



# Agudas Achim Congregation

401 E. Oakdale Blvd., Coralville, IA 52241

Phone: 319-337-3813

[www.AgudasAchimIC.org](http://www.AgudasAchimIC.org)

## March 2024 / Adar I-Adar II 5784

### FROM THE RABBI

*Esther Hugenholtz*

The Psalmist of Psalm 23 famously and poignantly stated: 'kosi revayah', 'my cup overflows.' Over time, this has come to be a Jewish expression of deep gratitude and abiding abundance. And so, I will echo these ancient words. My cup does indeed overflow. I am still verklempt (a good Yiddish word meaning 'overcome with feeling or emotion') at the amazing Shabbaton I experienced with Agudas Achim this past Shabbat.

Despite my recovery from Influenza, antibiotics and DayQuil allowed me to attend and participate (scratchy voice and lingering cough notwithstanding, and no, I was no longer contagious) in the festivities. From a lovingly Board-sponsored Oneg on Friday night filled with treats to a sumptuous Luncheon on Saturday afternoon, it was a day filled with unadulterated happiness and blessing. I am so, so grateful for the myriad of heartfelt well wishes, cards, letters and gifts celebrating my seven years with the congregation and I feel it is much more than I deserve, from, as Tolkien once wrote, 'such excellent and admirable' company. I was gifted a beautiful 'Tulip Pyramid'—a modern edition of a 17<sup>th</sup> century Delft Blue Dutch vase—as well as other indulgences. The vase sits proudly on my dining room table and the tulips are still going strong. But more than physical gifts, were the gifts of love and appreciation that I will carry within me for many years to come. It is a great and deep honor to be your rabbi, to walk this strange path of life with you, and to be in sacred partnership with this congregation. I still love Iowa

City and despite the unsettledness of our peculiar historical moment, do not regret coming here at all.

It is impossible to thank everyone who made the Shabbaton possible. I know Board President David Lubaroff and Board member Sue Weinberg both played an outsized role, with their team of co-conspirators. David has been and continues to be my partner in all synagogue things and his kindnesses affect me deeply. He has written wise words (with evidence-based data!) on the important role of positive feedback in this Bulletin and I encourage you to read his words. I also know the Board of Directors was deeply involved in this celebration and their warmth, collaborative spirit and forward-thinkingness (is that a word?) continue to inspire me. I also want to thank Principal Sonja Spear who got to showcase her scholarly and learned approach to Torah through her wonderful and thoughtful sermon, chock-a-block with rich Midrash and interpretation. Sonja, too, is my partner in all things synagogue and I look forward to many years of collaboration and dreaming. As for the professional staff in the Office: my illness allowed them to sneak around undetected to pull all of this together, with such loving detail, and I am blown away by their friendship and commitment. Every detail was lovingly planned and executed, right down to the name stickers for congregants and visitors. Even my little four-year old Shifra was walking proudly with her sticker on her t-shirt that said, 'Shifra – Member of Agudas Achim'. And of

*(Continued on page 2)*

## FROM THE RABBI

### *Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)*

*(Continued from page 1)*

course, I am grateful for all of you who came, and all of you who sent me messages regardless of whether you came or not. The Social Hall was heaving, the Oasis falafel was tasty and life was good.

Pivoting back to the President's article, I am always mindful of words historically ascribed to the Hellenistic Jewish Philosopher Philo of Alexandria (whether that attribution is historically accurate, I will leave to greater minds to determine): 'be kind, for everyone is fighting a hard battle.' These words feel especially poignant nowadays, when so many of us are fighting (or witnessing) battles, large and small. We are living in a time of conflict and heartbreak, of global calamity and private struggle. Some of these questions are much bigger than any of us hope to resolve in an article or sermon or opinion-piece, but we sit with the tension and wonder how we can make it through with our sense of self, justice and compassion intact. This is, of course, the task and challenge of holy community, and as per David's words, positive feedback, consideration and kindness are important factors in our continued cohesion and success.

In Judaism, we have many words for love, grace and kindness. Chesed, rachamim, chen, ahavah. All speak to the hope of creating a 'virtuous cycle'. Breaking through destructive and reductive patterns to create patterns of hope. This doesn't mean hard conversations can't be had or that important truths can't be spoken. It just means that we continue to practice a 'middah (shout out to Lea Haravon Collin's Mussar class), a virtue, of thoughtfulness and giving each other the benefit of the doubt ('dan l'kaf zechut' in Hebrew).

'This is an hour of change', the Reform prayer book asks us in one of its readings. 'Shall we draw back or cross over?' We are indeed in an 'hour of change' and the road ahead is not a

straightforward path. But I also trust that we have the moral reserves, emotional skills and spiritual fortitude to continue to navigate the challenges ahead. We have many exciting opportunities for deep Jewish engagement, facilitation, dialogue, spirituality, learning and just plain old community fun (the 'Havdalah and Bowling' event was wonderful – in full disclosure: I am a terrible bowler). Keep your eye on the calendar for activities in our beautiful building and downtown, and keep our hearts connected to each other. I firmly believe that there are many bright days ahead for Agudas Achim. I look forward to meeting the moment with all of you.

With all my love and blessings,

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz.



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*David Lubaroff*

I am still feeling uplifted by the Rabbi's Appreciation Event held at the synagogue on Saturday, February 24, 2024. The outpouring of support for Rabbi Hugenholtz was wonderful. Over 120 people, members, non-members, friends and clergy colleagues, attended the luncheon. They told Rabbi Hugenholtz, through messages in a guest book, sticky notes on a poster board, and personal conversations, how much she is appreciated and how her leadership in spiritual, social, and educational activities means to them. Seeing her face light up during the event was a joy to behold.

These actions of praise, positive feedback, and acknowledgement of a job well done extends to all of us. It is not confined to telling the rabbi that she is doing a great job, but it is, or should be, a practice we should make a part of how we relate to others. Positive feedback isn't just about kind words. It reaffirms that we believe that the person we are speaking to is having an impact. The feedback is inspiring and motivating. It is a win-win situation. If someone is doing an excellent job, tell him or her because that person will be motivated to continue that excellence. According to Harvard Business Review, 72% of employees feel corrective feedback from managers would improve their performance. The same study also found that 57% of people prefer feedback to pure praise. Feedback gives employees a chance to see themselves differently and understand how others perceive them.

To put it scientifically, when we receive positive feedback, it feels like we have been rewarded. Recent neuroscience research indicates that receiving positive recognition activates the same areas in our brain that are activated when we receive money – the ventral striatum and the ventral medial prefrontal cortex. We know how much joy comes from receiving money so the term *paying a complement* has real meaning.

