

Agudas Achim Congregation

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

January 2025 / Tevet-Shevat 5785

FROM THE PRESIDENT David Lubaroff

At the time I am composing my monthly message to the members of Agudas Achim we are midway through the celebration of Hanukkah. What is unique about the holiday this year is the fact that it begins in the secular year 2024 and ends in the following year 2025. Something to think about – are we celebrating the Hanukkah of 2024 or 2025? If the latter, will we be celebrating the same holiday twice, part of it in January 2025 and then again, the full eight days next December 2025?

We are taught that the story, which we commemorate each year on the 8-day festival of Hanukkah, aka Chanukah, is one of light over darkness. Note that this holiday is referred to as a festival and not a religious holiday. It is a relatively minor holiday with no special services. It celebrates the victory of the Maccabees, Jewish freedom fighters, who routed the Syrian-Greeks from the Holy Land and restored the Temple. The culmination is the miracle when a small bottle of pure oil - enough to fuel the Temple menorah for one day - burned for 8 days straight. In order to relate the story that led up to Hanukkah, we learn of Antiochus III, the King of Syria. He had waged war with King Ptolemy of Egypt over the possession of the Land of Israel. Antiochus III was victorious, and

the Land of Israel was annexed to his empire. At the beginning of his reign, he was favorably disposed toward the Jews and accorded them some privileges. Later, however, when he was beaten by the Romans and compelled to pay heavy taxes, the burden fell upon the various peoples of his empire who were forced to furnish the gold that was required of him by the Romans. When Antiochus died, his son Seleucus IV took over, and further oppressed the Jews.

We celebrate Hanukkah by paying homage to the miracle of the oil by eating foods cooked in oil that includes potato latkes and sufganiyot. The word "sufganiya" is derived from the Talmudic words sofgan and sfogga meaning, "spongy dough." Today, when most people think of sufganiyot they think of the spongy dough of doughnuts, usually filled with jelly. You will find many recipes for potato latkes, but the simplest is the best with four ingredients, potatoes, onions, eggs, and flour. Another theory of the origins of Hanukkah is not based on the burning of oil in the recaptured Temple. This story is based on the festival of Sukkot which is normally celebrated in the month of

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RABBI'S SABBATICAL

Rabbi Hugenholtz is on sabbatical December 1 through January 31.

FROM THE PRESIDENT David Lubaroff (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Tishrei. The Hasmoneans, the decedents of the Maccabees, were in battle and living in caves fighting as guerrillas during Tishrei. Because of this, they had been unable to honor the eight-day holiday of Sukkot, which required visiting the Jerusalem Temple. The holiday was postponed until after the recapture of Jerusalem and the rededication of the Temple. This, apparently, occurred in Kislev. Many scholars believe it is this connection to Sukkot – and not the Talmudic account of the vessel of oil that lasted eight days – that explains why Hanukkah is eight days long.

In the years before WWII, Hanukkah was not celebrated as a major holiday, with little to no gifts exchanged. At most, small tokens of money, or gelt in Yiddish, were given to children and grandchildren. It began to find new expression in the years leading up to the founding of the modern State of Israel. In the post-Holocaust world, Jews are acutely aware of the issues raised by Hanukkah: oppression, identity, religious freedom and expression, and the need to fight for national independence. Hanukkah has then developed into a holiday, redolent with gift exchanges. The game of dreidel that included the letters nun, gimmel, hey, and shin, is directly based on the German equivalent of the British totum game: N = Nichts = nothing; G = Ganz = all; H = Halb = half; and S = Stell ein = put in. In German, the spinning top was called

a torrel or trundl. At some point, most likely in the latter part of the 20th century, Jews began the tradition of giving gifts during Hanukkah, most likely because of being celebrated near the Christian holiday of Christmas.

My experiences celebrating Hanukkah mimic the early practices of receiving gelt, but in this case, real coins, not chocolate. Receiving gelt was a tradition, given to children by parents and grandparents. It was a "one-way" situation with only children receiving this gift. It was not until I was an adult did Hanukkah gift exchanges occurred. Now, everyone gives and receives Hanukkah gifts. The best thing about my early experiences with this holiday was eating potato latkes. I prefer eating them with sour cream while others may choose to it with applesauce or just salt. Now, our family makes a big deal of gathering as many children, grandchildren, spouses, cousins, and friends as are able to travel. Our traditional meal together consists of lots of latkes, egg salad, tuna salad, sour cream, applesauce, and a dessert of sufganiyot. I enjoy making and eating the latkes and being with loved ones. I also enjoy attending the latke party at Agudas Achim where I can continue eating latkes and interact with friends and colleagues. I hope all of you enjoy similar traditions.

