



Agudas Achim Congregation

401 E. Oakdale Blvd., Coralville, IA 52241

Phone: 319-337-3813

www.AgudasAchimIC.org

November 2023 / Cheshvan-Kislev 5784

FROM THE RABBI

Esther Hugenholtz

When in times of darkness, I turn to my Judaism. I turn to my community, to God, and to Torah—in the broadest sense of the word. The weekly Torah portion, relaying the mythical words of our ancestors, give me perspective and comfort. I seek out the Holy One in prayer, in the beauty of nature, in our Jewish people's indomitable resilience and in the love of those around me. Still, there is another deep source of Torah in my life: the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien.

It seems strange to write about 'The Lord of the Rings' when the world is aflame, but I remember three years ago, in the deepest despair of the pandemic, as the winter of 2020 was drawing to a close with not yet a vaccine in our arms, I decided to re-watch (and re-read) the trilogy. It was close to Hanukkah time; that lonely, dark period where all we could do was stare through each other's windows at our lit candles. Yet, I found comfort in the shadowy journey of Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin to Bree's inn, 'The Prancing Pony', where the hearth was lit, the ale was aplenty and Strider (a.k.a. Aragorn, Tolkien's redemptive, messianic figure) awaited them with knowledge of their mission.

Since then, I thought of Jewish holidays as inns, or waystations, through dark and difficult periods of

our lives. We may be marching on an unlit path, full of dangers, through this quest called life, but then, there is shelter from the storm, however temporary. In the winter season, with the waning light and the biting cold, Hanukkah very much feels like that first stopover, to offer us comfort and reprieve. A festival of warmth and light, of resilience and mission. A reprieve from the ever-present heaviness that lies about our hearts.

We feel that heaviness all too keenly. I will heartily admit to many tears and even more prayers as of late. I pray for the hostages to be released, rendered safely unto their families. 'Pidyon hashivu'im', the redemption of captives, is a time-tested and important mitzvah in our tradition. I cannot imagine what the 240 hostages and their loved ones are going through; the sheer horror is unimaginable. My broken heart turns to the 1400 massacred; Jewish Israelis alongside Palestinian Israelis and foreign nationals alike, brutally murdered in Hamas' pogrom. And my heart likewise has space and love and humanity to hold in it the many thousands of innocent Gazan civilians in mourning too. Irrespective of our ideological commitments, the cost of war is always high, because every human life is created in the Image of

(Continued on page 2)

**Reminder: Daylight Saving Time ends Sunday, November 5.
Remember to set your clocks back!**

FROM THE RABBI

Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

God and is infinitely precious. Our tradition is both replete with reflections on the necessity of war and the urgency of peace. Our Jewish ancestral wisdom invites each of us to gravitate to the message that resonates most with our ethical consciousness as Jews.

Many, many human beings in Israel and Palestine know that cost of war more deeply than any of us can. And many of us in the congregation hold deeply to our chest our beloved relationships with people in the region. During my pastoral check-in's, I've received emails and had conversations with Agudas Achim members who have family and friends in Israel; even medical personnel volunteering in where help is most needed. I, too, worry and pray for my friends and colleagues in Israel, including my rabbinic colleagues from MARAM, the Israeli Reform Movement. I cannot even come close to imagining the burden they are shouldering.

I continue to reel, as so many of us do. Only a month ago, we were celebrating Jewish joy. Utterances of rejoicing have turned to ashes on my lips, as our congregation pivoted to quickly offer succor where we can and support where we must.

Reaching again for a 'Lord of the Rings' metaphor, I am struck by the genius of Tolkien's story-crafting. The quest for Middle Earth is not just one quest; it is many parallel missions. Frodo is charged with casting the Ring of Power in Mt. Doom, Gandalf is tasked with rallying the armies of Rohan and Gondor while Legolas the Elf and Gimli the Dwarf occupy themselves with the defense of Helm's Deep. If these specificities are lost on non-LOTR fans; do not worry. The metaphor still stands: we cannot do all things at all times. Each of us has a part to play in the redemption of our world, even if only a small part. Even if only we redeem our tiny corner of the world through local action: through love, through righteous giving, through mutual

support, through brightening each other's dark days. Not all of us can cast the Ring into Mt. Doom; some of us guard the Shire and tend to it, working for better days of peace.

As we are 'working our gardens and tending them' in a paraphrasing of the Book of Genesis, we are strengthening Jewish peoplehood, Jewish values and Jewish community here. A few weeks ago, I had the honor of attending the inaugural retreat of a prestigious two-year professional development fellowship called CLI – the Clergy Leadership Incubator. Through monthly mentoring, innovation projects, learning and cultivating adaptive leadership, my fellow mid-career rabbinic colleagues and myself get to dream and work on building beautiful community. This retreat was planned long before the current war, but attending it proved to be a blessing. We rabbis were able to mutually support each other and amidst the shards of our broken hearts, dream of all that still can be.

In that vein, let us – as in the words of Joshua – be strong and of good courage; 'chazak v'amatz'. When Frodo laments, 'I wish the Ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened.', Gandalf responds: 'So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us...'

As a community, we work together to do right by the time given us. We may not always be of one mind; we may have profound and enduring disagreements. Each of us may mourn differently, react differently, have unique needs and seek out unique support. The mettle of holy community is tested, and at the same time, we remain steadfast in our commitment to each other and love for each other. In Iowa City/Coralville, we will continue with the resolve to see the image of God in each human being; to see kinship and closeness in each Jew.

