

AZOY

"Is that so?"

2017
MAY
5777



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
850-522-8685 / www.bnaiisraelpc.org

Thanks to All Y'All!

Big thanks to everyone who helped make this year's Community Seder so wonderful! Thanks to our specialty chefs – Anne and Lois for the delicious and plentiful (we each got 3) matzo balls, Linette for the expertly made charoses, Sharon and Judith for the home made old-world chopped liver. Thanks to Robert for the PR work and photography. Thanks also to everyone who helped set up, take down clean up and deliver groceries – including Stephen, Stevie, Nate, Jason, Eleanor, Lizzie and Jackie, Linette, Barbara, Judith, Heather, Alma. Lisa, Mike, Mary, Scott, Marie (and I hope I didn't forget anyone).

Thanks to the TBI Sisterhood for once again organizing the Seder and especially to Alma and Lisa for ensuring all bases were covered. They did an outstanding job! We also thank Rabbi Matt Dreffin from ISJL for his leadership adding fun and song to history and ritual. Thanks to Vittles Catering for cooking and serving a tasty meal.

It was delightful to share this year's Seder with friends, family, and new faces. Next year in Panama City...at TBI!

*Photos by Larry Brook, editor
Southern Jewish Life magazine*



🌀 The President's Message 🌀

It's May already and TBI's fiscal year is almost at an end. On June 11 we'll hold our Annual Congregational Meeting to review what has transpired over this past year and look at where we are and where need to go. I will take the liberty of using this space this month and next to share my thoughts with you.

First, I am delighted that Rabbi Alana Wasserman is our spiritual leader. She has taken a liking to our congregation – and that means you. She loves coming here sharing her time knowledge and abundance of empathy with us. She's open to hearing from each of us, responding humanely, spiritually and thoughtfully. She hears about our *tsuris* and our *mitzvahs*. We look forward to Rabbi Alana's leadership in the coming year.

Secondly, I want to give a shout out to the TBI Sisterhood. They have eagerly accepted the responsibilities of organizing Break-the-Fast and our Community Seder. And they've done a great job. They are also active in the larger community of Panama City by contributing regularly to Bay County Family Services. And they have forged a working relationship with women from the Bay County Islamic Society with more to look forward to in the future.

The last thought I want to share with you for this month is about "volunteering." Many of our members have volunteered in the past, for teaching school, helping with holidays and special events, etc. But the past is over and we must look to the future. We need you to help us move forward. We need you to step forward. We are currently seeking members to serve on the TBI Board; see page 6 for more information. To date, no one has stepped forward. We need you. Service on the Board can come in the form of accepting an office or serving as a trustee, but serving our shul is a must. We need you!

Please consider serving. And the rest of us will help you.

L'shalom - Sarah

TBI...the Place to Be in May!

We have lots going on this month at TBI and we want you to be a part of the many events offered. The first Friday May 5th, the students in our Sunday Shul will lead the Shabbat Service. They would love to see you all there to welcome the Sabbath and support their efforts. Sunday Shul teachers Mr. Daniel and Ms. Georgie will accompany the children in song and prayer.

The next weekend brings Rabbi Alana Wasserman back to Panama City to lead Shabbat services after we enjoy a hearty Shabbat dinner with an entrée by Ms. Georgie. We ask that you bring a salad side or dessert to go with the meal. On Saturday morning, the Sisterhood enjoys breakfast with the "sisters" from the Bay County Islamic Society at Another Broken Egg, on the Beach on Hutchison Blvd.

And at 1:00 pm we invite you and the public to view the powerful film "Denial" starring Oscar-winner Rachel Weisz. This true story is based on the actual trial about the falsification of history by Holocaust denier David Irving. Rachel Weisz plays Deborah Lipstadt who must prove that the Holocaust actually did occur. A thoughtful

discussion led by Rabbi Wasserman will follow. Snacks and beverages will be available and a \$5 donation will be graciously appreciated.

Saturday evening,Carolynn and Stephen Sickerman have invited all of us to their backyard for Havdalah and an old-fashioned BBQ. Contact Stephen at 850-814-2610 or sickerman@comcast.net for directions. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share and be prepared for a relaxing evening to end Shabbat and start the new week.

Sunday, May 14th is Mother's Day. After Sunday Shul, we'll enjoy a Mother's Day Brunch honoring all of our Mothers and especially our own Rabbi Alana who will spend the day with her "TBI family" instead of her biological one. We'll go out for a nice brunch at a local eatery to be announced at a later date.