I will paraphrase from an article on positive feedback by David Raphael. Giving positive

feedback is an essential element of a healthy environment. Saying, "nice job" is a good start, but people can make their positive feedback far more effective and impactful. There is a four-part framework that is helpful in assessing and enhancing the quality of our positive feedback:

**Passive and Destructive:** The person ignores an event and appears dismissive. Think of a time when you or a colleague worked for hours and organized a highly successful event, and they were offered no acknowledgement.

**Active and Destructive:** In this scenario, the person points out only the negatives ("The *charoset* at your Passover *Seder* was terrible"), steals the glory, or is actively dismissive of your success ("That was a great event, you couldn't have done it without me").

**Passive and Constructive:** A person provides low energy or understated support for the effort ("Nice job on organizing the 150-person mission to Israel that raised \$10 million. How do you like my new sports jacket?").

**Active and Constructive:** Active and constructive feedback provides authentic, enthusiastic recognition and, additionally, utilizes the event to advance learning and professional growth for both the individual and the team. Such feedback allows the professional to savor his or her accomplishment, learn from it and share what he or she has learned with others.

So, friends, we all like to have positive feedback in our lives. It is so much better than negative comments. It has been said that we learn from our mistakes. That is certainly true, but we also learn how to be successful by reinforcement of a job well done. If you haven't yet told Rabbi Hugenholtz how much you think she is doing as our spiritual leader, our social director, and our educator, please do so at your earliest convenience. Also, use positive feedback to tell members of the synagogue board, committees, our religious school principal, the office staff, or anyone at Agudas Achim that they are doing an excellent job. It goes a very long way.

Think positively.

## REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

### Tikkun Olam– Mallory Hellman

The Tikkun Olam Committee spent much of February immersed in reaching out to the greater Iowa City/ Coralville community in one of our favorite ways: with food! A huge and hearty thanks to everyone who contributed to our food drive for ThinkIC's "February Fillanthropy." Your donations made their way to ThinkIC on 2/29 and will be split among CommUnity, the Coralville Community Food Pantry, and the North Liberty Food Pantry.

On February 21, our very own Sonja Spear visited Iowa City Free Lunch to help with serving and post-meal cleanup. Thank you, Sonja!

**Interested in getting involved with Free Lunch in the future? Here's all you need to know:**

Agudas Achim is part of the "Avocado Group," (don't ask us why it's called this!), which volunteers at Free Lunch on the third Wednesday of each even month. **Our next volunteer date is Wednesday, April 17.**

Shifts begin at 9:30, with cleaning and meal prep in the Free Lunch kitchen. Volunteers can commit to a single two-hour shift, or volunteer for the whole day. Shifts are as follows:

9:30-11:30: Cleanup and cooking

11:30-1:30: Serving and cleanup

Iowa City Free Lunch is located at 1105 S. Gilbert Ct., Suite 100. It can be a little hard to find, so when you sign up, we'll give you detailed driving instructions. You're also welcome and encouraged to request a carpool with a tikkun olam committee member!

Can't volunteer, but want to help us by cooking in advance? Email Mal to become part of our casserole committee!

We on the Tikkun Olam Committee thank you for a wonderful February. Here's to an even better spring!

**If you are interested in taking a shift for April 17, please email**

**Mallory Hellman at [mallory-hellman@uiowa.edu](mailto:mallory-hellman@uiowa.edu).**

תיקון עולם

*Tikkun Olam*

Transforming the World



## ADULT EDUCATION

*Lisa Heineman*

There's lots happening in the world of Adult Education in the next few weeks!

March 22 @ 5:30 p.m.: **Spiritual journaling for Purim led by Corvin Greene.** We're going to move our spiritual journaling sessions to Friday evenings before services – a warm-up to get into the mood for Shabbat.

March 30 @ 12:30 p.m.: The first of two sessions on **death, dying, and mourning in a Jewish context**, led by the Rabbi. March 30 will be dedicated to the topic of death and mourning, and a subsequent session will focus on the Chevra Kadisha – the 'holy society' that provides dignified care for the deceased in accordance with Jewish law, custom, and tradition.

April 3 @ 6-7:30 p.m.: **Big Ideas in Jewish Books at ICPL.** We'll discuss Dana Horn's *People Love Dead Jews*. You can find a copy at the library or purchase it from a vendor of your choice.

April 14 @ 1 p.m.: **Curator-guided tour of *Making the Book: Past and Present* at the UI Library Gallery** – including a piece inspired by the Cairo Geniza

April 17 @ 6-7:30 p.m.: **Big Ideas in Jewish Books at ICPL.** We'll discuss Shaul Magid's *The Necessity of Exile*. You can find a copy at the library or purchase it from a vendor of your choice.

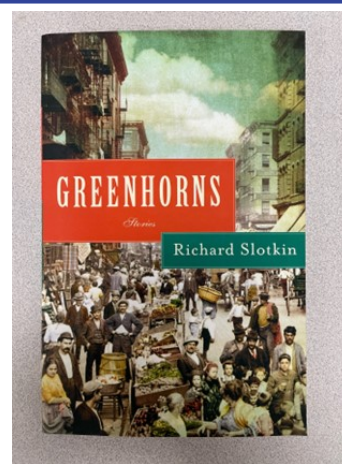
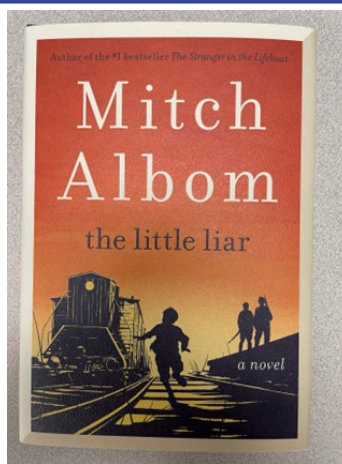
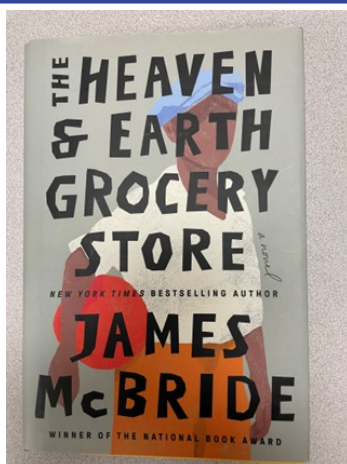
Unless otherwise indicated, all events are at the synagogue.

Due to the busy-ness of the spring season, we've decided to rethink the scheduling for our facilitated discussions on Israel. The previously announced session for March 2 will not take place.

## LIBRARY NEWS

*Teresa Weiner*

New in the library—check them out!



