

# The Agudagram

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June, July, August 2023 Volume 72, No. 10  
Sivan/Tammuz, Av, Elul 5783

## Agudas Israel Congregation

77 North Pine Street  
Hazleton, PA 18201  
570-455-2851

### Officers:

Richard Kline, Ritual Leader  
Debbie Walko, President  
Marlene Leonard, Vice President  
Richard Rockman, Secretary  
Helene Kline, Treasurer  
Richard Kline, Financial Officer



### SHABBAT CANDLELIGHTING TIMES

6/9- Parshat Beha'alotcha- 8:17pm  
6/16- Parshat Shlach- 8:20pm  
6/23- Parshat Korach- 8:22pm  
6/30- Parshat Chukat-Balak- 8:22pm  
7/7- Parshat Pinchas- 8:20pm  
7/14- Parshat Matot-Mattei- 8:17pm

7/21- Parshat Devarim- 8:12pm  
7/28- Parshat Ve'etchanan- 8:06pm  
8/4- Parshat Eikev- 7:59pm  
8/11- Parshat Re'eh- 7:50pm  
8/18- Parshat Shoftim- 7:40pm  
8/25- Parshat Ki Teitzei- 7:30pm

**Thank you to our Centennial Committee for planning such beautiful events celebrating 100 years of our wonderful congregation! Your hard work paid off! We hope everyone enjoyed both events celebrating Agudas Israel Congregation! L'Chaim to 100 more years!**



*What the “Writing on the Wall” in the Book of Daniel Really Means*  
*The phrase shows up in popular culture as synonymous with fatalistic warning, but it has a much deeper meaning for Jews.*

BY RABBI DAN ORNSTEIN

Super-star rappers French Montana, Post Malone and Cardi B made it the [title of their 2019 hit](#). Rock artist Paul Simon mentioned it in his hit single, [Kodachrome](#). Rembrandt immortalized it in his painting, [Belshazzar’s Feast](#), and he included in that work a “word puzzle” from the rabbis of the [Talmud](#). It’s been [satirized](#), politicized, popularized, set to music, made into the title of scores of books, bands and tunes. For more than 2,000 years, its imagery has terrified and mesmerized readers, even though most people, I suspect, don’t understand what it truly means or where it comes from. What is this mysterious idea striking fear in people’s hearts and making huge dents in high and low culture for centuries? It’s the timeless story of the writing on the wall.

When we use it in everyday speech, we might say, “You need to read the writing on the wall,” or “I can read the writing on the wall.” We generally mean by this that we can detect something terrible that will happen in the near future. There seems to be universal agreement that to read the writing on the wall means to brace oneself, soberly and stoically, for the worst. However, this popular use of the phrase distorts its original meaning. In the [Book of Daniel](#), the source of the phrase, something quite different is happening.

Some background is in order before we look at the original story of the writing on the wall. Daniel is a Jew [exiled to Babylonia](#) during the military campaign of [King Nebuchadnezzar](#) against the Judean State in 586 BCE. According to the first four chapters of his eponymous book, he and his three friends are part of an elite corps of exiles pressed into a royal training program to serve the king and state. The four young men distinguish themselves with a string of divinely aided successes, demonstrating extraordinary gifts of dream interpretation and intelligence, all while fiercely maintaining their Jewish identities and personal integrity. With strong echoes of the “exile-to-palace” climbs of [Joseph](#) (and, to some degree, [Esther](#)), Daniel and his friends twice interpret the king’s ominous dreams of personal and imperial disaster and apocalyptic regime change, while also exhorting him to repent before God. The “hat trick” that secures their high status with the king is when the three friends are thrown into a fiery furnace but survive the ordeal with nary a scratch on them. (The story of Daniel in the lion’s den, a similar miraculous escape from a pit of death, comes later in the book.)

With this in mind, we enter the scene of a huge party being held by Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, who takes over when his father is banished. What do we first notice?

Under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar ordered the gold and silver vessels that his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple at Jerusalem to be brought so that the king and his nobles, his consorts and his concubines could drink from them ... They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.

