



Message from the Rabbi

Thoughts Approaching Pesach – 2015

The *Maggid*, the central “Recounting the Story” section of the Passover seder begins with the following declaration, proclaimed as the matzah is raised for all to see:

“*Ha Lahma Anya*/This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. All who are hungry—come and eat! All who are in need—come join in our Passover! This year we are here; next year in the land of Israel! This year enslaved, next year free!”

This simple, direct series of statements clearly reflects the main lesson of our historical experience of suffering, which is: that we are to reach out to those in need, here and now, today. In this opening paragraph, we can sense at least two distinct tasks and connected challenges: one, to extend ourselves to others in need, and, two, to be honest about the difficult, even broken, places in our **own** lives. For empathy – which grows out of our own experiences – is what leads to action. When our hearts break for others, it is not only out of altruism; rather it is also because we have been there. Over and over, the Torah exhorts us to act on the basis of such empathy, saying repeatedly, “Do this – or that - **because you were once slaves in Egypt.**” Empathy is baked into our tradition.

The Zohar, the “bible” of Jewish mysticism, calls matzah, *Nahma Ila'ah* – “celestial bread.” We are commanded to rid our homes of leaven – *chametz* - prior to the start of Passover. That’s the literal meaning of *chametz*, all those left-behind bread and cracker crumbs that hide from us the rest of the year. But leaven has also come to represent unwanted personal qualities that we need to remove – like boastfulness, arrogance, insensitivity on the

oppression of human beings – as well as a false dependence on and subservience to material riches. Jewish tradition says that the 40 desert years were actually the honeymoon between God and the Jewish people. That might seem kind of crazy, considering how difficult and filled with fear, hunger and uncertainty those years were. But in a wilderness, many may find themselves at last freed from empty attachments and open to a deeper relationship to self, others, nature and God.

So our matzah is a paradoxical symbol of both oppression **and** liberation, just as our seder is a complex interweaving of celebrating freedom while also identifying with bondage. You know that we are instructed to place three matzahs on our seder plates, and various interpretations have been offered for this ritual. Some teach that the three matzahs represent the Jewish subgroupings of Cohen, Levi and Israel. Others that they stand in for the three sets of patriarchs and matriarchs in Genesis. Still another interpretation is that they are the unfree, the free who don’t care, and the free who do care. Another approach has been to identify the first matzah with the ancient liberation from Egypt, the second with the ultimate messianic redemption we all hope for one day, and the third with our current state of being *beinonim*, “in-between.” Because isn’t that where we all are most of the time – hanging in the balance, alive but not immortal, sandwiched between a fragile, limited, very human self and our creation in the Divine image?

The seder ritual seems to have it backwards: One would think that we should first eat the maror, the bitter herbs, just as the bitter slavery preceded the liberation, when the matzah was created. But in truth, our chronology is not so simple—we need to have first tasted freedom in order to deeply understand oppression. As flat and tasteless as it may seem to our jaded palates, freedom/matzah ought to be savored first—maybe its lingering aftertaste can then help us truly see suffering and affliction. This matzah-then-maror order also

points to the ongoing need to free ourselves, again and again, or more and more, and urges us to confront every form of slavery, at each stage of life. Some other thoughts:



One of the most awaited moments in our seders is when Eliahu Hanavi enters. At this moment in the dinner, we open the doors to our homes and welcome the prophet Elijah. The origin of this custom is in a Talmudic discussion. Our sages differed on the number of cups of wine that should be consumed at a Pesach seder. While some believed that there should be only four, others argued that we should drink five. So our Rabbis solved the dispute with a compromise; they established the custom of placing a fifth cup on our tables which we don't drink from. This cup was known as Elijah's Cup because according to tradition Elijah will return one day to solve all the disputes we limited humans cannot resolve ourselves – including this one about the number of cups that we must have at the seder.

The prophet's arrival is a symbol. In the Bible, Elijah was a mystical figure who had not died but ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire. This magical personality who visits us on the night of the seder is received with great joy.

