



Agudas Achim Congregation

401 E. Oakdale Blvd., Coralville, IA 52241

Phone: 319-337-3813

www.AgudasAchimIC.org

May 2023 / Iyar–Sivan 5783

Notice: All streamed services (except High Holidays which will have a separate link) from this point forwards will be streamed from our normal link, listed below. This is just for clarity around non-Shabbat services and does not affect our normal Shabbat link.

[Zoom Link for Agudas Achim Services](#)

FROM THE RABBI

Esther Hugenholtz

Personal Reflections upon Poignant Moments

Twenty years ago, I spent some time in Jerusalem. It wasn't my first visit to Israel and it certainly wouldn't be my last but it came at a poignant and painful time in my life. I was young, broke, had recently ended a significant relationship and was struggling with personal setbacks, working my way through graduate school. I was trying to access Judaism in a context that didn't make it easy (or welcoming) to do so, encountering more closed gates than open doors. Given all this brokenness, this flight to Jerusalem was more desperate pilgrimage than joyous vacation.

I remember going to the Western Wall with ambivalence and a sense of 'kavod'. *Kavod* (or *kaved*) in Hebrew doesn't just mean honor (which is an idiomatic translation) but literally means 'heaviness', 'weightiness.' I felt the weight of walking down those pale stone steps, in my long skirt and sleeves covering my elbows, as required by the ultra-orthodox authority that oversees the Wall.

My Jewish spirituality, rich though it is, does not center around the Western Wall. In fact, I struggle with all its implications: political, theological and otherwise. That is not to say that praying at the

Western Wall isn't a profound experience. I approached the Wall with expectation and trepidation. My desperate fingers clutched a handwritten note. Despite all my rationalist-Maimonidean inclinations, I had felt moved to pen down the deepest desires of my heart. I *davened* (prayed), pressed my hands against the cool, rugged stone and slipped the note between the cracks.

Twenty years later, I sat in my rabbinic office when a congregant reached out to me. Knowing that I needed emotional and spiritual support, this thoughtful person had charged a family member in Israel to go to the Wall and slip a note with my name and a healing prayer in the cracks. This happened only last week and I was profoundly overcome by this loving gesture and its spiritual power. Somewhere, embedded among those ancient stones, were words that wove my soul back into the Land of Israel; a prayer that was an answer to that other prayer from two decades earlier.

You may wonder what I wrote on that original note. It's a little sentimental and embarrassing, I admit,

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FROM THE RABBI

Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)

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but in the name of authenticity and vulnerability, I will share it, because rabbis are humans too. I had written a prayer for three things: that I would one day be Jewish, meet a loving Jewish spouse and become a rabbi.

Sitting in my office, I realized that all my three prayers had come true. And that a new prayer was unfolding before the mysterious Heart of All Being. I felt the tug of a sacred thread spanning decades and continents, pulling me back into the embrace of Torah and the Jewish People.

You may wonder why I am writing this. After all, it's not really my style. Despite the protestations of some congregants who tell me that they enjoy hearing the personal in the rabbinic, I am usually reticent to share stories from my life in my sermons or writings. I do not wish to center myself, my experiences, or suggest that these are normative. I value the rigor of intellectual preaching, of reaching into the textual tradition. Despite my gregarious nature, even I can be shy about the matters of the heart.

However, I am choosing vulnerability and authenticity because the moment calls for it. So many moments call for it, on both the micro- and macro-level. In this Bulletin, you will read important contributions from our President and President-Elect addressing the recent tensions in our community. It has been a heavy and weighty time for lay leaders and professionals alike, for every congregant who feels deeply and keenly the interests and welfare of our beloved community. It has been a heavy time for my family and myself as your rabbi. I have reached into the deep wells of my soul and have *kvetched* to loved ones and called upon the Holy One.

'Kavod', 'weight' is such an apt descriptor; we are all 'holding' so much and what we are 'holding' is so heavy. As we march through the Jewish calendar

and what we colloquially call the 'Yoms' (Yom HaShoah, Yom haZikaron, Yom ha'Atzma'ut), our hearts turn to the tribulations of the Jewish past and the challenges of the Jewish present. We have seen the unfolding of difficult events in Israel over the last months which may impact each of us differently but leave few of us unaffected. Closer to home, we are dealing with an American political situation that seems to be spinning out of control, as the contours of cruelty drift into ever-sharpening focus. And in this complicated, aggrieved, torn world, we step out, blinking in its harsh light after three years of pandemic isolation. We see each other's faces again, but have forgotten how to be 'panim al panim', truly face-to-face, to deeply see each other as wondrously made in the Image of God. This is the 'mussar', the moral muscle of our tradition that we must continually train.

I am struck by what I find myself holding; the paradox of pain and gratitude. I have been overwhelmed by kind, considerate, thoughtful, compassionate messages of support and deeply moving testimonials from congregants. I have felt the love and solidarity from our lay leaders who have worked quietly and tirelessly for the benefit of our congregation and its holy relationships. They have been and continue to be true and wise partners in sacred leadership. These experiences have been humbling and have reinvigorated my calling and mission. When I was ordained ten years ago, I made a promise to myself to, as Rabbi Leo Baeck phrased it, 'fill Jews with Judaism' and shine the light of Torah in my small corner of the world. That vow still stands, more than ever.

'The times are a-changing', a famous Jewish bard once sung. And change is hard, especially when it feels sudden and overwhelming. In the six years I've served this congregation, we have seen so much trauma and upheaval (I sometimes wonder what the heck I stepped into!) We need to give each other time and grace to process and heal, and accord ourselves curiosity and questioning to see

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FROM THE RABBI *Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)*

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what beautiful things may come next. Communal transition does not mean relinquishing the past or letting go of what we cherish, across Jewish generations. It merely means expanding the tent of Torah, seeing the abundance of possibility and renewal and know, deeply, that this has always been the history of our People.

