

AZOY

"Is that so?"

2017
APRIL
5777



**UNION for
REFORM JUDAISM**
האיחוד ליהדות רפורמית

SERVING REFORM CONGREGATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

The Monthly Newsletter of Temple B'nai Israel

The Reform Jewish Congregation of Bay County

Mailing Address: PO Box 16556, Panama City, FL 32406

Located at: 1910 Frankford Avenue, Panama City, Florida

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CALL FOR BOARD NOMINATIONS

The 2017 Nominating Committee is conducting a search for qualified nominees for the next slate of officers and trustees.

Any member in good standing of the Congregation wishing to run for office should submit his or her name and the office for which you wish to run in writing to:

Temple Secretary Stephen Sickerman, Temple B'nai Israel, PO Box 16556, Panama City, FL 32406. Your letter must be received no later than May 11, 2017.

Nominations will be closed following the regularly scheduled Board of Trustees meeting next month – May 11, beginning at 6:00 pm – to allow for notification to the congregation, prior to the Annual Meeting, of the nominations, including the Board's recommended slate. The election of officers and

trustees shall be held at our Annual Congregational Meeting, to be scheduled in June 2017. No nominations may be made from the floor.

If you wish to discuss the possibility of your nomination or for more information, please contact one of the Nominating Committee members:

Stephen Sickerman

sickerman@comcast.net or 850-814-2610

Mary Starkman

mary_starkman@comcast.net or 610-324-0892

Barbara Shykoff

barbara.shykoff@comcast.net or 850-625-1811

Remember, it's a mitzvah to serve on the Board!



**WE HOPE YOU MADE YOUR RESERVATIONS
TO JOIN US THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 13
AT 6:00 PM FOR OUR ANNUAL COMMUNITY
SEDER WITH ISJL RABBI MATT DREFFIN**

❧ The President's Message ❧

"Chag Pesach Sameach!"

L'shalom - Sarah

Pesach Traditions by Leah Wittenberg - ISJL Education Fellow

Passover has always been my favorite holiday – Jewish or otherwise. I love all of the seder traditions: crafting the perfect combination of a Hillel sandwich (*matzah* with *charoset* and *maror*), not having to have perfect posture at the dining room table, dipping my pinky finger in wine as I belt out the ten plagues, and more.

One of the reasons I love Passover is because it is such a sensory holiday. When I really think about it, I can taste the bitter *maror* on crunchy *matzah*, I can feel myself leaning against soft, inviting pillows, I can smell the sweet, red wine, I can hear the familiar tune of *mah nishtanah*, the four questions, I can see my family and friends smiling and laughing around me, and I can truly feel the pure joy of celebrating my favorite holiday.

While I love all of these traditions, I also like to try new things and look at the holiday from a different point of view. This is one of my favorite aspects of Judaism—that we have the same holidays each year and we read the same Torah portions over and over, but we can always glean something new.



One such thing is adopting non-Ashkenazi influences for the seder. One of my favorite Sephardic traditions is to hit each other (softly!) with green onions during the singing of *dayeinu*.

It's unclear exactly how this strange tradition came to be known at seders around the world. Some people think of it as a way to mimic how the Egyptians would whip the Israelite slaves in Egypt. Others believe it is a reference to Numbers 11:5-6, which reads: "We remember the fish we ate in Egypt free of charge, the cucumbers, the watermelons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now, our bodies are dried out, for there is nothing at all; we have nothing but manna to look at." This describes

the Israelites' desire for Egyptian onions and other food while all they had to eat was manna during the 40 years spent wandering the desert. The idea is that we hit each other with onions to scold one another for desiring any aspect of our lives as slaves in Egypt, including the food. (And let's face it, I'd rather be attacked by a green onion than a watermelon.)

I am very excited to kick off Passover this year with a visit to Panama City during the weekend of April 7 -9! To help us look at the holiday differently, on Saturday, I will be hosting a lunch and learn about the ten plagues, but from the Egyptians point of view. We will be going in depth about each plague and looking at who it actually affected and trying to understand the plagues in a different light. On Sunday, during religious school, we will be having a mock seder from the children's perspective.