Happy Hanukkah,

David Lubaroff

YOUNG FAMILY LOUNGE

We now have a young family lounge behind the Becker Room at the synagogue. Join us if you want to hang out January 12th 9:15-11:15 hosted by Lauren Kanner and January 26th 10:15-11:30 hosted by Sam Brotman with other young families.

Questions? Or do you have some gently used baby/toddler toys and furniture for the lounge? Text Sam Brotman 206-240-9799.



SCHOOL NEWS Sonja Spear

The school is closed for winter break. Instead of rushing to the synagogue on Sunday mornings, I'll be pouring myself a second cup of coffee. But I won't really stop working. To be honest, the school is always with me. I'll be thinking about the Purim carnival and planning more interactive ways to teach the story of the Exodus. I've heard some wonderful and alarming ideas from colleagues – squirt guns are involved! I'll review what we did last year and think about how to do just a little better this year. I will also think about the weather and sigh a little.

The truth is "Spring Semester" is mostly winter. We can expect ice, snow, freezing rain, and the delightful "wintry mix." When I first started working at Agudas Achim, I used to hop in the car and white -knuckle it though the worst weather lowa could throw at me. But I noticed that most people — people with robust common sense — stayed home. Also, I was haunted by the fear that parents would hit a patch of ice on the way to school and slide to disaster.

Eventually, I decided that no one should risk death to go to Sunday School. Here, then, is the policy for bad weather: If it is snowing/sleeting or if snow/ freezing rain is predicted for the morning, or if the roads are impassible, please anticipate that school will be closed. Check your email. I will email everyone no later than 8:30 if school is closed.

The only way I can gauge road conditions is to look out my window. Unlike, say, the superintendent of a public school, I don't have information about the condition of roads in general. It may sometimes happen that we close when we might have stayed open. But that is still better than having someone get into an accident trying to get to the synagogue.

On the other hand, we will hold Sunday School no matter how cold it is. (If I can get my car to start, that is.) Unlike public schools, we don't need to worry about students freezing at bus stops.

I hope that we have an entire semester of clear skies and clear roads on Sundays! I am looking forward to seeing the kids again in the new year and hearing all about their winter adventures.

HANUKKAH PARTY

Many thanks to everyone who made it to our annual latke party!





MAHJONG

Join us for Mahjongg at 1:00 p.m. in the synagogue on the dates below. Bring a Mahjongg card if you have one. It is helpful to know by the Friday before the Sunday game who is planning to play so please email the host if you plan to play. Beginners and walk- ins are always welcome.

If you would like to order a 2025 card which comes out in March or April 2025, Jeanne Abrons has organized purchasing cards that gives Hadassah a donation, by ordering through the Minneapolis- St. Paul Hadassah chapter. The cost is the same as ordering directly from the



National MahJongg League office. The cost of the card is \$14 for the standard size or \$15 for the large size. Make your check out to Ronna Locketz with your name and address and summary of card order and send to the synagogue to arrive by Jan 5 the latest. Please mark "For MahJongg" on the outside of the envelope. RSVP to Karen RSVP to Jayne RSVP to Corvin

Upcoming Dates

January 5- Karen	February 2- Corvin	March 9- Jayne
January 12- Jayne	February 16- Jayne	March 16- Karen
January 19- Corvin	February 23- Corvin	March 23- Corvin
January 26- Corvin	March 2- Jayne	March 30- Corvin

