School Fund<br>___ Sim & Sara Strauss Memorial Fund<br>___ Sisterhood Mitzvah & Memorial Fund<br>___ Synagogue Assistance Fund<br>___ Tikun Olam Fund<br>___ Torah Enhancement Fund<br>___ Kadima Fund |
|--|--|

**Contribution in memory of** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contribution in honor of** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>STAFF</b>			
Rabbi	Esther Hugenholtz	Office Secretary	John Wertz
Administrator	Karen Brady	Custodian	Amos Kiche
Principal	Sonja Spear		
<b>BOARD OF TRUSTEES</b>			
President	Sue Weinberg	Adult Education	<i>Vacant</i>
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Past President	Kathy Jacobs	Tikun Olam	Landon Elkind
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Board Secretary	Janelle Jaskolka	Youth	Shellie Smith
Membership	Jane Zukin	At Large 1	Elliott Abrons
Ritual	Peter Rubenstein; Alan Weinstein	At Large 2	Curtis Braverman
Religious School	Chuck Friedman	At Large 3	Mark Ginsberg