And, not to be missed is the Shabbat Service led by Mary and Mike Starkman on Friday May 26th which will be the start of the Memorial Day weekend! Please join us in May for some or all of these great events!

What is Lag Ba'Omer? by Rabbi Alana Wasserman



Did you know that there is a Jewish holiday in which we shoot toy bows and arrows? It's called Lag Ba'Omer.

As we all know, Passover ended a few weeks ago. We have now been freed from slavery in Egypt. But we are nowhere near ready to enter into the Promised Land – that won't happen for another forty years! So, what's the next step? The receiving of the Torah. But that does not come immediately either. Instead, we must wait 50 days. Fifty days from the first day of Passover is the holiday of Shavuot, which celebrates the receiving of the Torah and the Ten Commandments. This 50 day period is known as *sefirat ha'omer*, which means “the counting of the omer.” An omer is an offering of the new barley crop. During the time of the Temple, the Jewish people would bring an omer offering to the Temple every day beginning on the

second day of Passover and ending on Shavuot. According to tradition, the Israelites were told in Egypt that once they were freed, they would have fifty days before they would be given the Torah. They were so excited that they began a countdown. This was it.

The period of the counting of the omer is not a happy time. We consider it to be a time of mourning. This is because many massacres throughout Jewish history have been reported to take place during this time period. Most notably, we recall the loss of Rabbi Akiva's students during this time.

Rabbi Akiva was a supporter of Simeon Bar Kochbah, who led a revolt against the Roman rule in Judea. Many of Rabbi Akiva's students participated in the revolt, and were killed along with thousands of Judeans. The revolt did not succeed. As a result, the rabbis of the Talmud, who were still living under Roman rule, were afraid, and when they spoke of Rabbi Akiva's students, they said that they died of a plague.

While the period of the counting of the omer may be a time of sadness, there is one day, the 33rd day of the omer in which we take a break from the sadness and the mourning, and celebrate. This day is called *Lag*

Ba'Omer. The Hebrew letters *lamed* and *gimel* equal the number 33. On this day, we believe the “plague” was lifted, and the Jewish people experienced a momentary victory against the Romans. Some people celebrate this military victory by playing with toy bows and arrows to re-enact the win!

As the period of the counting of the omer is considered a period of mourning, many people do all of things that Jewish mourners do, including abstaining from shaving their beards and getting married. Therefore, on *Lag Ba'Omer*, men shave their beards, and many Jewish couples choose this date to get married. Three year old children often get their first haircut on this date as well. This is known as an *upshirin*.

The reason why I chose to write about *Lag Ba'Omer* is because it is not a well-known holiday, yet it is a part of our history and religion. Our job as Reform Jews is to learn about each and every Jewish holiday. Whether you choose to observe it by playing with bows and arrows, or by shaving and getting married is entirely up to you. I hope that in learning about this lesser-known holiday, that we will all take the time to learn more about other minor holidays, and their significance to us as a people.

• — CHAI NOTES — •

Mitzvah cards were recently sent to:

Nathan Mewhinney on the death of his sister by:
Sonny and Alma Glass
Mike and Mary Starkman

Get well wishes to Heather Mewhinney by:
Mike and Mary Starkman

Get well wishes to Nathan Miller by:
Sarah Farkas and Judith Scott

Please do not hesitate to contact Mary Starkman if you wish to send a Mitzvah card! They may be sent for all occasions, such as get well wishes, anniversary, birthday, congratulations, recognizing a birth or death, etc. Call me at 850-708-1766 or e-mail at mary_starkman@comcast.net.

The proceeds from sending the cards benefit Temple B'nai Israel. Suggested donation is \$18 or a multiple of \$18. However ALL donations for this project are deeply appreciated!

Farewell, Panama City! by Leah Wittenberg - ISJL Education Fellow

Last month, I visited Panama City and spent time with the Temple B'nai Israel community. I had such a great weekend and had the pleasure of staying with the Sternlicht family.

On Friday night, the Sternlichts and I had a lovely Shabbat dinner, followed by a great Friday night service at the Temple. There was lots of singing and I even had the help of Amanda, Lizzie, and Jackie with some of the prayers in preparation for the children's service in May. During services, I gave a D'var Torah about Shabbat HaGadol, the Shabbat that falls right before Passover, and its connection to the Torah portion of Tzav and the different sacrificial offerings in the Temple. We learned that the grain offerings were actually kosher for Passover all year round, and I talked about what this may mean for us today in terms of eating chametz and matzah. After services, we also had a nice oneg.