JANUARY YAHRZEITS

Ann Rodnitzky **Irving Gussin** Nathan Rodnitzky Anna Federbusch Isadore Tepper Pauline A. Kerber Janet Whitebook Anna Lea Dvoretzky Pinchas Levy Belle Rosenbaum Jesse Boyers Rebecca Markovitz Posner **Belle Strauss** Jovce Schiller Robert C. Levy **Betty Brodsky** Judy Rosenstein Roger Wetlaufer Kenneth Allweiss **Betty Mangers Rose Widiss Charles Henry Clements** Kent Braverman Sam Levev Daniel Kroloff Sari Goldstein Larry Tepper David Silversteen Leah Halle Sim Strauss Lewis Goodsell Susan Strauss Deanna Boyers **Edie Singer** Lillian Edwards **Toby Schuman** Esther Levy Louis Landweber Vivian Kroloff Florence Vitiello Max Levv Waverly C. Ormond George Elisha Hall Meyer Markovitz William Chazanoff Gertrude M. Rosenbaum Mildred Bar William Simon Hannah Pauline Scheer Berg Miriam Gelfand Zisi Leib Mazur Morris L. Ziskind Ilene Holbrook Irene Simon Nathan David Zabner

DECEMBER DONATIONS

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Rody Gessner and Michelle Edwards: in memory of

Lillian Edwards

Tova Vitiello: in memory of Florence Vitiello

Tom and Becky Gelman: in memory of Webster &

Gloria Gelman

David Skorton and Robin Davisson: in memory of

Pauline Skorton

Alan Mutnick and Rachel Albrecht: in memory of

Benjamin Ross Mutnick

SECOND CENTURY FUND

Richard and Phyllis Braverman

Doug and Beverly Jones

BUILDING FUND

Doug and Beverly Jones

CEMETERY FUND

Jonathan and Susan Simon: in memory of

Irene Simon and Mendel & Liba Goldberg

Elliot and Jeanne Abrons

Richard Haendel: in memory of Goldene Haendel

Howard Levin: in memory of Lena C. Dicker

Marvin Denburg: in memory of Sandra Denburg

GENERAL FUND

Leonard Sandler and Lucy David: in memory of

William M. David, Jr.

Bernard Miller and Sonja Hauter

Linda Kerber

Stephanie and James Tansey

Jody and Janie Braverman: in memory of Rosalie

Braverman, Jean Breggin, and Dana Coles

Caplan Family Foundation

Loretta Fingert: in memory of Bernice Corn

Loretta Fingert: in memory of Benjamin Shedle

Loretta Fingert: in memory of Henry Corn

Paul and Linda Muhly

Estate of Rhoda Vernon: in memory of

Rhoda Vernon

Micah Land

Hershel Rephun and Devon Terrill: in memory of

Claire Rephun

GENERAL FUND, CONT.

David and Martha Lubaroff: sponsorship of new

Yahrzeit board

LIBRARY FUND

Mel and Diane Sunshine: in memory of

Betty Brodsky

PORTMAN PROGRAM FUND

Richard Levine: in memory of Bernice Levine

SIM & SARA STRAUSS MEMORIAL FUND

Stephen Strauss: in memory of Marjorie Osdoba

SAFETY FUND

Mel and Diane Sunshine: in memory of

Joseph Sunshine

Sanctuary Community Church

Richard Levine: in memory of Bernice Levine

BRAVERMAN TALMUD TORAH FUND

Eloise McCuskey: in memory of Rosalie Braverman

TIKUN OLAM FUND

Elliot and Jeanne Abrons: for Warm Up America

Richard and Phyllis Braverman: in memory of

Rosalie Braverman

TORAH ENHANCEMENT FUND

Doug and Beverly Jones

MELENDEZ FAMILY GIFTS FUNDRAISER

Richard and Karen Lipman

Ruth and Douglas Nathanson

Jody and Janie Braverman

Nancy Sprince

Nathan Eugene Savin and Susan Enzle

Karen Charney and Benjamin Coelho

Susan Groff-VanArendonk

Esther Hugenholtz and Dave Middleton

Janice Weiner

Lauren Kanner and Aaron Adler

Gary and Mindy Russell

ADULT EDUCATION Lisa Heineman

Big Ideas in Jewish Books

Calling all creatives and artists! This month we'll read <u>The Place of All Possibility: Cultivating Creativity</u> <u>Through Ancient Jewish Wisdom</u> by Adina Allen. It's a short book with beautiful lessons for bringing together Torah study and creative expression. We'll meet at the Iowa City Public Library meeting room E on Wednesday, January 22, from 6-7:30 pm.

Big Ideas in Jewish Books will be on hiatus from February through May. During that time, please check out *Torah for our Time*, a collaboration with City Jews, Agudas Achim's Public Space Judaism initiative! You'll find details elsewhere in this bulletin.

