



Agudas Achim Congregation

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www.AgudasAchimIC.org

March 2023 / Adar-Nisan 5783

FROM THE RABBI

Esther Hugenholtz

For Such a Time As This

One of my favorite Bible verses is only two words long: *'I'et ka'zot'*, 'for such a time as this'. It's so much more efficient in the Hebrew! This pithy text comes from Megillat Esther, the Book of Esther, 4:14 to be exact, and it represents the fulcrum in the story. Esther has no desire to confront Achashverosh to try and save the Jewish people; she's merely a concubine at the court of one of the world's most powerful monarchs. She hasn't been summoned to the king's presence for a month; initiating such a visit could be a capital offense. How is she ever to have hope of redemption?

Yet, Mordechai holds her to account and says: "Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king's palace. On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father's house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for – *I'et ka'zot'* – just such a time as this." These words stir Esther into righteous action and, well, we know how the story ends: she saves the Jewish people.

It is inevitable that I often turn my thoughts to my heroic namesake and I often find myself meditating on that phrase, 'for such a time as this.' There's a clear moral urgency encapsulated within it; a 'we must act now', a 'we must be brave', and perhaps 'we cannot afford to stand down.' It is both rousing and encouraging; it holds us to account and aspires us to more. It reminds us that whatever we do in

this very moment matters immensely; this is the unfolding of the universe in our very hands.

It also seems fitting that Purim, in some ways, is the fulcrum between Hanukkah (and Tu B'Shvat) and Pesach. This quarter of the Jewish year, I often like to teach, is where we fight to hold our own against the Antiochuses, Hamans and Pharaohs of the world. It is where we rally our community, proudly and courageously, to confront abuses of power and overturn systems of injustice. Purim is the festival of the role-reversal, where we remind the powerful of their limitations and encourage the powerless in their newfound strength. This is the time to take Jewish responsibility; to pursue justice vigorously so that we may all be redeemed from the narrow places come Passover.

I've certainly felt these sentiments keenly. During this time calling for Jewish pride and dignity, I was honored to be interviewed about antisemitism in KCRG's 'Ethical Perspectives in the News' together with colleague Rabbi Todd Thalblum from Temple Judah in Cedar Rapids. When confronted with the potential of antisemitism (see President Janice Weiner's column), we were able to proudly rally our community and focus on love, rather than hate. 'For such a time like this', we will stake out our rightful place as a Jewish community in Iowa, with pride, resilience and joy.

Furthermore, some of you may know that during the month of Shevat, I did a (mostly successful)

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FROM THE RABBI *Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)*

(Continued from page 1)

'Vegan Shevat Challenge'. This was entirely self-imposed but it was a way for me to re-examine my relationship to food, the dietary laws, ethical consumption and the planet. My month of veganism inspired fun and engaging conversations and helped me re-appraise and appreciate the food on my plate. This environmental conscience dovetails beautiful with Tu Bishvat and you can also read another Esther's thoughts on her own spiritual practice of not buying needlessly in the period during Hanukkah and Tu Bishvat. (Esther is our 'remote member' in Scandinavia and this is her first piece of writing to the Bulletin!). Staying on the theme of Tu Bishvat a little longer, we also enjoyed a lovely Havdalah/Tu Bishvat event at Brix Restaurant with good food (including vegan options), thoughtful discussions and rousing song.

Our thoughts have been turning not just to environmental concerns but also to what is happening in our country and, closer to home, our state. I am a Board Member of the Iowa Interfaith Alliance which works tirelessly to highlight issues of justice in the Hawkeye State. In that capacity, I have been part of a 'clergy for reproductive rights' group and our clergy delegation went down to the Des Moines State House to defend reproductive rights and LGBTQ rights in our public schools. At such a time as this, it is important for progressive religion to stand up and be counted; to raise our voices for justice and inclusivity, for the separation of church and state and for the rights of women and other minorities. I was proud to talk to legislators of both parties and convey Jewish views and values on



FROM THE RABBI *Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)*

(Continued from page 2)

these important ethical issues. We also boosted our support for LGBTQ inclusion in schools by attending an impromptu ‘walk-out’ of school students (see photos included). It is important to let our youth know that we have their back; that we will embrace and love them for exactly who they are, in the strength of their authenticity and integrity.