Wishing us strength for the days ahead. I am here for each and everyone of you.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

David Lubaroff

To me, October 7 seems both like yesterday and long ago. Much, and little, has changed all over the world since that day. I am both the Board President but also a private human being, struggling with my thoughts on the war in Israel and Gaza. The intentional killing and capture of both Israeli soldiers and innocent men, women, and children is like a nightmare from which we expect to wake. Unfortunately, we are not asleep, but horrified. How do we cope with our feelings, particularly our inability to do anything to help Israel and its people? Likewise, how do we process, as Jews who value all human life, the mass civilian casualties in Gaza? In response to the invasion and war, the synagogue organized three gatherings this past month, as well as dedicating Shabbat services to the current crisis through prayer and poetry. **A non-partisan, non-political Peace Vigil will be held on Sunday, November 5, 6:00 p.m. at Mercer-Scanlon Gym, 2701 Bradford Drive, Iowa City.** (Please note that this is a vigil to hold space for the loss of life and is non-activist. Please refrain from bringing signs, flags, or slogans).

Jews in Iowa City certainly are not the only ones affected by the Hamas invasion and the war in Gaza. We all know friends and families throughout the state, the country, and throughout the world, particularly Israel, that are grieving. Many are keeping in touch with others having a rough time. My wife Martha has been in email and telephone communications with cousins living in the Tel Aviv and Haifa areas of Israel. Just this morning she received an email which, in part, told their view of the horrible war.

"Thank you so much for your thoughts and good energy. It is absolutely the worst time in our (Israeli) history that so many people were killed in one day or kidnapped from their homes. I am depressed and understand that we won't come out from this nightmare the same people. There are so many civil initiatives that warm our heart. This is our strengths! I wish I had better news to share with you."

I, like many of you, support Israel and its right to exist as a democratic, independent country. Jews have lived in Israel for over 3,000 years and officially an independent, self-governing country for 75 years. For all those years the right of Palestinians to have their own independent state has been the source of conflict and innumerable negotiations. The closest Israel and Palestine came to an agreement on two independent states was in 2001 during the meetings in Oslo, Norway. This is still the goal of many.

I feel conflicted about how Israel can rid the area of the terrorist Hamas organization when other innocents are killed. There is a humanitarian crisis that is the result of Israel's military response to the October 7 massacre. Mostly from the continuous air attacks. I recently read this statement - *It's okay to be heartbroken for more than one group of people at the same time*". This stance does not diminish our love and support of lost Israelis nor the mourning and anger as the result of the Hamas attacks. We can still have those feelings and yet, mourn and be angry about the death of innocent Palestinians.

We all need each other at this time, for support, as a shoulder to cry on and we all need an end to the violence. The best we can do to help, being so many thousands of miles away, is to donate to agencies that provide aid to people in need. A short list of these agencies, to which I have donated are Magen David Adom, HIAS, Oxfam, Jewish National Fund, and World Jewish Congress. There is an additional agency that supports the kidnapped Israeli children ([link to support the kidnapped](#)). Take note – much of the website is in Hebrew.

Let Agudas Achim Congregation be your source of comfort. Reach out to people, take care of yourselves, and be well.

David Lubaroff
President



All welcome

INTERFAITH PEACE VIGIL

**MOURNING ALL THE LIVES
LOST IN ISRAEL & GAZA.
PRAYING FOR THE SAFETY
OF THOSE WHO REMAIN IN
DANGER.**

**THIS WILL BE A SHARED COMMUNAL SPACE
FOR PRAYER AND CONTEMPLATION.
PLEASE HELP US TO BUILD THE SPIRIT OF
THE EVENT BY LEAVING FLAGS, SIGNAGE,
AND POLITICAL SLOGANS AT HOME**



**IF YOU HAVE A
FLAMELESS
CANDLE, YOU ARE
WELCOME TO
BRING IT**

*Sunday November 5, 2023
6 pm at Mercer-Scanlon Gym
2701 Bradford Drive*

Agudas Achim Congregation | Holy Trinity Lutheran Church | First Christian Church |
Garchen Mila Buddhist Center | Sanctuary Community Church |
The Congregational Church U.C.C.

BAR MITZVAH OF MARTIN BLUM



Please join us for the Bar Mitzvah of

Martin Blum

on Saturday, November 4.

A lunch after the services will be catered by
Oasis Falafel. All are welcome!

TIKKUN OLAM COMMITTEE NEWS

Mal Hellman

Tikkun Olam Donates to Aid Organizations in the Middle East

In response to the ongoing crisis in Israel and Gaza, the Agudas Achim tikkun olam committee is sending \$10,000 in donations to humanitarian aid organizations addressing needs in the area. The committee met on 25 October, and, by process of a vote, narrowed seven potential recipient organizations down to two.

Half our funds will support [HIAS](#), a Jewish organization working in solidarity with migrant laborers, refugees, and internally displaced persons to address both physical and psychological needs in the landscape of ongoing violence.

The other half will go to [Magen David Adom](#) (the Israeli Red Cross), which provides emergency medical services to civilians and soldiers, regardless of national origin, in Israel.

If congregants are able and feel so moved, we encourage individual donations and actions as well. We wish we had infinite funds to donate; below is a short list of other organizations we considered, and organizations whose work provides humanitarian aid in Israel/Gaza.

[Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières](#)

[OxFam](#)

[Palestine Children's Relief Fund](#)



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26 October 2023

Esther Hugenholtz
Rabbi

Janice Weiner
President

Karen Brady
Administrator

Sonja Spear
Principal

David Lubaroff
President Elect

Janelle Jaskolka
Vice President

Mindy Russell
Treasurer

Chuck Friedman
Secretary

Jeffrey R. Portman
Rabbi Emeritus

To Magen David Adom:

Greetings from Agudas Achim Congregation in Coralville, Iowa. Our tikkun olam committee has selected MDA as a recipient of our synagogue's donations to help those suffering in the ongoing crisis in Israel and Gaza. We are honored to present you with the enclosed \$5,000.