A question draws our attention: Why do we need to open the door for Elijah's entrance? After all, a magical figure such as he could easily enter through the window. He probably could also pass right through the walls! So what is the meaning of our activity leaving our seats and opening the doors?

Originally, Jews would open the door at the beginning of the seder, when we say "Let all who are hungry come and eat." Then the door would remain open throughout the dinner. Later, this

practice became dangerous due to religious persecution. So the tradition of opening the door for just a moment near the end of the ceremony was established. Some claim that the door was opened just to check for an enemy outside.

People sometimes mistakenly think that Elijah was meant to be the Messiah. But Elijah's role was more modest - to be a herald, a messenger, a bringer of wonderful news, in this case, that the Messiah's arrival was imminent. Messianism was a movement that emerged only in post-biblical Judaism. At the time of the Torah, the Messiah is not mentioned even once. During the time of the prophets, the use of the word *Mashiach* (Messiah) just referred to a human leader, someone who had been anointed. The actual origin of the word alludes to the ritual pouring of oil on the head of the leader as a sign of coronation.

Over the years, the concept of a flesh-and-blood messiah who would come to save humanity developed. This person, according to the classical view, would go through the gates of Jerusalem sitting on a white donkey and announcing the arrival of peace. What a wonderful image.

With the advent of liberal Judaism in the 19th century, this classical view of the Messiah began to be vigorously challenged. The early Reformers in Germany were bothered by the idea of waiting passively for the arrival of a savior. Instead, the progressive Jewish movements advocated for the idea of a messianic **age** instead of an actual **human** messiah. And not just that. They argued that it was human beings themselves who – inspired by the model of God's Creation – could bring about this wonderful era. As subtle as this difference may seem, it is, in fact, significant. To await the arrival of the messiah can mean a passive attitude toward the challenges of the world. On the other hand, to work for the creation of a messianic era means leaving one's comfort zone and taking full responsibility for the ways of humanity.

If you're anything like me, you fairly regularly feel confused and helpless about just how to do that. The world is so big and so full of problems; I feel like I am bombarded constantly for help. Some of these are requests and some are pleas; they arrive in my actual mailbox, my computer and in person. As I'm sure you do, I

respond to some, not to others. I never feel completely comfortable with my choices. As you know, during the week I work in Manhattan. There are people sleeping on the street right outside where I teach at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Other people ask for cash on a crowded subway car. Sometimes when I come off the George Washington Bridge and head down the West Side highway there is a man with a sign asking for change. In those moments, I just do not know what to do and I feel paralyzed. Most of the time I'm not comfortable handing out cash. But I feel terrible looking away. Then this week a colleague of mine posted something on Facebook that helped me – and maybe it will help you too. Rabbi Eric Solomon – my rabbinical school classmate – wrote: "I just did a quick mitzvah before Shabbat. I bought a set of McDonald's gift cards to give out whenever I see a person begging at an off-ramp or intersection. A suburban modern take on tzedakah. I know McDonald's isn't the healthiest, but it's cheap and has locations everywhere. At least I know people can get a meal there, can use the bathroom, sit inside for a little while and get warm." I read that and I thought to myself – wow. For those moments when I don't want to look away - I can do that. So I went out and bought some of those cards. Sometimes simple ideas pop up and, at that very moment, they're just the ones we need.

Maybe then, this is the symbol of the door that we open at our seders. Metaphorically we get up from our comfortable armchairs and take action. To open the door on Passover can represent a step in creating a different kind of world. Let's go.

Wishing you and yours a meaningful and inspiring Passover week.

Rabbi Kim S. Geringer



President's Message

Dear Fellow Congregants,

On May 17, 2015, it will be time once again for our Temple to "go to the polls". As you may recall, every two years we elect a new slate of officers and trustees. This will happen at our annual congregational meeting, a formal notice of which will go out later this month. Pursuant to our temple by-laws, a nominating committee has been formed to put forth names of candidates for each position. The committee this year will consist of volunteers Fran Breese, Madelyn Dunn and Laura Miller. I wish to thank them in advance for their service.

