

### **Agudas Achim Congregation**

401 E. Oakdale Blvd., Coralville, IA 52241 Phone: 319-337-3813 www.AgudasAchimIC.org

### February 2023 / Shevat-Adar 5783

## FROM THE RABBI Esther Hugenholtz

Since I moved to lowa, now almost six years ago, I've developed a personal custom of sowing cold weather seeds in seed trays on Tu Bishvat so that I could plant the seedlings out in the spring or at least harvest some microgreens for my home Seder at Pesach-time.

Rabbis love seed-and-plant metaphors. They are all over the tradition; our ancient ancestors were excellent agriculturalists. (Rabbis were also partial to figs – the Talmud is filled with them!) And it is true, seeds are remarkable little things; small but mighty, hidden yet on the cusp of being revealed. They are buried in the darkness of the land but vibrantly burst into the light. We scatter them, plant them, nurture them—and our reward is a harvest hundredfold.

Seeds are a fitting analogue for Jewish community life, and I, as a rabbi, often feel like a gardener. Often, our toils are hidden from view and the payoff is in the future, during a far-away harvest cycle. Sometimes, our labors immediately bear fruit.

One such labors bearing vibrant fruit was when I had the honor of writing a prayer to be recited in the State House by our synagogue president and State Senator Janice Weiner. The writing process of such a prayer is both creative and intensely private as I searched the reaches of my heart for the right words; for that place where the soul and the Divine touch. To hear those words echo through the halls of power was remarkable. Being a small community rabbi has unexpected blessings.

Usually though, rabbinic life is considerably more mundane. We write a lot of emails and host a lot of Zoom meetings. We quietly check in on people who need support, guide people through life during intensely personal moments and crises, wash the deceased, counsel the bereaved, teach those who seek Jewish wisdom and open the doors of Judaism in ways that may not always be apparent. During the pandemic, our work as rabbis became even more private and insular, our Torah like seeds burrowed deep into the soil. Yet now, we are starting to see the seedlings sprout through. Our Sunday School is abuzz with Hebrew song and learning as I encourage the kids to move their bodies through 'Shira'. Our services are gathering back old friends and welcoming new as more people feel more confident attending. New members continue to find their way to our community as our synagogue continues to grow. At the base of these successes lie a hundred small steps, by lay leaders and Jewish professionals alike. A membership pack sent out, a pastoral call made, a B-Mitzvah child tutored, a public event attended. It takes many 'gardeners' to bring in this fruitful harvest of community life, of tilling the soil of our hearts, of laying the foundations of a place that is a soft place to fall.

This is why I am so grateful for the direction our Agudas Achim family is moving. Many parts of my work are private and reliant on discretion, but the public parts we should celebrate. We are close to implementing a new Mission/Vision Statement that

(Continued on page 2)

#### FROM THE RABBI

### Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

both encapsulates the kind of community we are and the unfolding of what we are becoming. Our New Members Shabbat Service and Luncheon (February 4) will be joyous (please book your place and come!) and we will be enjoying the finer things of Brix' menu during our Tu Bishvat/Havdalah musical get-together (February 11). Our alternative services (more coming) are a wonderful way to discover a new Jewish experience, filled with song, silence, contemplation and connection.

Planting seeds at the end of the day is an act of defiant hope, especially during an Iowan Tu Bishvat with the ground frozen solid and the branches laden with snow and ice. But it makes that investment of trust even more poignant; though Spring may be far off, we continue to sow and trust the process. The winter of these last three years is starting to lift and our Judaism has carried us through. Won't you come plant with us and gather in an abundant harvest?

#### LIFE CYCLE EVENTS

Agudas Achim sends its condolences to the family of former Agudas Achim member Bette Meisel.

### FEBRUARY SERVICE SCHEDULE

#### **Streaming link for Zoom Shabbat services**

Beshalach	Friday, February 3	7:00 p.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative)
(Exodus 13:17-17:16)	Saturday, February 4	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
Yitro	Friday, February 10	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
(Exodus 18:1-20:23)	Saturday, February 11	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem
Mishpatim	Friday, February 17	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
(Exodus 21:1-24:18)	Saturday, February 18	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem
Terumah	Friday, February 24	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
(Exodus 25:1-27:19)	Saturday, February 25	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem

### FROM THE PRESIDENT Janice Weiner

Rabbi Hugenholtz held a beautiful and wellattended healing service this past month. It gave us all a chance to breathe, reflect and connect. I look forward to more of that. If you haven't tried it, I highly recommend it.