On Saturday morning, I went to the beach with Dan, Jackie, and Lizzie, collected a ton of shells, and enjoyed



the beautiful Florida spring weather. After, Lisa Rahn, Steve Theberge, and I had a conversation about the ten plagues and Pharaoh's "hardened heart" during Lunch & Learn. We thought about the plagues from both the Egyptians' and Israelites' points of view, and we related the plagues to modern day events.

In the afternoon, I spent time with the Sternlicht family and took a walk to the pier with the girls. Jackie's art was featured in the "Best of Bay Student Art Show" so we went to the Civic Center to check out the exhibit. Cynthia and Alvin Gingold joined us there, and I was excited to have the opportunity to meet them.

Havdalah at the beach returned this weekend, and Lisa, Steve, Joanne and Robert Goetz, and I had a lovely Havdalah service in the gazebo at Richard Seltzer Beach. We then watched the sunset and went to dinner at a delicious seafood and Cajun restaurant – Dee's Hangout.

The next day, during Sunday Shul, we had an interactive mock children's seder. Pearl, Ari, Amanda, Lizzie, and Jackie got to color in their individual Haggadot as we went along in the service. We did an activity about personality traits that connected to chametz, ten plagues yoga, Passover trivia, a "Where's Waldo" type activity using a huge visual Torah scroll, and the students practiced their play they are going to perform at the children's service in May. I am sad I won't be there to see their service, but I know they will do an awesome job!

As always, I am so grateful for everyone's hospitality, and for another fun-filled weekend at Temple B'nai Israel!

MAY CALENDAR

FRI	05/05	6:00 pm	Children's Shabbat Service led by our Religious School students – <i>oneg to follow</i>
SUN	05/07	9:30 am	Religious School
WED	05/10	6:30 pm	Monthly Temple Board of Directors Meeting
FRI	05/12	6:00 pm 7:00 pm	Shabbat Dinner - <i>please bring a side, salad or dessert</i> Shabbat Service with Rabbi Wasserman – <i>oneg to follow</i>
SAT	05/13	9:30 am 1:00 pm 7:00 pm	Salaam Shalom Breakfast at Another Broken Egg Presentation of the film "Denial" with discussion lead by Rabbi Wasserman Havdalah at the Sickerman's – 200 Derby Woods Drive, Lynn Haven <i>followed by BBQ – please bring a side dish, salad or dessert</i>
SUN	05/14	9:30 am 12:00 pm	Religious School HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY! Mother's Day Brunch with Rabbi Wasserman
WED	05/17	6:30 pm	Sisterhood Meeting
FRI	05/26	7:00 pm	Shabbat Service led by Mary and Mike Starkman – <i>oneg to follow</i>
SUN	05/28	9:30 am	<i>no Religious School – Enjoy the Memorial Day weekend!</i>



MAY JOYS & REMEMBRANCES

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

05/03	JOSEPH KIMMEL - GRANDFATHER OF HELAINE NORMAN
05/06	BEATRICE WETCHLER - MOTHER OF GAYLE PAYNTER
05/16	JUDITH PINK-GOLDIN - SISTER OF JOANNE GOETZ
05/25	DONALD GOETZ - FATHER OF ROBERT GOETZ
05/25	ANNIE ELIZABETH HART - GRANDMOTHER OF KAY STRIPLING
05/28	FLORENCE PEIROS - GRANDMOTHER OF STEPHEN SICKERMAN



BIRTHDAYS

05/02	JUDITH SCOTT	05/14	JOEY SOSTHEIM
05/03	RIC STRYNAR	05/18	LOIS OSWALD
05/10	SARAH FARKAS	05/29	ARTHUR NAGLER
05/11	SHANNON SKOULA-CLARK		
05/13	MIRIAM GILBERG		

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 May 2017

Shavuot

05/05 | 7:05 pm

05/12 | 7:10 pm

05/19 | 7:14 pm

05/26 | 7:18 pm

05/30 | 7:21 pm

CONTACT US

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VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Job Opening at TBI

Sunday School Teacher needed at TBI. Work with five delightful children who are eager to learn about their Jewish heritage Jewish culture, holidays, rituals and more. You are encouraged to attend ISJL's annual Educational Conference (paid for

by TBI). Lesson planning and lots of useful information provided by ISJL and your own knowledge and experience.