Everyone is welcome to either of these events, as well as Shabbat services on Friday night. I can't wait to be back in your welcoming community and to celebrate an early Passover with you all!



Welcome New Members!

The TBI family welcomes new members Marla Clark and Cindy Arnold. The sisters remember some of their Jewish upbringing from their childhoods but are now seeking answers to many questions about their heritage. They have been reading about it and look forward to the Rabbi's Lunch & Learn sessions to learn more. Please introduce yourself to them and welcome Marla and Cindy!



Passover Memories by Rabbi Alana Wasserman

Last month, during our Lunch and Learn, we got into a rousing discussion about the stories in the *Tanakh* – whether or not they actually happened, and does that even matter. This conversation reminded me of an article I wrote in 2005 for Passover. It was based on a sermon that Rabbi David Wolpe, of the Conservative Movement, had given four years earlier. In his sermon, Rabbi Wolpe said, “The truth is that virtually every modern archeologist who has investigated the story of the Exodus, with very few exceptions, agrees that the way the Bible describes the Exodus is not the way it happened, if it happened at all.” While this sermon shocked many in his congregation, and beyond, this was not a new notion, especially among biblical scholars. I’d like to share some of what I wrote back then with you now.

The story of the Exodus has been a major part of Jewish tradition for thousands of years. Therefore, it matters less if it actually happened or not. The story itself is a part of us, a part of our collective Jewish memory. That is what matters. Its lessons have sustained us. Every spring, whether Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, etc., Jewish people the world over gather around the seder table and retell this story. We all remember this story. It belongs to all of us.

And while the story of Passover is an important memory, having the seder itself every year creates new and meaningful memories for each of us as well. For example, many people will tell you that their favorite thing about Passover is their grandmother’s matzah ball soup. They say their grandmother’s matzah ball soup is better than anyone else’s. I said it about my Bobbe’s soup. For all of us, it is true because it brings back good memories of seders past. The smell of the chicken broth, and the fluffiness (or heaviness, depending on whether you prefer sinkers or floaters) of the matzah balls are physical reminders of family seders. It reminds you of the first time you were able to ask the four questions in Hebrew without any help. It reminds you of

the time you found the *afikomen* at the community seder and won the beautiful seder plate. These memories, and others, help to make Passover all the more significant and meaningful.

Memories are what sustain us. They keep alive thousand-year-old traditions, and they help create new traditions as well (such as the new tradition of having Miriam’s cup along with Elijah’s cup at the seder). Memories also help us to teach others. For example, the ideas of the Freedom Seder and the Feminist Seder have both been taken from the Passover Seder. The Freedom Seder is one in which people of different races and cultures are invited to come and share their stories of slavery and oppression. While we learn about their history, they learn about ours and the way in which we commemorate it. The Feminist Seder incorporates the same idea with regards to women’s fight for equality. By taking the story of the Exodus and applying it to others, we continue to teach the lessons of our collective memory. And in doing so, not only are we helping to create new memories, but we are further enhancing those we already have. I wish all of you a Zissen Pesach, a sweet Passover! *Chag Sameach!*

Sisterhood Snippets by Lisa Rahn, President

The Sisterhood’s March activities included an interfaith gathering at Willows Tea Room, making bowls at Tammy Marinuzzi’s pottery studio for the Empty Bowls Project and attending a gracious Solidarity Lunch hosted by the Bay County Islamic Society.

The Visual & Performing Arts Division of Gulf Coast State College will host the annual Empty Bowls Luncheon on Thursday, April 6, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Commodore Café in Student Union East. The goal of Empty Bowls is to increase awareness about the issues of hunger and to raise money to help fight hunger in our own

community. This year all proceeds will be donated to Bethel Village. Guests will be served a simple meal of soup and bread in handcrafted bowls. Each meal is \$10 and the bowl is yours to keep.

We’ve added two new members to our ranks – please welcome Sharon Grevet and Emily Little!