As Jewish people living in the United States, and as a committee focused on sustaining and improving the lives of people worldwide through *chesed* and social justice, we believe the work of MDA is indispensable to addressing the suffering in Israel and beyond.

With this donation, we send our solemn and heartfelt prayers for peace and for the speedy recovery of all in your care. May you continue your work in good health.

With every good wish,

Mallory Hellman
Chair, Tikkun Olam Committee
Agudas Achim Congregation
401 E. Oakdale Boulevard
(319) 337-3813



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HIAS
P.O. Box 97077
Washington, D.C. 20090-7077

Dear HIAS:

Warmest greetings from Agudas Achim Congregation in Coralville, Iowa. Our tikkun olam committee has selected HIAS as a recipient of our synagogue's donations to help those suffering, wounded, and displaced in the ongoing crisis in Israel and Gaza. We are honored to present you with the enclosed \$5,000.

As Jewish people living in the United States, and as a committee focused on sustaining and improving the lives of people worldwide through chesed and social justice, we believe the work of HIAS is indispensable to addressing the suffering in Israel and beyond. We see and honor your work with migrants, refugees, and those internally displaced, and we are particularly proud to support you in this vital element of your mission.

For me personally, this donation means the world. HIAS sponsored my grandparents' immigration to the United States after the Holocaust, and without such solidarity and largesse, I wouldn't be in a position to write this letter to you today. I know many others in our congregation have similar stories.

With this donation, we send our solemn and heartfelt prayers for peace and for the speedy recovery of all in your care. May you continue your work in good health.

With every good wish,

Mallory Hellman
Chair, Tikkun Olam Committee
Agudas Achim Congregation
401 E. Oakdale Boulevard
(319) 337-3813

MEMBER OF UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM & UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



LISA HEINEMAN

Sunday,
November 5
12:30 p.m.

Lisa Heineman will lead a discussion on the topic, “What’s it like to be a Jewish college student these days?” Lisa will give an update on the situation at Iowa and on other campuses, and participants are invited to process their stories of both difficult and uplifting experiences.

Agudas Achim Congregation
401 E Oakdale Blvd, Coralville, IA

SHABBAT SERVICES

[Streaming link for Zoom Shabbat services.](#) Schedule of service affiliations [here](#).

Vayera	Friday, November 3	7:00 p.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative)
(Genesis 18:1-22:24)	Saturday, November 4	9:30 a.m.	Bar Mitzvah of Martin Blum
Chaye Sarah	Friday, November 10	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
(Genesis 23:1-25:18)	Saturday, November 11	9:30 a.m.	Veteran's Shabbat
Toledot	Friday, November 17	7:00 p.m.	Lev Shalem
(Genesis 25:19-28:9)	Saturday, November 18	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah
Vayetze	Friday, November 24	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
(Genesis 28:10-32:3)	Saturday, November 25	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem

NOVEMBER Yahrzeits

Doug Armstrong
Selma Asch
Simon Assouline
Myron Baum
Norman Berg
Sherman Bloom
Florence Braverman
Rosalie Braverman
Jean Weinstein Breggin
Rose Marie Caplan
Victor Cohen
Lena C. Dicker
Edward Dvoretzky
Arthur Estin
Mertie Ellen Evans
Stanley Flatte
Naomi Friedman
Miriam Saltzman Goichberg
Liba Goldberg
Molly Goodman

Chaim Graber
Selma Graber
Goldene Haendel
Victoria Haendel
Sage Adams Hall
Alda Haravon
Aristide Haravon
Andrew Hoffman
Lisa Kaiser
Ben E. Kubby
Ed Laquer
Emilia B. Lasansky
Judi Lerner Aizenberg
Abraham Levitz
Reba Magaziner
Miguel Margulis
Sol Meyer
Leon Middleman
Meyer Middleman
Barbara Anne Mutnick

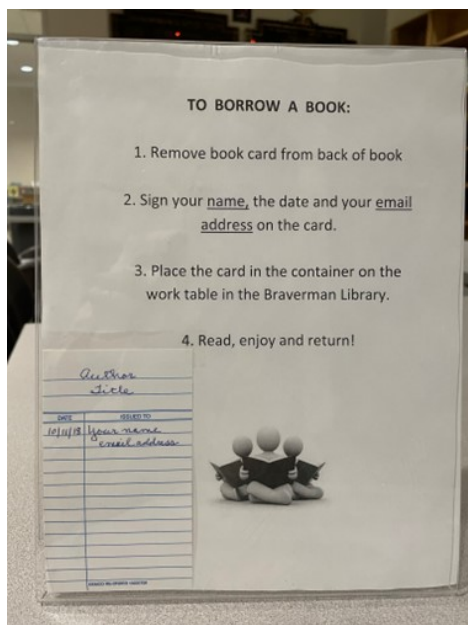
Michael Nadler
Harry Portman
Claire Rephun
Max Rosenbaum
David Rothstein
Mathilde Loewen Salomon
Edith Schneider
Norman Sellz
Gerald Shomberg
Pauline Skorton
Louis Snider
Joseph Sunshine
Beverly Tys-Berson
David Vernon
Morris Weinberg
Bess Weinstein
Al Widiss
Bernard Zwerling

LIBRARY NOTES

Teresa Weiner



Remember— the library is always open when the synagogue is open.



With over 3000 titles to choose from,
there's something in the Agudas Achim Libraries for everyone!

Recommended :

www.jewishbookcouncil.org

Jewish Book Council, founded in 1943, is the longest-running organization devoted exclusively to the support and celebration of Jewish literature.