## FROM THE CARING COMMITTEE

*Nancy Goldsmith, Susan Lutgendorf, & Teresa Weiner*

It's been a busy fall and winter, with many new babies and some health issues among our congregants, and we were able to help them all. However, the Caring Committee wants to expand the services offered, and that where you come in:

1. We would like to have a roster of volunteers who stand ready to support members of our congregation. Volunteers would offer comfort, connection, and assistance through, in-person and phone visits, providing rides, making deliveries, and other ways of reaching out to each other.

2. As you are hopefully aware, we use Meal Trains to provide meals to those dealing with stressful times such as childbirth and planned surgery. However, there can be situations that arise where help is needed, and we don't have time to organize a Meal Train. To that end, we would like to create a list of people who we can call upon at short notice to provide a meal when needed.

If you would be willing to help, please email us at: [caring@agudasachimic.org](mailto:caring@agudasachimic.org) with your contact information and what you would be willing to do.

And, as always, if you need help, don't hesitate to ask – just use the same email address and let us know.

Thank you,

The Caring Committee

Nancy Goldsmith, Susan Lutgendorf & Teresa Weiner

## COVID COMMENTS+

*Bob Wallace, Barcey Levy, & Jane Zukin*

The major respiratory viruses (COVID-19, influenza and RSV) are still with us and causing illness, and precautions about preventing them are still needed. However, there is some good news, as the number of persons hospitalized with COVID-19 in the US is generally dropping. If you have a positive test for the COVID-19 virus, the antiviral drugs are still effective, and you should consult your physician or pharmacist about them. All vaccines against respiratory viruses also continue to be effective, and if you've not had them this season, please talk to your physician about receiving them.

CDC announced on February 23<sup>rd</sup> that norovirus is seasonally increasing. This is a seasonal contagious virus that generally spreads by direct contact with other people and by food and other contaminated objects. It generally causes stomach aches, nausea and vomiting, and diarrhea. There are no specific treatments but experts recommend taking extra fluids to avoid dehydration. The best prevention is vigorous hand-washing.

To your health!

## SCHOOL NEWS

*Sonja Spear*

Dust off your groggers! It's nearly Purim!

The Sunday School is doing a new Barbie-licious spiel, and we're all tickled pink! (OK. I'll stop that now.)

But, seriously, we have begun Purim preparations, so we're having a lot of fun. A few Sundays ago, Haman escaped from custody and hid somewhere in the synagogue. The oldest kids wrote clues to help the rest of the school find him. They used all the vocabulary for items that we find around the synagogue such as *siddurim* and the *ner tamid*. (This was a sneaky review of what they had learned the week before. Don't tell them.) The younger kids followed the clues and discovered Haman.

Then, the oldest kids returned to learning the Torah service. The youngest kids made Purim decorations and learned the Purim story. But the middle grades got to put Haman on trial. Some of them argued for the defense, others for the prosecution. A few lucky kids got to be witnesses. Judge Toe Collins handed down a stiff (but not lethal) sentence.

The middle grades are also rehearsing the spiel under Hersh Rephun's direction. He is taking it very seriously, with auditions and everything. The kids even asked to take their scripts home to study. (We'll see how many scripts come back...)

Meanwhile, the middle grades are also learning to read Hebrew, starting with all the letters in the word *barukh* (blessed). The wonderful thing about this starting point is that the kids can read a word they already know by the end of just one session. Instant success!

The odd thing about instant success for the student is that it is built on a very careful planning on the part of the teacher. Often, the planning is invisible. It may be especially invisible in activities that seem spontaneous, such as when the kids hunt for Haman or put on a skit using only Hebrew words. I always hope that these activities feel like fun. I think kids learn best when their minds *and* their bodies are engaged. But to make sure that the

learning is there, the teacher needs to create solid scaffolding and to think the activity through step by step.



Last week, I attended Song Leaders Boot Camp (SLBC) at the Jewish Community Center in St. Louis. It was an amazing experience of singing, music, Torah study, and workshops. For the first time in a very long time, I got to be the student. I stepped into a workshop on transitions, for instance, to find the teachers already playing instruments and singing. I joined the singing, found a harmony, and – hey, instant success! Afterward, teachers broke down exactly what they had done to create a transition that moved the students from outside class to inside the class and transformed them from individuals to a single singing group. It must have taken hours to plan that short session. Behind those hours were thousands of hours of practicing music. It takes a lot of practice to make music sound spontaneous, just as it takes a lot of practice to teach. I came away from SLBC inspired to do more with music and to do it better. But I am also very aware of the thought and planning that will have to support my ambitions.

In their own way, I think the kids in the Purim spiel are making the same discovery. It takes practice to make a performance seem easy. So, come to the Purim spiel on March 24<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 to boo Haman and to cheer the kids on! You don't need to have a kid in the school to have fun. Just wear pink, be prepared to sing some very silly songs, and don't forget your grogger!

## MAHJONGG

Join us for Mahjongg from 2-4 p.m. in the synagogue. Bring a Mahjongg card if you have one.

March 10- hosted by Corvin

March 17- hosted by Karen ( time tbd- May move to earlier)

March 24- hosted by Karen

March 31- hosted by Corvin

[RSVP to Corvin](#)

[RSVP to Karen](#)



## FEBRUARY BOARD MINUTES

February board meeting minutes can be found [here](#).

## FEBRUARY ONEG HOSTS

**Thank you to our February Oneg hosts: Ari Levin, Sonja Spear & The Agudas Achim Board**

### BOOK DRIVE

Shelter House will be hosting their annual book sale March 23-24. Funds from this sale will be used to further the Shelter House's mission. Books in good condition may be donated by placing in the white bin in the foyer of Agudas Achim. Items will be collected through March 20.

### SPIRITUAL JOURNALING

Purim Spiritual Journaling  
before Shabbat Services at 5:30 p.m. March 22

Join us for some pre-Shabbat spiritual journaling focused on the themes of Purim. Corvin Greene will lead us through several journaling prompts to help you prepare for Purim. Bring something to write with and on. No experience necessary.

### LOST AND FOUND

Lost and Found items will be donated March 1—  
please grab your items before then!

### SYNAGOGUE DIRECTORY

We've made the decision to move the publishing of our synagogue directory to the summer months going forward. This does apply to this year's directory. We'll send out requests for database updates and information about advertising in the directory when the time comes.



## SYNAGOGUE SENIORS

The Synagogue Seniors will meet from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Thursday, March 21 in the Social Hall. The brunch gathering will feature a presentation by Bob Wallace, MD, the Irene Ensminger Emeritus Professor of Epidemiology and Internal Medicine at the University of Iowa. Bob will present on "The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Jewish Life: 2020 - 2024." During Bob's long career, he has mentored countless students, written more than 500 peer-reviewed papers, and has conducted research in aging, disease prevention, clinical epidemiology, health promotion and preventive medicine. We hope you will join us!