We have been busy planning and preparing for Passover. We look forward to joining with many of you and others for our Community Seder on April 13th.

APRIL CALENDAR

SUN	04/02	9:30 am 10:00 am	Religious School <i>No Adult Hebrew Class</i>
FRI	04/07	7:00 pm	Shabbat Service with ISJL Fellow Leah Wittenberg - <i>oneg to follow</i>
SAT	04/08	12:00 pm 6:30 pm	Lunch & Learn with Leah Wittenberg Havdalah at Richard Seltzer Park, Panama City Beach - <i>followed by dinner out</i>
SUN	04/09	9:30 am 10:00 am	Children's Seder with Ms Georgie, Mr Daniel & Ms Leah <i>No Adult Hebrew Class</i>
MON	04/10 – 04/17		PASSOVER
WED	04/12	6:30 pm	Monthly Temple Board of Directors Meeting
THUR	04/13	6:00 pm	Annual Community Seder with Rabbi Matt Dreffin - <i>hosted by TBI Sisterhood</i> <i>This event is by Reservation only!</i>
SUN	04/16	9:30 am 10:00 am	<i>No Religious School</i> Adult Hebrew Class
WED	04/19	6:30 pm	Sisterhood Meeting
THUR	04/20	10:00 am	Holocaust Remembrance Day event at Naval Support Activity Panama City <i>You must pre-register to attend this event - please see page 11 for more information</i>
FRI	04/21	7:00 pm	Shabbat Service for Yom HaShoah with Mary & Mike Starkman - <i>oneg to follow</i>
SUN	04/19	9:30 am 10:00 am	Religious School Adult Hebrew Class
SUN	04/26	9:30 am 10:00 am	Religious School Adult Hebrew Class



Celebrate Passover and Enjoy our Community Seder

Passover marks the unofficial arrival of Spring. Jews the world over celebrate the eight days of Pesach by removing all *chametz* from the home, replacing it with *matzo* (and other acceptable substitutes) and enjoying the festive Passover meal called a Seder. Traditionally, families have Seders on the first and/or second nights of Pesach. This year, though, TBI members and guests will enjoy the Seder on the fourth night of Passover – because that is the only night we were able to get Rabbi Dreffin to lead our Seder.

Our Seder will once again be catered by Vittles, owned by TBI member Peter Sostheim, and well versed in the rituals of the holiday. Volunteers from our congregation will be making some of the traditional foods associated with Passover like *matzo* balls, chopped liver and *charoses*. We will enjoy a full meal while reciting the story of the Exodus from Egypt, when Jewish slaves found their freedom on the way to Mt. Sinai where Moses received the Ten Commandments.

Children will hunt for the *Afikomen* and receive payment for returning it to the head table, so we can officially end the ritual meal with dessert. For the Seder, it is customary to invite guests – “...let all those who are hungry come and eat....” – and this year is no different. We have invited guests from the Bay County Interfaith Council and the Bay County Islamic Society, as well as friends with a curiosity about the holiday. We want you to join us! Help our guests feel welcome and learn about Passover and you should enjoy the spirit and good food of our annual tradition.

The Community Seder starts at 6:00 pm on Thursday, April 13 at the Temple. Reservations are required. In addition, a Children's Seder will be held on Sunday, April 9 at 9:30 am with our ISJL Fellow, Leah Wittenberg leading.



APRIL JOYS & REMEMBRANCES

Y A H R Z E I T S - THEIR MEMORIES ARE FOR US A BLESSING

03/20	CHARLOTTE MINKOWITZ - CONGREGATION FOUNDER & CHARTER MEMBER
04/06	STANLEY SILVERBOARD - FIRST HUSBAND OF HELAINE NORMAN
04/08	BERNARD WETCHLER - FATHER OF GAYLE PAINTER
04/13	RUDOLPH F. RIGANO - FATHER OF MARY STARKMAN
04/13	ESTELLE PINK - MOTHER OF JOANNE GOETZ
04/14	EVELYN DRESNER NASH - MOTHER OF LOIS OSWALD
04/25	SAM GINGOLD - FATHER OF ALVIN GINGOLD
04/26	IRWIN SICKERMAN - FATHER OF STEPHEN SICKERMAN



