



Agudas Achim Congregation

401 E. Oakdale Blvd., Coralville, IA 52241

Phone: 319-337-3813

www.AgudasAchimIC.org

January 2023 / Tevet-Shevat 5783

FROM THE RABBI

Esther Hugenholtz

Wow, what an incredible Kislev (December) month we've had in our community! I'm still buzzing from all the activity, energy and fellowship. First and foremost, I would like to extend a big, hearty thank you to all of our lay leaders and volunteers – as well as John and Karen in the office – for pulling everything together. I also want to extend a heartfelt thanks to all who attended, helped, donated and raised funds as well as brought their spirit and good cheer. I am also grateful to the local media for doing lovely reporting on our Hanukkah events, highlighting our community's joy, creativity and resilience during challenging times.

Our Hanukkah Crafts Bazaar was our (first ever?) event of this type and despite the short timeline, we pulled together a wonderful occasion where with the generous support of individual donors, artisans and the local business community, we had a smorgasbord of beautiful seasonal gift offerings. Our collection ranged from home décor, art, Hanukkah items to candy, freshly baked goods, jewelry, cards and much more. The social hall was buzzing with congregants, friends and guests milling around and enjoying both each other's company and a little retail therapy.

The week after, we had our amazing Hanukkah party with over a hundred attendees and – another first! – a live Klezmer band (with thanks to our President for the suggestion and our President-Elect for the musical connection). Having our Jewish 'classics' (dare I say, 'evergreens?') played live added so much *simcha* (joy) to an already happy

occasion. We had a fantastic latke-making team in the kitchen and our entirely in-house catered meal featured delicious salads, latkes with various toppings and desserts, including some hard cider for some extra cheer! The silent auction at the Hanukkah Party gave shoppers another opportunity to pick up some great items as well as gift certificates. Our two fundraising occasions raised a grand total of just under \$3000, which will help support our synagogue and shine our light in these times that call for a strong, vibrant, local Jewish presence.

[Please see this link](#) to the Little Village article with a great write-up and beautiful photography on our Hanukkah Party and the deeper meaning of Hanukkah.

Not long after, things were slightly upended by the 'Bomb Cyclone' and we deftly moved services online for one Shabbat to keep everyone safe. (I went 'out there' in the cold for a few minutes during the worst part of it and... it was quite an experience and one not worth repeating!) Being on 'Zoom-only' like this reinforces the camaraderie that our minyan has built up during the pandemic and levels the playing-field, allowing different people to participate fully in the service. While in-person services are definitely the preferred option, it is sometimes fun to be reminded of the cozy inclusivity of the Zoom medium and this has been one of the positive outcomes of Zoom in our communal engagement.

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FROM THE RABBI

Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Some post-Hanukkah festivities were continued with a rabbinic visit to Jewish Oaknollians where we enjoyed the delights of tea, chocolates and homemade ginger cake and talked about Hanukkah, history, our personal Jewish experiences and life. A wonderful time was had by all.

The weather has warmed up and the snow has melted; just in time for a wonderful Bar Mitzvah celebration in a packed and festive synagogue to close out 2022 with a champagne *kiddush* and *oneg*! (It does feel rather luxe making the blessing over the wine on champagne!).

2022 has ended but our festivities have not: the synagogue is very proud to announce that we will be having a festive Shabbat dinner on January 6 at 6:00 p.m. in honor of our newly elected Jewish officials in the state. We are so proud of State House Representatives Adam Zabner and Elinor Levin and State Senator Janice Weiner and we look forward to them advancing democracy, justice and civic engagement in our local government. Having

three elected Jewish officials in state government is a first, I am told, so come celebrate this historic moment with our community and congratulate our Jewish leaders. We are especially grateful to the Social Committee for organizing this wonderful dinner. Donations are welcome and if you have any dietary or vegetarian needs, please let the synagogue office know.

Apart from a newly launching Mussar Course (on how to develop your moral and spiritual attributes) and 'Tevet Yoga' with our wonderful teacher, Lea Haravon Collins and the 'Light-themed' alternative contemplative Kabbalat Shabbat service on January 13 (moved due to the 'Bomb Cyclone'), January will be a quiet month as we gently usher in 2023. Thank you all for making 2022 a great year – a year of regathering and reconnecting, a year of coming to terms with COVID in safe and joyous ways, a year of seeing faces again, of embracing each other again, of synagogue events and parties, learning events and services, a year of friendship and dreaming of a brighter future. *Ken yehi ratzon*, may it be so. May we go from strength to strength!

