



Student Rabbi Ben Freed

Shalom Chevre, Shalom my friends,

I want to start off by saying how sad I am that I have not been able to make my last two trips to visit you at Agudath Achim. I am grateful to be in good health while writing to you, but I also look forward to the day that I will be able to share words of Torah from the Bimah and in the classroom in addition to from The Shofar. I hope that you have all been able to remain in good physical and mental health through this crisis. I am glad that your synagogue leadership has been so active in making sure the community feels connected and has programming to bring people together remotely until we can once again gather in person.

I'd like to share with you some thoughts on one of the Torah portions that I was unable to join you in reading. On May 2 we would have read together from parashat *Kedoshim*, which starts with the words קדושים "And you shall be holy, because I, the Lord your God am holy." The verses that follow are some of the most famous in the whole Bible and make up what is often known as the "Holiness code." The Holiness code contains a sweeping code of laws ranging from honoring our parents and not putting a stumbling block before the blind to leaving the corners of our field unharvested for the poor to glean and—perhaps most famously—"And you shall love your neighbor as yourself." The "golden rule" is certainly one of the great mitzvot in the Torah, but I'd like to take a moment to share the opinions of some rabbis and thinkers who have questioned the central place we hold for these words.

Rabbi Akiva, one of the most famous rabbis of the Talmud is quoted in a number of places saying "[loving your neighbor as yourself] is the fundamental principle of the Torah," and many people throughout the ages would likely agree with him. However, notably, there's one rabbi who disagrees loudly. Another rabbi named Ben Azzai responds to Rabbi Akiva that, "This is the book of the generations of man' (Gen. 5:1) transcends the weight of that [commandment]." At first, this seems like a crazy argument! Rabbi Akiva has brought a famous passage that demands we love our neighbors and Ben Azzai has the nerve to say "that passage is nice, but let me show you the beginning of this great list of names"?!

Nechama Leibowitz, a great 20th century scholar of the Torah, points out that the end of the verse quoted by Ben Azzai is a reminder that all humans are descendents from Adam and all humans are created in the image of God. If we take loving one's neighbor as oneself as the fundamental principle of the Torah, then each person's commitment to others is reliant on their feelings towards themselves. Leibowitz says that Ben Azzai is making a critical argument here that "love of one's fellow man should not be not measured by the love of oneself. He, indifferent to his own lot, must not ignore the plight of his neighbor, whose Divine image commands consideration and respect." Ben Azzai says that yes, we must love others, but not because we love ourselves, but because they have innate dignity as humans who were created in the image of God.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, the former chief rabbi of the United Kingdom, also questions the centrality of the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself, and instead notes that we should look to a commandment that appears 16 verses later—and in 36 other places throughout the Torah.

"The Hebrew Bible contains the great command, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself,' and this has often been taken as the basis of biblical morality," Rabbi Sacks writes in his book *Faith in the Future*. "But it is not: it is only part of it. The Jewish sages noted that on only one occasion does the Hebrew Bible command us to love our neighbour, but in thirty-seven places it commands us to love the stranger. Our neighbour is one we love because he is like ourselves. The stranger is one we are taught to love precisely because he is not like ourselves."

Taken together, Ben Azzai, Nehama Leibowitz, and Rabbi Sacks are all pushing us not to simply love others because we love ourselves or because they are our "neighbors" who come from similar backgrounds to us. All of these commentators urge us to love others and to work on their behalf simply because they are human beings.

This message is necessary today more than ever as we look to support others—and be supported ourselves—throughout this pandemic. It says that even if you are not concerned for your own health and safety, it's important to stay home because there are others who are more at risk. It says that each human being who is infected is one person too many and we must do what we can to help protect our community. This message says that even in a time of heightened fear it is unethical and unconscionable to demean or heaven forbid attack people of an ethnic background different from our own.

We have seen people throughout Arkansas, throughout America, and throughout the world embody Ben Azzai's idea as they shop for elderly neighbors they may not have met before, continue to work essential jobs despite the danger to themselves, and practice social distancing even when it is painful and hard.

It is only by working together, as neighbors and strangers, that we will emerge from this crisis stronger than we were before. Even as we isolate, now is not the time to draw inward and only look out for ourselves, it is time to listen to the words of the Torah: "Love your neighbor as yourself," "Love them [the strangers] as yourself," and remember that we are all created "in the image of God." Implicit in all these commands is a third that I'd like to leave you with: "Love yourself." You are also created in the image of God. You are all such wonderful people and I look forward to being in your company soon.