[\(Daniel 5:2-4\)](#)

This was, for the ancient Jews watching, truly vile. It was bad enough that the Babylonians, under the leadership of Belshazzar's father, exiled the Jewish people, destroyed their holy Temple, and stole the sacred vessels ... but using them to get more drunk and to worship false gods? Even God, who according to biblical theology used the Babylonians as a means by which to punish the Jews for their sins, would have no reason to want that. Enter the writing on the wall:

Just then, the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace opposite the lampstand, so that the king could see the hand as it wrote.

[\(Daniel 5:5\)](#)

The king calls for his magicians and wise men to read and interpret the writing but, predictably, they can't. Only that magnificent court Jew, Daniel, is able to. After excoriating Belshazzar for his arrogance and impudence before God, he reads the now-famous words on the wall:



***Mene Mene Tekel U-Pharsin***

Our hero decodes God's dire warning to the king:

God has numbered [the days of] your kingdom and brought it to an end; you have been weighed in the balance and found wanting; your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

(5:26-28)

Spoiler alert: That night, Belshazzar is killed, presumably the victim of a military campaign that brings his enemies, the Medes, to power. The writing on the wall foretold truly.

There are clearly similarities between the biblical story and our pop culture appropriation of it. However, the contrasts are what fascinate me.

First, in the popular versions, we usually talk about a person reading the writing on the wall him or herself, to come to terms with a terrible, inevitable reality. But in Daniel, the king and

all his advisors can't read the writing on the wall. Its message is utterly lost to them until Daniel explains it to them.

Second, we generally use the phrase "the writing on the wall" to refer to something which is ominous, but morally neutral. Something bad is going to happen, but it could be deserved or undeserved by us, depending upon our behavior or other circumstances. Yet Daniel's explanation to the king makes clear that his ruin is the result of his arrogance and hunger for power.

Third, reading the writing on the wall entails preparing for an unpleasant future with no necessary reference to the past that might have brought us there; Daniel's ominous prediction to Belshazzar is preceded by a harsh admonishment for his miserable past and his villainous deeds.

Daniel is more a [classical prophet](#) than a futurist. His job, in this scene, is to reveal Belshazzar's fate; but even more so, he's there to offer a damning critique of the king and his society, to force them "to read" the truth about who they have become and where it is leading them.

My teacher, Rabbi Gordon Tucker, wrote about how our revered teacher, [Rabbi Abraham Heschel, understood the nature of biblical prophecy](#):

*Heschel ... argued that the special aptitude of the prophets was not an ability to predict the future, but rather the deep intuitive sense they had of the devastating effect that earthly injustice has on God's inner emotional life. As he put it, whoever imagines that God is unaffected by injustice by and to humans, is denying the very essence of religious faith. In this view, what caused prophets to shriek was a shattering and undeniable empathy with the suffering of the Creator.*

Daniel is no [Jeremiah](#); he doesn't shriek at state and society from the margins, he serves them from within, indeed from high within as a member of court. Yet as a passionate lover of God and God's oppressed people, he refuses to sugarcoat the message of the wall's writing to appease the king and court. With an empathic rage barely restrained by formality and eloquence, he condemns *and* supports them by unpacking the dire message written by God's "hand."

The story of the handwriting on the wall occupies the realm of biblical mythology and miracle. Removing this literary dressing, we're left with a message and a mission, a "writing on the wall" of contemporary life, which we Jews are obligated to place incessantly before society: we must speak truth to power. This is difficult to do, especially when it places us at great potential risk; it has always been a fraught endeavor for us, especially in the Diaspora. Like Daniel, we Jews have struggled over many centuries to survive with political cunning under regimes that tolerated us, used us, were hostile to us, and most horribly, tried to destroy us. Even Jewish life in democratic America comes with complicated strings attached. They present us with huge political and moral choices between self-protection and fighting for what is right in the greater society. That's why Daniel can be such a powerful model for us. He rises so high in the court of the king that the latter calls upon his wisdom and good counsel before all his nobility. Yet the

favor that Daniel carries with Belshazzar doesn't prevent him from severely chastising Belshazzar for his wrongdoing. Daniel serves the king, but he serves God and God's truth even more. Particularly in our current American-Jewish Diaspora, we have never felt so well integrated and so fearful for our future and the future of the country. Cast over us is a foreboding that our society is actually *writing* its own slow demise on our American wall; ironically, it can't – or it refuses – to read what it has written. Daniel teaches us that, however risky it may be, we Jews must be on the frontlines of using our accrued power, privilege and presence to speak out, protesting what we know are the growing injustices and hatreds that threaten to shatter America in angry, warring, pieces. Daniel demands of us that we help our society to read the writing on the wall before it's too late to repair what is broken.