BIRTHDAYS

04/01	ELIZABETH SUTTON
04/03	JOSH SOSTHEIM
04/03	JAKE SOSTHEIM
04/07	MARY STARKMAN
04/11	ELIZABETH SICKERMAN
04/16	JACOB SICKERMAN

ANNIVERSARIES

04/13	BRIAN HUMBOLDT & GAYLE PAYNTER
04/20	STEPHEN & CAROLYNN SICKERMAN

If your Joy or Remembrance is missing or incorrect please e-mail theazoy@gmail.com

Take a break from the hectic work week and mark the Day of Rest with lighting of the candles.

Shabbat Candle Lighting Times for April 2017

04/07 | 6:46 pm

04/10 | 6:48 pm
1st night Passover

04/14 | 6:51 pm

04/21 | 6:55 pm

04/28 | 7:00 pm

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Sunday Shul Report

by Georgie Hartzog

March certainly came in like a lion... beginning with a wonderful Purim Celebration. This gathering included costumes and a rousing rendition of the Purim story by our own Rabbi Wasserman. The crowd went wild.... really they did! Enjoy the pictures of the event in this issue.

Our "Heros of the Bible" continued the next week and Samson was the star. We learned about his strength and the fact that his hair was not cut, but actually Delilah shaved his head. Lucky for Samson, unfortunate for his enemies -- HAIR GROWS

BACK! Thus ended the lesson.

Because March 12 was "Spring Forward" day, we played a True/False game using fly swatters with spring flowers. True, show me the flower side; False was the plain side. Not only was it fun, but got a bit dangerous for the teacher...all that swatting. Good luck to their parents, I sent those home.

Next up was Moses. What a "super hero" Moses was! Placed in the river as a baby, growing up in the home of his enemies, begging the Pharaoh to let his people go, parting the Red Sea, climbing the mountain for the Ten Commandments, guiding those

people through the desert for 40 years and then finally to the Promised Land. What a bummer, he didn't even get to go.

Of course, you cannot discuss Moses without mentioning Miriam, his sister. There are some interesting "myths" about her...ask a kid. For fun we read the story "Let My Babies Go" and then drew pictures of Moses and some of the fabulous things he did. Students took home sand dollars (get it: sand and water).

We are looking forward to our last Hero on April 2nd...Joshua. Stand by for details!





< Sunday Shul photos
on pages 6 & 7
by Georgie Hartzog

Purim photos
on page 9
by Stephen Sickerman >

A Brief History of Jews in Florida by Hodalee Scott Sewell

Jews have a long history in the state of Florida. The first known Jews arrived in the Spanish possession of Florida and most likely settled in one of North America's oldest European settlements, the city of Pensacola, in 1763. Pensacola was an international settlement when it was a possession of Spain, with persons from many parts of the world living there, and the number of Jews was likely small. As years passed, more Jews followed to settle in other areas in the northern part of the state.

Populations of Florida's few European settlements were low, and over the next few decades the Jewish community had a population of only a dozen or so individuals most likely. Early records are few and we only have a partial view of the times. The first Jews who migrated to Florida after the Spanish handover to the US in the early 1800s were small in number and they formed a community at Milton, 20 miles to the east of modern day Pensacola. In part due to Milton having been an important center for lumber production and distribution in the South, the earliest Jews to the area, the Ashkenazim, were involved in the processing and production of lumber. This was a business they were experienced in, since most originated from heavily wooded areas in what is now southern Germany, according to "A History of Temple Beth-El, Pensacola, Florida 1876-1990" by Janel D. Hendrix (Trent's Prints, 2004).

With changes in the economy, social order and politics in Florida, a Jewish congregation was also formed in Pensacola. This community founded Temple Beth-El a few years after organizing in 1876, including a few of the families who had been in Milton area. Most of the lumber worker individuals and

families in Milton did not join the Pensacola congregation. Some historic evidence indicates that this small group eventually started a smaller Jewish community to the east, in Okaloosa County.