If you would have whispered in my ear twenty years ago that I would one day be a rabbi in Iowa, with an American-born toddler and another daughter watching the Hawkeyes triumph at women's basketball (and a son who doesn't care for sports but loves coming to synagogue!), I would have stared at you with utter disbelief and perhaps some notion of absurdist humor. Yet, here I am, connected to this beautiful country, and all of you, through the sacred thread that once connected me to the cool stones of the Western Wall.

As Shavu'ot nears (and let me briefly pitch the awesome Shavu'ot plans elsewhere in this Bulletin), the sacred threads that connect us and the

generations may be revealed in more clarity. The Rabbis teach that all generations of Jews, whether by birth or by choice, whether in the past or in the future, were all standing at Sinai. When so much seems torn asunder in our world, we are still connected by these sacred threads, as they wrap around our fingers like tzitzit and coil around our hearts, binding us all. We belong to each other, even and especially when we disagree, when we are hurting, when we are lonely or scared. We have been through so much; be it these three pandemic years, or the century of this congregation's existence or the millennia of Jewish history.

With gratitude to God, we are still here to celebrate the joy and the beauty of it all. Let us, in this season of the Giving of our Torah, affirm these truths and choose them again. Being Jewish in Iowa City is pretty great (did you know Trader Joe's sells blintzes?)—and I pray that all of us get to be Jews full of Judaism here together.

With blessings of peace and offerings of love and gratitude,

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz

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.

LIFE CYCLE EVENTS

The Congregation extends its condolences to Steve Collins and Lea Haravon Collins, Steven J., Serena, Jeremiah, Ariel and Tobiah Collins and Sue McCann on the death of Steve's brother, Rodney Guy Collins.

**There is a joyful
place in Iowa City to
meet Jewish friends!**

**Want to learn more about the
synagogue school?**

**Join us for festivities on
Sunday, May 7, 11:00 a.m. to
noon, and stay for a Q&A about
the school, 12:00 to 12:30.**





Kids' Shavuot

Ice cream! Petting Zoo! Fire pit!

Sunday, May 7:

Sunday School 9:15 a.m.,
Celebration 11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Janice Weiner

One of the many blessings of Congregation Agudas Achim is our diversity. That's not just a catch phrase – it's true. We are about everything you can imagine – in terms of religiosity, who we are, where we came from, how we practice, and how we came to Judaism. We are a tapestry that reminds me of the varied squares of one of the Warm Up America blankets – and like those blankets, we help, reach out and warm others without judgment. Decades ago, the Reform and Conservative movements decided it was time to stop being the gatekeepers of Judaism – and to throw the gates open. We are who we are because of that - and it is a very good thing.

It allows us to accept people, meet them where they are, welcome them into our community – and grow. That is not the case with so many religions and denominations these days. I consider us fortunate indeed. We might benefit further from studying and considering our own version of the URJ's "Audacious Hospitality", the Reform Movement's focused effort on equity, diversity and inclusion.

When the state legislature was debating legislation banning gender affirming care for anyone under 18, I spoke on the floor about Jewish values – b'tzelem Elohim and all being made in the image of G-d. That means every single person is valued and accepted for who they are, in all their diversity. And while today's fractured political discourse may occasionally make us yearn for more people who think or look like we do, it is so important to pull up short and recognize the danger inherent in that. Over and over throughout history, we have seen – experienced firsthand – the dangers inherent therein.

Congregants who have studied Mussar (I am not yet among them, though I aspire to be) have told me that patience is one of the character traits (middot) of Mussar. For me, patience is like taking a long, slow breath, and then another and yet another. It is in short supply in our society as a whole and, I

suspect, in many households. (I'm reminded of the epidemic of pulling the trigger on people for pulling up in the wrong driveway or ringing the wrong doorbell). We are all on a hair trigger. We need patience with one another, with people who hold different points of view, who represent different communities, and who display differences in any one of myriad ways. I suspect many of us could take a step back, take a breath – and I include myself in that category. Mussar teachers suggest the use of phrases that we repeat to ourselves each day when we are working on specific middot; one such suggested phrase for patience is: "I can bear the burden of my obstacles". In other words, it is a reminder that it is expected and understandable that things don't go our way all the time – in fact, it is remarkable how often things do go as we plan – and when they don't, that we have the capacity to bear that burden. This ties into the idea – another fundamental Jewish notion – of "bearing the burden of others" – bearing that burden in the positive sense of being part of a larger system, and part of our collective responsibility. Each of us are part of a larger system and part of our responsibility as a Jew is to bear the burden of others, perhaps to lessen the burden of the other and allow them to take a breath, give them some grace. We need to recognize that each person is a holy soul and treat them accordingly. It's not easy. None of this is easy.

Just as I came back to town in 2015, a very thoughtful, thorough and time-consuming – and, yes, patient - process of choosing a new rabbi was wrapping up. It struck me as a seminal moment for this congregation, a coming together and examining of values and how to move into the future with purpose and intentionality. It's so easy to forget that all that work that was done. I believe it's time to put that front and center again; to remember what we did and how we did it. I was not a part of that but have reaped the benefits many times over.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Janice Weiner (cont.)

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We're not a monolith. People have different views. That's a good thing and it's important to sit with that. Some are most comfortable with the traditions and approaches that served this congregation well for decades. Some want to charge into the future. Both have validity and need to be honored – we will be well served if each of us can gain understanding of the other (and all the gradations in-between) and bear the burden of the other.

In the coming weeks, as we prepare to embark on yet another transition – from one board to another – it may be useful to dwell on the major transitions that have been taking place in this congregation – and the greater community – over the past shmita – the last seven years.

As we were working on our gradual transition from one rabbi to another – no small feat when one has been here for four decades – we were face to face with the dislocations of the Trump presidency, followed by the Pittsburgh Tree of Life murders and

rising antisemitism. Then the pandemic hit, and a whole new level of crisis diverted our attention for valid, existential reasons. It was necessary and absolutely appropriate. But we forgot that we had unfinished transitional business.

