

Yes, You Heard It Through



THE GRAPEVINE

A Publication of the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah

April 2011

Adar II/ Nissan 5771

Haman Drowned Out, AARHavurah Saved by Fount of Guile & Talent

Marcy Epstein, Grapevine Editor

In yet another extraordinary chapter of Jewish cultural history, Havniks gathered at the JCC on March 20th to witness and carouse around the events of Purim. Gedolim and other free spirits regaled the crowd with their spiels, children ran and played in traditional costume, and better times were had by all. Thanks to the hard work of Jennifer Cohen (who has a particularly soft spot for Purim), we banded together to ward the likes of Haman off for another year.



Idelle Hammond-Sass, Anita Rubin-Meiller, and Lori Lichtman kick up in a Mary Poppins spiel; g'dolim spice up the Purim megillah; Queen Esther (Isabel Ahbel-Rappe) and Danny Steinmetz mix it up. Photo credits: Stephanie Rowden.



Lillie, Lucy, and Molly revel in the holiday. Photo credit: Stephanie Rowden.

Stories of Pesach

Compiled from Members of the Havurah

Ed.: Isn't Passover incredible? Every year, we are commanded and also invited and also allured by the retelling of Exodus and its examination of slavery, liberation, and people-dom. Every year, we think about what we will do for Passover, and, perhaps with more tremulousness, what Passover will do for us. This year, we share just a few vignettes from Benji Ben-Baruch and several other members of our congregation, in hopes that you will enjoy their stories and think about Passovers known to them, new to you. As Hillel suggests, the expansion of our community's story of Pesach is praiseworthy.

From Benji Ben Baruch:

Passover 5731 (1971): I was living in Beit ha-Kerem in Jerusalem. A group of students from the Hebrew University were preparing a seder for

ourselves. Being one of the few who baked, I was tasked with baking the sponge cakes and angel food cakes that were "traditional" in our traditions. I readily accepted the task.

This was one of the stupidest things I ever did. I had never done Passover baking before. But I soon learned that beating egg whites without an electric beater is one of the ways in which we make our lives bitter in remembrance of slavery. I also learned that in the absence of an electric mixer or eggbeater one should not observe the tradition of sponge cakes and angel food cakes. That angel should be allowed to pass over one's kitchen.

But I had committed myself to baking a dozen cakes. (Yes, it was one of THOSE kinds of community events.) I had a hand-held eggbeater that was old and rusty. And I had the traditional fork-from-the-silverware-drawer. By the time I was done, my arms were ready to fall off. About half of the cakes came out fine. Most of the cakes came out ok. But a few of the cakes manifested symptoms of inadequately beaten egg whites.

From Deb Kraus:

I've been a part of so many meaningful seders through the years that I wouldn't know where to begin. Maybe it's my tradition of having the seder in the comfy chairs in the living room so as to fully recline. Or perhaps it was the complete improv seder we did second night last year. Or maybe it was the rock and roll seder that we put together a couple of years ago where everyone brought the music that they felt epitomized each of the rituals. Let me know if you would like the that playlist!

From Audrey Newell:

We struggled with what to do for dessert at our seders. It seemed like cheating to use Manischewitz mixes. The Israelites did not leave Egypt with hundreds of egg whites and electric mixers. Naturally, as an ex-Girl Scout, I thought of making matzoh s'mores. The kids are always enthusiastic about this, while the adults are too dignified. The adults say they'll eat fruit and ice cream. But once the kids gather around the stove

roasting marshmallows, the smell becomes irresistible and soon everybody is standing around the stove roasting marshmallows and making matzoh s'mores.

From Benji Ben Baruch:

Passover 5704: I came back to the table at the family seder at the home of my father's aunt and uncle and began fidgeting while we were waiting for the afikomen to appear. My aunt asked me why I didn't want to wear my sports jacket. This seemed a silly question. Why would a 4-year old kid want to wear a sports jacket at the dinner table -- or anywhere else for that matter? But then everyone started yelling at me to put on the sports jacket. I really didn't want to put on the sports jacket. It was uncomfortable. It was itchy.

But what could I, a small child, do against the screaming demands of my extended family? And then, as I tried to put the jacket on, things got worse. My right arm wouldn't go in. There was something blocking my arm. I was angry. I was frustrated. I was, surprisingly, the "finder" of the afikomen. Everyone was so happy that I found the dessert -- to me it was as tasteless as matzah. But I did get a shiny silver dollar.

From Karen Cooper:

My favorite is one my cousin read one year but I don't know the title or author. Here's the gist:

A long time ago in Bialapedloz (where our grandfather is from) the rabbi is sick and cannot make his rounds of the places that are going to prepare things for Passover.

His students crowd around him to take notes because they will be visiting the farms and kitchens making sure things are exactly right for the holiday.

Their rabbi is known for his adherence to the rules and when he gives his mark that something is acceptable for Passover, it is accepted by all other rabbis. The students listen carefully.