Before we know it, Purim is here and Pesach is not far behind. Families are so welcome to celebrate our Purim Carnival with us on March 5th and our Sunday School has prepared a hilarious Purim Spiel with plenty of ‘on trend’ cultural references to entertain adults just as much as kids. Also, we will be selling hamantaschen at the Carnival to raise money for a synagogue sustainability project: a rain barrel.

On Monday the 6th of March, we will be having our joint Hillel-Agudas Achim Megillah Reading (and hamantaschen baking) for people of all ages (kids

also welcome!) Please register through Hillel for this event.

As Pesach draws close, I am working on organizing a ‘Young-ish, Jew-ish’ group for adults between the ages of 25 and 45 (roughly... eh, who’s checking?) We have seen interest and engagement of this age group at the synagogue and we will be organizing some social events in the near future. If you would like to be on our mailing list, please let the office or rabbi know!

There is a lot more going on at the synagogue: we’ve had a ‘synagogue basics’ course as well as a wonderfully well-attended ‘Learners’ Service’. We will also be doing an Alternative, Contemplative Service in the future as well as a Family Service. Come check out our different offerings!

Let’s remember: for ‘such a time as this.’ Spring is coming, let’s roll up our proverbial sleeves and build the Jewish presence we want and the just world we need by beginning locally, one small, defiant, resilient step at a time.

MARCH SERVICE SCHEDULE

[Streaming link for Zoom Shabbat services](#)

Tetzaveh <i>(Exodus 27:20-30:10)</i>	Friday, March 3 Saturday, March 4	7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative) Mishkan T’filah (Reform)
Ki Tissa <i>(Exodus 30:11-34:35)</i>	Friday, March 10 Saturday, March 11	7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T’filah Lev Shalem
Vayakhel-Pekudei <i>(Exodus 35:1-40:38; 12:1-20)</i>	Friday, March 17 Saturday, March 18	7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T’filah Lev Shalem
Vayikra <i>(Leviticus 1:1-5:26)</i>	Friday, March 24 Saturday, March 25	7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T’filah Lev Shalem

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Janice Weiner

Hate is rampant in the state house – hate and creeping authoritarianism. Throughout our long history, Jews have seen this movie way too often. We know that when permission is given by those in power to punch down on one group, it does not end there.

So I wanted to share with you part of what I said on the floor of the state senate this past Monday, as a point of personal privilege, in the wake of the “Day of Hate” that local and national Nazi groups proclaimed for this past Saturday. It is important that people realize and are educated about what hate is and what hate does:

As I was driving home last Thursday, I got a call from the director of Hillel at the University of Iowa – the organization that supports Jewish students on campus. “Had I seen the notification about an antisemitic ‘Day of Hate’ being organized by Nazi groups around the country for Saturday the 25th?” she asked. I had not. She added that it was spearheaded by a home-grown Iowa group, then spread countrywide – I won’t give them the satisfaction of naming them publicly. I pulled off at the next rest area.

That first call set off a cascade of other calls, texts and emails. Why was I involved? Because I’m currently president of the board of my synagogue. By the time I got home, collectively, we had reached out to three police departments, shared information with them, notified members of our congregation, and organized extra security for Shabbat – sabbath – services this past Saturday. This was replicated in Jewish houses of worship and community centers not just here in Iowa – but across the country.

A day of hate. Hate is not isolated; it is not insulated. Once given permission to thrive,

it is like a cancer - it metastasizes. It doesn’t matter what group is targeted – it can be, as in this case, Jews. It can be Blacks or Hispanics or immigrants or the LGBT community. It is still hate. And hate is a Pandora’s Box – once opened, we lose control.