I challenge us to resume it with patience, intentionality, openness and tolerance. We can respect, value and learn from each other by again undertaking a similar community-building process. The last one, I believe, taught us a great deal about the community itself – and the sort of community to which we aspire. We are in a different place, with many new members. It is always the right time to gather and learn.

Next month, as my board presidency winds down, I'll do my best to elaborate on this Jewish journey. Informed in part by the communities I encountered during my Foreign Service career, I'll endeavor to lay out my perspective, mindful of our traditions and the road ahead, looking through the prism of my second shot at parenting – and the chance to actually have a child grow up attached to and learning in one Jewish community.

LAG B'OMER

Lag b'Omer Get Together and Workshop

Tuesday, May 9, socializing 6:30 p.m.; workshop 7:30 p.m.

The weather is warming and Big Grove has fire pits! Come gather for Lag b'Omer, like we did last year, at Big Grove for drinks, refreshments (and maybe even nibbles). Stay for the socializing and brainstorming.

The first part of the evening is dedicated to socializing and schmoozing.

The second part will be a workshop on preparing a session for our Shavuot retreat, facilitated by Lisa Heineman. If you have a gift or an offering to share and you'd like a bit of support - or if you're not sure what to share but you're interested in brainstorming - this is the workshop for you. (If you're not able to attend this workshop but would like to facilitate a session at our Shavuot retreat, please reach out to Lisa at Lisa.heineman.1945@gmail.com.)

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING AND NEW BOARD SLATE

David Lubaroff

Dear Fellow Congregants:

The last few years have been stressful, and I am working hard to develop a slate of members for the next board of directors that will work with me to ease us out to be a more congenial and respectful congregation, and have the best interest of the synagogue at heart. I believe that the members on the election slate, made up of a representation of the Agudas Achim membership, are extremely capable carrying out that mission. They are men and women, young and old, recent and longtime members, conservative and reform, gay and straight; in essence a cross section of our congregation. This list will be presented for your consideration at the June Congregational Meeting. This year's meeting will be held on **Thursday, June 15 at 7:00 p.m.** in the synagogue. A Zoom option will also be available and a link will be sent close to the date of the meeting. I look forward to seeing you there.

The formal process, as stipulated in the synagogue by-laws, calls for me to work with a nominating committee to develop a list of members in good standing to present to you for your approval. The committee is: President - Janice Weiner, President-elect - David Lubaroff, Rabbi - Esther Hugenholtz, Administrator - Karen Brady, and Trustee - Mindy Russell.

Any member of the congregation in good standing who does not wish to accept my full slate may obtain ten (10) signatures to propose an alternate candidate for any position, which need to be submitted to the office no later than May 18, four weeks before the Congregational Meeting. The congregation would then vote on that proposed alternate and my candidate at the June meeting. I hope that you will vote to approve my slate.

Synagogue Board 2023-2025 Board Positions

Position	Name
President	David Lubaroff
President-Elect	Jeanne Cadoret
Vice President	Jayne Sandler
Secretary	Chuck Friedman
Treasurer	Mindy Russell
Membership	Karen Lipman
Past President	Janice Weiner (2023 – 2024)
Ritual Committee	Andrea Chase
Social Committee	Ariel Levin & Lori McMann
Adult Education / Religious School	Lisa Heineman
Tikkun Olam Committee	Mallory Hellman
At Large	Sue Weinberg
At Large	Lori McMann
At Large	Naomi Greyser

FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

David Lubaroff

Dear Agudas Achim Family –

I am distressed as a result of a long-term series of events and their consequences. By now all of you will have received the letter from the Executive Committee bringing to your attention the toxic atmosphere brought on by bullying tactics of a small number of congregants. The main target has been our Rabbi, although those of us in lay leadership and our staff have been subject to direct verbal and written attacks. The result has caused immense stress, particularly for the Rabbi and her family-and our congregational family.

Much has been said and written about the effect of the COVID pandemic on individuals, families, and houses of worship. All of us have been affected by the years of isolation leading to a lack of personal interactions. The pandemic came at a time when we as a congregation were working through a transition from a Rabbi who lead us for over four decades to a new one. We are more cranky than before the pandemic making normal acts and practices more difficult and less enjoyable. Did this contribute to the current toxic atmosphere?

Everyone is entitled to their opinions, but there is a right way and a wrong way of expressing them. The productive way is to talk to the person or people in a calm, non-accusatory manner. Personal attacks do not accomplish what calm discussion can. Chapter 2:4 in the Pirkei Avot says, "Do not judge your fellow until you have stood in his(her) place."

The leadership of our synagogue has been working hard during the years of attacks. We have spoken to many congregants, including those with persistent and recurring concerns. We listened to their concerns and specific issues and discussed them with the Rabbi; as a result, changes have been made. There have been several iterations of these conversations and changes. It's not about an unwillingness to change; it's about something more than that. Leadership's goals have been to support our rabbi and to assure people that they are being

heard. Some complaints were well founded; others turned out to be based upon incorrect information or personal preferences. That's understandable – people have preferred ways of doing things.

None of us are perfect - we are all human, make mistakes and can always do better, learn, and improve. Yet we are dealing with a professional in our rabbi – someone with deep knowledge, a passion for Judaism and a vision of how to move this congregation forward at a time when most other religious organizations in this country are shrinking – and we owe her – as we all owe each other – respect for what she brings. The Rabbi has always been open to dialogue with others, to bring issues to her attention and suggestions for change. This allows everyone to be heard, nobody is hurt, and the congregation benefits from respectful discussions. Friends – we are at an inflection point where we risk the collapse of a vibrant synagogue or we survive and continue to grow.

There are seven Jewish values that serve as guidelines for inclusive Jewish communities. They are what keep us together and allow congregations to grow and flourish. They include, but are not limited to, *Kavod* or Respect. Judaism teaches us to treat ourselves and others with respect – do unto others ... *B'tzelem Elohim* or In God's Image. The Torah tells us that we are all created in the image of God and thus we should see humanity and dignity in all people. *Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh* or Communal Responsibility. The Jewish principle states that "All Israel is responsible for one another" which means each of us must take action and inspire others to create a community in which we can take pride. *Sh'mirat Halashon* or Guarding One's Use of Language. The Talmud warns us that we must take care in how we use language. Talking about others behind their backs is prohibited.