Presidents Message... Susan Weinstein

Hello fellow congregants and friends. We've had such an unusual couple of months with the COVID-19 pandemic: Passover in isolation, no services or programming, everyone being separate but together in spirit.

Huge thank you goes to our medical professionals, grocery workers, emergency professionals, janitors and all the other folks out there keeping things going for us and putting their own health in jeopardy. Since I'm in a 'high risk' group myself, I truly appreciate the efforts of all to keep us safe. And my heart goes out to all the businesses and individuals that are suffering due to closures. I hope and pray we can continue to distance ourselves until this virus has died down.

At Synagogue, our administrator Laura, has kept things going and putting out information for us all. She is a pleasure to work with and truly cares about Synagogue and its members. Chuck Prousnitzer, building and grounds chairman, has been working on addressing building repairs and issues. We now have a new air conditioner for the offices and school wing, which went out last fall. A water leak outside behind the dairy pantry has been identified and repaired. We were hit by some of the recent storms, affecting many electrical circuits in the building, including power to the offices and knocking out our computer. We have replaced our computer with a current, more powerful machine, so good comes out of everything! We lost some food in a freezer and refrigerator, but we were so fortunate as our losses don't amount to more than our insurance deductible.

Toni Roosth is working with our custodian, Lidia Allerenó, to find extra jobs and deep cleaning so we can keep her employed and busy. She is such an asset and works very hard for us. Even during a pandemic, the mundane continues, but so does our appreciation of those who make all this happen.

Good news for Agudath Achim is that, as far as I'm aware, no members are ill with COVID-19. We have wonderful volunteers calling our members, making sure all needs are being met, and brightening everyone's day. Other volunteers are helping pack and deliver meals to school children and their families in coordination with the Clinton Foundation and the City of Little Rock. Special thanks go to Jana Cohen for offering her busses to help transport meals to distribution sites.

We have initiated several opportunities for our community to get together through the internet. Links are available in the weekly announcements.

- Student rabbi Ben Freed has opened his shul's weekly pre-Kabbalat shabbat Zoom service to our members. If you haven't zoomed in yet, it's at 4 pm CST each week and is incredibly joyous and meaningful.
- Sunday mornings at 10 AM, one of our congregants is doing Torah study via WebEx. Please register and join in—it's a great time to learn.
- Saturday evening, May 2, student Rabbi Ben Freed held a Havdalah service. We hope to continue this on a regular basis.
- Every Wednesday at 5 PM we are doing a Zoom Sip & Schmooze, just to gather together socially.

If anyone has an interest and wants to work with us on an interest group, let me know. This could be a cooking demonstration, watching a movie or Netflix series, book club, etc.

Please let me or the office know of any needs or concerns. We are here for each other and care about each other. We're a family—living apart for now—but still together in spirit.

Sue

Synagogue Office Hours

Mo, Wed & Fri 9:00AM-1:00PM

Tue & Thu 11:00AM-3:00PM

Telephone - 501-225-168

Email - office@LRsynagogue.org

7901 W. Capitol Avenue, LR AR 72205

Congratulations to Our Graduates

Draven Orleanski, Graduate from High School

Samantha Steinberg, Graduate of Central High-continuing to Arizona State University

Nicole Fijman, Graduate of Southern Mississippi University-Master's in Biology

Sara Goldsholl, Graduate of UAMS college of Medicine-continuing as OB/GYN Resident

Jared Mackey, Graduate of Murray State University-continuing in Veterinary Science

