



Agudas Achim Congregation

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www.AgudasAchimIC.org

August 2021 / Av–Elul 5781

Note: Keep an eye out for a High Holidays Bulletin in mid-to-late August.

FROM THE RABBI

Esther Hugenholtz

As I write this, I am listening to the cicadas and crickets through the open sliding door that leads to our freshly painted screen porch and a sense of wellbeing settles on me. The night is surprisingly cool and I'm relishing the breeze, reminiscing on the wonderful times my family had these last few weeks. The time to go on road trip adventures, to dine al fresco, to putter about the (new) house doing chores and repairs and just enjoy each other's company. July always represents a natural lull in the Jewish calendar and this year, we leaned into its restfulness with both greater intentionality and gratitude.

Now I'm back, going through hundreds of emails and surveying the task at hand: the High Holidays are coming! I am starting to make both mental and physical notes of my sermon topics and turn my attention to the logistics and liturgy that make the season unique, especially so this year. I know that for many of us, the High Holidays last year were taxing: emotionally, spiritually and practically. This year, we may find a different set of emotions: hope in coexistence with concern, joy deepened by solemnity. The High Holidays, of course, are like cupped hands ready to receive our feelings and thoughts; committed to

welcoming us to the experience just as we are. All we need to do is 'show up', be it physically or virtually.

Meanwhile, I am delighted to be able to welcome each other back to the synagogue for in-person, masked services in our beloved building. As for me, I look forward to seeing you there if you feel

comfortable attending. While there may not be a Kiddush or Oneg, I would be delighted to tell you all about our journeys across the Midwest.

If you would like to do some learning (one-on-one or in a group, in-person or on Zoom) in order to orient your heart towards the High Holidays or to

(re)familiarize yourself with some of its key concepts, ideas, prayers and texts, please do let me know. I would be delighted to make such arrangements to help you connect more deeply to the season.

For now, as we slowly, slowly transition to late summer and then into early fall, I wish you cool nights and sunlit days and all the time that we may be given to reflect and rejoice as we prepare for the New Year.

This year, we may find a different set of emotions: hope in coexistence with concern, joy deepened by solemnity.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Janice Weiner

I am writing this from the New Jersey shore – where Alaska and I are with an annual gathering of cousins that, of course, did not take place last year. The littles have grown, the teens have matured, and there are new babies and toddlers who were not yet born when we last gathered two years ago. During the days we are outside (at the beach) and in the evenings in someone's back yard. We are mindful of the pandemic – evening gatherings used to be inside – but it is a joy to watch the kids run on the beach, dig in the sand and laugh as they run into the waves. We have cousins who flew from Washington state, Oregon and Illinois, who drove from Massachusetts, NJ and NY - and of course, we drove from Iowa. Everyone is here from this branch of the family - save one couple with a brand-new baby. Everyone made the effort – it mattered this year.

I tell you this not because you have a particular interest in our family, but to illustrate that, despite the Delta variant, despite everything, people are re-gathering – and feel an urgency and need to do so. And we at Agudas Achim are as well. Just as my cousins and I are experiencing a mixture of hesitancy, joy, initial awkwardness, relief and normalcy – mixed with a dose of caution (everyone except the under-12's are vaccinated), I expect it to be so as our community re-gathers. Because re-gather we will, with a hybrid option for those who do not yet feel ready, whatever the reason.

I wish you all the capacity to make the most of this summer; to re-connect with those you can – with whatever mixture of caution, awkwardness, joy and relief that entails.

We'll be coming out with guidelines shortly, but one thing I can preview: we will be requiring masks indoors. At this point in the pandemic, it is in everyone's interest to be able to remain safe while re-gathering, and the board's consensus on this was unanimous even before the CDC's recent revised guidelines. We will protect the unvaccinated kids and those who are immuno-compromised while we re-connect, sing and appreciate what we have been missing for the past 16 months.

As I wrote last month, this is not linear. And yet thanks to science and medical professionals, so much more is possible now. I can't wait to see you

in person on Shabbat – and during the High Holy Days, which we are coordinating with Hillel, and which will take place at the Iowa Memorial Union, so there is enough space for all to gather safely (with a virtual option).