SCHOOL NEWS

Sonja Spear

Sometimes nothing goes quite as planned, but everything goes just right.

Last week, one of the teachers was absent; one was unavoidably late. Many of the madrichim (teen-aged helpers) were not there. But we still learned a lot and had a great time.

I would like to begin by nominating Meyer Lehrman as my personal hero. Meyer is a parent who helps in the classroom. He took on the oldest kids with seriousness and grace. That class focuses on the variety of Jewish communities in the world. The complexity of Jewish identity is always a theme. But the recent violence in Israel and Gaza have thrown that complexity into sharp relief. We talked a little about the difference between a nation and a state. At the school, we want to create a safe place for our kids to discuss whatever they are hearing from their classmates in the public schools. But, most importantly, we want them to understand that they are safe here in Iowa City and that they are not personally responsible for anything happening in Israel and Gaza.

With the older kids in good hands, I took on Logan's class. This class is learning about the Jewish calendar. To be frank, I was a little afraid of teaching the calendar because by the time we get to leap months and solar v. lunar cycles, my head is spinning! Fortunately, I could start with the basics.

The kids compared Jewish and secular calendars. (They started by looking for their own birthdays and were outraged to find that these were not

highlighted on *any* calendar, Jewish or not.) They asked why Jewish months seemed to start several days into the secular month and why there were so many different holidays on *all* calendars.

To get a handle on the calendar, I asked them to create their own with as many weeks, months, and holidays as they wanted. I would act out their holidays. So, I guess I was asking for it. "Kids are the Boss of Adults Day," anyone? Also, we had "Candy for Breakfast Day" every Monday. The kids concluded that calendars are bossy because they tell you what to do. (True!) It's just a short step from that observation to understanding the need for a Jewish calendar. We will tackle that next week.

Meanwhile, Hersh and Hannah joined forces to talk about Abraham and Sarah, who opened their tent in hospitality to all. Attempts at making a tent (or a blanket fort) failed for lack of material. But everyone had a good time making models of tents out of paper.

We have assigned each class a particular prayer from the Kabbalat Shabbat service to study. The rabbi carried her guitar from class to class to help the kids learn to sing and to understand the prayer. Once they are familiar with each prayer, they will also learn to read it.

During the service at the end of the day, each class stood on the bimah and led their special prayer.

All in all, it was a good day.

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 November 22 at 1:00 p.m. on Zoom.

[Contact the office](#) for information.

Join Us! Agudas Achim Synagogue Seniors

THURSDAY November 16
11 AM TO 1 PM
SOCIAL HALL

*Synagogue Seniors member David Schapira, born in Iowa City to one of the synagogue's founding families, will talk about his Vietnam experiences recounted in his book, "The Storyteller: Live for Today and Look Toward the Future." Throughout his journey he encounters comical situations, bizarre characters, and the self-searching answers for survival that he was constantly facing. **PLEASE RSVP BY MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13** so we can plan appropriately for brunch. Reserve your spot by emailing: rsvp@agudasachimic.org*

Coffee, Conversation, and a Nosh

- However you define "seniors" is up to you
- Bring a friend
- Make a new friend
- Group meets third Thursday of the month
- To reserve your spot email: rsvp@agudasachimic.org



Jeanne Cadoret - Phyllis Petchers - Jane Zukin

ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE NOTES

Lisa Heineman, Rachael Carlson, Corvin Greene, & Doug Jones

Sunday, Nov 5 @ 12:30 pm: Lisa Heineman will lead a discussion on the topic, “What’s it like to be a Jewish college student these days?” Lisa will give an update on the situation at Iowa and on other campuses, and participants are invited to process their stories of both difficult and uplifting experiences.

Sunday, Nov 12 @ 1:00 pm: Tour of “Hey Buddy, I’m Bill” at the Main Library Gallery, University of Iowa (corner of Washington & Madison).



Bill Sackter, the child of Ukrainian Jewish immigrants, experienced decades of institutionalization due to a diagnosis of ‘feeble-mindedness.’ Upon his release, he became a disability rights activist, a consultant at UI’s School of Social Work, founder of Wild Bill’s Coffee Shop ... and a member of Agudas Achim Congregation, where he celebrated his bar mitzvah at age 66. You can read more about him (and the exhibit) [here](#).

Curator Sara Pinkham will lead the tour, and we are over the moon that Rabbi Jeff Portman, who knew Bill well, will be present to share his reminiscences.

Friday, Dec 1, Oneg: Doug Jones will give a short - and fun - talk about the history of Hanukkah games. And maybe, just maybe, we’ll learn a few variations on how to play dreidel.

Ongoing: Are you interested in learning to chant Torah and, perhaps, prepare a b’mitzvah? If so, please contact Lisa Heineman at lisa.heineman.1945@gmail.com. We hope to get this program off the ground in early 2024.

OCTOBER ONEG HOSTS

Thank you to October oneg hosts!!!

Claudio Margulis & Xiaowei Han; Corvin Greene

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

CHESHVAN & KISLEV YOGA

Cheshvan Yoga:

Announcing Cheshvan Yoga: From "Mar" to Marvelous! Cheshvan is considered a "mar" (bitter) month due to its dearth of Jewish holidays. Let's sweeten the season by joining together for some Cheshvan Yoga!

In this three-session drop-in class, we will relax, refresh, and rejoice in the New Year while giving ourselves time to rest and integrate our personal experience of the High Holy Days. 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: Sundays from 2:00-3:00 p.m. on November 5 & November 12

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

The Essence of Kislev:

In this three-session drop-in class, we focus on light, hope and strength as the days get shorter and we approach our festival of rededication. We will come away from each gathering with a simple movement practice that we can add to our daily routine. Everyone is welcome. No previous Yoga experience necessary! Join us for as many sessions as you like.