## ROSH CHODESH YOGA

Join us for Rosh Chodesh classes to welcome Adar (two Adars this year!) followed by a full month of Nissan Yoga.

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:** Sundays 2:00-3:00 p.m March 17, April 13, April 20, April 27

**Location:** Agudas Achim Congregation

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

**For more information:** [Leslea-collins@outlook.com](mailto:Leslea-collins@outlook.com)



## WARM UP AMERICA

Warm Up America invites you to its first

### SIT, KNIT, AND CROCHET DAY

March 31. 10:30-a.m. to noon.

BYODrink, and snacks if you're motivated. [Kosher, of course.]



Spend a casual 1.5 hours visiting with WUA people and working on your current project or just visiting. Have a question about a project? Share it with us.

If we are not at the front door, please come around to the social hall door in the back of the building. We'll also meet on March 3rd and 17th, 10:30a.m. - noon, in the social hall. Schmoozers are welcomed.

## AGUDAS ACHIM SAYS “THANK YOU” TO RABBI HUGENHOLTZ

On Saturday, February 24, 2024 (aka 22424) a special event, consisting of a Shabbat service and luncheon, was held to show appreciation for all the wonderful things that Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz does for Agudas Achim and for the communities of Iowa City and Coralville. The service was well attended and over 120 people attended the luncheon that included synagogue members, non-members, friends, and colleagues.

The service was led by our Rabbi with assistance from lay leaders Alicia Maxwell, Peter Rubenstein, and Bernie Miller. School Principal Sonja Spear gave a D’var Torah on the Parsha about the very specific clothing worn by Aaron upon his elevation to High Priest.

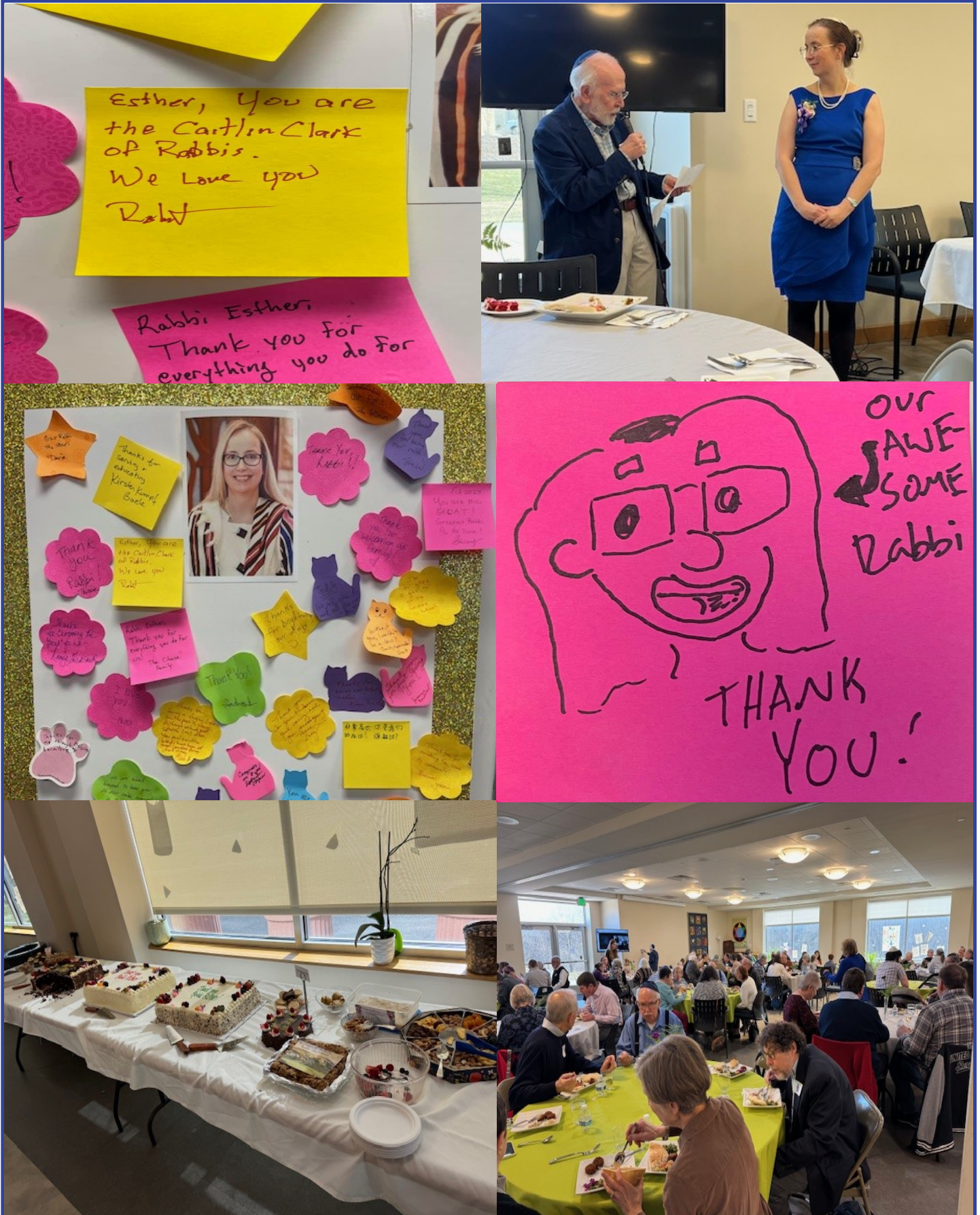
The luncheon was a wonderful event. We all enjoyed the food, drink, and multiple-flavored cakes that had the message “*Thank You Rabbi Esther.*” Tributes to the Rabbi were many: a Guest Book in which anyone could write their feelings for her, a Poster Board on which people could attached sticky notes with personal messages, short speeches by Kathy Jacobs and David Lubaroff, and finally gifts.

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz is people person and a compassionate person, one who goes out of her way to do the right thing for others and deserves our kind words and thanks for who she is and what she does.





## CELEBRATING RABBI HUGENHOLTZ





*happy*

**PURIM**

The Agudas Achim LGBTQI+ Group Invites You to a

## QUEER PURIM PARTY

Saturday, March 23rd 9:30 PM (Following Megillah reading)  
Studio 13 @ 13 S. Linn St #1, Iowa City, IA

This will be an opportunity to shmooze, watch drag performances, and enjoy  
holding space as queer individuals and allies!

Agudas Achim will have a reserved booth & a bottle of champagne.  
Studio 13 is an age 19+ gay bar.