**SHEILA IS RESIDING AT ST. LUKE'S PAVILION.  
VISITATION AT ST. LUKE'S IS NOW OPEN TO THE  
PUBLIC. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEND HER A CARD OR  
VISIT, YOU MAY FIND HER AT:  
SHEILA MOYER  
C/O ST. LUKE'S PAVILION  
1000 STACIE DR. ROOM 202  
HAZLETON, PA 18201**

**GET WELL WISHES ARE EXPRESSED TO:  
BRUCE MILLER, BOBBIE KLEMOW, LEANNE  
TRATTNER, SHIRLEY BRENNER, & EILEEN  
BRENNER.**

**SHOULD ANYONE HAVE ANY NEWS TO  
SHARE WITH THE AIC FAMILY, PLEASE EMAIL  
IT TO  
[AGUDASISRAELHAZLETON@GMAIL.COM](mailto:AGUDASISRAELHAZLETON@GMAIL.COM) TO  
RUN IN THE NEXT AGUDAGRAM!**



*June/July/August (Sivan/Tammuz/Av/Elul) Yahrzeits*  
*May the memory of the righteous endure as a blessing.*

The yahrzeit plaque lights are on in the sanctuary in memory of our departed loved ones.

\*Numbers before each name correspond to the Hebrew date of their passing. The date after each name is the secular day of the yahrzeit. Yahrzeit candles should be lit the evening before this date burning through the day of their passing. Kaddish should be said the evening before and the day of the date of passing.

SIVAN

12 Joseph Brown 6/1  
12 Jakob Spanier 6/1  
13 Bessie Brenner 6/2  
13 Faye Orkin 6/2  
13 Sarah Deitch 6/2  
14 Elizabeth Gildenberg  
6/3  
15 Sol Schmerin 6/4  
15 Sandra Graylin 6/4  
15 Bertha Schwartz 6/4  
15 Lillian Keich 6/4  
15 William Silverman 6/4  
17 Helen Burkat 6/6  
18 Anna Stolboff 6/7  
18 Herbert Narrow 6/7  
20 Edna Glass 6/9  
20 Morris Bar 6/9  
21 Max Figlin 6/10  
23 Sgt. Harry Cohn 6/12  
24 Louis Syken 6/13  
24 Richard Lande 6/13  
24 Fanny Kline 6/13  
24 Simon Lande 6/13  
25 Arnold Ber 6/14  
25 Michael Brenner 6/14  
25 Bessie Glickman 6/14  
27 Carl Jaffe 6/16  
28 Dorothy Druian 6/17  
28 Abraham Brownstein  
6/17  
30 Ely Abramson 6/19

TAMMUZ

2 Alvan E. Baum 6/21  
3 Ray Rockmaker 6/22  
3 Max Kaplan 6/22  
4 Mark Janov 6/23  
4 Irving Refowich 6/23  
6 Renae Ziff Berman 6/25  
6 Doris Faltz 6/25  
6 Philip Narrow 6/25  
6 Minnie Miller 6/25  
6 Abraham Goldberg 6/25  
7 Anna Sussman 6/26  
7 Benjamin Gordon 6/26  
8 David Frumkin 6/27  
8 Louis Moskowitz 6/27  
9 Sophia Friedgood 6/28  
9 Hyman H. Wagner 6/28  
9 Max Miller 6/28  
9 Harriet Walit 6/28  
9 Leonard Walit 6/28  
9 Harry Ziff 6/28  
10 Joseph Starker 6/29  
11 Sadie Abramson 6/30  
11 Eli Kline 6/30  
11 Harold Landau 6/30  
11 Nathan Rosen 6/30  
12 Saul Baiderman 7/1  
13 Mary Ann Belak 7/2  
13 Sara Frumkin 7/2  
14 Rose Schwartz 7/3  
14 Meyer Small 7/3  
15 Hyman H. Davidowitz