Until then, I wish you all the capacity to make the most of this summer; to re-connect with those you can – with whatever mixture of caution,

awkwardness, joy and relief that entails. And please know that as we at Agudas Achim will re-connect and re-gather, we will take into account people's concerns.

Hoping to see you very soon,

Janice

WEDNESDAY BOOK GROUP

The Book Group will meet via Zoom on Wednesday, August 25 at 1:00 p.m.
Please contact the office for more information.

TWO TALKS GIVEN EARLIER THIS MONTH

Peter Rubenstein

Tisha B'Av – A time for despair or a time for hope

I am going to begin this talk with what some might consider a bit of heresy: we should view Tisha B'Av as a time of hope as well as a time of sorrow. So how did I come to this assertion. The High Holy Days are rapidly approaching. They bracket a ten day period in which we are urged as individuals and as a community to address two issues. First, we are to examine those areas in which our actions have fallen short of what is expected of us as humans and as Jews. Then, we are charged to resolve to change our behavior for the better with respect to our relationship with God, with individuals whom we know and with the world in which we live. In Judaism, this practice is called T'Shuvah or turning.

Following through in our resolutions to meaningfully change our lives generally requires a great deal of effort both mentally and physically, and if we are to pursue the goals of our resolutions, the possibility of being successful needs to be present. Otherwise, it is like we were continually banging our heads into a wall. We all know, however, what is likely to happen to New Year's resolutions. They are earnestly made with good intentions and generally rapidly forgotten. Often this failure to follow through results from the conditions in which we find ourselves. The grind of daily life, the difficulties in securing food and housing for us and our families, constant battles with illness and the chaos that can ensue and the inability to communicate our feelings with those that are part of our lives puts us in survival mode, trying to simply get through the day. There simply is no time or energy left for self-reflection and meaningful atonement.

If we are to accomplish these two charges delineated above, we must first clear our minds of all that is holding us down. This idea of clearing the mind of what burdens us literally occurs every day in our brains. So much information enters our brains on a daily basis that it can literally clog our brains preventing them from functioning properly. We solve the problem when we sleep during which our

brains actually prune away the weak connections that have not been supported as representing meaningful connections. Interference with proper sleep interferes with our ability to analyze, to make judgements, and to act decisively. We are just overwhelmed by all of the detail and input our brains otherwise have to put up with. The same idea happens in our religion. On Shabbat, we call a halt to the input that burdens us. We use the rest to clear our heads, to look into ourselves and take stock, so we can go on with our lives more successfully in the week to come. On Yom Kippur in days of old, we read that the people gathered all the sins and problems that burdened them and transferred them to the goat who carried them into the wilderness, allowing us to get on with the process of atonement and refocusing our lives.

For us, today, as the New Year approaches, our Jewish tradition also provides a means of obtaining that freedom for our brains, at least in a spiritual way, so that we are better able to meaningfully look into ourselves and bring about the change we desire. It is an eight week period preceding Rosh HaShanah that begins with the observance of Tisha B'Av. I grew up in a Reform household and had little idea what Tisha B'Av was. I later learned that it is generally viewed as a day of sorrow in which major calamities in Jewish history occurred: the fall of the First and Second Temples, the signing of the Writ of Expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and the beginning of World War I which caused such devastation to Jewish communities in Europe. It is a fast day in which we remember these calamities and others that have befallen and continue to befall our People to this day. We abstain from daily pleasures and read the Book of Lamentations to help us recall these times of sorrow in our history.

So how can I possibly assert that one might also view this day as one with at least a glimmer of hope? Following Tisha B'Av are seven sabbaths of consolation in which the haftarahs that were chosen by the Rabbis were done so in order to give comfort

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TWO TALKS GIVEN EARLIER THIS MONTH