**SUNDAY, MARCH 24TH**

# Barbie Purim Spiel 10:30 am Carnival 11 am-12:15 pm

**Esther**  
**The Barbie Spiel**

A 20 MINUTE MEGILLAH

Enjoy a megillah reading like none other-  
Barbie themed!

\*Free\* carnival in the social hall  
immediately following.

Costumes encouraged  
Feel free to bring a friend!

All events hosted at Agudas Achim



AGUDAS ACHIM

# YOUTH GROUP

Who: 7th-12th graders

What: Fun events, snacks, games  
& more

When: Activities offered varying  
days and times

**FOR MORE INFO, EMAIL:**

[secretary@agudasachimic.org](mailto:secretary@agudasachimic.org)



## MARCH SPECIAL EVENTS

Warm Up America	Synagogue	Mar 3	10:30 am-Noon
Mahjongg with Corvin	Synagogue	Mar 10	2-4 pm
Warm Up America	Synagogue	Mar 17	10:30-Noon
Rosh Chodesh Yoga	Synagogue	Mar 17	2-3 pm
Mahjongg with Karen	Synagogue	Mar 17	2-4 pm
Board Meeting	Synagogue	Mar 21	7-8:30 pm
Spiritual journaling for Purim with Corvin Greene	Synagogue	Mar 22	5:30 pm
Purim Megillah reading	Synagogue	Mar 23	8:15-9:15 pm
LGBTQI+ Purim Party	Downtown (Studio 13)	Mar 23	9:30 pm
Sunday School Purim Shpiel	Synagogue	Mar 24	10:30 am
Purim Carnival		Mar 24	11 am-12:15 pm
Mahjongg with Karen	Synagogue	Mar 24	2-4 pm
Tot Shabbat	Synagogue	Mar 29	5:30 pm
Shabbat Dinner	Synagogue	Mar 29	6 pm
Death and Mourning #1 (Burial & bereavement) Lunch & Learn	Synagogue	Mar 30	12:30-1:30 pm
Warm Up America- Sit, Knit & Crochet Day	Synagogue	Mar 31	10:30-12:15 am
Mahjongg with Corvin	Synagogue	Mar 31	2-4 pm
Early Keyboard Society	Synagogue	Mar 31	3-5 pm

## RECURRING GROUPS WITH FIXED TIMES/DATES- [CALENDAR ON WEBSITE](#)

<b>Yiddish Study Group</b>  Mondays and Fridays at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom.	<b>Book group</b>  Fourth Wednesday of every month at 1:00 on Zoom (in person this May-October)	<b>Intro to Judaism Class</b>  Mondays at 7:30 p.m.	<b>Talmud Study Group</b>  Sundays at 9:00 a.m. on Zoom.	<b>Adult Learners Group</b>  Alternate Mondays 6:00-7:00 p.m. starting February 12.	<b>Seniors Group</b>  Third Thursday of every month at 11:00 a.m.
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## UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

### APRIL CALENDAR

Big Ideas in Jewish Books ('People Love Dead Jews')	ICPL Meeting Room B	Apr 3	6-7:30 pm
Death and Mourning #2 (Chevra Kadisha/the burial society)	Synagogue	Apr 6	12:30-1:30 pm
Nissan Yoga	Synagogue	Apr 7	2-3 pm
Fireside Chat	Synagogue	Apr 10	6:30-7:30 pm
Warm Up America	Synagogue	Apr 14	10:30 am-Noon
Fireside Chat	Synagogue	Apr 14	11-12 am
Tour of Making the Book: Past & Present	UI Library Gallery	Apr 14	1-3 pm
Nissan Yoga	Synagogue	Apr 14	2-3 pm
Free Lunch Program Volunteer		Apr 17	8 am-1 pm
Big Ideas in Jewish Books ('The Necessity of Exile')	ICPL Meeting Room D	Apr 17	6-7:30 pm
Nissan Yoga	Synagogue	Apr 21	2-3 pm
Second Seder	Synagogue	Apr 23	
Warm Up America	Synagogue	Apr 28	10:30-12
Nissan Yoga	Synagogue	Apr 28	2-3 pm

## THE U.S AND THE HOLOCAUST- *Iowa City Senior Center*

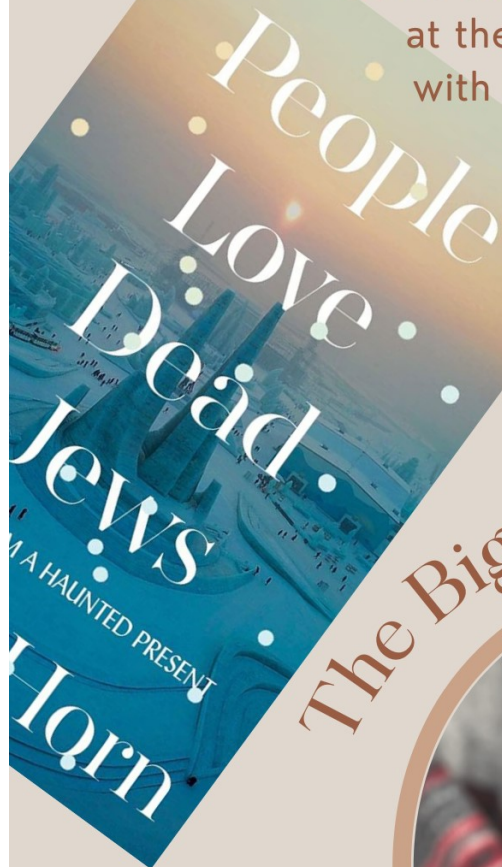
The Iowa City Senior Center is presenting a three-part, six hour PBS documentary series that examines America's response to one of the greatest humanitarian crises of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Americans consider themselves a "nation of immigrants," but as the catastrophe of the Holocaust unfolded in Europe, the United States proved unwilling to open its doors to more than a fraction of the hundreds of thousands of desperate people seeking refuge. Through riveting firsthand testimony of witnesses and survivors who as children endured persecution, violence and flight as their families tried to escape Hitler, this series delves deeply into the tragic human consequences of public indifference, bureaucratic red tape and restrictive quota laws in America. Did the nation fail to live up to its ideals? This is a history to be reckoned with.