Let us as a Jewish community come together to support Rabbi Hugenholtz and each other, put an

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FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

David Lubaroff (cont.)

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end to conflict, plan and do positive things in our synagogue. This community has persisted for over a century – and we have what it takes to make it thrive into the next century. We need it now, more than ever. We need you more than ever. We value each and every member of our congregation who has committed to its continuity and who are eager to see all of us thrive Jewishly and find joy and meaning in our Jewish lives: together.

In another section of this Bulletin is a letter which lists the names of members that have agreed to

serve on the next Board of Directors. All of these people are dedicated to working to make Agudas Achim a welcoming and open Jewish congregation committed to supporting ongoing education, traditional and innovative worship, and community. Our current Board, led by President Janice Weiner and the Executive Committee, have worked hand in hand with the Rabbi to bring us out of the dark. Janice has been an excellent President and I hope I can walk in her shoes the next two years.

I look forward to working with our Rabbi, the Board, and members of Agudas Achim.

MAY SHABBAT & SHAVUOT SERVICES

[Streaming link for Zoom Shabbat services](#). Shavuot services will also be streamed at this link.

Emor <i>(Leviticus 21:1-24:23)</i>	Friday, May 5 Saturday, May 6	7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative) Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
Behar-Bechukotai <i>(Leviticus 25:1-27:34)</i>	Friday, May 12 Saturday, May 13	7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah Lev Shalem
Bamidbar <i>(Numbers 1:1-4:20)</i>	Friday, May 19 Saturday, May 20	7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah Lev Shalem
Shavuot Evening Service / Wine & Cheese Buffet	Thursday, May 25	6:30 p.m.	
Shavuot Morning Service	Friday, May 26	9:30 a.m.	
Shavuot Retreat– No Evening Service at the synagogue	Friday, May 26		More details further in bulletin
Shavuot Morning Service	Saturday, May 27	9:30 a.m.	

MISSION STATEMENT

Several months ago, a small ad hoc Visioning Committee was formed on the advice of the URJ to draft a new mission and vision statement for the Agudas Achim Congregation. As a group, we researched and discussed what makes a good mission and vision statement. We looked at mission statements from a variety of sources, including other synagogues, churches, and even businesses. We then dug deep to identify the ideas and values that we have witnessed and experienced both within our community and within ourselves that make this institution stand out. We brainstormed reasons that people choose to be a part of our synagogue. Next, we identified a handful of those values that are key – not only to how we see ourselves, but how we want others to see us – as we move forward into our 2nd century. We challenged ourselves to hone this list into a concise and workable statement that will give a foundation and guidance to the work of establishing a strategic plan and the governance of the synagogue. Lastly, we presented a draft to the Board, reviewed their input and finalized the statements accepted by consensus of the Board.

What is the purpose of mission and vision statement?

Who are we? What do we represent and what do we do?

A mission statement communicates an organization's purpose and direction to everyone. It defines an organization's purpose and its primary objectives. The statement aims to give clarity, direction, focus, confidence and motivation (among other things) to everyone involved along with providing a formal method for expressing a distinct cultural environment created by the values, norms and beliefs of a community and establishment. A good mission statement will powerfully explain your intentions and can motivate an organization to realize an inspiring vision of the future to both members of the community and people outside of it.

Having a clear, focused mission and vision cuts down on the waste of efforts and resources and fosters drive towards organizational growth. Having a good mission statement will help guide decisions and actions that align with our purpose. It will also help to us to keep track of our efforts and guide our efforts towards achieving our vision and goals. Additionally, it will help us know when we are ready to set new milestones.

Vision Statements focus on goals and aspirations that support that mission.

They are also timeless: Even if the organization changes its strategy, the vision will often stay consistent for a longer period of time.

Recommendations moving forward

The Mission Statement presented clarifies our identity and values as a congregation and expresses our vision of the future. We can use it to show everyone who wishes to know about us – including Jews seeking a synagogue – who we are. We can also refer to it to help smooth the transition from one Board to the next and to improve communication between the lay leadership and the rest of the congregation.

To these ends, the Visioning Committee recommends using the Mission Statement in the following ways:

1. The Mission Statement will have prominent place on the synagogue's website, be included in the monthly bulletin, in the weekly email, and in other synagogue communications that promote or reflect our values.
2. The Mission Statement should be included in the orientation packet given to each new member.
3. At the beginning of every new Board, each committee should take some time to write its own mission statement taking inspiration from

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MISSION STATEMENT

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the Mission Statement and making explicit how that committee intends to support and further the mission of the synagogue.

4. Each committee's mission statement should be on the synagogue's website along with a statement inviting volunteers interested in the work of the committee.

As time passes, the synagogue will evolve. The Mission Statement will only remain relevant if it changes with the needs and aspirations of the congregation.

To keep the Mission Statement relevant and to improve communication between the Board and the congregation, the Visioning Committee recommends:

1. Six months before the beginning of a new presidency, President Elect will review the Mission Statement in partnership with the Rabbi. Together, they may decide to leave the Mission Statement as written or to change it. Any changes will be made collaboratively with the full consent of both the Rabbi and the in-coming President Elect.
2. The in-coming President will use the Mission Statement (revised or not) to help recruit volunteers to the Board and to explain the role of the committees to new members.
3. At the annual congregational meeting when a new Board is introduced, the in-coming President

will communicate a vision for the new Board based on the Mission Statement (revised or not).

Our Mission:

Agudas Achim Congregation is a vibrant, egalitarian, inclusive Jewish community committed to supporting your joyful journey with Judaism.

Our Vision:

Agudas Achim is a welcoming and open Jewish congregation rooted in the Coralville/Iowa City area, committed to supporting ongoing *limmud* (education), *traditional and innovative tefilah* (worship), and *kehillah* (community), which includes Jews of all generations, interfaith families, cultural Jews, spiritual seekers and our LGBTQ+ family.