If you have interest in serving in any of these important roles, I urge you to contact them and make your interest known. If you have questions about the roles and duties for these positions, feel free to contact me or any other board members for information. I promise not to try and talk you out of it!

Being able to serve your congregation in this manner is a great blessing and of course is vital to our continued existence.

Have a happy Passover and a good month.

Philip M. Miller, President



Yahrzeits

בראבא יתגדל

April 6 -Bernard Lewis ---father of Samuel Lewis
 April 10 -Samuel Sales ---brother of Maralyn Ricciardi
 April 22 -Rita LaMell --- wife of Harold Markowitz
 April 26- Sylvia Chasanoff ---mother of Deanna Bovasso
 April 27 - Jack Silverman ---father of Terry Silverman
 April 28 - 9 Iyar-Matthew Dunn--- father of Robert Dunn

May the memories of our loved ones be a blessing.

CONGREGATION SHA'AREY HA-YAM BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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	Charles Flum	732-228-7991	cflum1@comcast.net
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Carmen Mirandowitz makes an appearance at Purim services at Congregation Sha'arey Hayam.



Fundraisers... We need your support!!!

Collection Drive - Drop off in front of Otto's garage between April 12 - April 17. You can also bring your bags to services on the evening of the 17th. We are collecting the following: clothing, coats, bedding, drapes, purses, linens, towels, stuffed animals and shoes. Any questions contact Dayna (609.709.9410)

Save-the-Date - August 29th - Art Auction at the beautiful Perry's Lake Club House. More info to follow.

Amazon Smile - When shopping at www.SMILE.Amazon.com you can designate REFORM JEWISH COMMUNITY of BARNEGAT (there are no additional fees, the congregation makes a percentage).

ShopRite Cards are always sold at services, but can be purchased anytime by contacting Dayna (609.709.9410) or Syble (609.978.4240)

Tribute Cards can be sent to anyone for any reason with a minimum donation of \$5. Contact Syble (609.978.4240)



- Harriet Cohen
- Phyllis and Stan Blum
- Dolly Weiss
- Maralyn Ricciardi



 11 David Jonas

 29 Sandy Goldsborough



April 7, 1962 Joe and Fran Breese
April 28, 2007 Helen Cocuzza

2015 Services DatesSaturday, April 4th Second night Seder

Friday, April 17, 7:30pm

Friday, May 8, 7:30pm

Friday, May 22, 7:30pm

Friday, June 5, 7:30pm

Friday, June 26, 7:30pm

Hebrew School

Our students prepared for Passover with making Elijah's cups! These will be with them forever on their Seder tables! As hopefully spring will be arriving soon we hope to have some classes outdoors...will spring be coming? The students hope so!

מסעפצק רשת
א בגדה זחטי כל

TEMPLE COMMITTEES**New Members Welcome**

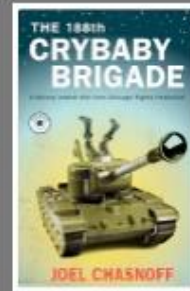
Temple Committees	Chair/Members
Choir	<u>Philip Altland</u> Cyndy Friedland, Wendi Higgins, Pat Barndt, Madelyn Dunn, Robert Dunn, Syble Bleiweis, Rena Kreisler
Finance	<u>Treasurer, Ernie Bleiweis</u> Financial Secretary, Cyndy Friedland President, Phil Miller
Fundraising	<u>Dayna Otto</u> Pat Barndt, Syble Bleiweis, Madelyn Dunn, Cyndy Friedland, Wendi Higgins, Joan Silverman
Greeters	<u>Hope Gardiner</u> Pat Barndt, Syble Bleiweis, Wendi Higgins
Hospital Visits	<u>Jack Crespy</u>
Membership	<u>Cyndy Friedland</u> Syble Bleiweis, Joan Silverman
Music	<u>Philip Altland</u>
Newsletter	<u>Rose Jackson</u> Hope Gardiner
Oneg & Dinners	<u>Madelyn Dunn</u> Pat Barndt, Wendi Higgins
Publicity	<u>Cyndy Friedland</u>
Religious School	<u>Cyndy Friedland/ Phil Miller</u>
Ritual	<u>Allan Levy</u> Philip Altland, Charles Flum
Sunshine	<u>Syble Bleiweis</u> Ruth Schlyen, Phyllis Blum, Harriet Cohen
Tributes	<u>Syble Bleiweis</u> Joan Silverman
Yahrzeits	<u>Harriet Cohen</u> Pat Barndt