JANUARY SERVICE SCHEDULE

[Streaming link for Zoom Shabbat services](#)

Vayechi <i>(Genesis 47:28-50:26)</i>	Friday, January 6	7:00 p.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative)
	Saturday, January 7	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
Shemot <i>(Exodus 1:1-6:1)</i>	Friday, January 13	7:00 p.m.	<i>Shining Our Light Healing Service (in-person only)</i>
	Saturday, January 14	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem
Vaera <i>(Exodus 6:2-9:35)</i>	Friday, January 20	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
	Saturday, January 21	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem
Bo <i>(Exodus 10:1-13:16)</i>	Friday, January 27	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
	Saturday, January 28	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem

A heartfelt thanks to everyone who made this year's Hanukkah programming a success!



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Janice Weiner

I tiptoed toward this secular new year 2023 with some trepidation. It seems as if we entered every year – starting with 2020 – with great fanfare. And then, wham. Little did we know what lay before us. And so it has been with each successive year.

Last year, even as we seemed to be able to take a breath in the midst of COVID, I feared for our democracy – and the country squeaked through.

So as we enter 2023, we don't and can't know what awaits us – good, bad, indifferent. But here's what I do know. We have all experienced loss, loneliness, dislocation, and the upending of the world as we knew it. And we should take that and run with it. What do I mean? I mean that it's time to stop waiting for things to happen. As Pollyanna-ish as this may sound, don't wait.

Here's my anecdote: We traveled to the Jersey shore this past summer for an annual gathering of cousins. There were 35 of us, several generations – we sat on the beach, watched the kids build sandcastles, play in the waves and eat ice cream; we gathered for dinner, drank beer, and cleaned up for a family photo framed by sand and sky. All four Vexler siblings were there with their extended

families. One of them - Paul - had been diagnosed with a form of blood cancer, but treatment was working, they had a plan, and he looked great – he even surfed with his brother Norman on the surfboard they co-owned. In December, the treatment stopped working and Paul died. He had so much more to do, so much more art to create, so many more family memories to create. He wasn't done. Paul kept living and creating every second - until he couldn't.

Everyone has a Paul in their life. I will never, ever regret any effort I made to get us to those beach weeks, to attend weddings and b mitzvahs and memorials – and to just stay connected.

That, in a nutshell, is my takeaway from these last years. If you can go, go. Don't wait. Take care of yourselves – and then go for it. You won't ever regret making the effort to spend time with family or friends. If you have a dream, pursue it (in case you're wondering, it's why I'm headed to Des Moines). And support those around you who are reaching for theirs. Loving kindness, tikkun olam, repairing the world – giving ourselves permission to live fully.

STOP THE BLEED WEBINAR

Stop the Bleed Webinar

Learn the skills of emergency first aid

Thursday January 26 at 1:30 p.m.

Organized by the URJ

[Registration Link](#)

COVID COMMENTS

Bob Wallace, Barcey Levy, & Jane Zukin

Returning to the Synagogue after Covid-19 Infection

Updated December 27, 2022

Note: All COVID-19 health recommendations are based on those from the CDC (US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and the FDA (US Food and Drug Administration). Please always see your doctor about the specifics of your medical conditions and advice on COVID-19, for yourself and for those around you. Also, the CDC and the FDA promote the importance of keeping up-to-date with recommended vaccine practices, including those for other current infection problems. Again, please see a medical professional about receiving these vaccines.

Entering the Synagogue

In the COVID-19 virus era, the synagogue board recommends that anyone who is acutely ill for any reason should not come to the synagogue. Particularly, anyone with a cough, runny nose, fever, nausea or vomiting, tiredness, diarrhea or other similar symptoms should stay home, and seek medical advice if needed. If you are sick, whether or not you are up-to-date with your vaccinations, you should try to get a test for COVID-19 infection and influenza, available at health care facilities. "Home" or self-testing kits are also available from pharmacies, some grocery stores, through the mail from federal sources, or through your health insurance. There are medications that can be used to shorten the course of Covid-19 and influenza, and these can be obtained from your medical provider.