We live Jewish values in our diverse faith community and in relationships with our non-Jewish neighbors. We are dedicated to ensuring our stability and nurturing our future growth. We embrace our core principles: *chesed* (loving kindness), *kavod* (respect) and *tikkun olam* (repairing our world). We strive to foster *mishpachah* (congregational and global Jewish family) with *chevra* (friendship) and by supporting each person's unique and joyful Jewish journey.

As a synagogue community, we celebrate *sacred time* (Shabbat and holidays), *commit to righteous action* (compassionate engagement and social justice) and *forge meaningful connections* (mutual support and friendship).

APRIL ONEG HOSTS

Thank you to April's oneg hosts!!!

Sue Weinberg & Robert Armstrong; Sonja Spear

If you'd like to sponsor an oneg, contact the office!

COVID COMMENTS

Bob Wallace, Barcey Levy, & Jane Zukin

COVID-19 is still with us in the community, but the levels have been fortunately decreasing. Some issues are of import as of this writing:

1. Our recommendations for welcoming you to the synagogue have not changed (Please consider masking; don't come if you are acutely ill, etc.) We will continue to do our best to post warnings and to protect ourselves as much as possible.
2. Availability of information on COVID-19 activity in Iowa and Johnson County has decreased, as the State has stopped reporting full information on virus activity to CDC. This is terribly unfortunate, and Iowa is the only state that is not fully reporting its activity. See the Iowa Capital Dispatch on the Web-April 10th issue, for more information. There are other ways to get useful information, however: Follow this column; seek information from the Johnson County Department of Health; Search websites from surrounding states-if there is viral activity there, it is likely to be present locally; look

at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics daily newsletter-"The Loop"- look for "COVID by the Numbers"—(note: cases in the hospital are not necessarily local, but if present in our clinical system, there is likely to be some infectious activity nearby; contact your local healthcare professionals; or contact us (particularly BobW) for more assistance on community exposures.

3. A new COVID-19 vaccine is becoming available. It is "bivalent" (containing protection for two viral "Omicron" strains). It is recommended for persons 65 years and older as well as those with diseases that compromise immunity. There are various recommendations about using this vaccine, and some are complex. All persons should contact their health professionals for more information. The original "monovalent" COVID-19 vaccines are no longer recommended and will no longer be available.

To your health!

IYAR YOGA

Iyar Yoga: Light, Healing, and Preparation

In this three-session drop-in class, we will join Yogic practices and Jewish wisdom to explore Iyar's themes of light, healing, and preparation. 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.

Remaining Dates: Sunday May 7 and Sunday May 14, all at 2:00 p.m.

Location: Agudas Achim Congregation, 401 E Oakdale Blvd.

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

To register: rsvp@agudasachimic.org

For more information: leslea-collins@outlook.com



Shavuoth is just around the corner!

Shavuoth tends to drop off our calendar in the religious school because it usually falls after the academic year is over. But it is a little early this year, so we can go out with a Shavuoth blast!

To build anticipation, the whole school has been counting the *omer*, the days between Passover and Shavuoth. The kids have been keeping track of the days by wrapping candies and stringing them together. When they reach 49, we will have enough to unwrap on Shavuoth. But, of course, no one wants to wait that long. The kids can earn a candy for right now (and one to put on the string) by working on decoding Hebrew. They go from the Aleph Bet Station (to learn or review the alphabet) to the Find It Station (where they locate particular words, syllables, or roots in a prayer), to the Read Station where they practice reading a prayer out loud. So far, this game has been a lot of fun.

To get ready for Shavuoth, **Kitah Aleph** has been learning about the Ten Commandments. They discussed the rules given in the Torah, then they thought about how to apply them. For instance, if one kid stamps on another kid's bagel, does that violate the Ten Commandments? (Or just the Health Code?) Do we need a new commandment: "Thou shalt not stamp on a bagel. Stay tuned! The debate continues.

In **Kitah Bet**, we did a close reading of the passage in the Torah when Moses goes up Mt. Sinai. The kids drew a picture to help them imagine the thunder and fire on the mountain and the rising smoke. Then, we talked about *midrash*, a way of interpreting the Torah that tells a story about the story, usually anchored in an alternate meaning to a word in the text.

According to the Torah, the Children of Israel waited *tachat* the mountain until Moses returned. *Tachat* is usually translated "at the foot of the mountain," which makes literary sense. But *tachat* usually means "under." We have one *midrash* in which God picked up Mt. Sinai and held it over the heads of

the people, who stood *tachat* (under) the mountain. He threatened to drop it on them unless they accepted the Torah. Alternately, God held the mountain over the people as a wedding canopy to celebrate the dedication of God to Israel and Israel to God. The kids loved both images. (Well, they liked the threatening one better. Of course.) Then they expressed their own understanding by creating torn paper art. They were attracted to the brightest colors, so maybe their view of the giving of the Torah was not all that grim.

Kitah Gimel, meanwhile, has been deep in discussion of the Jewish value of *zedakah* (charity). They will act on what they have learned by raising money for the Coralville food bank.

They have also learned a lot about Jews in India through the *B'khol Lashon* curriculum. They are ready to take what they have learned and use it to create an educational game for the younger kids. We will also be sampling some Indian dairy treats for our Shavuoth celebration. (Don't panic! There will also be blintzes and ice cream.)

At the beginning of our weeks of Shavuoth preparation, the school held a family-friendly Shabbat service. We integrated it into the Torah service of the regular Conservative service. It was a great experience for the kids who came. Not only did they get to look at a Torah scroll and parade with the Torah, they also had the opportunity to lead a few prayers. I saw otherwise very shy kids grab the microphone with enormous confidence! It was truly inspiring. Oh, and we did a little physical interpretation of the text by acting out the roles of priests and patients. Sticky notes were involved. Also, candy. If you didn't get to see it, – and it was a sight to behold! – I hope you can come to the next one.