I’d ask that for just a minute, we all let down our guard and reflect. Some legislation making its way through this body singles out specific groups. When we do that, when we ban teaching about past hate, whether we realize it or not, we give oxygen to hate.

After the Pittsburgh Tree of Life synagogue murders in 2018, I wrote in a letter to the editor that we Jews are used to being the canary in the coal mine of hate – for millennia. I know it’s devilishly hard to slap that lid back on, but it is past time.

We cannot give hate any purchase or space. Hate can’t win. It can’t. Because when it does, we all lose.

Surely, we can all agree that hate can’t win.

You can see this in video format on Twitter and Facebook, and you can contact me for a link.

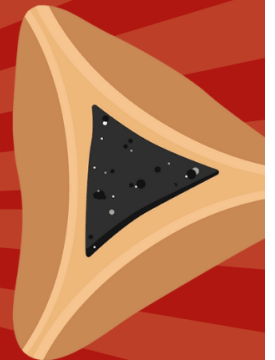
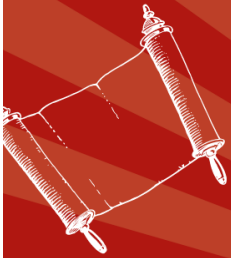
We know that the best remedy is to push out into the community, to show up, to be good allies, and to fully engage in Tikkun Olam. That has never been more necessary than it is now. Thank you for being who you are, thank you for being part of this amazing congregation.



SUNDAY MARCH 5 2023
AT AGUDAS ACHIM SYNAGOGUE



PURIM CARNIVAL



Purim Spiel! Hamentashen!

Fancy costumes!

9:15 Sunday School

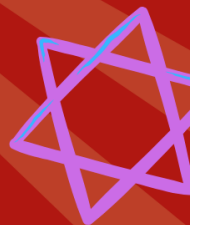
10:30 Spiel (parents invited!)

11 - 12:15 carnival, balloons and games



Join the fun and bring a friend!

For info: principal@agudasachimic.org



Join Hillel & Agudas
Achim Congregation for:

Purim

Monday, March 6, 2023

6:30 pm: Hamantaschen

baking

7:15 pm: Megillah reading

@ Iowa Hillel

Costumes encouraged!



Registration is required via lu.ma/iowa-hillel

TIKKUN OLAM NEWS

Mallory Hellman

TIKKUN OLAM COMMITTEE SEEKS MEMBERS

Greetings, friends! This is Mallory Hellman, new(ish) chair of the Tikkun Olam Committee. Since taking this position in 2022, I've been excited both to keep up Agudas Achim's tikkun olam traditions (thanks to all who donated to the food drive!) and to start some new ones - like the reverse tashlich river cleanup we did in October.

As we all know, it takes collective effort to make lasting change, and I'm eager to work with fellow members of our congregation to plan some more outward-facing/justice-oriented events in the

coming months. If you are curious about what tikkun olam stands for or have ideas about how we can engage meaningfully with the greater Iowa City/Coralville community, join our introductory meeting!

Tikkun Olam Introductory Meeting

Thursday, March 23, 4:30-5:30 p.m.

619 2nd Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52245

Light refreshments will be provided! The location (my home) is wheelchair accessible. All are encouraged to come - no previous experience with tikkun olam necessary.

COVID COMMENTS

Bob Wallace, Barcey Levy, & Jane Zukin

There has been some reasonably good news. CDC has changed Johnson County's risk designation from Medium to Low, but there are still cases reported daily in the County, and there are mixed findings in other parts of the country. The policies for entering the synagogue have not changed, and we still recommend masking and social distancing, and when group activities are occurring, we still request that these recommendations be followed. Public health laboratories are still searching for new viral variants, and these will be reported publicly if any are found. It is still important to be up to date on all of your COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines. As noted before, if you have special problems or risks with for the COVID-19 virus, please consult your health provider.