Isolation

If you are sick and COVID-19 virus is a possibility, you should stay home, avoiding work, school or other social situations, and isolate yourself from other people as much as possible until the test result is available. If you have more serious symptoms, such as an emergency warning sign like

difficulty breathing, seek medical care immediately. If you have a diagnosis of COVID-19 infection (usually with a positive test), whether or not you are sick, you should isolate yourself as best as possible for at least five days. If after five days you are feeling better or well *and* are fever-free for 24 hours, you may end isolation and return to social activities, such as entering the synagogue, work, school or other social activities, but it is recommended that you wear a good-quality mask and practice social distancing for the next five days if at all possible. If after 10 days you are feeling better and don't have a fever, you may return to your regular social activities, but wearing a good quality mask and doing some social distancing where possible may still be of value. If after 10 days you are still sick, or have a fever, you should stay in isolation and consult your doctor or medical care provider.

Returning to the Synagogue After Isolation

If you are able to end isolation, as noted above, and are no longer sick, we welcome you back to the synagogue. Please note that the synagogue may have additional health rules about attending, such as requiring mask-wearing and social distancing. Our own recommendations will be available in our weekly and monthly online publications, including this bulletin. Please also note that if you have a health problem that makes you more susceptible to COVID-19 or other infections, it is important to consult your medical provider for more detailed health care and vaccination advice, over and above the recommendations suggested here.

Seeking More Information

If you wish to get more information, again your medical care provider is an important source. You can also find more information about isolating and returning to social activities from the CDC website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html>

TEVET YOGA

Announcing January Yoga Class: Transformative Tevet

The constellation for Tevet is the goat. The goat works its way slowly, laboriously up the mountain of winter. Though the path is treacherous, the goat never slips or falls. Sure-footed, firmly centered in the earth, the creature eventually reaches the summit. As winter deepens, and darkness arrives early, we remember that we too can reach summits of joy—even in darkness
(from <https://ritualwell.org/ritual/essence-tevet/>)

In this five-week drop-in class, we will join Yogic practices, Jewish wisdom and the fresh start of the secular new year to both steady ourselves and spark transformation in these deep and dark winter weeks. We will come away from each gathering with a simple movement practice that we can add to our daily routine. Everyone is welcome. No previous Yoga experience necessary! Join us for as many sessions as you like.

Dates: Consecutive Sundays January 1-29, 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Location: Agudas Achim Congregation

Bring: Yoga mat, large towel, or blanket (optional, but nice to have)

To register: rsvp@agudasachimic.org

For more information: leslea-collins@outlook.com

SHABBAT DINNER TO HONOR JEWISH ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES



Friday, January 6, 6:00 p.m.
at Agudas Achim

PLEASE RSVP TO
RSVP@AGUDASACHIMIC.ORG BY
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4; LET US KNOW IF
YOU WOULD LIKE A VEGETARIAN MEAL

DONATIONS ENCOURAGED



Yahrzeit Minyan for Doug Jones' Mother

We will hold a yahrzeit minyan for Doug Jones' mother at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 11.

Intermediate Judaism Group

Corvin Greene has started a Facebook group called ***Intermediate Judaism: Continuing Our Learning Beyond Conversion***, which is open to anyone who is Jewish, has converted to Judaism, or is in the process of converting.

[Link to Group](#)

Warm Up America

Warm Up America will meet again on January 8 and 22, 2023, 10:30 a.m.-noon in the social hall, to continue our tradition of providing afghans for those who might benefit from a bit of warmth, emotional or physical. We'll be masked per Shul policy and personal preference.

Having created and donated 3 dozen afghans containing nearly 1800 knit or crocheted "patches" in 2022, we look forward to an equally productive 2023.

We appreciate donations of all-synthetic yarn and of funds for yarn c/o the Tikun Olam fund, earmarked for Warm Up America.

We welcome visitors and schmoozers. We gladly teach knitting and crocheting to those who'd like to make patches for our 2023 afghans.

The Agudas Achim office has more information.