Midrash comes in many forms. And many long, winding paths lead to the foot of Mt. Sinai. It doesn't really matter how you get there, so long as you can stand together with a loving and joyful community and hear the Torah.

A BUDDHIST LENS – ADULT ED EVENT

A Buddhist Lens: May 21 at 12:30 p.m. at the synagogue

We are continuing 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.

HILLEL GIVING WEEK

It's Global Giving Week at Iowa Hillel! All gifts made to Iowa Hillel through May 5 will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$10,000. Make a gift today to have your gift DOUBLED, increasing your impact on Jewish college students at The University of Iowa!

[Click here for more information or to donate.](#)

MAY YAHRZEITS

Louise Allweiss
Grace Bernstein
Emma Braverman
Anna Brenner
Sally Broad
Jimmy Price Bryant
Helene Colen
Ana Cotler
Justin Denman
Hy Dicker
Harry Herbert Dreyfuss
Katie Fishman
Joyce Flaum
Steven Frankel
Frances Green
Lee Green
Lev Gudkov

Sarah Stone Haendel
Sarah Hall
Bernice Hertz
Reaves Holbrook
David Jacob Hugenholtz
Bessie Josselson
Samuel Kanef
Arthur Kay
Beverly Klein
Bernard M. Levy
Maurice E. Lipman
Belle Lupeson
Edith Meyer
David Michaels
Robert Alan Naylor
Samuel Osdoba
Simon Pava

Anna Roston
Susan Schuler
Freda Schumeister
Michael Smith
Micki Soldofsky
Louis Solganick
Susan Sorokin
Israel Standig
Yetta Standig
Epstein Stephen
Miriam Stone
Rose Baskin Tear
Ruth Maxine Berg Waldman
Irving Warren
Walter Zukin

MENACHEM REPHUN POETRY

Menachem Rephun - son (and stepson) of Hersh Rephun and Devon Terrill - recently released his new book of poetry, *What Will Not Return and Other Poems*. He made a brief visit to Iowa City from his home in Teaneck, NJ, and the collection of his poems is now available at Prairie Lights, 15 S Dubuque St, Iowa City, IA 52240, (319) 337-2681.

A graduate of Fairleigh Dickinson University, Menachem Rephun has always been passionate about creative writing, poetry, and literature, and their ability to open doors of empathy and understanding between people from all walks of life. Some of his literary criticism can be viewed on his blog, "Meditations in an Emergency" and his essay on Fahrenheit 451 was published on the official Ray Bradbury website, at <https://raybradbury.com/legacy/>. Menachem's young adult novel, *This Could Be The Day*, is available on Amazon.

A poem from the collection:

Sadness Your Blue-Eyed Lover

Sadness your blue-eyed lover calls you find her winter evenings by the sea

She sailed to where the grey surf beats against the rocks tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow in their sleep crying out 'don't leave me do not leave'

This is Death your captain your drunken lover weeps he smokes he waits beneath the hangnail moon all day and night the trains cry out beneath the bridges the clouds turn

Away from us the people pass the businessmen the jugglers the women all in white the coolness of your palm will never leave him at dusk he waits in vain for your return the pain where you left him will not heal in the shadow of the trees he waits and waits

At dawn the gypsy woman shows your fate in tea leaves all across the Earth the Autumn lanterns sway the leaves lie still the stone horse rears the grey clouds pass the red balloon drifts into the fog the stream breaks across the small sharp stones bloodied his feet it always rains he wishes he had never met you

At dusk your lover wakes it is cold he is alone he knows you are gone forever

There is only silence now he has drunk the night and blotted out the sun he has known the lovers'
Sorrowing Loneliness & Grief.

There will be more, in time

BEIT MIDRASH ON JEWS, PALESTINIANS, AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL

We had two successful gatherings in April. We are taking a break due to other synagogue activities. Stay tuned for announcements of future gatherings.

WARM UP AMERICA

Are you planning trips for graduations or summer vacations? Wondering what to do as someone else drives or flies your conveyance?

Warm Up America can help. We're looking for knitters, crocheters, and those interested in learning. We'll even help you remember that skill you learned from a grandparent or in home ec [remember those classes?].

We'll meet on *May 7th and 21st in the social hall, 10:30 a.m. - noon.*

Join us and find out how you can be part of providing afghans for those in need of a little warmth, yes even in summer, without leaving your home or vehicle. We provide the yarn, thanks to tikun olam donations. You provide the time.



SENIORS GROUP

Join the Agudas Achim Synagogue Seniors Chavurah that meets **every third Thursday of the month** from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the social hall. (Please note this is a change from the previous date). It's a social gathering that offers good conversation, an occasional program, hot coffee, and always a delicious nosh. Visit with old friends and meet new ones. There is no fee and however you define "seniors" is up to you.

ALDA HARAVON UNVEILING

Please join us for Alda Haravon's unveiling with a short service led by Lea Haravon Collins

Friday, June 2, 4:30 p.m.

Agudas Achim Cemetery,
875 Linder Road NE, Iowa City

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 May 24 at 1:00 p.m. on Zoom.

[Contact the office](#) for information.