Another important issue that has been noted in the media is that the federal government has

announced that many of the national emergency programs that were in place during the pandemic will end on May 11, 2023. The details are complex and can't be summarized here, but there are several benefits that have been in place that may be removed. For example, the additional funding for the federal SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—"food stamps") will end on this March 1st, and neighborhood food pantries have already noted particularly strained resources. Medicare will continue to provide vaccines at no cost, but this may not be the case for testing kits, masks and some medical treatments. Please try to be aware of these issues and talk to your health providers or funding agencies if you are receiving health or other pandemic-related benefits.

Thanks, and Shalom.

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: rsvp@agudasachimic.org

For more information: leslea-collins@outlook.com

SCHOOL NEWS

Sonja Spear

Kitah Gimel marched into the Sanctuary last Sunday chanting “Eyn Kamokha” at the top of their lungs. They went right up to the *bimah* and led the entire school through the service for taking out the Torah with just a little help from the rabbi. This was not *quite* what I had planned for the 15-minute service that ends every Sunday School session. I was prepared to teach prayers from the Kabbalat Shabbat service. I had a sheaf of handouts and everything. But the kids were way ahead of me, as usual.

Kitah Gimel had been practicing the opening prayers of the Torah service for a couple sessions. They had reviewed vocabulary, written commentary in their notebooks, sounded words out, and chanted, chanted, chanted the prayers. They were getting tired of this set of prayers, and they did not hesitate to tell me so.

“I get it,” I told them. “Just show me that you’re ready to lead these prayers, and we’ll move on.”

Challenge accepted! They put their heads together and planned a takeover of the entire fifteen-minute service. Outrageous! Well, of course, I’m secretly thrilled and very proud of them. But let’s keep that between ourselves.

Kitah Gimel’s seizure of power seems right for the month of Adar, when revolution is always in the air. Purim is all about reversals of fortune.

The underdogs come out on top, and the powerful fall victim to their own evil schemes. No wonder kids love this holiday, even though adults sometimes find it a bit disconcerting. So, power to the kids! It’s time to make masks and groggers using nothing but paper plates, a few paper forms, and yards of tape.

Kitah Aleph threw itself into making groggers out of paper plates, coloring masks and gluing stickers on crowns as they learned the story of Esther.

Kitah Bet put a little more emphasis on the *mitzvot* of Purim, including the *seudah*, or festive meal, which struck them as a very good idea.

We are *almost* ready for the Purim carnival on Sunday, when the kids (and parents) will try their hands at many new games. The carnival is in the last hour of Sunday School, from 11:00 – 12:15. Everyone is welcome! Costumes are optional but strongly encouraged. The games are free, but bring cash for the bake sale. Proceeds will go to help **Kitah Gimel** buy a rain barrel for the synagogue and to ReLeaf Cedar Rapids, a nonprofit that is restoring trees to Cedar Rapids.

After all, Purim is not just about revolution, it is also about resiliency. Without humor, pluck, and a sense of purpose, Esther could not have defeated Haman and (without drawing too close a comparison) **Kitah Gimel** could not have derailed our fifteen-minute service.

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.

A BUDDHIST LENS – ADULT ED EVENT

A Buddhist Lens

Announcing an adult ed event on the spiritual perspective of Buddhism, led by Naomi Bloom.

Buddhism and Judaism appear to have had very little interaction until the 20th Century, but the interface has become fairly robust and quite interesting in recent decades. What is spiritual practice, at its root? Can insights from Buddhism enhance our spiritual practice as Jews? Let's explore these questions by hearing what may be some new ideas, trying out some brief meditations, sharing, and discussing together.

Everyone is welcome. No previous experience with or knowledge of Buddhism is necessary. Food will be provided.

Date: Sunday March 19, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Location: Agudas Achim Congregation

Optional suggested reading: *The Jew in the Lotus* by Rodger Kamenetz

To register: rsvp@agudasachimic.org

For more information, contact [Naomi Bloom](#).

If there is sufficient interest, we will organize follow-up sessions at a time convenient to those interested.