Adult Learners' Class

Would you like to improve your Hebrew (or begin learning)? Would you like to learn to read Torah (and perform a great mitzvah for the congregation)? We're planning our Adult Learners' Class, which will take the form of 10-12 weekly meetings between February and Pesach. We'll choose a meeting time according to the needs of those who sign up. <u>We'll need a minimum of 5 participants to run this program</u>. If you're interested, please contact AdultEd@AgudasAchimIC.org by Friday, January 24.

Oneg Discussion

Help us to mark the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by joining Oneg following services on Saturday, January 18. Barney Sherman, retired host of Iowa Public Radio Classical, and Lisa Heineman, Holocaust educator at The University of Iowa, will present a panel discussion of *Time's Echo: Music, Memory, and the Second World War*.

WARM UP AMERICA Therese Guedon, Jeanne Cadoret, & Jeanne Abrons

Warm Up America has completed and shared 27 afghans this year, with about a dozen more being worked on in Dec. We have donated to Domestic Violence Intervention Project, Catholic Worker House, Houses into Homes, Habitat for Humanity, Inside Out Reentry, Shelter House, United Action for Youth, and directly to several individuals recently released from prison. Each of our afghans bears a tag saying: "Handcrafted for you by Warm Up America, Agudas Achim Congregation and Friends, Iowa City/Coralville, Iowa."

We thank Agudas Achim members who have donated funds through Tikkun Olam and all-synthetic yarn for our afghans, as well as members and non-members who make this possible.



We will meet in the social hall from 10:30 a.m. to noon on January 12 and 26, 2025. Please consider joining us then or donating toward our 2025 afghans.

TORAH FOR OUR TIME

Lisa Heineman

Torah for our Time: A welcoming space for learning, questioning, and community-building

Torah (Hebrew): wisdom, insight, teachings

Are you grappling with the urgent questions of our day? The teachings of Judaism may surprise you!

From Abraham's arguments with God about collective punishment ... to modern debates about Jews' relationship to the land of Israel ... to the Trans Torah of gender non-conforming Rabbis: As long as Judaism has existed, Jews have grappled with big issues, inventing and re-inventing tradition in response to the complexities of the world around them.

Join us in learning about the transformative implications of the Jewish tradition of questioning and exploration!

In each meeting of Torah for our Time, Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz will introduce Jewish writings that speak to issues of our day. As we discuss those teachings, we'll become part of the process of re-imagining tradition, putting it into conversation with the world around us - and considering implications for action.

Torah for our Time is for everyone - Jewish, Jew-ish, Jew Curious, or just plain Human. After all, Jewish tradition considers all of us to have been created in the image of God. And if God's not part of your framework, no problem: Jews have engaged in plenty of debate on the existence and nature of God, too.

Location: Public Space One, 538 S. Gilbert St.

Dates & Times: Alternate Wednesdays, 6-7:30, February through May

Schedule: (Drop in and out, or visit the whole series!)

Wed, Feb 5 Democracy: Argument for the Sake of Heaven

Wed, Feb 19 Immigration: Welcoming the Stranger Wed, March 5 Racial Justice: Moses's "Dark" Wife

Wed, March 19 No meeting

Wed, April 2 Reproductive Justice: On Water, Life, and Personhood Wed, April 16 Climate & Environmental Justice: Healing the World

Wed, April 30 Israel & Palestine: In the Image of God Wed, May 14 Gender Identity: Androgynous Adam Wed, May 28 Economic Justice: Opening our Hands

Torah for our Time is presented by City Jews, the public space Judaism initiative of Agudas Achim congregation. City Jews builds community, fosters Jewish culture and learning, and deepens spiritual connection in downtown Iowa City.

Questions? Please contact us at adulted@agudasachimic.org and follow us on Instagram @IowaCityJews.

RSVP helpful but not required: adulted@agudasachimic.org

Each meeting will include an opportunity for a free-will donation to a local organization working on the issue at hand.

FINANCIAL CORNER Jayne Sandler

DID YOU KNOW.....

One of the most advantageous ways to pay your Agudas Achim dues or make a large contribution is through the gift of publicly traded stock. Making a gift of securities is simple and offers several financial benefits.

- 1. The total value of any publicly traded stock upon transfer to Agudas Achim is tax-deductible, if the stock has been held for more than 1 year.
- 2. There is no obligation to pay any capital gains taxes on the appreciation.
- 3. Your stock transfer can be used to pay your dues, pledges or large donations throughout the year, including end of year donations.