DONATIONS

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Alan Mutnick & Rachel Albrecht: In memory of Paul Mutnick

Dorothy Paul: In memory of Florence Glick

Sue Weinberg & Robert Armstrong: Sale of Chametz

BRAVERMAN TALMUD TORAH FUND

Eloise McCuskey: In memory of Corrine 'Corky' Miller and David Braverman

CEMETERY FUND

Jody & Janie Braverman

Lorraine Dorfman: In memory of Donald Dorfman

Katherine & Dwight Keller: In memory of Ansel Chapman

Mark Robin: In memory of Herman Robin

Rhoda Vernon: In memory of Bernard Vernon

FUND RAISING

Judith Steinbach

GARDEN FUND

Mace & Kay Braverman: In memory of Bob Braverman

GENERAL FUND

David & Constance Berman: In memory of Chaim & Ruth Berman

Kathleen Jacobs

Linda Kerber: In memory of Mary Gantz

Gary & Randi Levitz: In memory of our parents

Kit & Linda Wertz

PORTMAN PROGRAM FUND

Richard Levine: In memory of Bernice & Morty Levine

SAFETY FUND

Richard Levine: In memory of Bernice & Morty Levine

SIM & SARA STRAUSS MEMORIAL FUND

Richard Strauss & Ellen Herman: In memory of Leona Herman

TIKUN OLAM FUND

Richard & Phyllis Braverman: In memory of Corrine "Corky" Miller and David Braverman

Carrie Z. Norton: In memory of Rebecca Ziskind

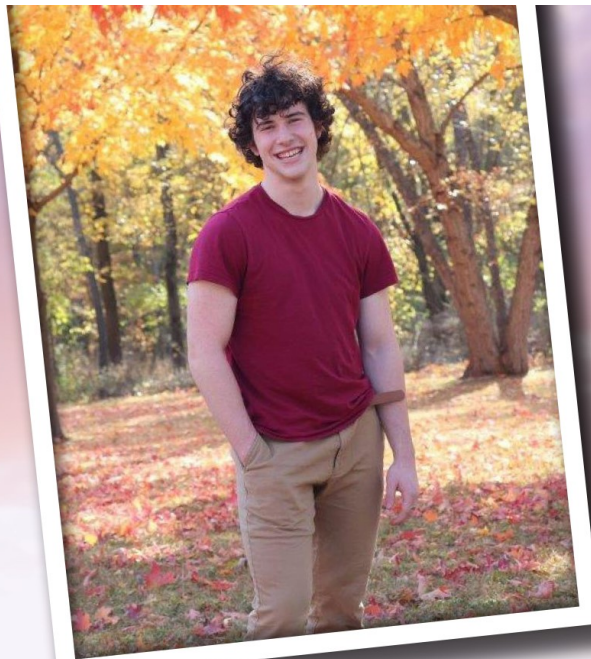
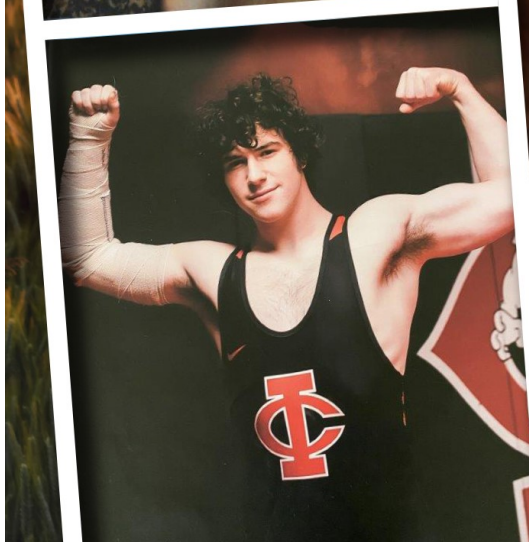
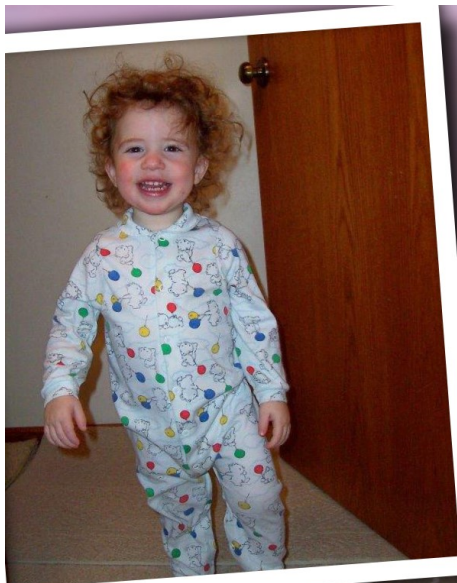
LIBRARY NOTES

Teresa Weiner

- Wanted— less books on our shelves and more books in your hands! Come browse and borrow whenever the synagogue is open.
- Send us your reviews of the Jewish books you've read. Great? Tedious? Meh? Do tell.
- Know of a book that would enhance our collection? We'd like to hear about it.
- Recommended web site— <https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org>. "Jewish Book Council, founded in 1943, is the longest-running organization devoted exclusively to the support and celebration of Jewish literature. For over seventy years, Jewish Book Council has brought people together for meaningful discussions about Jewish life, identity, and culture through a literary lens."
- Library Committee members are Becky Gelman, Rabbi Jeff Portman, Esther Retish, Sonja Spear, and Teresa Weiner. Email us at library@agudasachimic.org.

ARI COLLINS GRADUATION

Lea Haravon Collins and Steve Collins invite the congregation to come to Ari's graduation party! Details below.



*Please Help
Us Celebrate
Ari's
Graduation!*

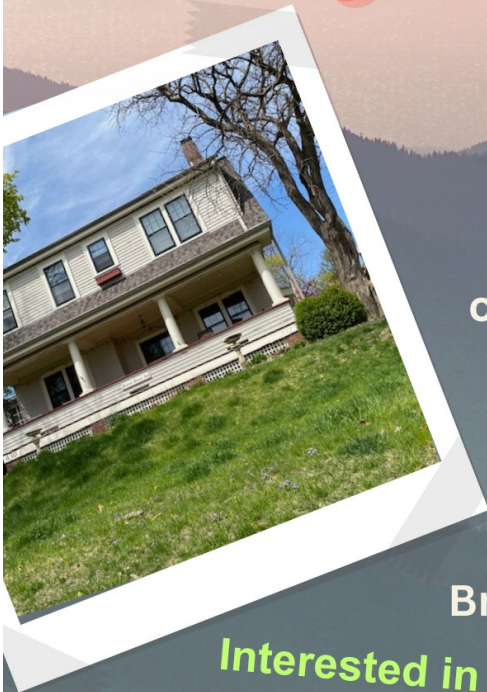
**Thursday May 25th, 2023
4:00pm-7:00pm
24 Woodcrest Ln NE
Iowa City**

Agudas Achim presents

SHAVUOT

Urban Retreat

linked fundraiser for the
JoCo Food Bank



Overnight learning & spiritual retreat full of song and schmoozing on 2nd night of Shavuot. Help raise funds for the Johnson County Food Bank. Come as you are, bring comfy clothes, & blankets/pillows (optional) for our first ever Shavuot Retreat/Tikkun Olam fundraiser. We have places for napping/resting at Brown Street Inn. For information on donating, contact Karen Brady at administrator@agudasachimic.org.