EARLY KEYBOARD SOCIETY CONCERT

An Early Keyboard Society concert by Rebecca Pechefsky, harpsichord, will be held on **Sunday, March 26 at 3:00 p.m.**

This will be a concert of music by rarely heard Spanish composers José de Nebra (1702-1768), Sebastián de Albero (1722-1756) and Antonio Soler (1729-1783).

Well-known in the New York area, Rebecca Pechefsky has performed in such venues as Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Hall, and the historic 1765 Morris-Jumel Mansion, where she and Brooklyn Baroque have appeared in a yearly series for two decades.



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 March 22 at 1:00 p.m. on Zoom.
[Contact the office](#) for information.

WARM UP AMERICA

Warm Up America will meet on March 5th in the library, and on March 19, April 2 & 16 in the social hall, all from 10:30 a.m. to noon. Masks are optional, but may be a good idea because we work together closely.

We welcome congregants and friends to help us organize, assemble, and finish the afghans. If you knit, crochet, or can sew with yarn -- or would like to learn -- please contact us or join us during a Sunday a.m. meeting. And, if you find extra synthetic yarn during spring cleaning, we'd appreciate your donating it to our yarn bins in the Shull.



DONATIONS

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Ray & Lindy Buch: In memory of Elizabeth Buch

Judy & Gary Galluzzo: In memory of Charlotte Bernstein

Tom & Becky Gelman: In memory of Webster B. Gelman

Leonard Sandler & Lucy David: In memory of Gertrude Sandler

David Skorton & Robin Davisson: In memory of Sam Skorton

Temple Emanuel: In appreciation of Rabbi Hugenholtz

Helen Ziskind: In memory of Sydney Josselson

BUILDING FUND

Jeff & Sara Braverman

CEMETERY FUND

Michael & Joanne Margolin: In memory of Arthur Margolin

FAMILY ASSISTANCE FUND

Doug & Beverly Jones: In memory of Goldie Solganick

GENERAL GIFTS

Christine Boyer: In appreciation of Yoga

Valarie Brown

Michael Flaum & Elizabeth Willis: In appreciation of Lea's Yoga classes

Judy & Gary Galluzzo: In appreciation of Yoga

Joshua Hare: In appreciation of Yoga

Suzanne Kaller

Richard & Karen Lipman

David & Martha Lubaroff: In memory of Albert Lubaroff

Susan Lutgendorf

Nan Rubin

Barbara Silverman

Sarah Weinman

SIM & SARA STRAUSS MEMORIAL FUND

Richard Strauss & Ellen Herman: In honor of David Strauss 80th birthday

Richard Strauss & Ellen Herman: In memory of Samuel Markovitz

Stephen Strauss: In honor of David Strauss 80th birthday

Stephen Strauss: In memory of Meyer Markovitz, Rebecca Posner, Isaac Strauss, Samuel Markovitz and Susan Strauss

LIBRARY NOTES

Teresa Weiner

- Deepest gratitude goes out to Ellen Caplan who retired after years of devoting time and library science expertise to us as our volunteer librarian. You're a treasure, Ellen!
- Thank you for donations from your home libraries! Look for books not added to our collection in the foyer— free for the taking before being donated elsewhere.
- Agudas Achim is a PJLibrary partner. Check it out [at this link](#). Please help us cover costs with donations earmarked for PJLibrary.
- The library is open anytime the synagogue is open. Stop in and sit for a bit. Check something out. Return it when you're finished. Repeat! It's really that simple.
- Library Committee members are Becky Gelman, Rabbi Jeff Portman, Esther Retish, Sonja Spear, and Teresa Weiner. Comments? Questions? Let us hear from you!