Peter Rubenstein (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

and solace to the people leading up to the High Holy Days so they would be mentally prepared for the exercise in reflection and T'Shuvah that would be required. This notion is explicitly reflected in the the following words from one of these haftorot: Comfort Ye, Comfort Ye my People, saith your God. I would argue, however, that this exercise designed by the Rabbis to better prepare us for the task ahead is insufficient. As drivers in Iowa in the winter, we have faced the prospect of being at the bottom of a hill on an ice-covered road with a desire to get to the top. We rev the engine, put the car in low gear step on the gas and stall about halfway up the hill after which we slide back to the bottom. We try a couple of more times with the same failed results and ensuing frustrations and, sometimes, a string of expletives. Success is sometimes achieved, however, if we back up part way on the hill from which we just descended and try again. The added momentum which we now gain gives us the push we need to reach the top. I would argue that Tisha B'Av provides us with this added momentum. It allows us to focus on all of the negativity of our past history and of our present lives and in essence and to then actively remove its burden from our minds and bodies. This freedom from psychological and spiritual oppression that we, now in charge, bring about can provide the momentum we need to put ourselves ultimately in a position to take stock of our lives and to put forth the effort needed to affect the changes that we identify are needed.

This idea of hope, associated with the observance of Tisha B'Av, is actually hinted at in the last lines of the Book of Lamentations which is embodied in the prayer that we know as Hashivenu. We recite this every service when we return the Torah to the Ark. First, we recite the prayer Etz Chaim He – It is a Tree of Life to them that hold dear to it – a means to the end we are trying to achieve. We then close with the Hashivenu – Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return. Renew our days as of old.

So let us not ignore Tisha B'Av. Let us observe it for sure to mark the sadness in our history that it represents. But let us use this observance as well to decrease the burden associated with that sadness to give us the momentum, coupled with the comfort and solace provided by the subsequent seven weeks to instill in us the hope that change is possible. And let us then build on that hope to meaningfully change our lives for the better in the year to come.

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Peace – God's Responsibility?

It has been said that "War is Hell" due to the destruction it brings and the chaos and debilitation that accompanies it during the conflict and long after the conflict ceases. Unfortunately, it seems like it is always with us and it comes in different shapes and sizes: between countries, between parts of countries, within our states and cities and within our families. It is no wonder, then, that achievement of peace is a major focus of our liturgy.

Two prayers, in particular, embody this search. One is at the end of the Friday night Amidah, and the other is an analogous prayer at the end of the Saturday morning Amidah. At first glance, the Friday night prayer would seem to be simply a shortened version of the Saturday prayer, in keeping with the introductory nature of the Erev Shabbat service. However, closer inspection, at least to me, reveals significant differences. The Friday prayer begins "Shalom rav al Yisrael amcha tassim l'olam," or, in English, "Grant abundant and lasting peace to Your people Israel and all who dwell on earth, for You are the sovereign master of all the ways of peace." This language seems to reflect the covenantal relationship between Jews and God with the responsibility of peace squarely on God's shoulders. The Saturday prayer, Sim shalom tovah u'vracha" begins in much the same way but then continues "Bless us, united as one with the light of your presence, for by that light, You have given us a

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TWO TALKS GIVEN EARLIER THIS MONTH

Peter Rubenstein (cont.)

(Continued from page 4)

guide to life, the love of kindness, generosity, blessing, compassion, life and peace.” In other words, God’s spirit within us provides us with a manual for how to conduct our own lives based on a LOVE of that set of qualities including peace. It is our responsibility as individuals, spurred on by that small piece of God within us, to bring about those qualities enunciated in the prayer.

Two of the key words in this prayer are light and love. The latter derives from the former and provides a blueprint for how we might work to bring about peace. Judaism teaches us to “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All of those qualities we wish for ourselves and work to attain are those we should wish for and work for others to achieve as well. Yet, too often, we work for our own benefit but neglect the opportunity to bring others along with us. The prophet Malachi summed this up with the saying “Why do we deal treacherously brother against brother?”

War generally seems to come about when a person or group of people feel they have no other recourse to solve a problem with which they are confronted. In our families lack of respect, the willingness to listen to one another, to care and support one another lead to strife that is often irreparable. In our communities, the lack of resources, safe and suitable housing, access to healthy food, a good education, and the perceived lack of ability to achieve what our neighbors have, even with hard work, can end in riots as a last means of people trying to make themselves heard. People confronted with changing demographics and dynamics within a country who feel that they are losing what makes them safe and gives them control of their lives will revolt against the change. On a larger scale, countries go to war because of a lack of land, food, water, and other resources deemed necessary for the countries to prosper.