We at Agudas Achim can be proud that we create a safe space – a space where all are truly welcome. That has always been the case – but in this day and age, we need to be explicit that we welcome people with open arms. You will soon see that warm, welcoming spirit reflected shortly when we roll out our new Mission/Vision statement.

In the midst of much ugliness at the State House (it's hard to avoid, since those of us who are there are immersed in it) – draft bills that seek to make it harder for lowans who need it to get SNAP benefits, bills that single out the LGBTQA+ community, especially trans kids, and attempts to continue to undermine public education – our community, large and small, remains a safe haven. When I drive back to lowa City each week, I breathe out. We are fortunate, and it matters that we continue to stand up for truth and social justice – and just caring for one another.

I partnered with Rabbi Hugenholtz to bring a bit of Agudas Achim to the State House this week. Every day, when the Senate gavels in, one senator offers a prayer. I signed up to do the prayer this past Monday. I asked the rabbi to write a prayer focused on social justice, to help counter the "let's pile on this group or the other" mentality that we are seeing in way too many draft bills. I asked that it focus on how we reach out and give people a hand up. She wrote a beautiful prayer – I edited a bit and switched out the blessing at the end, but what you see here is her handiwork. I read it aloud on January 30<sup>th</sup> – and it is likely the first such prayer that a Jewish legislator has offered in three decades.

It was as important to me to express those values as it was vital to show that there are people of

other faiths represented at the Capitol. Reps Levin and Zabner came over to watch. And I wanted to share it with all of you. I hope we can all embrace these values and treasure what we have.

Holy One, God of Creation,
Your voice spoke Creation into being.
And sang Revelation into covenant.
Your call burned inside prophets and seers,
Humbling the powerful and uplifting the poor.
Open our hearts to hear your voice.
Open our hands to heed your call.

Holy One, God of Justice.
Your ear heard the outcry of Sodom.
Your heart was moved by the plight of the stranger,
The widow, the orphan, the poor, the
downtrodden.
You hearkened to our people in the days of

You took us out with a strong arm, So that we might pursue your holy cause. Strengthen our arms to protect the vulnerable. Strengthen our resolve to bring righteousness to life.

Holy One, God of Love.
Your visions are of a world
Where justice is pursued passionately,
Where righteousness covers the lands like the seas.
May we too be filled with justice, righteousness and love.

And fulfill the mitzvah of caring for our fellow human beings,

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu lirdof tzedek.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who calls us to holiness through mitzvot, commanding us to pursue justice.

Amen.

Pharaoh,



### COVID COMMENTS Bob Wallace, Barcey Levy, & Jane Zukin

General COVID-19 Activity. The COVID-19 virus, with newer variants, is still circulating in Iowa and Johnson County, and while case rates are currently declining locally (as of January 28, 2023), CDC designates Johnson County as having Medium Risk. CDC recommends that you follow all current public health recommendations; first and foremost it is important to maintain up-to-date immunizations. Also, In the past few weeks there have been several public health reminders that if someone acquires the infection, it is still very important to seek an anti -viral medication as soon as possible. In this situation, please contact your doctor or pharmacist immediately for further advice, regardless of the severity of the illness. Even mild cases may sometimes lead to persistent symptoms, so-called "long COVID."

**International Travel**. Although we are in the heart of winter, many are considering international travel this year. Please be aware that local regulations for

entering and leaving other countries, as well as for the US, may be changing, and if you are planning such travel, please stay up to date on national rules and regulations. For example, several countries in Southeast Asia have tightened their rules (as of January 5, 2023). In order to stay current with global regulations, you can go to the Web. CDC follows changing rules and regulations—Information can be found at: <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/international-travel-during-covid19.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/international-travel-during-covid19.html</a>. Airlines and travel agents may have additional information. Please note that this website addresses COVID-19 specifically. There may be

other health, safety and logistical issues about

international travel that require attention. You can

find current information from the US Department

Shalom, and Happy Trails.

of State, at Travel.State.Gov.

### **ADAR YOGA**

### Announcing Adar Yoga Class: From Sorrow to Joy

When the month Adar enters, increase in joy.

~ Talmud, Taanis 29.

Adar's is no "ordinary" joy...it is the joy of transformation. It is the joy of the bitter turned sweet, of the adverse converted into a positive force.