DONATIONS

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Jane Bird

Mace & Kay Braverman: In memory of
Bob Braverman

Miriam Gelfand Estate

Tom & Becky Gelman: In memory of
Gloria J. Gelman

Rody Gessner & Michelle Edwards: In memory of
Lillian Edwards

Ellen Lewin & Lizabeth Goodman: In memory of
Molly Goodman

Alan Mutnick & Rachel Albrecht: In memory of
Benjamin Ross Mutnick

Charles & Nicole Pruchno

Jonathan & Pamela Sabin: In memory of
Michael Allen Sabin

GENERAL FUND

Kimberly Benesh: In appreciation of Lea's Yoga

Aaron Caplan & Leah Lee: In honor of
David & Joni Caplan

Caplan Family Foundation

David Cuning & Naomi Greyser: Appreciation of
Lea's Yoga & Amos's help

Lea Haravon Collins & Steve Collins: In memory of
Alda Haravon and Jacob Haravon Collins

Jeff & Janet Weingarten

GARDEN FUND

Michael & Joanne Margolin: In memory of
Lillian Margolin

Carrie Z. Norton: In memory of Morris L. Ziskind

CEMETERY FUND

Elliot & Jeanne Abrons

Richard Haendel: In memory of Goldene Haendel

FAMILY ASSISTANCE FUND

Gary Gussin & Susan Brown: In memory of
Irving and Janet Gussin

HIGH HOLIDAY/CANTOR FUND

Jeanne Cadoret: In memory of Remi J. Cadoret

LIBRARY FUND

Elliot & Jeanne Abrons

PORTMAN PROGRAM FUND

Elliot & Jeanne Abrons

Richard Levine: In memory of Bernice Levine

BRAVERMAN TALMUD TORAH FUND

Eloise McCuskey: In memory of Rosalie Braverman

TIKUN OLAM FUND

Elliot & Jeanne Abrons: for Warm Up America

Jeanne Cadoret: for Warm Up America

Julia Gelfand & David Lang: In memory of
Lawrence Gelfand

Carrie Z. Norton: In gratitude of Jeanne Cadoret &
other Mercy Hospital Christmas volunteers for
the community goodwill gesture

Kathy Ormond: In memory of Waverly C. Ormond

SIM & SARAH STRAUSS MEMORIAL FUND

David & Penny Strauss: In memory of
Simeon Strauss

Stephen Strauss: In memory of Sim Strauss,
Belle Strauss & Marjorie Osdoba

SAFETY FUND

Kathleen Jacobs

Richard Levine: In memory of Bernice Levine

BABY NAMING FOR AVI JOSEFA NEIMAN-BROWN

A baby naming for Maurine Neiman and Bennett Brown's daughter, Avi Josefa Neiman Brown, will be held on Sunday, January 15 at 2:00 p.m. You can attend in person or via Zoom [at this link](#).

JANUARY 2023

Sun	1	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM	Thur	19	Board Meeting	7:00 PM
		Tevet Yoga	2:00 PM	Fri	20	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM			Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM
Mon	2	Office Closed				Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
Fri	6	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	Sat	21	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
		Dinner to Honor Jewish Elected Officials	6:00 PM	Sun	22	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM			Sunday School	9:15 AM
Sat	7	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM			Warm-Up America	10:30 AM
Sun	8	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM			Tevet Yoga	2:00 PM
		Warm-Up America	10:30 AM			Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM
		Tevet Yoga	2:00 PM	Mon	23	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM			Tea Time Check-In	2:30 PM
Mon	9	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM			Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM
		Tea Time Check-In	2:30 PM	Wed	25	Mussar Course	11:00 AM
		Mission Statement Meeting	5:30 PM			Free Lunch	11:30 AM
		Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM			Book Group	1:00 PM
Thur	12	Exec Meeting	5:30 PM	Fri	27	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
Fri	13	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM			Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM
		Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM			Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
		Light & Healing Service	7:00 PM	Sat	28	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
Sat	14	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM	Sun	29	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
Sun	15	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM			Sunday School	9:15 AM
		Tevet Yoga	2:00 PM			Tevet Yoga	2:00 PM
		Simchat Bat: daughter of Maurine & Bennett	2:00 PM			Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM
		Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM	Mon	30	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
Mon	16	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM			Tea Time Check-In	2:30 PM
		Tea Time Check-In	2:30 PM			Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM
Wed	18	Morning Minyan for Doug Jones	8:30 AM	SAVE THE DATE!			
		Mussar Course	11:00 AM	Sat	2/4	New Member Shabbat Luncheon	12:00 PM
		Ritual Committee	7:30 PM				

YIDDISH STUDY GROUP

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

WEDNESDAY BOOK GROUP

The Wednesday book group will meet on January 25 at 1:00 p.m. on Zoom.
[Contact the office](#) for information.