To state the opposite, people that are happy, content, live in an environment that allows them to build and to be creative are very unlikely to risk its destruction with war. It is the love of those qualities listed in the Saturday prayer, kindness, generosity, blessing, compassion and life, that if we work to help others obtain, will lead to the establishment of peace. This course of action is embodied in the idea of Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, and appears repeatedly in our liturgy. The prayer in the Amidah beginning “Michalchayl chayim b’chesed...”, using God’s attributes as an example, lays out a series of actions we should pursue: support the falling, heal the sick, loosen the chains of the bound, and keep faith with those that sleep in the dust.” We can even, with our actions, participate in m’chayai maytim or giving life to the dead, because people who are continually struggling with no end in sight, who are ailing physically and mentally feeling as if the whole weight of the world is on their shoulders might be considered in a sense to be spiritually dead. Our actions to rectify the situation then, as stated above, can in essence, restore these individuals to life. The haftarah we read on Yom Kippur morning, from the Book of Isaiah, again lays out the course of action that God wants us to take in order to rectify the inequities befalling our neighbors.

So in the end, bringing about peace is not God’s responsibility, but ours and ours alone. To be sure, we believe that God within us inspires and guides us toward this end, but it is up to us to carry out the plan based on that light and the love it engenders. This whole discussion can be summed up beautifully in a line of a song written by Vince Gill in 1993 “Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.”

WARM UP AMERICA

Warm Up America [WUA] members knit and crochet 9"x7" rectangles which we assemble into afghans for shelters and other places where people might appreciate some added warmth.

In August we will meet under the Agudas Achim portico on the 8th and 22nd, and in September on the 12th and 26th, from 10:30a.m. to noon. We will be masked and distanced *per* policy on each date.

Do you enjoy knitting, crocheting, crohooking, or sewing with yarn? Do you want to learn how? We provide one-on-one tutorials for those who'd like to learn or to refresh their skills.

Please join us and help our afghans go from individual patches to patchwork afghans for individuals of all ages.

For further information, contact Therese Guedon, 319-339-4455 or thereseguedon@gmail.com.



BLAST FROM THE PAST

See if you can guess who these photos are! The names are on page 8.



DONATIONS

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Mace & Kay Braverman: In memory of
Bob Braverman

Irwin & Patricia Levin: In gratitude of support for
Aron's Covid-19 recovery

Nathan Eugene Savin & Susan Enzle: In memory of
Muriel Savin

Jeffrey Whitebook: In memory of Julie Whitebook

BRAVERMAN TALMUD TORAH FUND

Eloise McCuskey: In memory of David J. Pitzele

CEMETERY FUND

Ewa Bardach & Hani Elkadi: In memory of
Yelena Laneeva Bardach

Richard & Goldene Haendel: In memory of
Anitra Haendel

Sinaya Nadler: In memory of David Nadler

FAMILY ASSISTANCE FUND

Nancy Sprince: In memory of Dorothy Buddelof

GENERAL FUND

Jody & Janie Braverman

Kathleen Jacobs

HIGH HOLIDAY/CANTOR FUND

Mel & Diane Sunshine: In memory of Sam Brodsky

LAUREN REECE FLAUM TERRACE FUND

Michael Flaum & Elizabeth Willis: In memory of
Lauren Reece Flaum

LIBRARY FUND

Sam & Marj Kuperman: In memory of Burton Frank

Rhoda Vernon: In memory of Lillian Sterman

Marc & Nancy Zwerling: In memory of
Craig Zwerling

PORTMAN PROGRAM FUND

Richard Levine: In memory of Mortimer Levine

PRAYERBOOK FUND

Charlotte Dvoretzky: In memory of
Miriam Silversteen

SAFETY FUND

Nancy Sprince: In memory of Craig Zwerling

Sue Weinberg & Robert Armstrong: In memory of
Albert Habousha

SISTERHOOD MITZVAH AND MEMORIAL FUND

Jaime Kean: In memory of Pat Kean

TIKUN OLAM FUND

Sam & Marj Kuperman: In memory of Eleanor Frank
(for Warm-Up America)

Irwin & Patricia Levin: In memory of
Rose "Rae" Levin and Katherine Schor

FAIR SHARE REMINDER

Fair Share forms are not just a formality. Your pledges are important for planning our budget, even more so in these less certain times of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thank you to our 57 members who returned their forms in July. That is approximately 30% of our membership. Let's see if we can get another 30% (or more!) in August. Please return your forms. Feel free to contact Karen, administrator@agudasachimic.org, if you have any questions, or if you have misplaced your form.