**Fridays, April 12-26, 9:30 am – 12 pm**

**Iowa City Senior Center, 28 S. Linn St., Iowa City; Room 302.**

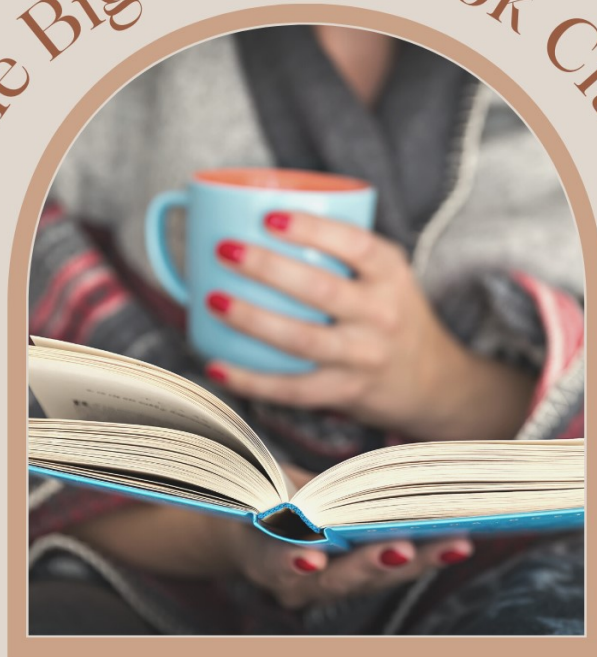
[Register online](#) or call 319-356-5220.

Come explore important Jewish ideas  
at the Iowa City Public Library  
with Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz



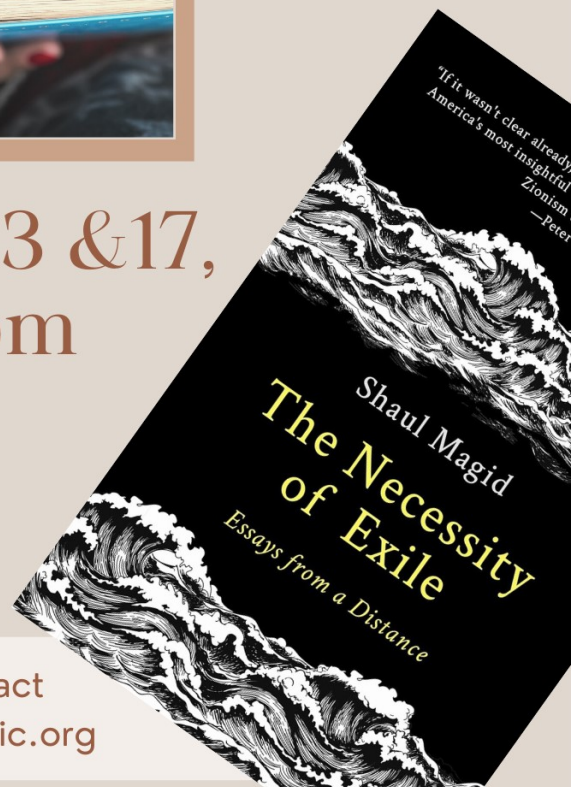
Dara Horn,  
'People Love Dead Jews'  
April 3, Room B

## The Big Ideas Book Club



ICPL, April 3 & 17,  
6-7:30 pm

Shaul Magid,  
'The Necessity of Exile'  
April 17, Room D



More info? Contact  
[rabbi@agudasachimic.org](mailto:rabbi@agudasachimic.org)

## UNIVERSITY OF IOWA EVENTS

Please join us for several big events at the university, including the official launch of the new Jewish Studies Program and a series on “Sephardic Stories of Identity and Belonging: Spain, Portugal, and the Americas”

The events will feature two guests:

Dr. Isaac Amon, Director of Academic Research, Jewish Heritage Alliance, and Adjunct Professor, Washington University School of Law, St. Louis, MO

Dr. Jesús Jambrina, professor of Spanish, Viterbo University, Viterbo, Wisconsin, and founder of the Centro Isaac Campantón in Zamora, Spain

Monday April 8, 3:30-5:00, Old Capitol Senate Chamber: Launch of the Jewish Studies Program, featuring a conversation with Drs. Amon and Jambrina about Sephardic history, identity, and citizenship. A reception will follow.

Tuesday April 9, 3:30-5:00, in 318 Phillips Hall, two 20–30-minute talks: Dr. Amon, “The Legacy of Sefarad: (Crypto) Jewish Experiences in Spain and Portugal” and Dr. Jambrina, “Zamora Sefardí: Jewish Legacy in Zamora, Spain.”

Wednesday April 10, 12:00-1:30, UCC 1117, Dr. Amon, “In the Shadow of the Inquisition: The US Constitutional Right to Liberty of Conscience.

## FREE SHABBAT DINNER *Social committee– Lori & Ari*

The Social Committee is delighted to host a congregation-wide free Shabbat Dinner on March 29, 2024, 6:00-7:00 p.m., in the social hall! We will provide the food, so we hope to have an accurate head count! Please [RSVP](#) or by calling the synagogue office. Details will follow in weekly synagogue emails in March!

## TOT SHABBAT

The Agudas Achim Young Family Group is hosting a Tot Shabbat on Friday, March 29 at 5:30PM. This is a special service for parents and children, aged 2 years to 7 years, with grandparents and additional siblings welcome. We will sing a few easy songs and read a story together. After the service we will join the synagogue Shabbat dinner at 6PM.

Karen Charney will again lead Tot Shabbat with her guitar. Join us!

Please RSVP to [Membership@agudasachimic.org](mailto:Membership@agudasachimic.org) with names of who are attending Tot Shabbat.



## RABBI HUGENHOLTZ'S SERMON

### *Sermon Series on the Synagogue: Part 3*

#### *Build it, And They Will Come*

If you want a thorough hot take (is that paradoxical?) on the Jewish future, I refer you to a recent article in The Atlantic called 'The New American Judaism', with the clickbaity subtitle: 'Rabbis are in short supply, and congregations are struggling. But Jewish life is still thriving.' Written by Shira Telushkin, the daughter of the prolific writer Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, the article does a good job sketching out some of the challenges, trends and opportunities of near future American Judaism.

Welcome to my third and final instalment of my sermon series on 'The American Synagogue'. We've looked at the foundation of the synagogue in the ancient past and we have looked at synagogue trends in our current moment. Now we will take a look at what the future may bring and how we may meet the moment.

Telushkin's 'Atlantic' article paints an unstable picture of congregational life. There is a national shortage of rabbis, so pulpits remain unfilled. For the past 15 years, applications to rabbinical schools have plummeted for a variety of reasons, including the significant burden of debt that needs to be taken on in order to complete five-year post-graduate training. There is also the shifting nature of the rabbinate itself, with rabbis becoming increasingly entrepreneurial, working in non-profits, hospitals, universities and day schools. At the same time, historically, seminaries have trained their rabbis for the gold standard of the pulpit, so there is a mismatch in training and expectations. The author is quick to note that this predicament is not only affecting the Jewish community. Secularization is on the rise and churches too suffer many of the same challenges and shortages.