The Place To Be

The Women's Division of the Jewish Federation of Ocean County
invites you to join us for an evening of laughter
with comedian and author

JOEL CHASNOFF



Thursday, April 30, 2015

Clarion Hotel

815 Route 37 West, Toms River

Dessert Reception & Gift Auction - 7 p.m.

Comedy Show - 8 p.m.

To purchase tickets, please call the Federation office
at 732.363.0530 or go to www.jewishoceancounty.org

Ticket deadline, Friday, April 24. Tickets at door based on availability.

Platinum Ticket Sponsor - \$500

8 tickets, reserved premium seating, prominent program listing, and gift auction tickets

Gold Ticket Sponsor - \$236

4 tickets, reserved premium seating, prominent program listing, and gift auction tickets

Silver Ticket Sponsor - \$118

2 tickets, reserved seating, program listing, and gift auction tickets

Bronze Ticket Sponsor - \$54

1 ticket, reserved seating, program listing, and gift auction tickets

\$36 general admission ticket

With thanks to our Event Sponsor:

GASTROENTEROLOGISTS of OCEAN COUNTY

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OMAR TAMIMI, MD
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JAI MIRCHANDANI, MD
732.349.4422

Bring your spouses and friends!



Dietary laws observed



All proceeds benefit the Jewish Federation of Ocean County, providing programs and services which foster the well-being of our Jewish community here at home, in Israel and around the world.
Jewish Federation of Ocean County 1235A Rt. 70, Lakewood, New Jersey 08701

Jewish Heritage Day with "Israel Matters."



Join us on April 26 at the Lakewood BlueClaws for Jewish Heritage Day.

Former Yankee first baseman Ron Blomberg will be signing autographs. Kids 12 and under will receive a kosher hot dog, chip, and soda voucher upon entrance into the ballpark.

Tickets are \$8.00 for kids and \$10.00 for adults. Use code "Israelmattersnj" for discount. Copy this Link to Blue Claws site and paste into your browser to purchase tickets:

<https://www.ticketreturn.com/prod2/BuyClear.asp?EventID=113484&continue=buynew.asp#.VRwhV2cg-mE>

Israel Matters NJ, is being coordinated by *Standing With Israel of Ocean County NJ*, a coalition of Jews and Christians in Ocean County NJ standing united in support of Israel and combating anti-Semitism. The coalition is co-chaired by Rabbi Robert Rubin (of Temple Beth Or, Brick) and Pastor Alex Perednia (of Laurelton Park Baptist Church, Brick).

"Israel Matters" revolves around a modular display of 16 colorful panels, each seven feet high, which collectively tell Israel's story through photographs and basic facts. The displays highlight significant issues and topics regarding Israel, its achievements and advancements in various fields like technology and the environment.

Membership

We are striving to grow...can you help us?!! As we attend meetings for our communities, local gathering, library programs...do you meet any unaffiliated Jewish folks? Our aim is to keep growing and we need everyone's help!! Our congregation is a warm and loving one, can you reach out to your family and neighbors to join us? Invite them to our services to meet fellow Jews...we are a small but mighty community that can reach far... if we work together to grow... Let's all reach out this month... ya just never know who you may meet!!