LIFE CYCLE EVENTS

The congregation extends its condolences to Sam, Max, Isaac, and Valerie on the death of David Bills.

YIDDISH STUDY GROUP

The Yiddish Study Group meets Mondays and Fridays at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom.
Contact the office for more information.

BEREAVEMENT GROUP

The bereavement group will meet on Wednesday, August 18 at 12:30 p.m. via Zoom.
For more information, [contact Martha Lubaroff](#).

AUGUST YAHRZEITS

John Abrons
Charles Anolik
Jack Balch
Janusz Bardach
Mary "Vera" Boyers
Eli Braverman
Victor Brecher
Samuel Brenner
Leonard Brodsky
Ida Canter
Charlotte Cohn
Stanley Corwin
Brenna Davidson
Abraham Dicker
Rosa Dicker
Rebecca Engman

Rhona Fox
Eleanor Frank
Frank Phillip Friedland
Ann Hecht
Donald Herbach
Dorothy Haber Kaufman
Pat Kean
Milton Klausner
Marilyn Krachmer
Robert Kubby
Deborah Levin
Jacob Louis Levin
Joseph B. Levin
Mortimer Levine
David Milavetz
Josh Rephun

Selma G. Rose
Sylvia Roston
Walter Roston
Sam Saltzman
Muriel Savin
Miriam Silversteen
Francis Smith
Robert Soldofsky
Morris Tiss
Louis J. Tunik
Murray Weiner
Julie Whitebook
Lillian Zwerling

BLAST FROM THE PAST NAMES

The pictures on page 6 are David Zabner and Chuck Friedman.

SHABBAT AND FESTIVAL SERVICE SCHEDULE (ALL SERVICES VIA ZOOM)

Streaming links for Shabbat services on Zoom: [Friday Night \(7:00 p.m.\)](#);
[Saturday Morning \(9:30 a.m.\)](#) Evening services have a schmooze prior to the service at 6:30 p.m.

Re'eh (Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17)	Friday, August 6 Saturday, August 7	7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative) Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
Shoftim (Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9)	Friday, August 13 Saturday, August 14	7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah Lev Shalem
Ki Tetze (Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19)	Friday, August 20 Saturday, August 21	7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah Lev Shalem
Ki Tavo (Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8)	Friday, August 27 Saturday, August 28	7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah Lev Shalem

AUGUST 2021

Sun 1	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM	Wed 18	Bereavement Group	12:30 PM
Mon 2	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM		Education Committee	6:00 PM
	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM		Ritual Committee	7:30 PM
	Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM	Thur 19	Board Meeting	7:00 PM
Fri 6	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	Fri 20	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
	Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM		Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM
	Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
Sat 7	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM	Sat 21	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
Sun 8	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM	Sun 22	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
	Warm-Up America	10:30 AM		Warm-Up America	10:30 AM
Mon 9	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	Mon 23	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM		Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM
	Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM		Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM
Thur 12	Executive Committee Meeting	5:30 PM	Wed 25	Free Lunch	11:30 AM
Fri 13	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM		Book Group	1:00 PM
	Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM	Fri 27	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
	Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM		Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM
Sat 14	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
Sun 15	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM	Sat 28	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
Mon 16	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	Sun 29	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM	Mon 30	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
	Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM		Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM
SAVE THE DATE!					
Rosh Hashanah Services begin the evening of Sept 6					

STAFF			
Rabbi	Esther Hugenholtz	Office Secretary	John Wertz
Administrator	Karen Brady	Custodian	Amos Kiche
Principal	Sonja Spear		
BOARD OF TRUSTEES			
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Past President	Sue Weinberg	Ways & Means	Mindy Russell
Treasurer	Mindy Russell	Youth	Curtis Braverman
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Ritual	Rita Marcus	At Large 3	Samantha Goldish
Religious School	<i>Vacant</i>		