7/4

16 Gerald L. Cohn 7/5  
16 Thelma Figlin 7/5  
16 Sam Figlin 7/5  
16 Naomi S. Jaffe 7/5  
17 Elyne Goldberg 7/6  
17 Anna Rockmaker 7/6  
18 Morris Kaplan 7/7  
18 Evelyn Rosen 7/7  
19 Harold Baum 7/8  
19 Lucille Vegh 7/8  
19 Sara Greenblatt 7/8  
21 Joseph Burkat 7/10  
21 Jerome Syken 7/10  
21 Emanuel Greif 7/10  
22 David Tulin 7/11  
23 Trudy Buchbinder 7/12  
25 Ruth Glassberg 7/14  
26 Hyman Adler 7/15  
27 Mollie Rockman 7/16  
27 Rosalind Spiegel 7/16  
27 Henry Small 7/16  
27 Leontyn Lorbeer 7/16  
29 Samuel Franklin 7/18  
29 Manuel J. Harris 7/18  
29 Rose Dubinsky 7/18  
29 Ronald Schwabe 7/18

AV

1 Ruth Schwartz 7/19  
2 Sarah Goldberg 7/20  
6 Sara Cohn 7/24  
6 Selma Levine 7/24  
6 Harry Heller 7/24

8 Norman Rosen 7/24  
9 Abraham Solomon  
7/25  
10 M.S. Frumkin 7/26  
11 David Klemow 7/27  
11 Mark Kaminoff 7/27  
14 Rachel Weisman 8/1  
16 Joanne Cherrin 8/3  
17 Dora Sugarman 8/4  
19 Morris Barsky 8/6

19 Myra Griffith 8/6  
19 Mary Mednitsky 8/6  
21 Abel Levine 8/8  
22 Emanuel Greenwald  
8/9  
23 Samuel Moldoff 8/10  
26 Tillie Berman 8/13  
26 Ruth Refowich 8/13  
27 Evelyn H. Greif 8/14  
28 Rose Dymond 8/15

28 Samuel Miller 8/15  
30 Fannie Figlin 8/17  
30 Samuel Mitchneck 8/17  
30 Lena Trattner 8/17  
  
ELUL  
5 Jane Hurwitz 8/22  
5 Max Bromberg 8/22  
11 Birdie Richter 8/28

PLEASE REMEMBER THE MITZVAH OF GIVING TZEDUKAH TO YOUR SHUL  
OR THE SHUL OF YOUR LOVED ONE WHO HAS PASSED, ON THE OCCASION  
OF THEIR YAHRZEIT IN THEIR MEMORY.

REFLECTION WHICH MAY BE READ WHEN LIGHTING A YAHRZEIT  
CANDLE FOR YOUR LOVED ONE:

“I light this candle to bring peace to the soul of \_\_\_\_\_ (insert Jewish name) ben/bat (son  
of/daughter of) \_\_\_\_\_ (insert father’s Jewish name).”

The human soul is a light from God. May it be your will that the soul of (*insert name*) enjoy  
eternal life, along with the souls of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and  
Leah, and the rest of the righteous that are in Gan Eden. Amen.

*Neir Adonai Nishmat Adam. Yehi Ratzon Milfanecha, Adonai Eloheinu Veilohei  
Avoteinu, Shetehei Nishmat (insert name) Tzerurah betzeror hachayim, im nishmot  
Avraham Yitzchak ve’Ya’akov, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel VeLeah. Tehi Menutchatah  
kavod, Selah*

**MAY DONATIONS RECEIVED**

**Yahrzeit Fund**

<u>Donation From</u>	<u>In Memory of</u>
Ariel & Aleta Grunberg	Blanche Schwartz, mother
Barbara Wagner & David Stern	Edith Wagner, mother
Carlos & Sharon Buchbinder	Rudolph Suess, grandfather
Carolyn L. Schwartz	Blanche Schwartz, mother