Dates: Consecutive Sundays from 2:00-3:00 p.m. November 19– December 3.

Location: Agudas Achim Congregation

Optional, but nice to have: Yoga mat, large towel, or blanket

To register: rsvp@agudasachimic.org

For more information: Leslea-collins@outlook.com

DONATIONS

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Arthur Bonfield: In memory of Doris Bonfield

Steven & Barcey Levy: In memory of Robert
Thurston

Bob & Donna Rodnitzky: In memory of Leo Pliner

Sue Weinberg & Robert Armstrong: In honor of
Rabbi Hugenholtz for providing an outstanding
High Holiday experience

HIGH HOLIDAY FUND

Fayga Greiner

Susan Groff-VanArendonk

Michael & Joanne Margolin

Mark & Jayne Sandler

Sue Weinberg & Robert Armstrong

Alan & Nina Weinstein: In memory of Maurice &
Bess Weinstein and Emilia B. Lasansky

GENERAL FUND

David & Constance Berman: In memory of Robert
Hoffman

Jody & Janie Braverman: In memory of Elsie Wingo
and Rebecca Richman

Corvin Greene

Bruce Hecox & Brenda Kelly

Jeanne Jaggard: In memory of Harold Jaffe

Linda Kerber: In memory of Harry Kaufman and
Mel Marcus

David & Martha Lubaroff: In memory of
Mary Lubaroff

CEMETERY FUND

Lorraine Dorfman: In memory of Beverly Tys-Berson
and Bertha Tiss

Richard Haendel: In memory of Henry M. Haendel

COMMUNITY RELIEF FUND

Mark Graber & Hetty Hall: In memory of
Selma Graber

FAMILY ASSISTANCE FUND

Sue Weinberg & Robert Armstrong: In memory of
Doug Armstrong

GARDEN FUND

Mark Graber & Hetty Hall: In memory of
Sage Adams Hall

LIBRARY FUND

Rhoda Vernon: In memory of Herman Sterman

PORTMAN PROGRAM FUND

Richard & Phyllis Braverman: In memory of
Rosalie Braverman

Barry & Marjorie Ginsberg: In memory of
Dorothy Kanef

Mark Graber & Hetty Hall: In memory of
Chaim Graber

TIKUN OLAM FOOD DRIVE

Robert & Vida Brenner

Ray & Lindy Buch

Jeanne Cadoret

Miriam Gilbert

Doug & Beverly Jones

Ariel Levin

Irwin & Patricia Levin

Ellen Lewin & Lizbeth Goodman

Judith Liskin-Gasparro

Phil & Susan Lutgendorf

Bernie Miller & Sonja Hauter

Doug & Ruth Nathanson

Bob & Donna Rodnitzky

Pete & Linda Rubenstein

Sonja Spear & Stephen Wolcott

Nancy Sprince

Ellen Weinberg

Sue Weinberg & Robert Armstrong

TIKUN OLAM FUND

Mel & Diane Sunshine: In Memory of Mildred Siegel

Marc & Nancy Zwerling: In memory of
Craig Zwerling

TORAH REPAIR FUND

Nancy Goldsmith

Mark & Jayne Sandler

NOVEMBER 2023

Thur	2	Yahrzeit Minyan for Hersh Rephun's mother	6:00 PM	Mon	13	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
						Intro Class	7:00 PM
Fri	3	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	Thur	16	Seniors Group	11:00 AM
		Erev Shemini Atzeret	7:00 PM			Board Meeting	7:00 PM
		Services					
Sat	4	Martin Blum Bar Mitzvah	9:30 AM	Fri	17	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM			Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
		Luncheon after services honoring Martin Blum		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			Kislev Yoga	2:00 PM
		Adult Ed: Lisa Heineman discussion on Jewish college life	12:30 PM	Mon	20	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Cheshvan Yoga	2:00 PM			Intro Class	7:00 PM
		Interfaith Peace Vigil	6:00 PM	Wed	22	Free Lunch	11:30 AM
Mon	6	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM			Book Group	1:00 PM
		Intro Class	7:00 PM	Thur	23	HAPPY THANKSGIVING	
Wed	8	Ritual Meeting	7:30 PM	Fri	24	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
Thur	9	Exec Meeting	5:30 PM			Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
Fri	10	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	Sat	25	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM	Sun	26	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
Sat	11	Veteran's Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM			Warm-Up America	10:30 AM
Sun	12	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM			Kislev Yoga	2:00 PM
		Sunday School	9:15 AM	Mon	27	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Warm-Up America	10:30 AM			Intro Class	7:00 PM
		Cheshvan Yoga	2:00 PM	Wed	29	Tikun Olam Casserole Cooking	5:30 PM
						Save the Date	
				Sun	12/10	Bazaar & Hanukkah Party	

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE NEWS

Karen Lipman

Save the date! New Member Shabbat will be Saturday January 27, 2024, followed by lunch. Plan on joining us to welcome members that joined in Calendar year 2023.

BOARD MINUTES

You can find minutes from our October board meeting [at this link](#).

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.

FROM THE CARING COMMITTEE

Nancy Goldsmith, Susan Lutgendorf, & Teresa Weiner

Agudas Achim's Caring Committee coordinates volunteers to support members of our congregation and community. Volunteers offer comfort, connection, and assistance through participation in Meal Trains, in-person and phone visits, providing rides, making deliveries, and other ways of reaching out to each other.

Contact us at caring@agudasachimic.org :

- May we add you to our volunteer list? Please email your contact information to us!
- Can our volunteers help you? Don't hesitate to ask— just email your request to us!