MARCH 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	18	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
Sun	5	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM	Sun	19	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
		Sunday School	9:15 AM			Warm-Up America	10:30 AM
		Warm-Up America	10:30 AM			Adar Yoga	2:00 PM
		Purim Carnival	11:00 AM			Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM
		Adar Yoga	2:00 PM	Mon	20	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM	Wed	22	Mussar Course	11:00 AM
Mon	6	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM			Free Lunch	11:30 AM
		Hamentashen Baking & Megillah Reading at Hillel	6:30 PM			Book Group	1:00 PM
Wed	8	Mussar Course	11:00 AM	Fri	24	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
Thur	9	Exec Meeting	5:30 PM			Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM
Fri	10	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM			Alternative Healing Service (in-person only)	7:00 PM
		Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM	Sat	25	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM	Sun	26	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
Sat	11	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM			Sunday School	9:15 AM
Sun	12	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM			Early Keyboard Society Concert	3:00 PM
		Adar Yoga	2:00 PM			Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM
		Jewish Young Adults Meetup @Sidekick Coffee	3:00 PM	Mon	27	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM	Wed	29	Mussar Course	11:00 AM
Mon	13	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	Fri	31	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
Wed	15	Ritual Committee	7:30 PM			Family Kabbalat Shabbat Dinner	6:00 PM
Thur	16	Board Meeting	7:00 PM			Family Kabbalat Shabbat	7:00 PM
						SAVE THE DATES!	
				Thur	4/6	Second Seder Meal	6:00 PM
				Sat	4/8	Torah Service at Zabners	9:30 AM

SYNAGOGUE VENMO

We Have Venmo! Our 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.](#)
[We also have Paypal here.](#)

TU B'SHEVAT

Ruchel Nechama

Note: The views and ideas expressed are those of the author and not necessarily representative of the views of Agudas Achim.

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This year we decided to truly plant the roots of justice and Tikkun Olam into a month-long focused journey from Chanukah into Tu B'Shevat. To be mindful of the resources we take in, make sure we take care of our earth and be conscious of everything going into making all that we use, as well as being mindful and trying to create as little trash as possible. All this while we are re-doing our apartment. We decided to do a "no spend", meaning not spending on anything except rent (and medications and veterinary and cat food, because of course, life comes as it comes) - but not on food for us, not anything. We ate out of the fridge and freezers, using up those odds and ends in little jars and those weird flours at the back of the cabinet and rustled up, at times slightly odd concoctions, but we were always fed and happy. And we were conscious. We were thankful. We knew that this meal, with all its parts, had passed through the hands of so many people before ending up before us. If we did have to buy anything we decided that to cover the "cost" we would have to sell something we had - we sold some books, a colourings book we hadn't used, a flower pot. But mostly we just didn't need to buy anything at all if we just were willing to be a bit creative. But as has been our experience when we sell something: no matter how small, there's usually someone who wants what I no longer want, rarely is my "trash", truly trash.

We live in a world where we are told the minute something isn't perfect or doesn't serve your life, it is tantamount to being worthless to everyone. We went from being told to preserve, sometimes keeping too much, never being able to let go for fear of not having enough, or "just in case", but to always consider the future, to minimalism being touted as The Better Way. But instead of a minimalism of using less, needing less, of finding ways of doing without or working to learn new skills so we can mend and

keep our items working longer, we were told to throw it in the bin, don't be attached to things, don't let them weigh you down, if you don't use it then just chuck it out! Instead of learning how to take care of our items, we were told not to care at all. "Does it bring you joy?" And so we didn't get told to buy less, consume less - just to throw out more. And so the cycle of consumerism keeps going, we just see the effects less visibly in terms of boxes of clutter in our home.

A few years ago I wanted to truly look at and learn more about what it takes to create our items, how consumerism affects wildlife and nature, how we are encroaching on so much animal habitat, cutting down trees to make room for even more production and all the issues this brings to our ecosystem. I think a great exercise to truly understand the value of something, even something you just consider trash or meaningless, is to hold it in your hand and think about how each component of it is made; what has had to be grown or created, all the often tens or even hundreds of parts of different things needed to be made and grown to go into this one thing that has then been shipped, and just have a think of everything that went into creating that fuel, all the work done to extract it, all the things that went into building that boat or plane that transported it, all that went into getting it to you from the docks or airport, everything that goes into keeping a store running, everything grown to create the things needed to get all of these things together - all of this has converged together to give you this thing in your hand that you're just about to throw in the trash, that will likely go into an anaerobic environment where it won't even be broken down even if it could in a different environment. And if we don't throw it in the bin, we send it off to the charity shop.