~ https://www.meaningfullife.com/transformative-joy-adar

In this four-session drop-in class, we will join Yogic practices, Jewish wisdom, and Adar's theme of joy to transform challenges into celebrations. We will explore several of the fourteen (!) Hebrew words for joy, coming 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 February 26 - March 19 at 2:00 p.m.

Location: Agudas Achim Congregation

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

To register: <a href="mailto:rsvp@agudasachimic.org">rsvp@agudasachimic.org</a>

For more information: <a href="mailto:leslea-collins@outloo">leslea-collins@outloo</a>k.com

# SCHOOL NEWS Sonja Spear

Ah, February! As we scrape the ice off our windshields, our thoughts turn naturally to – planting trees!

Yes, it is nearly Tu Bishvat, and the school faces our usual February quandary: How do we get excited about trees when they're dormant?

Fortunately, kids have good imaginations.

All of the students made the leap from planting trees to caring for the environment. We had a little discussion of what makes trees important to us. ("Good climbing" trees came ahead of fruit trees!) One of the older kids mentioned that trees absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen. "No trees, no us!" he concluded. Everyone agreed.

The kids in *Kitah Gimel* (Class Three) worked with Emily Schoerning to find practical ways to make the synagogue more sustainable. They learned which trees to plant if we want them to flourish in a warmer future. In the meantime, they decided to raise money to buy a water barrel, decorated with the words "bal tashchit" to remind us not to destroy the environment.

They are still planning how to raise the money. But I expect a bake sale for Purim, with proceeds divided between the water barrel and ReLeaf Cedar Rapids, a charity that is replanting trees in Cedar Rapids.

In class last week, they discussed the strange story of Honi the Circle Drawer. Not familiar with Honi the Circle Drawer? According to the Talmud, he once asked an old man who was planting a carob tree why he bothered, since he would not live to see the fruit. "My ancestors planted trees for me," the man replied. "So I plant for my children." Then, Honi slept for seventy years. When he woke up.... But I don't want to spoil it for you.

Let's just say that planting trees is both a good practice and a rich metaphor for teaching Torah. In that spirit, we sang and studied the prayer 'Etz Hayyim Hi', which celebrates the Torah as the Tree of Life.

Kitah Aleph and Kitah Bet (the first and second classes) practiced Aleph Bet Yoga, twisting their bodies into the shapes of the letters. All limbered up, they roam all over the synagogue, identifying letters and taking note of important ritual items such as mezzuzot. These were their (literal) first steps toward reading. I think they had fun.

Next week, we will celebrate Tu Bishvat by tasting fruit and learning the word "'etz," (tree), a good word to say, a good word to read, and a great thing to climb.





Saturday, February 11, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Brix Restaurant, 209 N Linn St, Iowa City

Price \$25 / person. Sponsorships available.

limited attendance | rsvp@agudasachimic.org

Come eat, drink and sing for Tu Bishvat (Jewish new year of the trees)! Enjoy wine, cheese, salmon, and fruits. Vegan options available.

# AGUDAS ACHIM CONGREGATION SENIOR BRUNCH

What's New?
Let's Get Together to Catch Up
It's Been a While

Bagels and Coffee
Thursday, Feb. 23
11 am to 1 pm
In the Social Hall



Please RSVP by Monday February 20

Informal event for all seniors
(however you define "seniors" is up to you)

rsvp@agudasachimic.org

### **YIDDISH STUDY GROUP**

### **WEDNESDAY BOOK GROUP**

The Yiddish Study Group meets Mondays and Fridays at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Contact the office for more information.

The Wednesday book group will meet on February 22 at 1:00 p.m. on Zoom.

<u>Contact the office</u> for information.

### WARM UP AMERICA

Warm Up America has started its "2023 Collection" afghans. We'll meet in the social hall on February 5 and 19, and on March 5 and 19, 10:30 a.m. - noon. We welcome congregants and friends to help us organize, assemble, and finish the afghans. Masks are optional, but may be a good idea because we work together closely.