WARM UP AMERICA

For many years, Agudas Achim has hosted the local Warm Up America group, which provides afghans for area organizations helping our neighbors. We use *all*-synthetic yarn, only, because other fibers shrink. We appreciate donated yarn and funds for purchasing yarn, through Agudas Achim's Tikun Olam fund.

We encourage Agudas Achim members and their friends to join us, schmooze, and maybe help while we work. No special skills or prior knowledge are necessary. Our next gathering dates are November 12 and 26, 2023, 10:30 a.m. - noon, in the social hall.



VETERAN'S SHABBAT

Agudas Achim Congregation is planning a special Veteran's Shabbat to coincide with Veteran's Day Saturday, November 11. If you served in the armed forces for the United States or another country, we want to hear from you.

Please send your service information to janezukin@gmail.com. Let us know the dates and locations of your service, the branch in which you served, your final rank, and include a photo of yourself in uniform if you wish. Thank you for your service.

SERMON FOR PARASHAT NOACH

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz

‘Vayomer Elohim l’noach, ketz kol basar ba lifnei ki mal’ah ha’arets chamas mifneihem v’hineni mashchitam et ha’arets’ – ‘God said to Noah: I am ending all flesh for the earth is filled with ‘Chamas’, lawlessness, because of them...’ Gen. 6:13

Friends, I say this with a heavy heart: this will be the most cited verse from Parashat Noach across synagogues throughout the world.

It is striking, suprising and chilling to see that word in Hebrew: ‘chamas’, now two weeks into our global shivah for the victims of the Hamas pogrom committed on Simchat Torah. Victims of all backgrounds: Jewish Israeli, Palestinian Israeli, Thai, American and more. Young and old, from the hoary-headed to the suckling babe.

The Hebrew word chamas (coincidentally unrelated to the Arabic acronym of Hamas) has many dark shades of meaning in Tenakh: violence, chaos, disorder, lawlessness, injustice, wantonness. Chamas signals the breakdown of the social order, the lowering of the bar of our collective morality, the erasure of our common humanity.

All of that speaks so deeply to us in this moment.

Here we find ourselves; adrift on churning seas. It is hard to find the words. Impossible to find the words. We grasp onto thin and fragile tethers of hope: the release of two American female hostages, while we continue to pray for the others. Yet, we also feel despair move over us, thunderous and unrelenting, as we see the loss of human life tick up, day after relentless day. And we know it will not end soon. We know that there will be an aftermath. We bear witness to it; helpless and far away, and there is little we can do but pray, hold space and go about whatever shreds of normalcy remains with us. To think that only two weeks prior, we sang with rejoicing; we dipped our apples in honey, felt the grace of Yom Kippur and the happiness of Sukkot. Now, the words of Jewish joy have turned to ashes in my mouth.

In fact, it is impossible to find the words. Any words. And I am reminded of the Torah’s counsel: ‘Vayidom Aharon’, the Torah tells us, when Aaron learns of the sudden and cruel death of his two elder sons. ‘And Aaron was silent.’

Still, the paradox exists: even if we feel we may not have words, we cannot be silent. We must whisper our truths in the sacred chambers of our own hearts, speak our moral courage and hold each other with words of kindness, grace, wisdom and peace. That, dear friends, feels near impossible right now. All I can strive to do is to teach you what Torah I have; to turn to our great and holy tradition as the crucible for the force of our emotions, the depth of our grief. Torah is the vessel of our tears for our people.

Just as the ark was the vessel of Noah’s tears.

Parashat Noach is Parashah where time feels disconnected or dismantled. It is set in an ancient mythic past and yet it rings with the predictive truth of a dystopian future. Erroneously cast into cutesy children’s stories about a boat and animals two-by-two, its grim, existential power is often elusive. Yet, if we lean into the text and come to know its protagonists, we can share in their trauma and maybe understand a little of our own. The portion invites us to imagine ourselves as Noah: a thoughtful and righteous man, by all accounts (even if only relative to the depravity of the ‘dor mabul’, the generation of the flood), who stood by as he saw his entire world destroyed. All he could do was build an ark for himself and his immediate family. The narrative pleads before our imagination: what was it like to know that the world entire would drown? All his loved ones and friends, and perhaps his enemies too—swept away for ever. What moral injury did he experience as the rains came down and human beings and animals alike desperately clambered to higher ground, to no avail? And what was it like to sit in that ark, with one, sealed up

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SERMON FOR PARASHAT NOACH

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)

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window, storm-tossed, immersed in darkness and crippling isolation.

Each of us is a Noach now, as we witness our violent world come apart at the seams. Is there an ark for us? An ark that is both a vessel for our tears and a crucible of our hope? Is there a way for us to find a modicum of safety and sanity amidst all we see, hear and witness?

Perhaps our ark is Shabbat. Our ark is song. Our ark is prayer. Our ark is community. Our ark is moral agency. Our ark is yearning for peace. Our ark is our common humanity.

We are each other's ark and we will carry each other across turbulent waters.

Of course the Noach story ends. God re-establishes the covenant of Adam with Noach, re-affirming the abiding and uncompromising truth that each

human being is made in the Image of God. A dove returns with an olive branch; a rainbow is erected across a clear sky and Noach and his family find their footing. Spinning wildly between gratitude and trauma, they bring their offerings and imbibe their wine. The pain is great; their souls are wounded but—humanity continues on. Humanity continues on.

We are still in our ark; in suspended animation. We do not yet know what will come or how we will respond to it. Each of us will experience this dark night of the soul differently. Each of us will cry unique tears, ask ourselves unique questions, cast our unique thoughts into a starry night. But we are here together. That is all we have got, and from this we derive our resilience.

Holding you all in my heart; let us hold each other and the world entire.

Shabbat shalom.