Unfortunately they won't be able to sell most of the things either and will just throw most things straight out as well, and so while we get to feel like we didn't _really_ just throw a useful item in the trash, we just outsourced it with someone else ending up doing it.

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TU B'SHEVAT

Ruchel Nechama

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The end results stay the same. To keep myself accountable to myself I avoid this type of donation and always sell or donate directly person-to-person, it takes more time and effort but it forces me to be honest with myself about what my footprint on the ground truly is. Because the world all around is telling us to not care, to care about our own lives in our own bubble, but if the last few years taught us anything it is how inter-connected we are, how what we do affects others and how we are accountable to each other.

By doing this exercise, to truly see everything that this thing you are holding truly is, the multitudes having gone into it, doing this even one time will truly change how you view the things in your home and on the shelf in the store and make it so much easier to say no thank you to things that won't last. But it also makes you so much more thankful to all the people who have affected your life: how each of us is part of other people's lives all over the world in ways we never consider. I am so thankful for the work done, for the time spent going into creating the food I eat, the things I use, the clothes I wear. I want to truly respect them, the earth, all of it. Truly the tree of life is a vast, inter-connection of every person of earth and the more we realize that we are connected by every action done, the more further we come in respecting and loving the earth and everyone on it.

As part of all of this and learning about this over the last few years (having done no-spends and such several times over the years) has been learning the value of mending. Both for the world for also for ourselves and feeling capable and continuing to learn new things. My motto is that if it is not worth mending, it's not worth buying, and so when I buy something I always try to think 'what happens if this breaks?'. If I don't think I'd care much, it's a sign it's something I probably don't need to buy in the first place. If it's something that I think will be very difficult to mend or fix, I try to see if I can buy a

similar item or the same item from a different place where it can be more easily fixed. From doing this and trying to avoid creating "trash", I have learned so many skills: I'm not a practical person at all, I am very thankful to have a wife who is by far my better half in this department, but I've learned (or helped...) to darn socks, to make too small clothes into new items and to re-design clothes, to take in and let out clothes, to take apart furniture to make new things with the parts, to take clothes that are too far gone and make them into stuffing or use them as rags and washcloths or cut into parts so I can use patches that are ok to mend other clothes. We've taken apart parts of our dishwasher and our washer to fix things - the amount of tutorials for all kinds of things like this on YouTube is beyond incredible! - and saved both our wallets and the planet. I've learned how to make all kinds of recipes I never would have tried if I would just go to the store to pick up something to more easily make something with what I had, I have furthered my community and friendships by trading my skills or something I have for their skills or something I need. I have spent six hours folding laundry for a friend in return for being able to binge their streaming service for a show I like when I was feeling a bit desperate for entertainment. For those six hours though we also laughed and talked and were able to spend time together. I was able to teach her a skill I have (how to fold sheets! It doesn't have to be something big!) while she was able to help me with something I wanted. I have cleaned apartments, watched pets, recycled literally several hundred dollars worth of bottles for a friend who had been storing her's in her basement and needed them gone but felt embarrassed to do so -- of course I've done most of these things with nothing in return plenty of times before, but I've also traded it for something I've needed when I've had my own needs. I needed new lightbulbs, maybe someone else has some but needs something of mine?

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TU B'SHEVAT

Ruchel Nechama

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Community is so important and looking beyond the easy fix and the quick purchase or simple toss has enabled me to learn so many new things and to strengthen my friendships and community. Community is one of our most important assets and so many of Judaism's core teachings are about the necessity of helping and supporting each other, with not only giving charity but of teaching skills and to find ways of helping others while also allowing them to feel useful in return. In a community that shares more equitably sometimes a trade can feel better than a gift. We all have something to share, something to teach, something of value. If we move beyond just simply viewing something as useful or useless we can find so much beauty and so much ingenuity - and sharing that with the ones around us means not only do our items last longer and we can respect the resources having gone into them more, but we can also further our communities' skills, spending time together and helping everyone more readily have their needs met both physically and emotionally.