Yet the story is not only grim. 'New institutions of Jewish learning, social activism, and lay leadership have flourished, largely thanks to the growing engagement of younger Jews.' That's the good news. Telushkin cautions us by adding: 'Very little of this renaissance, however, is affiliated with large, established synagogues... almost none of it is tied to the denominations... The centralized Judaism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is giving way to a series of independent organizations, reflecting a broader trend across faith communities toward religious individualism. This new Judaism raises questions about what a rabbi should be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century...'

One criticism of the article I have is that Telushkin seems to make the very error that she has identified in Jewish institutional life: she focuses too much on 'the rabbi' in her analysis, and less on what is driving the current generations of Jews. In some ways, we are seeing paradigmatic disruption and generational fracturing; in other ways, this is a tale as old as time. This is why the historical perspective is so important: Jewish life has always been disrupted, been fractured and in response, innovated – the very institution of the Synagogue was once upon a time a revolutionary innovation; and before it, the Temple, and before that, the Tabernacle. We have always had divisions; sometimes healthy, sometimes not.

Even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the 'centralized Judaism' the author describes, came out of innovation. Many of you of a certain generation may remember the revolutionary empowerment of The Jewish Catalogue, the Chavurah movement and the counter cultural emergence of both Jewish spirituality and social action as key components of Jewish life. Now, those ideas are mainstream; as has the Independent Minyan movement of the Gen X'ers and Millennials (as I came of age). Now, Gen Z is charting its own course

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## RABBI HUGENHOLTZ'S SERMON cont.

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through our communal landscape. To put it in the words of our own Kohelet (Ecclesiastes): '*v'ein kol chadash tachat ha'shemesh*' – 'there is nothing new under the sun.'

What is the future of the contemporary synagogue? One prediction is post-denominationalism. 'Long ago, Jews stopped thinking denominationally', Rabbi Gary Glickstein, a Reform leader, notes in the article. Where Agudas Achim once was a quirky novelty, I have had several conversations with colleagues over the years asking me for advice on how to transition their own congregations to dual or multiple affiliation. In today's Jewish world, we are 'ideological grazers', where we find inspiration in multiple ways to be, think and do Jewish.

A second change many congregations are grappling with are their financial, governance and dues structures. As economic pressures increase on younger generations, synagogues need to make *absolutely clear that finances are not be a barrier to participation*; and communicate this compassionately and effectively. Throughout my own Jewish journey, I know that I could not be the rabbi I am today without the philanthropic generosity of others.

Yet another change, one that has been afoot for a long time, is how we welcome and integrate interfaith families, spiritual seekers, the Jew-curious and converts into our communities. Those not Jewish, or in some cases, not yet Jewish, are an integral part of our communal life and their presence blesses and enriches us. As I said over the High Holidays, Judaism is not a zero sum game. The presence of newcomers in our midst strengthens us and allows us to prosper. We want you. You are welcome and beloved, as you are.

Even so, all these changes, important though they are, make one basic assumption: that the core institution itself remains constant. A synagogue is still conceived of in a certain mid-to-late twentieth century way - a fixed institution with physical walls. However, the future calls us to knock down the proverbial walls and reimagine the synagogue in more expansive and creative ways.

The synagogue, friends, is **us**. It is its people, our Torah and our God; the bonds of affection and mutual support between us, the wisdom tradition from which we seek guidance and inspiration, and the world of which we are inextricably part. The synagogue is this beautiful sanctuary and auxiliary spaces. The synagogue is also anywhere where Jews gather to find purpose, joy and meaning in their Judaism. The synagogue is in the home, the sanctuary and in the public space.

The 'synagogue' is just as much us making Havdalah at a local café and going bowling; it is just as much our team of volunteers cooking up a storm for the Free Lunch Program, going on a march or participating in Jewish cultural and literary life at the public library. The synagogue happens in people's homes, in the streets, in our sukkahs, and in digital spaces. My rabbinate extends way beyond these walls; recently, I taught a digital course on conversion for the 'UnYeshiva', an emerging digital community of learners pushing the boundaries on what Judaism is and what it looks like. My rabbinate happens on Facebook (for good or ill, sometimes!) and on Zoom and sometimes even text message. My rabbinate happens in coffee shops and casual encounters. In my rabbinic mission, the 'synagogue', then is wherever I bring Torah to our aching world.

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## RABBI HUGENHOLTZ'S SERMON cont.

(Continued from page 20)

We need the ancient and the cutting edge, the established and the innovative, the anchor and the sail. We need the wisdom of our elders and the moral courage of our youth. The 'synagogue of the future' may or may not be in a fixed location, but what it must be is a mission-driven embrace of curiosity, openness and belonging in an increasingly fraught and lonely world. We all do 'synagogue' in so many small, tangible, important ways, whether it is participating in our Buddy System, welcoming a friend or being Jewishly-motivated to engage in civic action. 'Synagogue' may even be the quiet space of reflection we find; whether it is here in song and prayer, or in the silence of the forest, mountain or ocean.

The Jewish future is disrupted, complex, diverse, fragmented, fluid. Adaptive change is hard and exciting. It brings with it challenges and resistance, as well as invitation and opportunity. I think that the unspoken blessing of small communities like ours is our *nimbleness, cohesion and creativity*. We may lack the clout and resources of large communities but make up for it plenty in other ways. We can provide heartfelt community, genuine and important discourse and innovative programming with a short turnaround time. We are small but mighty.

Finally: the synagogue is **you**. We have journeyed for three weeks to examine who we are, where we came from and where we are going. I couldn't do this incredible, holy, transformative work without any of you, and I think our future is bright.

Allow me to end with a rabbinic story, if I may, from Tractate Gittin 56a. When the Romans razed Jerusalem and burnt the Temple to the ground, all seemed lost. It was a moment of ultimate disruption in our people's history. Yet the rabbinic sage, Yochanan ben Zakkai pleaded with Jewish militants to be smuggled out beyond Jerusalem's walls in a coffin, as God's House went up in flame. Emerging from his ruse before the military commander and Roman Emperor Vespasian, he was asked what his wish was. Yochanan ben Zakkai answered: 'give me Yavneh and its sages.' Yavneh was a town of no particular import. Yet, it is here where the first Batei Midrash, Houses of Learning, were built, and where, phoenix-like, Rabbinic Judaism rose from the ashes.