Temple Beth-El would influence American Judaism, most notably through one of its members, Mrs. Paula Herskovitz Ackerman (1893 - 1989). She was a pioneering soul, the first female to perform rabbinical functions in the United States. She led the Beth Israel congregation in Meridian, Mississippi from 1951-1953, a labor which made her the first woman exercising spiritual leadership of an American mainstream Jewish congregation before female leaders became commonplace as now. She led the Beth-El congregation in Pensacola briefly in the 1960s, and also led the National Committee on Religious Schools for the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. Ahead of her time – a woman would not be ordained in Reform Judaism until 1972 – Ackerman was truly a pioneering Florida Jew.

Back to the early days though, in the early 1820s, there were most likely only a few dozen Jews resident in the panhandle region of the state. Moses Levy (1782 - 1854), born in Mogador, Morocco, was a noted social and religious reformer, and a successful lumber dealer. Levy purchased 100,000 acres in north-central Florida. Here he established Pilgrimage Plantation as a refuge for persecuted European Jewry. The Pilgrimage Plantation, important as the first communitarian refuge for European Jews in this country, was destroyed by hostile Seminole Indians in 1835 during the onset of the Second Seminole Conflict, one of the costliest Indian Wars in American history. Levy played a big part on the early Florida scene, as he

was also one of the founders of the town of Micanopy. He was unusual for the fact that he was a slaveholder as well as an advocate for the gradual emancipation of slaves. Levy penned "A Plan for the Abolition of Slavery" in London, England in 1828. With this he achieved celebrity at the apex of the antislavery campaign. Like Jews throughout history, he was caught in the struggles of his era. Having denounced slavery during the Civil War period, he was indeed controversial. Levy is most frequently noted as the father of Senator David Levy Yulee.

When Florida became a state in March of 1845, the available documentary evidence indicates there were fewer than 100 Jews present in the state. All told, Florida only had 66,500 souls back then. Achieving prominent places in society despite their small numbers, the Jews of Florida would set the pace for the generations who followed. The Levy family had a generational role in the state. David Levy Yulee, the first US Senator from Florida was elected to two terms: the first from 1845-1851 and the second from 1855-1861. The buildup of Jewish community was slow in the 19th century. The Jacksonville Hebrew Cemetery was the first Jewish institution present in the state, established just before the Civil War in 1857.

The roots of the Key West Jewish Community are not dated, but Jews were first recorded in the city in the 1880s. When the community was organized by Joe Wolfson, Abraham Wolkowsky and Mendell Rippa, most were escaping European persecution running rampant on the Continent at the time. In 1887, Congregation B'nai Zion was founded there. In 1895, Jews from Key West were among those who supported the independence of Cuba from Spain. With the advent of the 1900s,

Florida would have at least six congregations established in the state. In the 1920s some Jewish entrepreneurs moved to the then sparsely populated wilderness of south Florida, but the majority of the Jews resident in the state remained in the north, with 40% of Florida's 10,000 Jews residing in Jacksonville by the late 20s. By 1940, there were about 25,000 Jews in Florida and the post war boom would bring many more to the state. Jews kept coming south and in the 1940s Miami eventually claimed the status as the city with the largest Jewish population: 5,000.

By 1960 175,000 Jews had settled in the sunshine state, and today Florida is rich in Jewish culture and people. It has a vibrant and international Jewish flavor, especially in South Florida. There are several Cuban synagogues, including the Cuban Hebrew Congregation, Temple Beth Shmuel, first organized by Askenazim in the 1960s and Temple Moses, a Sephardic Cuban synagogue of whom most of its members are of Turkish descent. There is now a diversity of Jewish identity in the sunshine state. This rich history includes Miami's oldest congregation, Temple Beth David. There are nearly 190 synagogues and congregations in Florida, treasured institutions of Jewish life built to serve over 500,000 Jews.