STEPS:

1. Instruct the institution where your stocks are held to transfer the shares to the Agudas Achim brokerage account at Hills Bank and Trust and Wealth Management Group, 590 Forevergreen Rd., North Liberty, IA 52317. Please give your broker the following information:

Account Name: Agudas Achim Congregation

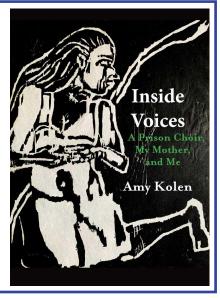
Tax ID Number: 1306761

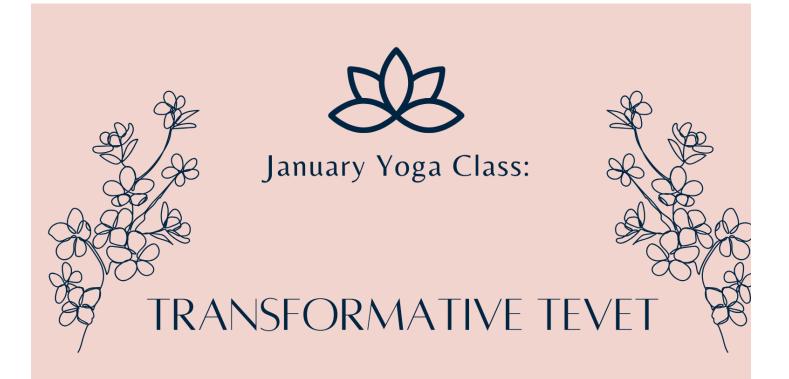
2. This step is VERY IMPORTANT! To identify your donation and send you an official tax receipt, please alert the Agudas Achim office and provide the gift details to administrator@agudasachimic.org, or speak to John.

If you have any financial questions or concerns, please contact your financial advisor or accountant for further information on the potential tax benefits for your particular situation.

AMY KOLEN MEMOIR

Agudas Achim's gift shop has some copies of Amy Kolen's new memoir, *Inside Voices: A Prison Choir, My Mother, and Me?* at \$20 per book. Contact the office to order. Amy grew up in Iowa and spent about forty years living in Iowa City before moving to Colorado. The book deals with questions such as: What was it like to grow up as a Jewish girl in 1950s-1960s Iowa? How does a daughter deal with her mother's inability to accept her for who she is? When that daughter, in her sixties, finds herself the primary caretaker for her mother at the end of life, how can she reconcile their tumultuous relationship with her deep desire to offer her mother a loving farewell within the confines of a healthcare facility? The author finds solace, wisdom, and a way to move forward through her participation in a community choir with inmates at the local prison, as well as in the grief rituals of Judaism.





In this drop-in class, we will join Yogic practices, Jewish wisdom and the fresh start of the secular new year to both steady ourselves and spark transformation in these deep and dark winter weeks. We will come away with a simple movement practice that we can add to our daily routine. Everyone is welcome. No previous Yoga experience necessary!

Date: Sunday January 12, 2:00-3:00 p.m.
Location: Agudas Achim Congregation, ,Coralville IA
Bring: Yoga mat, large towel, or blanket (optional, but nice to have)
For more information: leslea-collins@outlook.com

COVID COMMENTS Bob Wallace, Barcey Levy, Jane Zukin

The COVID-19 virus is still with us. Despite a decline over the fall, within the past few weeks of CDC's indicators have been in an unfortunate direction, with national increases in COVID-related positive tests, emergency room visits, hospitalizations and deaths. We urge everyone to keep up with COVID vaccinations as recommended, as this situation remains very important. Please seen your physician if you have further questions, but the usual vaccine sources are available.

In addition, the State of Iowa announced that the number of Iowans receiving their annual influenza vaccines has been declining over the past years, and the Department is urging everyone who hasn't had the vaccine to receive it as soon as possible, as the winter (now) is the main season for flu illness.

Thanks,

To your Health!

CONGREGATIONAL NEEDS FUNDRAISER

This space is dedicated to our congregation's smaller projects, and for people that may have a special passion in these areas of need to help us.

Our Torahs were repaired recently by a Sofer, but it has since become apparent that one of our torahs has a tear in the parchment that tore through the Hebrew writing, making the Torah not Kosher and therefore unusable for the time being. It can be repaired by replacing that particular panel, which can be done. But further funds will be needed. We have updated our goal to our anticipated total costs.