Between the Pittsburgh Massacre, the COVID pandemic and our post October 7<sup>th</sup> world, rising authoritarianism and climate change, the disruption of recent years invites us to turn to Yochanan ben Zakkai for courage and vision. I believe that we have what it takes for us as a community to journey into the future; to hold courageous conversations on our relationship to Israel, navigate political and ideological difference, learn from the rich experience and investments of our elders and the moral vision and energy of our youth, explore meaningful Jewish spirituality and be present in our local community with the fullness of our Judaism. And because I've gone sufficiently native, I won't say, 'give us Yavneh and its sages.' Instead, I will close with 'if you build it, they will come.'

### All sermons in the series:

[Sermon on the Synagogue 1: Past](#)

[Sermon on the Synagogue 2: Present](#)

[Sermon on the Synagogue 3: Future](#)

## BUDDY SYSTEM

### Agudas Achim Buddy System

A famous rabbinic saying (Pirkei Avot 1:7) states: 'U'k'nei lecha chaver' - 'and make for yourself a friend'. Friendship and peer-to-peer relationships are the foundation of Jewish community life and Agudas Achim is looking to strengthen these.

Our synagogue community has a 'good problem' - our membership is growing! With new members, come new opportunities to get to know each other and make each other feel welcome in the community. At the same time, we want to honor and take care of our longstanding members without whom our community would not exist. They too may want to reconnect with fellow members in new ways.

With this in mind, we are launching the Agudas Achim 'Buddy System'. What is the 'Buddy System'? A 'buddy' commits to a minimum of three engagements with their assigned friend: 1) a phone call, 2) a coffee date, 3) a (Shabbat) dinner invite. This limited, timebound commitment makes it easy for you to sign up and create new relationships. Of course, you can remain someone's buddy for much longer than this!

Likewise, if you want to receive a buddy as a member of the congregation, please sign up. We will assign you a buddy for these three engagements. If you enjoyed connecting to your buddy and want to become a buddy in turn for someone else, let us know! Looking forward to all of us acquiring new friendships in our beautiful Jewish community.

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz and the Membership Committee (Karen Lipman, Jane Zukin, Nate Mullin, Karen Charney, Shawna Levy and Chuck Friedman)

If interested, complete and mail to Agudas Achim, or email to [rsvp@agudasachimic.org](mailto:rsvp@agudasachimic.org).

☐ I want to be a buddy

Name	Contact info

☐ I want to receive a buddy

Name	Contact info

## DONATIONS

### Building Fund

**Leonard Sandler & Lucy David:** In memory of Sam Sandler, from Len, Lucy, Hannah, & Family

### Cemetery Fund

**Michael & Joanne Margolin:** In Memory Of Arthur Margolin

**Lorraine Dorfman:** In Memory Of Sara Dorfman

### General Fund

**Jessica Zehavi**

**David & Martha Lubaroff**

**Jody & Janie Braverman:** In memory of Ralph Wingo

**Kathy Jacobs**

**Annette & Stanley Isaacson:** In Memory Of Gary Fingert

### Louis Ginsberg Youth Fund

**Mark and Vickie Ginsberg:** In memory of Rose Lee Pomerantz

### Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

**Loretta Fingert:** In honor of rabbi's birthday and 7 years with us

**David Skorton & Robin Davisson:** In Memory Of Sam Skorton & Bess Millstein

**Jeffrey Whitebook:** In Memory Of Maynard "Moe" Whitebook

**Bernie Miller & Sonja Hauter:** In Memory Of Gary Fingert

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**Richard Strauss & Ellie Herman:** In memory of Samuel Markovitz

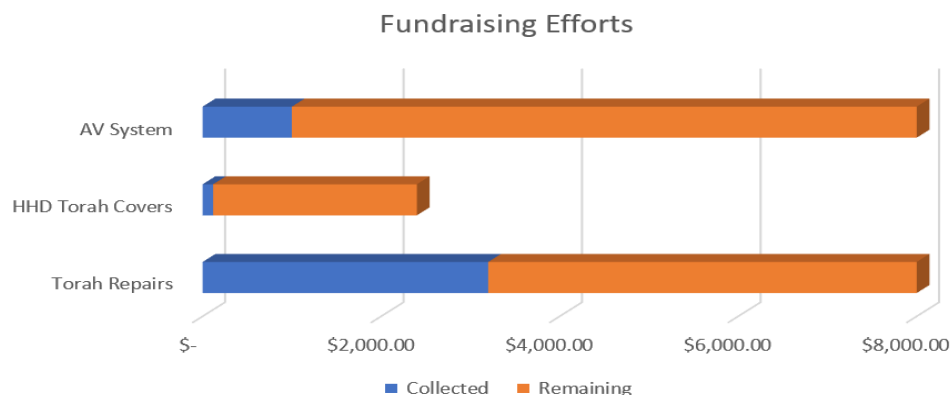
**Steven Strauss:** In Memory Of Samuel Markovitz

### Tikun Olam Fund

**Doug & Beverly Jones:** In Memory Of Goldie Solganick

## 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 under Torah Repairs.





## SHABBAT SERVICES

[Streaming link for Zoom Shabbat services](#)

Ki Tissa <i>(Exodus 30:11-34:35)</i>	Friday, March 1	7:00 p.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative)
	Saturday, March 2	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
Vayakhel <i>(Exodus 35:1-38:20)</i>	Friday, March 8	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
	Saturday, March 9	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem
Pekudei <i>(Exodus 38:21-40:38)</i>	Friday, March 15	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
	Saturday, March 16	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem
Vayikra <i>(Leviticus 1:1-5:26)</i>	Friday, March 22	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
	Saturday, March 23	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem
Tzab <i>(Leviticus 6:1-8:36)</i>	Friday, March 29	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
	Saturday, March 30	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem

## 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.

## MARCH Yahrzeits

Dora Anixt Corn	Joseph Landweber	Marcia Williams Roston
Max Berkowitz	Jean Leiberman Lenett	Mark Rothstein
Joan Clements Bryant	Helen Leah Lison	Jay Sandler
Corinne Chapman	Benjamin London	Sam Sandler
Morris Dicker	Edith London	Reuben Savin
Hyman Dubin	Dinah Leah Markovitz	Farel Schapira
Stanley Edwards	Andrew Marks	Jessica Schwartz
Arthur Gross	Amanda Miller	Sari Sprince
Harriet Blakeslee Hall	Rabbi Elijah "Zeke" Palnick	Sara Strauss
Schuyler Schenck Haskell	Dorothy Pliner	Eileen Wallace
William Herman	Lucile Potter	Irwin Weinman
Benjamin B. Hertz	Joseph Prager	Olive Wertz
Dora Joseph	Ruth Rogers	Nancy McGinnis Whitehead
Donia Kuperman	Joseph Rose	Daniel Wolf

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

## STAFF

Rabbi	Esther Hugenholtz	Office Secretary	Hannah Sandler
Administrator	John Wertz	Custodian	Amos Kiche
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