



Agudas Achim Congregation

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January 2021 / Tevet–Shevat 5781

FROM THE RABBI

Esther Hugenholtz

It might sound strange to admit but my family and I just had a lovely Hanukkah. Knowing that things would be very different this year, we decided to make the best of it and we were fortunate enough to be able to do so. Spending quality time together is one unexpected gift of the pandemic that I will treasure for years to come. I attempted to make my first gingerbread house (well, Temple, actually, with a little gingerbread Maccabee and another little gingerbread High Priest), we drank lots of hot cocoa, played games and ate fried foods of dubious healthful status.

Lighting the hanukkiyah felt particularly meaningful this year, as we were leaning into the message of banishing the darkness through our light. During my 'staycation', I binge-(re)watched the Lord of the Rings trilogy by Peter Jackson and must say that its message rang truer with me than ever before. Are we not all on a strange hero's journey, of both great solitude and real significance? For those of you who may be less familiar with Tolkien's epic, it centers around the quest to destroy an evil ring (consider it an embodiment of the 'yetzer hara', the inclination towards evil, if you will) in the fires it was forged. While a great alliance of men, elves and dwarves seek deliverance on the battlefields, it is Frodo, the solitary traveler, and his trusted companion Sam, who push on to cast the ring into Mt. Doom.

For all the heroics of the story, perhaps the truest hero is the unassuming and loyal Sam. Without

complaint and with a grave sense of duty, he carries the ring-bearer Frodo (quite literally at one point) and is the unspoken savior of the story. Without Sam, Tolkien's mythical 'Middle Earth' could not have been saved from the clutches of darkness. Each of us is called to be, to the best of our abilities, a 'Sam'.

The hero's archetype is nothing new in our tradition. Like Tolkien, our Hebrew Bible complicates and nuances the hero's archetype. Heroes in our Jewish tradition aren't just brawny, bold and brave. They are complex, thoughtful and often unexpected. They start off with personality flaws or troubled pasts. They have humble or lowly origins. Rahab was a prostitute, yet it is through her that the Israelites could enter the Holy Land. Ruth was a poor widow of a despised nation, yet would be the predecessor of King David, Moses was a baby floated down the Nile. Jacob was a trickster and Joseph was arrogant but both would enjoy a growth curve that allowed them to become their truly heroic selves and perpetuate the legacy of the Jewish people. What binds heroes in our Bible together is the idea that we do not merely do things for the betterment of our selves but for the elevation of others. In this sense, Tolkien's Sam fits our Biblical paradigm very well.

We will all be glad to see the back of 2020. This past year has shown the darkness of the human

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FROM THE RABBI

Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)

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condition but also the light that grows in our souls. We have seen the heroic in the mundane. Through our healthcare workers, essential workers and those leaders who were able to articulate and implement a vision of hope and competence amidst the despair. (I am also thinking of the parallels with the Biblical Joseph here, saving an entire nation from famine through competent planning and distribution). On a smaller scale, we have seen acts of service and kindness in our community too: a successful haul for our local Food Pantry, support for each other through the Caring Committee and all of you who show up digitally at events demonstrating that even a virtual community can still be a strong, hopeful community. While this year has been so hard for so many of us, Judaism, our Torah and our community have provided us with sanctuaries along the way.

'Gam ki elech be'gei talmavet, lo ira ra ki atah imadi' – 'though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness, I fear no harm for You are with me'. I've sat a lot with this line from the 23rd Psalm lately and derived courage from it. The usual translation is that the 'atah' – the 'you' – refers to God, and that is an authentic reading. But what if we create a

subversively humanist reading for our times and translate the 'atah' as 'you' with a little y; not as the Divine but as every human connection we have, every human face we see, even if that face is half-covered by a mask? Like Sam marching to Mt. Doom, like Joseph in Pharaoh's prison, we are walking down paths of darkness but we are not alone because we have each other. It is each other who we serve.