#### **DONATIONS**

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Ray & Lindy Buch: In memory of Joyce Schiller Rody Gessner & Michelle Edwards: In memory of

**Stanley Edwards** 

**Steven & Barcey Levy**: In memory of Ruth L. Levy **Bob & Donna Rodnitzky**: In memory of Ann &

Nathan Rodnitzky

Jeffrey Whitebook: In memory of Maynard

Whitebook

**GENERAL FUND** 

**David & Constance Berman**: In memory of Doris

Hoffman and Judith Goldfein

**David & Joni Caplan** 

**Karen Charney & Benjamin Coelho** 

Joshua & Jennifer Gersten

Lea Haravon Collins & Steve Collins: In memory of

**Jacob Haravon Collins** 

Linda Kerber: In memory of Pauline Kerber,

Miriam Gelfand, and Sylvia Kaufman

David & Martha Lubaroff: In memory of Sydney

Josselson

James & Jill Michel: In appreciation of Yoga

**Bernard Miller & Sonja Hauter**: In memory of

Abraham Miller

**GARDEN FUND** 

Richard & Nancee Blum: In memory of Joseph

Rose

Jonathan & Susan Simon: In memory of our

parents

**CEMETERY FUND** 

Julia Gelfand & David Lang: In memory of Miriam

Gelfand

Sam & Marj Kuperman: In memory of Boris

Kuperman

Jack L. Snider: In memory of Betty Snider

**FINE ARTS FUND** 

Richard & Nancee Blum: In memory of David

Blum

**HIGH HOLIDAY/CANTOR FUND** 

**Stanley & Jane Zukin**: In memory of Lama Shetzer

LIBRARY FUND

Mel & Diane Sunshine: In memory of Betty

**Brodsky** 

**PORTMAN PROGRAM FUND** 

Susan Groff-VanArendonk: In memory of Wayne

VanArendonk

**Jeffrey Whitebook**: In memory of Janet

Whitebook

**SOCIAL FUND** 

David & Martha Lubaroff: for the elected officials'

dinner

Bob & Maureen Wallace: elected officials' dinner

**TIKUN OLAM FUND** 

Jerry Naylor: In memory of Mary S. Naylor

SIM & SARA STRAUSS MEMORIAL FUND

Richard Strauss & Ellen Herman: In memory of

Sim & Belle Strauss

### MEETING WITH RABBI HUGENHOLTZ

<u>We've set up a Calendly link here</u> 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.

### FEBRUARY 2023

Fri	3	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	Fri	17	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	4	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM	Sat		Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
		New Member Shabbat Lunch	12:00 PM	Sup		Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
Sun	Sun 5	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM	Juli	19	, ,	
		Sunday School	9:15 AM			Sunday School	9:15 AM
		Warm-Up America	10:30 AM			Warm-Up America	10:30 AM
		Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM			Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM
 Mon	6	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	Mon	20	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
Wed	8	Mussar Course	11:00 AM	Wed	22	Mussar Course	11:00 AM
Thur	9	Exec Meeting	5:30 PM			Free Lunch	11:30 AM
Fri	10	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM			Book Group	1:00 PM
		Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM	Thur	23	Senior Brunch	11:00 AM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM	Fri	24	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
Sat	11	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM			Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM
		Tu Bishvat Havdalah Gathering	7:00 PM			Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
Sun	12	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM	Sat	25	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
		Sunday School	9:15 AM				
		Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM	Sun	26	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
Mon	13	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM			Sunday School	9:15 AM
		Intro to Judaism 7:3				Adar Yoga	2:00 PM
Wed	15	Ritual Committee	7:30 PM			Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM
Thur	16	Board Meeting	7:00 PM	Mon	27	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
				-			

### **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.

### **FEBRUARY YAHRZEITS**

Michael Balch Rose Goldman Abraham Miller

Charlotte Bernstein Vera Gutierez Rabbi Elijah "Zeke" Palnick

David Blum Patricia Hass James Robin John Brady Jacob Horowitz **Ruth Rogers** Fannie Saltzman Braverman Doris Johansen Joseph Rose Arnie Breggin Maurice Joselson Dennis Saletta Sam Sandler Irene Brodsky Sydney Josselson Susan Schechter James Terrell Bryant Sylvia Kaufman

Elizabeth Buch Simone Kay Lama Shetzer
Barbara Jean Bunnell Shmarya Kleinman Harry Shulman
Helen Chazanoff Allen Kraft LaVerne Siebuhr

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Belle Coster

Boris Kuperman

Goldie Solganick

Sara Dorfman

Harry Levin

Stanley Edwards

Albert Lubaroff

Gittel Tepper

Sol Elster Marvin Marcus Wayne VanArendonk

Louis Friedman Arthur Margolin Pat Vunderink Marlene Garfin Samuel Markovitz Olive Wertz

Webster Gelman Tamara Mazur Maynard "Moe" Whitebook

Merrel GoldbergPatrick McEwenAlan WidissJudith GoldfeinEdna Irene McGinnisEarl Yanney

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