Additionally, our AV System has been installed and we are still needing donations to complete this fundraising project. We now are able to successfully ZOOM our services regularly straight from the Bimah.

Check out our progress! Please consider donating to these important projects!



INTRO TO JUDAISM CLASS

Do you want to know more about Judaism but never had the chance to ask? Do you want to deepen your connection to Jewish wisdom and life?

Whether you are already Jewish, considering Judaism as your spiritual path or just 'Jew-curious', you are most welcome to join our yearlong, 36 session Introduction to Judaism program.

The course is taught by Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz and affiliated with the Miller Introduction to Judaism program.

During each session, the first part of the class focuses on teaching basic Hebrew literacy while the second part of the class follows a set curriculum, addressing different themes. The class is free, with a one-off cost for the workbook. Donations are welcome.

Class will begin in February of 2025, and take place Tuesday nights at Agudas Achim. Contact the office for more information.

BUDDY SYSTEM

Interested in having a buddy or being a buddy?

Information can be found here.

DECEMBER ONEG HOSTS

Thank you to December's oneg hosts:

Social Committee, Beverly & Doug Jones, Marcus & Joan Nashelsky

Sign up to host an oneg at this link.

BOARD MINUTES

December board meeting minutes can be found <u>here.</u>

SYNAGOGUE SENIORS

The Agudas Achim Synagogue Seniors will meet from 11 am to 1 pm on Thursday, January 16 in the Social Hall. More information about the brunch and speaker will be sent out soon. Mark your calendars! Hope to see you there.

SERVICE SCHEDULE FOR 2025

The schedule for 2025 can be found <u>here</u>.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE NEWS

Save the Date: Saturday March 29 for Membership Shabbat! This is where we honor old and new members followed by a lovely lunch.

RECURRING GROUPS WITH FIXED TIMES/DATES- CALENDAR ON WEBSITE

Yiddish Study Group

Mondays and Fridays at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Book group

Fourth Wednesday of every month at 1:00 p.m.

Talmud Study Group

Sundays at 9:00 a.m. on Zoom.

Seniors Group

Third Thursday of every month at 11:00 a.m.

JANUARY SPECIAL EVENTS

Warm Up America	Synagogue	1/12	10:30 a.m.
Tevet Yoga	Synagogue	1/12	2:00 p.m.
Oneg Talk	Synagogue	1/18	after service
Big Ideas in Jewish Books	ICPL	1/22	6:00 p.m.
Warm Up America	Synagogue	1/26	10:30 a.m.

SHABBAT SERVICES

Streaming link for Zoom Shabbat services

Vayigash	Friday, January 3	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
(Genesis 44:18-47:27)	Saturday, January 4	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative)
Vayechi	Friday, January 10	7:00 p.m.	Lev Shalem
(Genesis 47:28-50:26)	Saturday, January 11	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah
Shemot	Friday, January 17	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
(Exodus 1:1-6:1)	Saturday, January 18	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem
Vayera	Friday, January 24	7:00 p.m.	Lev Shalem
(Exodus 6:2-9:35)	Saturday, January 25	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah
Во	Friday, January 31	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
(Exodus 10:1-13:16)	Saturday, February 1	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem

CONTACT INFORMATION

Trying to reach the office or someone else at the congregation?

Hannah: office@agudasachimic.org

John: administrator@agudasachimic.org

Rabbi Hugenholtz: rabbi@agudasachimic.org

Sonja: principal@agudasachimic.org

The rabbi is not checking her email while she is on sabbatical. For assistance, please contact Hannah or John.

LIBRARY NEWS Teresa Weiner



New in the library!

"The eighth issue of *Paper Brigade* explores the idea of home. It features reflections on October 7th and interviews with Israeli authors Ayelet Tsabari and Maya Arad; remarks by James McBride and a conversation with Taffy Brodesser-Akner; a Jew-ish literary map of the Netherlands; photography of European Jewish country houses; explorations of the relationship between queer artists and muses; a dive into the little-known Passover story of Babar the Elephant; plus fiction, poetry, and more."

https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/shop/paper-brigade-volume-eight

Donate via Venmo; Donate via Paypal

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Principal	Sonja Spear		
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