The crisis is by no means abated and our small community will be tested for some time to come. We will have to pick up the pieces of a fragmented and traumatized society even as we re-group to find a new normal. But we have glimmers of hope and reason to believe that we will be okay. If anything, we have learned this year that we have each other. I cannot imagine a greater gift.

Let's keep on giving that love, support, service and sense of community to each other, as our President Sue Weinberg so wisely charges us. Together, we got this.

Here is to a happy, and – *please God!* – healthy 2021.

BEREAVEMENT GROUP

The bereavement group will meet on Wednesday, January 20 at 12:30 p.m. via Zoom.
For more information, [contact Martha Lubaroff](#).

WEDNESDAY BOOK GROUP

The Wednesday book group will meet on Wednesday, January 27 at 1:00 p.m.

DONATIONS

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Jeanne Cadoret

Miriam Gelfand and family: In memory of

Lawrence Gelfand

Rody Gessner & Michelle Edwards: In memory of

Lillian Edwards

Linda Kerber: In memory of Dick Kerber and

Rivalie Sideman Cohn

Sam & Marj Kuperman: In memory of Arthur Estin

Steven & Barcey Levy: In memory of Ruth Levy

Alan Mutnick and Rachel Albrecht: In memory of

Benjamin Ross Mutnick

Charles & Nicole Pruchno: In memory of

Gladys Pruchno

Bob & Donna Rodnitzky: In memory of

Ann Rodnitzky

Jonathan & Pamela Sabin: In memory of

Michael Allen Sabin

Leonard Sandler & Lucy David: In memory of

William M. David, Jr.

Joel Shilyansky & Sonia Sugg: In memory of

Esther Sugg

David Skorton & Robin Davisson: In memory of

Pauline Skorton

2ND CENTURY FUND

Linda Kerber

CEMETERY FUND

Elliot & Jeanne Abrons

Richard & Goldene Haendel: In memory of

Aaron Braverman

Sam & Marj Kuperman: In memory of

Boris Kuperman

Michael & Joanne Margolin: In memory of

Lillian Margolin

Becky Sale: In memory of Brenna & Arnold Davidson

COMMUNITY RELIEF FUND

Jeanne Cadoret

Helen Goldstein: In memory of

Jonathan A. Goldstein

David & Martha Lubaroff: In memory of

Mary Lubaroff

FAMILY ASSISTANCE FUND

Jeanne Cadoret

GENERAL FUND

Naomi Bloom & Ellen Marie Lauricella

Robert & Vida Brenner: In memory of

M. David Allweiss, Pat McEwen and

William Brenner

Jeanne Cadoret

Aaron Caplan & Leah Lee: In honor of

David & Joni Caplan

Caplan Family Foundation

Michael Flaum & Elizabeth Willis: In memory of

Alda Haravon and Chester Flaum

Mark Graber & Hetty Hall: In memory of

George Elisha Hall

Gary Gussin & Susan Brown

Dan & Joan Hackbarth: In honor of the

Whitebook family, in Terry Whitebook's name

Kathleen Jacobs

Edward Krachmer: In memory of Marilyn Krachmer

Lois Rosenthal: In memory of Craig Zwerling

Mark & Jayne Sandler: In memory of Arthur Estin

Harriet & Stephen Swartz

Jeff & Janet Weingarten

HIGH HOLIDAY/CANTOR FUND

Jeanne Cadoret: In memory of Remi J. Cadoret

Edward Krachmer: In memory of Marilyn Krachmer

LIBRARY FUND

Elliot & Jeanne Abrons

RABBI PORTMAN PROGRAM FUND

Jeanne Cadoret

Miriam Gelfand and family: In memory of

Lawrence Gelfand

PRAYERBOOK FUND

Jeanne Cadoret

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DONATIONS (cont.)