SERMON FOR PARASHAT LECH LECHA

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz

'Let There Be No Strife Between You and Me'

The story-telling element in our Jewish culture is so compelling, worlds of the heart bound in words, each story a gem in a jewel box. During moments of great joy or deep sorrow, we look into our collective soul and glimpse our gems, weigh them in our hands, survey their angles and luster.

Like many of you, I carry stories about the land which we call Israel and Palestine. Our stories are drawn up within its borders but also transcend beyond. We walk this land, 'the length and breadth of it', as this week's portion has it. We bear witness to it; its singular beauty and its bitter scars. We position ourselves in relation to it: before it, within it. We love it and struggle with it; a web of contradictions, a veil of intimacy draped across it. This land invites the telling of stories.

I visited Israel for the first time when I was 17 years old. I had won a European Union-wide youth essay writing prize, issued by the EU and UNESCO, on the topic of '50 Years of the Holocaust – the Lessons for Europe.'

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SERMON FOR PARASHAT LECH LECHA

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)

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I grew up in a liberal Zionist home. In post-War Netherlands, many gentiles identified strongly with Israel. My mother had been there several times, even managing to get trapped there for a while when the Six Day War erupted in 1967. I grew up with travel guides gracing our coffee table, advertising working summers at Kibbutzim. I wanted that too, the passionate dream of a young teenager. I spent almost a month travelling with my family in Israel, coast to coast, top to tail, even visiting the Golan Heights, the West Bank and Petra in Jordan. This trip became a collection of gems in my jewel box. Some of them were lustrous and bright; others had sharp, jagged edges.

I returned again and again, coming home to my people: on youth trips, yeshiva programs and for rabbinical studies. My last visit was in 2013, six months pregnant with my oldest child. One of my most enduring memories was a rabbinical school visit in 2011. I wanted to daven at *haKotel ha'Ma'aravi* – the Western Wall – and dressed modestly for the occasion, looking indistinguishable from *Dati Le'umi* women, the Orthodox 'National-Religious' demographic. This made me uneasy because I do not share their religious values.

We picked our way through the Palestinian part of East Jerusalem and it was a scorching July afternoon during Ramadan. A Muslim vendor was selling *limonana*, a popular local mint-lemonade drink. I felt some remorse enjoying the refreshing beverage while thousands of people around me were fasting. I bought the drink and the vendor, out of the goodness of his heart, gave my friend (who accompanied me) a second, free drink. We thanked the gentleman and continued picking our way through the narrow, golden streets of the Old City. I met the friendly gaze of a Palestinian woman who smiled at me. 'Cham', she said in aspirated Arabic and I immediately understood, because this is also the word for 'hot' in Hebrew, *cham*. We shared a

simple human connection and I wished her *Ramadan Mubarak*.

My many stories from Israel are littered with such human connections. An Israeli-Russian bus driver who marvelled to see a woman pray with tefillin and gave me a thumbs up. Encounters buying flowers for my host for Shabbat from flirty Jewish street vendors on a Friday afternoon, hearing the ubiquitous 'Shabbat shalom'. Hanging out with secular young Israelis on the beaches of Tel Aviv. Enjoying creamy Palestinian hummus with an Israeli friend in the Abu Gosh village (world recorder holder for the best hummus, allegedly). Banter with the *Bitachon* (security) people at Ben Gurion airport ('what do you mean you are a female rabbi? And you haven't even had a Bat Mitzvah!').

We carry our gems close to our hearts. We have Israeli family, friends, colleagues and loved ones in the region. In my pastoral check-in's with congregants these past weeks, I have been privileged to hear so many moving stories of loved ones in Israel or on their way there to offer medical aid. Doctors, nurses, cousins, siblings, children. WhatsApp messages and email updates from a faraway land that feels so close; I hold our stories, beautiful, complex, complicated, as tenderly and lovingly as any one rabbi can.

When I pondered what to preach on for this Shabbat, I felt overwhelmed by the choice of so much Torah: thick, dense, meaningful. *Parashat Lech Lecha* is one of my favorite parshiyot. I deeply identify with *Avraham Avinu* and *Sarah Imeinu*. There is much that resonates with us Jews; this text a repository replete with our highest values and greatest moral instincts. I could have chosen to preach a sermon on what it means to lead a Judaism by its vision; to lean into being a blessing to all, a maker of peace, a builder of hope. There are legion midrashim that conceive of Abraham and Sarah opening up their nascent community and

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SERMON FOR PARASHAT LECH LECHA

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)

(Continued from page 20)

extending welcome beneath the poles of their tent; making converts, relaying ethics. There is a midrash of our Patriarch witnessing a burning citadel, a metaphor for our world on fire.

Rather, I think we need to hear our stories first. Placing humanity before ideology, emphasizing vulnerability in our values. We cannot control the Big Things; not even by storming the gates of Heaven; not by tweet nor Instagram post, op-ed or Facebook update. Not by news report and opinion-piece, documentaries and podcasts dripping with political analysis. There is a time and place for that. But in this sacred space, held by holy community, it is the gems of our human stories that cast light in the darkness.

In the middle of the Torah portion, tensions rise between Lot and Abraham. Lot is an *ersatz* Abraham; he is a follower rather than a leader, a bystander, not an upstander. Like his uncle, he has amassed resources and wealth; yet he has not calibrated his moral compass to the degree Abraham has. The Torah tells us that in order to stave off conflict between both parties and their large retinues and flocks, Abraham gives Lot first choice to new grazing lands, despite the Patriarch wielding more power, authority and seniority. *'El na tehi merivah beini uveinecha... ki anashim achim anachnu'*, Abraham tenderly states: 'Please now, let there be no strife between me and between you, for we are kinsmen' (literally: 'brothers'). Gen. 13:8

Lot settles in the plain of Zoar, amongst Sodom and Gomorrah, a land so fertile, abundant and beautiful that the Torah calls it 'Gan Adonai', the Garden of the Eternal. Perhaps the ability to name tension and sit with it, to keep moral agency, to lead with principle rather than politics, the call to hear 'the other', is what creates the gift of expansive abundance in our lives, a garden of Divinity.