Interested in leading a session or donating?
Contact lisa.heineman.1945@gmail.com

Fri 26 May
6 pm dairy potluck dinner
7 pm musical Shabbat/Shavu'ot service
All night learning (drop in/drop out or stay all night)
6 am dawn service
Place: Brown Street Inn,
430 Brown Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52245
rsvp@agudasachimic.org
rsvp's welcome but not required!



SHAVUOT URBAN RETREAT / ABUNDANT HARVEST FUNDRAISER

Shavuot Urban Retreat

Shavuot marks the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. And so there's a tradition of all-night study: the *Tikkun Leil Shavuot!*

Our inaugural Shavuot Urban Retreat will be the night of Friday, May 26 at Brown Street Inn, 430 Brown Street. We'll have access to wonderful common indoor and outdoor space, and the events will take place both outdoors and indoors, weather permitting. We'll have a couple of bedrooms for folks who would like to take a nap during our all-nighter, and you can also bring blankets and pillows to make yourself comfortable in the common space. We'll provide childcare for at least part of the night, and we'll have snacks and heavily caffeinated beverages available throughout. There are some accessibility limitations to the venue, so please let us know your needs and we'll work together to ease the way.

6:00 pm: Gather for potluck picnic dinner

7:00 pm: Shabbat and Shavuot Service

8:30 pm: Learning begins. Come for any portion of the night or the whole shebang!

We're looking for volunteers to facilitate sessions of anywhere from 20 to 60 minutes. We hope to have a wide variety of sessions, from textual study to crafting, from creative writing to Yiddish to yoga: whatever inspires you! If you have an idea for a session – or if you're interested in organizing one but would like to brainstorm ideas first - please contact Lisa Heineman: lisa.heineman.1945@gmail.com. Lisa will also hold a workshop at our Lag B'Omer celebration: Tuesday, May 9 @ Big Grove (social gathering 6:30, workshop 7:30).

We encourage people at all stages of Jewish and other learning to consider facilitating a session.

And check out the Abundant Harvest Fundraiser, below – the more learners we have and the longer they stay, the more we'll raise for the Johnson County Food Bank!

6:00 am: Sunrise service

Abundant Harvest Fundraiser

Shavuot also marks the first fruits of the summer grain harvest in the Land of Israel. The mitzvah of leaving gleanings in the fields for those in need is central to the Book of Ruth, traditionally read on Shavuot.

To help ensure that our neighbors enjoy the fruits of the harvest, we're raising money for the Johnson County Food Bank in conjunction with our retreat.

Please join our fundraiser by pledging an amount of your choice for each person-hour of learning. We'll tally up the learning and let you know the size of your donation after the event.

More details on next page...

(Continued on page 22)

SHAVUOT URBAN RETREAT / ABUNDANT HARVEST FUNDRAISER (cont.)

(Continued from page 21)

For example: Perhaps you pledge \$1 per person-hour of learning.

20 people participate for 2 hours = \$40

10 people participate for 5 hours = \$50

6 people last all night: 9 hours = \$36

Your total donation: \$126

What happens if more people learn for more hours than anyone had anticipated, and you owe more than you'd budgeted? No worry: you can set an upper limit for your donation. But please do consider donating generously if you can afford to do so. There's great need in Johnson County, and the Food Bank needs our help to compensate for shrinking public resources.

To make your pledge, please contact Karen Brady: administrator@agudasachimic.org

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH PROCLAMATION

May 2023 was proclaimed Jewish Heritage Month by the Iowa City Council. Here are some photos from the event:



MAY 2023

Mon	1	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	Fri	19	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
Fri	5	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	20	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
Sat	6	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM	Sun	21	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
Sun	7	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM			Warm-Up America	10:30 AM
		Sunday School - Last Day	9:15 AM			Adult Ed: A Buddhist Lens	12:30 PM
		Petting Zoo	11:15 AM			Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM
		Listening Post	10:00 AM	Mon	22	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Warm-Up America	10:30 AM	Wed	24	Mussar Course	11:00 AM
		Beit Midrash on Jews, Palestinians, and the State of Israel	12:00 PM			Free Lunch	11:30 AM
		Iyar Yoga	2:00 PM			Book Group	1:00 PM
		Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM	Thur	25	Shavuot Evening Service	6:30 PM
Mon	8	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	Fri	26	Shavuot Morning Service	9:30 AM
Wed	10	Mussar Course	11:00 AM			Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Listening Post	7:30 PM			Shavuot Urban Retreat (all night)	6:00 PM
Thur	11	Executive Committee	5:30 PM			Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM
Fri	12	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM			Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
		Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM	Sat	27	Shavuot and Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM	Sun	28	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
Sat	13	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM			Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM
Sun	14	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM	Mon	29	Office Closed - Memorial Day	
		Beit Midrash on Jews, Palestinians, and the State of Israel	12:00 PM	SAVE THE DATE!			
		Iyar Yoga	2:00 PM	Fri	2-Jun	Alda Haravon Unveiling	4:30 PM
		Dungeons & Dragons Group	3:30 PM	June	9-10	Julia Fitzpatrick Bat Mitzvah	
Mon	15	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM				
Wed	17	Ritual Committee	7:30 PM				
Thur	18	Seniors Group	11:00 AM				
		Board Meeting	7:00 PM				

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.](#)

STAFF

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Administrator	Karen Brady	Custodian	Amos Kiche
Principal	Sonja Spear		

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