SAFETY FUND

David & Joni Caplan
Kathleen Jacobs
Linda Kerber
Susan Lutgendorf
Gary & Mindy Russell
Ellen Widiss

SCHOOL FUND

Elliot & Jeanne Abrons

SIM & SARAH STRAUSS MEMORIAL FUND

Richard Strauss & Ellen Herman: In memory of
Rebecca Posner, Meyer Markovitz, Isaac Strauss,
Sim Strauss and Belle Strauss

TIKUN OLAM FUND

Elliot & Jeanne Abrons: for Warm Up America
Jeanne Cadoret
Kathy Ormond: In memory of Waverly C. Ormond

JANUARY YAHREZEITS

Phyllis Bills	Joseph Greenberg	Rebecca Markovitz Posner
David Blum	Irving Gussin	James Robin
Kent Braverman	Charles Hecht	Nathan Rodnitzky
James Terrell Bryant	Doris Hoffman	Belle Rosenbaum
William Chazanoff	Sylvia Kaufman	Dennis Saletta
Charles Henry Clements	Simone Kay	Susan Schechter
Mary Jessie Clements	Pauline A. Kerber	Joyce Schiller
Jacob Haravon Collins	Shmarya Kleinman	LaVerne Siebuhr
Belle Coster	Boris Kuperman	David Silversteen
Anna Lea Dvoretzky	Louis Landweber	Edie Singer
Lillian Edwards	Harry Levin	Betty Snider
Anna Federbusch	Ruth Levy	Benjamin Sprince
Marlene Garfin	Betty Mangers	Isaac Strauss
Webster Gelman	Meyer Markovitz	Isadore Tepper
Ruth Ginsberg	Edna Irene McGinnis	Larry Tepper
Merrel Goldberg	David Moyer	Rose Widiss
Rose Goldman	Mary S. Naylor	Celia Wolf
Sari Goldstein	Hannah Pauline Scheer Berg	Morris L. Ziskind

SAVE THE DATE

MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY, Monday, January 18, 7:00 p.m.

Please hold the date for a special livestream screening.

Details to be announced in the weekly email. m

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Sue Weinberg

Happy New Year! 2020 is finally hindsight, and I hope that 2021 is a better year for everyone in every way. We are off to a good start, vaccine is currently being distributed and several members of our congregation who are front-line workers have already received their first dose. But now is not the time to relax, please keep up your precautions until the experts have determined that it is safe to congregate, which will likely not be until after a substantial portion of the population has been vaccinated.

I would like to propose a theme for this coming year – service. The congregation needs your help in various ways. In addition to financial support, we need volunteers – many committees are very small, which limits what they can do. If you have any interest in volunteering for one of our many committees, please contact the committee chair or the office.

Another way to contribute is to attend synagogue events. Quarantine and isolation is hard on all of us, and while zoom is not a replacement for face to face contact, it does help keep us connected. Plus we enjoy seeing your faces and checking in with

you! One advantage of Zoom is that people can participate from all over the world. We have enjoyed seeing congregants who have moved away (I'm talking to you Jon and Susan Simon!) and meeting and seeing relatives of congregants (hi to my sister Ellen!). In addition to our weekly services, which include time for a schmooze prior to Friday evening services, we offer and host a wide variety of educational and social events on zoom. There are fascinating Adult Ed talks on a wide variety of topics, Talmud study, book group, Warm Up America, and Rabbi Hugenholtz's Intro to Judaism, Tea Time Check-ins and Thursday night Maariv services. We hope to see you at some of these events. And although I do not know when, eventually we WILL be able to return to our beautiful synagogue building for in-person events, while hopefully continuing our new tradition of offering on-line participation so those unable to attend in person can still participate.

Wishing you all a very happy and HEALTHY New Year!

L'shalom,
Sue

HEBREW CLASSES THROUGH TIFERETH ISRAEL

Congregation Tifereth Israel in Des Moines is offering two Hebrew classes on Wednesday evenings. Beginners' Hebrew will be from 7:15-8:15 p.m. and is taught by Russell Braman. This begins with the Alef Bet, and by the end of the course, students should know all their letters and vowels.