David Matlow	Louis Matlow, father
Ed & Shayna Geller	Isaac Jaffe, grandfather
Ed & Shayna Geller	Naomi Jaffe, aunt
Ed & Shayna Geller	Samuel Jaffe, uncle
Ed & Shayna Geller	Anna Stolboff, aunt
Ed & Shayna Geller	Sol Schmerin, grandfather
Faye & Richard Bishop	David Bishop, grandfather
Faye Klemow	Bessie Glickman, aunt
Gary F. Clark	Herbert Clark, father
Hannah Micki Auerbach	Louis Ruttenberg, father
Herma Jaye Aiken	Elizabeth Gildenberg, grandmother
Honey Minkin	Joseph Brown, grandfather
Howard & Kathy Brown	Joseph Brown, grandfather
Howard Rockman	Florence Kashnitz, aunt
Jacqueline Matlow	Louis Matlow, father-in-law
Jacqueline Matlow	Morris Barr, grandfather
Janet L Keich	Lillian Baum Keich, mother
Lenore Levy	Charles Warshofsky, father
Leonard & Ann Louise Brenner	Benjamin Glass, grandfather
Leonard & Ann Louise Brenner	Betty Brenner, mother
Leonard & Ann Louise Brenner	Joseph Brenner, father
Leonard & Ann Louise Brenner	Maurice Brenner, grandfather
Leonard & Ann Louise Brenner	Phyllis Kallick, aunt
Leonard & Ann Louise Brenner	Rebecca Brenner, grandmother
Lois Kline Bailey	Jeanne Kline, mother
Marilyn Bergstein	Hannah S. Cohn, mother
Mr. & Mrs. Howard Narrow & sons, Rhona & David Narrow	Herbert Narrow; brother, uncle

Mr. & Mrs. Howard Narrow & sons, Rhona & David Narrow	Sylvia Narrow; mother, wife
Prof. Gary F. Clark	Ethel B. Clark, mother
Rhoda Smulyan Wolff	Fannye Wolff, mother-in-law
Rhoda Smulyan Wolff	Harvey Wolff, husband
Richard Rockman	Rochelle Goldman, cousin
Robert Steinberg	Philmore Steinberg, father
Sherri Klemow-Shevlin	Bessie Klemow, grandmother
Sherri Klemow-Shevlin	Ruth Klemow, mother
Shirley, Cindy, Debbie & Family	Jerry Brownstein, uncle, brother
Shirley, Cindy, Debbie & Family	Stanley Brenner, son, brother
Tom Kline	Isadore & Jeanne Kline, parents
Wayne Orkin	Faye Orkin, mother

We greatly appreciate donations for yahrzeits, life events, and other celebrations! They truly keep the shul running and show how strong our congregation is.

If you'd like information about donating, please email us at [agudasisraelhazleton@gmail.com](mailto:agudasisraelhazleton@gmail.com) or call the shul.

## AIC NEWS



\*The Next **Leisure Lunch** (*date TBA*) will be "farm-to-table" at Mountain Grove Community Farm in Sugarloaf. We hope parents & kids will join us for this event as well as our usual Leisure Lunch crew. Lunch will feature farm fresh ingredients, a farm tour, a Hebrew School lesson for the kids, and games. Please contact Christina if you are interested in participating in this event.

\***2023 Dues Reminders** will be going out to those who have not yet paid their 2023 dues. Thank you to those who have already sent them in.

\***High Holidays** are not that far off (*Rosh Hashanah starts Sept. 15th*), so keep an eye out for forthcoming Yom Kippur Booklet mailings to update your listing.

## SUMMER PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Shalom all,

I am thrilled to say that our centennial events were both fabulous. I guess it is true that hard work does pay off. We put in many hours planning these events and thankfully they were both huge successes. Thank you to all who contributed and attended to make these events so spectacular. With 190 lively people attending the June event, the band, EpicSoul rocked clubhouse at the Valley Country Club and their dance floor will never be the same. And the outstanding comedian, Carrie Karavas had us all laughing our tails off.

Happy 100th year to Agudas Israel Synagogue building!

The next Agudagram will be for September including all our High Holiday information. Any other pertinent information will be sent via email.

Have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

*Debbie Walker*