I think all of this is a really good focus as we turned from Chanukah, where we had a miracle of having what we needed last longer, where we didn't have what we needed and where we truly had a miracle of resources and into Tu B'Shevat where we honor the resources provided to us from the creation of the earth, where we are thankful for and respect the resources growing all around us and the true abundance we have in the world if we were just willing to share and create an equitable world and that G-d has provided us a blueprint for with Maaser, Orlah, Shmitah and so on.

G-d has shown that when we truly are lacking resources He can provide it, but he also has created a world where we are not truly lacking the resources to feed everyone: we have plenty, we could feed millions more. What is stopping that is us and the systems we've put in place, our unwillingness to truly see the needs of the poor and the stranger as

as important as our own. So I wanted to make sure to focus on respecting the resources we've been given and the barriers causing some people to lack access to the abundance that is available. There are so many barriers we have created to be able to have a world of plenty for some, at the expense of others. We value some people's wants over other people's needs. Tu B'Shevat is just one of the New Years that remind us about the cycle of life and death, abundance and debt, creation and destruction. Tu B'Shevat shows us that circle of life, the neverending abundance that is there if we just respect the sanctity of it and see the true humanity and life all around us and that we need to work together to equitably share and cooperate as true communities.

So that's what we're doing for Tu B'Shevat this year. We didn't really plan for a Seder or for any sort of specific ritual. We decided to plant our roots firmly into the ground, to truly be mindful and cognizant and to see the promise of life springing forth from the ground yet again and to just sit with all of this, to see the connection and the blessings that The Holy One truly has brought forth from every vine, from the ground and from the branches, from every seed and from the womb, to be truly thankful for all the people whose hearts and hands, whose labour has brought forth so much. May there come a time when we truly respect everyone and everything around us and we truly embody Tikkun Olam, where we repair the world, figuratively and literally, emotionally and physically, where we can all plant our roots and grow and thrive.

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh HaOlam, borei n'fashot rabot v'chesronan, al kol ma she-barata, l'hachayot bahem nefesh kol chai, barukh chei ha-Olamim.

Blessed be You, Lord our G-d, the One who created so many different living things, all needing each other, to make one Life interwoven through them all, as one soul.

MARCH YAHRZEITS

Asher Bar-Lev	Betty Krantz	Mark Rosenthal
Max Berkowitz	Donia Kuperman	Sanford G. Rossen
Pearl Berman	Joseph Landweber	Marcia Williams Roston
Eleanor Blauner	Mae Landweber	Mark Rothstein
Joan Clements Bryant	Jean Leiberman Lenett	Joseph Rubenstein
Allen Buch	Rae Lieberman	Mary Frances Russell
Corinne Chapman	Helen Leah Lison	Mary Saletta
Sol Crandell	Benjamin London	Esther Sandler
Morris Dicker	Edith London	Gertrude Sandler
Mike Donner	Evelyn Madison	Jay Sandler
Hyman Dubin	Anna Markovitz	Reuben Savin
Edith Davidson Estin	Dinah Leah Markovitz	Farel Schapira
Sadie Friedman	Andrew Marks	Leo Schapira
Mary Gantz	William Melton	Jessica Schwartz
Samuel Goldman	Amanda Miller	Ed Singer
Harley William Goodman	Bess Millstein	Sari Sprince
Bertha Graber	Joann Sprinkman Picard	Sara Strauss
Arthur Gross	William Henry Picard	Warren Stroh
Harriet Blakeslee Hall	Dorothy Pliner	Eileen Wallace
Schuyler Schenck Haskell	Rose Lee Pomerantz	Stanley Weinberg
William Herman	Lucile Potter	Nancy McGinnis Whitehead
Benjamin B. Hertz	Joseph Prager	Dale Wilhelm
Dora Joseph	Louis Elliot Price	Ralph Wingo
Ida Kleinman	Louis Rosenbaum	Daniel Wolf

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