Intermediate Hebrew will be from 6:15-7:15 p.m. taught by Rabbi Emily Barton. This class is for people who can already recognize a majority of their letters and vowels and have some basic decoding behind them. We will start with a review using Aleph Isn't Tough and then move further into reading more prayers and even maybe some Torah.

Both classes will be on Zoom, even if in some miracle we end up back in person at some point. The classes will run from **January 6 to April 7**.

Students must register by emailing the office at office@tifereth.org, and will then receive book information and a zoom link. There is no fee to take the class and it is open to everyone, though people must purchase their own books.

CLICK THE IMAGE BELOW TO VIEW HILLEL'S ANNUAL REPORT



SHABBAT AND FESTIVAL SERVICE SCHEDULE (ALL SERVICES VIA ZOOM)

Streaming links for Shabbat services on Zoom: [Friday Night \(7:30 p.m.\)](#);
[Saturday Morning \(9:30 a.m.\)](#) Evening services have a schmooze prior to the service at 6:30 p.m.

Vayechi (Genesis 47:28-50:26)	Friday, January 1	7:00 p.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative)
	Saturday, January 2	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
Shemot (Exodus 1:1-6:1)	Friday, January 8	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
	Saturday, January 9	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative)
Vaera (Exodus 6:2-9:35)	Friday, January 15	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
	Saturday, January 16	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative)
Bo (Exodus 10:1-13:16)	Friday, January 22	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
	Saturday, January 23	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative)
Beshalach (Exodus 13:17-17:16)	Friday, January 29	7:00 p.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative)
	Saturday, January 30	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform)



Agudas Achim Congregation

Fund/Food Drive – NOW
In Support of Table to Table

Information Provided By:
Tikkun Olam Committee



MAIL CHECK to Agudas Achim
or

Contact Jody Braverman for Item Pick Up
319/631-0416 jtbraverman@yahoo.com

Checks Made Payable
to Agudas Achim or
Table to Table

CASH/Check Preferred

Always Accepting Food, Toiletries, & Diapers

Tikkun Olam committee is sponsoring a Fund/Food drive in support of Table to Table food rescue. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to stress families and individuals throughout the country, there is an on-going need to provide food in the local area. Help support Table to Table in this effort.

From Table to Table's website:

"Our mission is to keep wholesome food from going to waste by collecting from donors and distributing to agencies that serve the hungry, homeless and at-risk."

Contact Jody Braverman for more information at 319/631-0416 or jtbraverman@yahoo.com

WARM UP AMERICA

Warm Up America will meet by zoom at 11:00 a.m. on Sundays, January 10 and January 24.
Warm Up America is now part of Tikun Olam!



sorting knit, crochet, and crohooked 9x7 rectangles



mascot Fred George inspects an afghan lay-out



completed afghan, with tag stating it is from WUA
at Agudas Achim



afghans delivered to a shelter

YIDDISH STUDY GROUP

The Yiddish Study Group meets Mondays and Fridays at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom.
It will not meet on New Year's Day. Contact the office for more information.

UPCOMING ADULT EDUCATION EVENTS

The Making of a Liturgist Alden Solovy January 17, 10:00 a.m. via Zoom



In an intimate session, Liturgist Alden Solovy talks about what it means to write modern day Jewish liturgy and his journey to this off-the-beaten-path vocation. He'll talk about how the traumatic death of his wife led him onto new paths: creating liturgy pulsing with joy and sorrow, as well as moving to Israel alone in middle age. Alden will talk about his writing process and the source of his inspiration. You'll cry, laugh and be uplifted.

Alden Solovy spreads joy and excitement for prayer. An American Israeli liturgist, poet, author and educator, Alden is the Liturgist-in-Residence for the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. His writing was transformed by multiple tragedies, marked in 2009 by the sudden death of his wife from catastrophic brain injury. His teaching spans from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem to synagogues throughout North America, as well as Leo Baeck College in London and Limmud Conferences in the U.S., Canada and the UK. He is the author of four books. Alden's work is anthologized in 15 volumes from Jewish, Christian and Catholic publishers. Alden also writes for Ritualwell, RavBlog and the *Times of Israel*. He's a three-time winner of the Peter Lisagor Award for Exemplary Journalism and the founder of ManKind Project Israel. Find his latest work [here](#).