MUSSAR CLASS

Pathway to the Inner Life: An Online Mussar Class facilitated by Lea Haravon Collins

Wednesdays, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Dates: 1/18, 1/25, 2/8, 2/22, 3/8, 3/22, 3/29, 4/12, 4/26, 5/10, 5/24

[Registration Link](#); [More information](#); [Contact Lea](#)

NEW MEMBER LUNCH

Save the Date: Agudas Achim Welcome New Members Shabbat Lunch

After Services Saturday, February 4

All congregants invited

Details and RSVP information to follow

JANUARY YAHREZEITS

Kenneth Allweiss
Phyllis Bills
Jesse Boyers
Kent Braverman
Betty Brodsky
Jack Joseph Brown
William Chazanoff
Charles Henry Clements
Mary Jessie Clements
Jacob Haravon Collins
Anna Lea Dvoretzky
Lillian Edwards
Anna Federbusch
Miriam Gelfand
Gloria Gelman
Ruth Ginsberg
Sari Goldstein
Lewis Goodsell
Joseph Greenberg
Irving Gussin
George Elisha Hall

Leah Halle
Charles Hecht
Doris Hoffman
Pauline A. Kerber
Daniel Kroloff
Vivian Kroloff
Louis Landweber
Sam Levey
Max Levy
Pinchas Levy
Ruth Levy
Betty Mangers
Meyer Markovitz
David Moyer
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Waverly C. Ormond
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Rebecca Markovitz Posner
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Susan Strauss
Isadore Tepper
Larry Tepper
Roger Wetlaufer
Janet Whitebook
Rose Widiss
Celia Wolf
Nathan David Zabner
Morris L. Ziskind

THE RABBI'S SERMON FOR PARASHAT VAYESHEV 2022

Esther Hugenholtz

Halls of Mirrors, Palaces with Windows

When the police officer came into the synagogue two Sundays ago, and requested to 'talk to the rabbi', my heart sank. I'm not going to deny that I wasn't anxious when I invited him to step into my office. I remember the pit of my stomach opening wide when he told me about the Nazi leafletting in our area. I also remember processing my emotions with lightning speed, forcing myself to take a deep breath and remarking (not without despondency and cynicism) that 'it was only a matter of time.'

Like so many of us, I am sure, I was pulled into a vortex of emotions: relief (no-one was immediately hurt), worry (what will happen to our Hanukkah programming?), exhaustion (here we go again), fear (will they hurt us?), anger (self-explanatory), defiance (we will not cede to hatred) and perspective ('*gam zeh ya'avur*', this too shall pass). As the weeks have gone by, we have seen the leveraging of goodness, kindness and solidarity in our community. The Mayor of Coralville, Meghann Foster, reached out to both the congregational president and myself; over fifty local clergy and other signatories issued a solidarity statement with the Jewish community; the local media interviewed the president and we have received cards and emails from kind-hearted neighbors expressing both their concern and love. One of the most powerful experiences I had in the wake of all this was meeting with a Black pastor-colleague and talking open-heartedly about antisemitism, racism and how we can bring our communities together. I was deeply touched, stirred and blessed by this important encounter as we are considering next steps.

Our Hanukkah plans have not changed; if anything, we are coming out on top. We had a wonderful Hanukkah Bazaar with beautiful donations from congregants and the generous local business community, creative vendors and a silent auction. This Sunday, we will have our annual Hanukkah

Party (where we will also have further opportunity for our auction, so bring your wallet, check or Venmo details), and we will have a beautiful, alternative service next Friday centered around the theme of 'Shining your Light'.

Last Sunday, a group of us hosted a booth at the newly-created 'One Bright Future' event in Morrison Park. The City of Coralville had asked us to showcase Hanukkah in a multicultural display. After five years in Iowa, I know when to put on my snow pants and venture into the December cold: our outreach team gave away gelt, dreidels, dreidel instructions and a raffle for Target's 'Mitzvah Moose', a blue soft toy with light-up menorah antlers.

As we gave out gelt ('have you had your daily dose of chocolate today?'), people were open, kind and receptive. One non-Jewish gentleman shared his fond memories of attending friends' Bar Mitzvahs in New York. Children gleefully grabbed gelt and spun dreidels. A woman from a local church expressed her solidarity with our community. Another person told us how awful the leafletting was and how glad they were that we are part of the Coralville community. A lot of people smiled and waved as they walked their dogs. And most people could not decline an offer of free chocolate. There was something deeply moving about engaging with the outside world with confidence and joy (and did I mention chocolate?). It affected something in me.