Becky Sherman, Graduate of Hendrix College

BIRTHDAYS

2-May	Samuel	Lulky
4-May	Harry	Ehrenberg
5-May	David	Lowitz
7-May	Ithay	Biton
7-May	Jerry	Cohen
9-May	Charlene	Prousnitzer
10-May	Joshua	Epstein
13-May	David	Prager
14-May	Toni	Roosth
15-May	Philip	Prousnitzer
15-May	Gary	Weisbly
16-May	Leah	Berney
17-May	Mikhail	Ivanovsky
17-May	Susan	Martinez
18-May	Jared	Mackey
18-May	Ethan	Miller
20-May	Miriam	Hasson
20-May	Vera	Weller
24-May	Jeffrey	Kirsch
24-May	Farah	Steinberg
26-May	Lucy	Towbin
2-Jun	Spencer	Storhthz
3-Jun	Bonnie	Jacobson
3-Jun	Rebecca	Sherman
4-Jun	Jordan	Kaiser
6-Jun	Raida	Snyderman
8-Jun	Adina	Dowden-Anhalt
8-Jun	David	Krapf
9-Jun	Michael	Simon
10-Jun	Theo	Franks
12-Jun	Michael	Frais
13-Jun	Hank	Greenbaum
13-Jun	Michael	Schmitz
14-Jun	Leiah	Brown
16-Jun	Lewis	Krain
17-Jun	Landon	Pilcher
19-Jun	Andrea	Itskovich
21-Jun	Lirit	Biton
22-Jun	David	Bauman
22-Jun	Jay	Reddock
22-Jun	Aaron	Towbin-Hickling
23-Jun	Andrew	Collins
24-Jun	Suzanne	Storhthz
25-Jun	Rachel	Kuperman
28-Jun	Larry	Alman
29-Jun	Arlene	Margolis

**Thank you for
your Donation!**

Cemetery Fund

Charles & Martha Alman In memory of Gussie Alman Charles Schlosberg
Cecile Schweig In memory of Hyman Burta
Eva Zeno In memory of Norbert Zeno
Maurice Besser In memory of Edward Strauss

Endowment Fund

Rose Schwartz In memory of Norbert Zeno In honor of Eva Zeno
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Kiddush Fund

Polly Greenbaum In honor of David Greenbaum
--

General Fund

Avery Robinson
Gary & Carole Weisbly In memory of Sidney & Selma Koenig Albert & Lillian
Weisbly John & Ellen Moore In memory of Robert Itzkowitz Joe Miller
Laurence & Anne Miller In memory of Audrey Miller Poritzky
Judy Pearlstein In memory of Robert Itzkowitz
Eva Zeno Speedy Recovery for Jerry & Sue Cohen
Christopher Barrier & Nan Selz In honor of Eva Zeno
Laurence & Anne Miller In appreciation of Rabbi Ben Freed
Rabbi Block In honor of Susan Weinstein

Anniversaries

2-May	David & Polly Greenbaum
4-May	Ira & Karen Stone
15-May	William & Bonnie Jacobson
22-May	Bob & Angie Boury
24-May	Chuck & Charlene Prousnitzer
1-Jun	Charles & Martha Alman
9-Jun	Joe & Valerie Steinberg
26-Jun	Sy & Sharona Niksefat
26-Jun	Robert & Marcia Safirstein



Yahrzeit - יָאָרְצֵיִת

MAY	YAR	
1	7	Jordan Kiel
2	8	Rabbi Seymour Weller
2	8	Shimoni Egon
3	9	Jack Barg
3	9	Emilie Zeno
5	11	Max Adolph Hirsch
5	11	Herman Rovinsky
7	13	Selma Resnick
8	14	Abraham Tenenbaum
9	15	Betty Nussbaum
13	19	Abe Bram
14	20	Murray Sherman
17	23	Phyllis Alexander Storhthz
17	23	Nella Greenbaum
18	24	Gertie Bram Kossover
19	25	Philip Geller
19	25	Joyce Ehrenberg
21	27	Harry Kuperman
21	27	Clara W. Burta
22	28	Jack Shulman
MAY	SIVAN	
26	3	Rose Bram
31	8	Elma Frenkel
JUNE	SIVAN	
2	10	Bessie Schlosberg
3	11	Leon Itzkowitz
4	12	Isaac Hefler
5	13	Dr. Mark Krain
7	15	Leon Sobel
8	16	Usher Selig Treitman
9	17	Carolyn Greenberg
12	20	Joe Besser
13	21	Sophia Cohen
16	24	Howard Eisenberg
17	25	Ben Spector
18	26	Tillie Sanders
21	29	Mortimer Goldberger
JUNE	TAMMUZ	
24	2	Dora Kluglose
24	2	Sandra Loket
25	3	Mary Bernhard
25	3	Rachel Tenenbaum
28	6	Herman Loket
30	8	William Sanders

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