Rabbi Nikki DeBlosi, PhD Good, Bad & Holy: Sex in the Jewish Tradition February 14 (Valentine's Day), 10:00 a.m. via Zoom

Is it Jewish to talk about sex? Did the ancient rabbis view sex as a positive influence, a negative

influence, or something else altogether? Does Judaism understand the topics contemporary Jewish folks grapple with in terms of sexual identity and expression? Do Jewish values clash with popular views on sexuality? How can Judaism shape, expand, or define our decisions about sex and intimacy? Join Rabbi Nikki DeBlosi, PhD, for a frank and open discussion of a collection of texts that will help us begin to explore the intersection between our own internalized notions of sexuality and the rich depth of Jewish traditional texts on this fundamental part of human life.

Named in 2015 by the Forward as one of America's Most Inspiring Rabbis, Rabbi Nikki is a freelance writer, speaker, teacher, and spiritual counselor. Ordained as a Reform Rabbi in 2013, she combines a high-level academic background with an approachable presence. Her interests include queer and feminist theory, sexuality and relationships, pastoral care, liturgy, and expanding lifecycle ritual. A convert herself, Rabbi Nikki helps folks find community and belonging. She's also a huge Buffy the Vampire Slayer fan.

Dr. Zvi Bellin Introduction to Jewish Mindfulness Practice February 28, 10:00 a.m. via Zoom

Join Dr. Zvi Bellin for an entry class in Jewish mindfulness. We will study a foundational Rabbinic text in Jewish mindfulness and discuss how it can be made relevant for our lives today. Building off of that text, we will try on several practices that can enrichen a Jewish life of presence, compassion, and connection. Beginners and advanced practitioners of any mindfulness system are encouraged to join.

Dr. Zvi Bellin is an Associate Professor of Holistic Counseling Psychology at John F. Kennedy University. Zvi's clinical skills integrate mindfulness, spirituality, and meaningful living for individuals, couples, and families. Through his work with Moishe House, Zvi has taught Jewish mindfulness worldwide, and has led extended Jewish mindfulness retreats since 2007.

JANUARY 2021

ALL SERVICES, MEETINGS, AND EVENTS WILL BE VIA ZOOM. EMAIL THE OFFICE IF YOU NEED DETAILS.

Fri	1	Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM	Wed	20	Bereavement Group	12:30 PM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM			Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM
Sat	2	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM			Education Committee	6:00 PM
Sun	3	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM			Ritual Committee	7:30 PM
Mon	4	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM	Thurs	21	Board Meeting	7:00 PM
Wed	6	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM			Soulful Virtual Ma'ariv	8:30 PM
Thurs	7	Soulful Virtual Ma'ariv	8:30 PM	Fri	22	Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM
Fri	8	Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM			Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM	Sat	23	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
Sat	9	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM	Sun	24	Sunday School	10:30 AM
Sun	10	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM		24	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM
Mon	11	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM	Mon	25	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM
		Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM			Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM
Wed	13	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM	Wed	27	Free Lunch	11:30 AM
Thurs	14	Executive Committee Meeting	5:30 PM			Book Group	1:00 PM
		Soulful Virtual Ma'ariv	8:30 PM			Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM
Fri	15	Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM			Adult Ed Committee	5:30 PM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM	Thurs	28	Soulful Virtual Ma'ariv	8:30 PM
Sat	16	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM	Fri	29	Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM
Sun	17	Adult Ed: Alden Solovy Talk	10:00 AM			Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
		Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM	Sat	30	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
Mon	18	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM	Sun	31	Sunday School	10:30 AM
		Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM			Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM

STAFF

Rabbi	Esther Hugenholtz	Office Secretary	John Wertz
Administrator	Karen Brady	Custodian	Amos Kiche
Principal	Sonja Spear		

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