Hanukkah is the paradox of lighting up fire on the inside so it can shine outside. It's striking to think about the original gold Menorah in the Temple. That Menorah only shared its light in the Temple precincts, in the antechamber – certainly not visible to all, not even the people gathered in the outer courts of the Beit haMikdash. The Menorah shone a private, intimate, hidden light. It was a source of spiritual comfort to the Kohanim (Priests) serving in the Temple, but pretty much no-one else.

Presumably, the fires on the Mizbe'ach (the Altar)

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THE RABBI'S SERMON FOR PARASHAT VAYESHEV 2022

Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)

would have been much more visible to Temple worshipers; partially through the flames themselves and partially through the smoke (and smells!) rising up from it.

When the Rabbis recast the militaristic commemoration of Hanukkah in miraculous terms, they could have ordained any number of practices. Given that the Maccabean Revolt was a response to anti-Judaic persecution, and given that the Rabbis themselves experienced anti-Judaic persecution, it would have been intuitive for them to create a parallel purpose to the Hanukkiyah: light it in the center of the home where its light will nourish you: privately, intimate, away from sight.

But that is not what the Rabbis ordained. In their visionary boldness and their emotional astuteness, they intuited that we meet adversity with resilience and hence we have the mitzvah of 'pirsumei nisa', the proclamation/publicizing of the miracle. We are charged – unless it is actively unsafe to do so – to place our Hanukkah lamps in doorways and windows, for all the world to see. In fact, the Halakhah tells us we have to light them early enough in the evening so that by-passers can see their light: we HAVE to be seen, by Jew and non-Jew alike. We have to proclaim our Jewishness. That very outward act is not just an outward act for its own sake. It's not just defiance, resilience and outreach. It's actually a pathway to transformation of our inwards state too. This simple act of lighting lights publicly or semi-publicly helps us process the nuanced feelings we may have about our own Jewishness and our place in the world.

Hanukkah is the season of the winter solstice; we are immersed in darkness and the Torah reading cycle follows suit. Darkness, night, dreams, pits, imprisonment are all aspects of the texts we study at this time, especially during the Joseph cycle. Here is another paradox: Joseph is the first Jew with a genuinely diasporic experience: most of his life and his death occurs outside of what is then called Canaan. He too has to toggle between outward

modes of assimilation and inward Jewish loyalty and belonging. Through his very life; his negotiations with the Palace and ultimately Pharaoh and even his own estranged brothers, he lives that paradox on inside-outside, hidden and revealed. We are the inheritors of the questions and existence of this kind of Jewish life, that feels surprisingly modern and fresh.

As we face yet another pandemic winter, albeit with much better tools and much higher hopes, we will continue to grapple with this paradox. We want to see and be seen; our community has different needs; we want to break out of our loneliness, trauma and isolation in different ways. Some of us want to engage publicly with our Judaism; others don't. Some of us thrive with the comfort of our generational peers; others welcome the dynamism of a fast-paced world. We have different risk profiles, economic backgrounds, Jewish experiences, spiritual orientations, emotional responses and existential questions to this life we live. But we all draw strength from being in one community and grappling with its diversity. We are shaped by circumstance but honed by our moral commitments. It may feel that we are stumbling through a hall of mirrors, where each of us only sees part of the picture; a fragment, a snippet, perhaps even a warping of what we think things to be. What Hanukkah teaches us, and what Joseph teaches us, is that we can break through the fog and darkness and place our light in open windows. I pray and continue to work for the vision that Judaism is a palace with many doors and windows; with intimate spaces to meet our needs; with common areas to build community and light streaming out in a shared vision that we are proud of who we are, in love with all we can be and here for each other and our world. Let's keep talking; let's keep connecting. Am Yisrael Chai, the Jewish People lives.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Urim Sameach!

MEETING WITH RABBI HUGENHOLTZ

[We've set up a Calendly link here](#) for setting up meetings automatically with Rabbi Hugenholtz. We are reserving Wednesday and Thursday from 4-6 for B-Mitzvah meetings specifically, but feel free to schedule a meeting with her if you'd like. Meetings can be via Zoom, via telephone, or in person.

SYNAGOGUE VENMO

We Have Venmo! Donating to Agudas Achim has just become easier! We now have a Venmo account: @AgudasIC. (There are other Agudas Achims out there, so be sure to choose the one with IC at the end.) Since we are a business account, we do have a 2-3% charge on each donation in case you'd like to add a bit more. [You can donate via Venmo at this link.](#)

STAFF

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

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