This one line in the Torah can launch a thousand sermons. I am struck how Abraham doesn't say 'let there be no strife between *us*' but rather says 'between myself *me and you*.' He has the humility and the sensitivity to reflect on his own actions instead of deflecting responsibility to the other.

I am struck by the narrative: two men who found a way to tell of their lives and walk the breadth and beauty of this land. Who held each other's humanity at the core of their moral imagination.

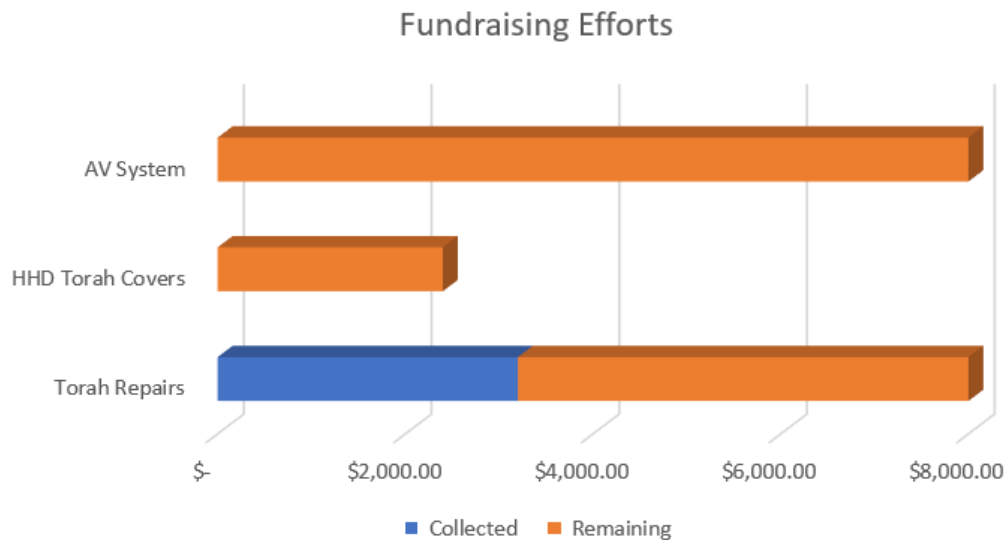
'Cham', the Palestinian woman said to me kindly. The shared experience of Middle Eastern heat. I am reminded that in next week's portion, Abraham sits *'kechom yahom'*, in the 'heat of the day' awaiting to entertain angels. We are sitting in the *heat* of our own days; scorching, parching, difficult. On our skin, we feel the jagged edges of our gems; the glint of complex beauty, a hint of color among the black.

Please, let's keep telling each other our stories. Stories of those killed; stories of those still taken hostage; stories of impending loss and of the momentum of grief; a grief of the land and yet transcending it. Let's also tell stories of what we can protect, save, cherish, rebuild. Stories of this land and its humans, stretching back into a primordial past, the rhythm of our words falling to the beat of sandaled feet. And please God, we will tell a new story and sing a new song. Let the moment be near, may the time be now for us to tell a story of our common dignity, our shared humanity and of days of peace.

Please, God, may that be Your will and ours.

CONGREGATIONAL NEEDS FUNDRAISER

From time to time our congregation has needs that you may have a special passion for helping to provide to our space. In an effort to ensure our stability as a congregation, feel free to donate to these "smaller" important needs, as you are able. We will be noting our progress (transparently) each month to monitor where we are in reaching these goals! Note: \$2400 was previously in the Torah fund and is included here.



MESSAGE FROM AREA CLERGY

Dear Rabbi Esther and our friends at Agudas Achim Synagogue,

In the wake of the recent violence in Israel and Gaza, we wanted to express our deepest sympathies and solidarity. We know that the Jewish community everywhere is impacted, and we want you to know that you have our support.

Additionally, we know that antisemitism is very real and that this war will not help. We wish to express our ongoing commitment to work against antisemitism and any threats towards Jewish people. As Christian and Interfaith leaders, we recognize that we have a special responsibility to name the historical harm against Jewish people and to stand up against bigotry and hatred.

With love and support,

Iowa City area clergy

Adey Wassink
Tom Wassink
David Borger Germann
Ryan Downing
Jill Michel
Nora Boerner
Carolyn Otis
Meg Wagner
Laura Hudson Kittrell
Dorothy Whiston
Kara Seaton
Jane Stewart
Diana Smith
Mary Kay Kusner



Note: we've also received flowers and cards from many different individuals and organizations in the area. We're very thankful for their support.

AGUDAS ACHIM CONGREGATION PRESENTS

Coming together for
a Season of Light and Resilience!

HANUKKAH LATKE PARTY & BAKE /CRAFTS SALE



SUNDAY DECEMBER 10
BAKE & CRAFT SALE 4:30 P.M.
PARTY (CANDLE LIGHTING) 5:30 P.M.
LIVE KLEZMER BAND 6:30 P.M.
(TIMINGS & COST TO BE CONFIRMED)

Join us for menorah lighting,
good food, live music, arts & crafts sale and more!

At the synagogue - all welcome.

Do you want to sell/donate handcrafted
goods or food? Contact us.

rsvp@agudasachimic.org

[Donate via Venmo](#); [Donate via Paypal](#)

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