You will work with Hebrew teacher, Daniel Sternlicht, to ensure a well-rounded Jewish education for our students. Time required is one

hour on Sundays from September through May (with time off on holidays). This is a volunteer position but comes with much gratitude from the TBI board and whole congregation. More information is available by calling or emailing Sarah Farkas at 507-990-6724 or email at farcott@gmail.com.

TBI Offers Opportunities for You

In an effort to bring Jewish education and teaching opportunities to members of our congregation, the TBI Board is offering to subsidize the cost of two very meaningful and useful conferences:

ISJL Education Conference in Jackson, MS happens on June 25 – 27, 2017. TBI is affiliated with the Institute for Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) who supplies our Sunday Shul teachers with Jewish curriculum suitable for our children. The conference introduces attendees to a variety of areas including Jewish culture, history, holidays, Israel, Hebrew, ritual, prayer and much more. In addition, attendees meet and get to know this year's ISJL Fellows who will be working with us throughout the year. The cost for one TBI person to attend the conference hotel fees and mileage will be paid by TBI. If interested please call or email Daniel Sternlicht or Sarah Farkas.

URJ, the Union for Reform Judaism, with whom TBI is also affiliated, offers members from small congregations without a full-time rabbi, the opportunity to learn about leading lay services and officiating at some other Jewish rites. The program is called Had'rachah (meaning "guide") and is offered through OSRUI. This year Had'rachah education will take place from August 2 – 6, at the Jewish camp in Oconomowoc, WI. This is a beautiful woodsy setting in rural Wisconsin. Registration is open until June 23. TBI will pay the tuition and travel costs for one of our members to attend. For more information about the training and the location please call Mary or Mike Starkman. To register, please call Sarah Farkas.

These are great opportunities for members of TBI to learn and experience more about Judaism and be able to give back to our community. Please consider attending.

FINAL 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 10, 2017.

Nominations will be closed following the regularly scheduled Board of Trustees meeting this month – May 10, beginning at 6:30 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 on June 11, 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!

Sisterhood Snippets

by Lisa Rahn, President

The Sisterhood's April was dominated by planning and coordinating another successful Passover community seder led by ISJL Rabbi Matt Dreffin on Thursday, April 13th. Seventy-two community members participated in the event, some for the first time ever at a seder, and all had a great time!

Kudos especially to Alma Glass, who chaired the committee and fretted over every last detail, even taking Publix to task when they failed to deliver the customer service for which they are known. Her efforts were not in vain as everything went smooth as silk. Sincere thanks to all who contributed food, effort or their goodwill in preparation for, at, or following the event!



Photos by Larry Brook, editor
Southern Jewish Life magazine

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To access the TBI "store," which is registered as **Bay Jewish Community Inc**, please go to:

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/59-3151696>



additional Seder photos by Stephen Sickerman

Sunday Shul Report

by Georgie Hartzog

Everyone is a Hero and Joshua did not disappoint! The last in our Bible Hero Series ended on April 2nd. Of course, we all know what Joshua is famous for, the whole wall and trumpet thing, but, there was so much more. Joshua and his men fought a lot of bad guys and burned a lot of bad people's property. An exciting life that lasted 110 years. Students discussed in the wrap-up of this series, the fact that we are surrounded by Heroes – policemen, firemen, teachers, parents...the list goes on and the “good” is limitless in our world!

Our ISJL contact, Leah, visited on April 9th. Equipped with all the “right stuff,” Leah led our students through a Passover celebration... complete with matzah, bitter herbs, etc. To add to the excitement, there were games that included finding frogs, and counting lotus. We are very thankful for Leah and will miss her next year. Good luck, Leah!

April 23rd was the first Sunday that kicked off our series on Noah's Ark. After discussing Noah and his mission to complete and fill the Ark with his family, animals and supplies, we targeted DOGS. The history of dogs (don't believe that “wolf” commercial) were

herding dogs....what else would those Shepherds use? We also talked about dogs and their tongues.... dogs lick us to make themselves and us feel happy, but they also lick wounds and their dog buddy's infected ears. All in all, Ms. Georgie is not getting rid of her two doxies and will continue to allow them to sleep on her bed.

The Ark Series will have two more lessons....one on cats and one on wildlife. We are looking forward to those lessons and invite you to join us!

photos by Georgie Hartzog