Florida Jews continue to make history today. In 2004, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, a resident of Weston, became the first Jewish woman from Florida to be elected to the US Congress; in 2012, Scott Israel was elected Sheriff of Broward County, making him the first Jew elected sheriff in Florida history. Other Jews of note include Col. Abraham C. Myers, former Florida Governor David Sholtz, former Miami Mayor Abe Aronovitz, and the founder of Wometco Theatres and former Miami Beach mayor, Mitchell Wolfson.



MAZON'S FIFTH QUESTION

[Read this after the seder's Four Questions]

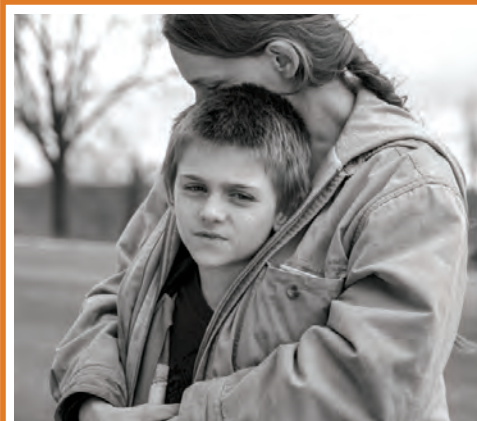
Each year at the Seder, we ask the traditional four questions. And each year, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger asks a Fifth Question to raise awareness about a particular hunger-related issue and spark important conversations around the seder table. This year, we turn our attention to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which faces proposals for devastating changes and cuts that would increase the problem of hunger.

Charities and houses of worship provide important temporary assistance for emergency situations, but they simply do not have the capacity or resources to feed the overwhelming number of people in need.

Federal food and nutrition assistance programs serve as our nation's frontline defense against food insecurity. SNAP is the nation's most important and effective anti-hunger program, targeting assistance according to need and helping millions of Americans to purchase adequate food for an active, healthy, and productive life.

On this night (and all other nights going forward), let us ask our elected officials to do better and commit to supporting policies that work to end the problem of hunger, not make it worse.

[All read The Fifth Question together.]



THE FIFTH QUESTION

Why is this night different from
all other nights?

On all other nights we ask,
"How can I help feed the hungry?"

Tonight we ask,
*"How can we protect the
precious safety net that supports
those who are hungry?"*



YOU CAN HELP PROTECT SNAP

Visit mazon.org/SNAP to sign a petition asking Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-WI) to protect, not eviscerate, SNAP.

House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) has previously introduced dangerous proposals to change the structure of SNAP that will eviscerate the program and its funding. Now there is a real threat that his plan will advance, causing millions to suffer.

SNAP is the nation's most important anti-hunger program and a major pillar of the nation's safety net. It protects against hunger and lifts millions of people out of poverty.

Please join MAZON in urging Speaker Ryan to protect the SNAP program and the millions of Americans who cannot feed their families without it.



The 2017 annual Holocaust Remembrance Day commemoration will be held at Naval Support Activity Panama City, Thursday, April 20. The hour-long event will start at 10:00 am.

As in previous years, the event will be held at the Long Glass Conference Room, a short distance from the entrance gate on Thomas Drive.

The doors will open at 9:30 am. The program, although declared to start at 10:00 am, will begin with a video scrolling at 9:45 am and parading of Colors and the national anthem at 9:55 am.

In order to attend, you must pre-register for this event. Religious Program Specialist Onisha Simmons needs the names of all Temple members who think they might want to attend.

Please contact Specialist Simmons by texting to 404-88-1467 or by e-mail onisha.simmons@navy.mil no later than close of business, Monday, April 17. A valid picture ID (ie, driver's license) will be required to get through the gate.

Thanks to Barbara Shykoff for providing this information to *The AZOY*!

**ANNUAL HOLOCAUST
REMEMBRANCE DAY
COMMEMORATION**

**"For the dead and the living, we must bear witness.
— Elie Wiesel**

**NSWC & NSA PC invites you to
attend this year's event held**

April 20, 2017

10:00 – 11:00AM
BLDG 308
Long Glass
Conference Room