He goes through his list of people, kitchens, etc. and lists especially what to watch out for from all of the people.

The rabbi finally gets to the woman who makes the matzah that the rabbi himself eats for all of Passover. He says to be especially careful at this woman's house.

His students closely question why: Is it humutz? Is it the time in the oven?

He tells them that she is a widow and raising five children. Be especially careful not to look too closely.

From Benji Ben Baruch:

Passover ca. 5718: At the large multi-family seder that had become customary for us, the afikomen was found by Mira Sussman (known to some in the Havurah since she moved back to this area with her family). The negotiating protocol for redeeming the afikomen had become ritualized, as is appropriate, and it was expected that she would get something of value to her and make the decision as to which non-profit would be given a donation. When asked what she wanted as ransom to redeem the afikomen she replied "All the men should do all the cleanup after the seder." And so all of the men cleaned up after the seder. And then the women, not satisfied with our best effort, corrected our work.

From Allison Stupka:

One of my most memorable Passover seders was when I was living in Seattle, new to Judaism, and accompanied my then boyfriend to a seder.

I remember a hilarious slightly boozy dinner with lots of what seemed to me then, strange stories.

Someone had made a gefilte fish from Alaskan salmon, there were many people I did not know, but I sensed a nice closeness.

From Benji Ben Baruch:

Passover ca. 5713: It came time for maror. For some reason -- perhaps because he was actually paying attention -- the eldest of my younger

brothers was not real keen on eating the maror. But everyone cajoled him, showing him that all of the rest of us did it with relish. The pressure upon him to fulfill this mizvah was growing in intensity because my father would not continue the seder until this portion was completed through the participation of all expected to participate.

Apparently my brother was one of these privileged people. The more the pressure increased, the more my brother resisted. Indeed, for him, this ceased to be a mizvah and became a commandment. My brother saw himself as one of the oppressed Jews facing increasing oppression and in need of a liberator. The rest of us saw him as being like Pharaoh, becoming more and more hard-hearted, stiff-necked, and stubborn as the pleadings to be reasonable and compliant increased. What could he, a small child, do in face of such family pressure?

He relented and he quickly ate and swallowed the maror. And he immediately burst out crying with a *schrei* "You tricked me!" I have often wondered what he learned about liberation and freedom that year.

From Deb Kraus:

Probably my favorite story involves being at the Rye Town Hilton with the in-laws when Molly was five years old. She spent the entire seder breaking apart matzahs and putting them back together like puzzles. It was mesmerizing and a great diversion for me. Danny and I have often remarked that we were glad we splurged on the "luxury entertainment system" when we "ordered" her from the "dealership;" it definitely came in handy that night. [Molly Kraus-Steinmetz has approved this message.]

Second Seder Promises Intellectual & Wine Tasting

Debbie Zivan, Havurah Board

Please feel free to invite your friends, out-of-town family and neighbors to this year's Second Seder. This year, we're planning a more spontaneous and diverse retelling: bring your favorite hagaddah with your favorite part of the seder.

We'll have an intellectual tasting feast at this year's Second Seder. This might include your sharing your favorite reading, along with personal comment or insight about it; or it might include a favorite picture or piece of art that speaks to some aspect of the seder. Perhaps you might love the Four Questions in a foreign language. Your own experience will determine how creative our seder is!

In addition, Joel Goldberg has agreed to once again supply some interesting wines for tasting, as we drink from the Four Cups.

And for a final treat, our seder will also feature a play by Morah Shoshana's *Yeladim!*

An Evite for the seder has been sent through reconannouce just this week. RSVPs will be taken via the Evite. Having trouble accessing the Evite? RSVP to djzivan@yahoo.com.

Seder-goers will provide the food for the event. If planning to attend, please let us know what dish you plan to share. We're fortunate to have Audrey Newell's care once again for the festivities. You can contact her with questions at audreyaarh@gmail.com.



Dairy Matzah Farfel Kugel

*By SK Stein,
epicurious.com*

Ingredients for the Kugel:

5 eggs
1/3 c. sugar
4 c. matzoh farfel
1 c. low-fat sour cream
1 c. non-fat cottage cheese
1/3 c. melted butter
10 oz. apricot preserves
Topping:
1/3 c. finely chopped walnuts
2 Tbs. sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon

Preparation:

Beat the eggs until light; beat in the sugar.

Add the cottage cheese, sour cream, butter, and jam to the egg mixture.

Soak the farfel in cold water until it is soft.

Then squeeze out the extra water.

Add the farfel to the egg mixture and blend.

Put in a greased 13"x9" dish.

Mix the topping ingredients and sprinkle on the top of the kugel.

Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes.

Optional: lay sliced fresh apricots in patterns along the top of the kugel, brush with egg white and brown sugar, cover and bake. Delish!

Passover (Nissan 14-22 or April 18-26 this year) commemorates such a complex set of events that the final word will never be said about it. It touches me because it is a time when families or family-like groups gather together in harmony and joint purpose around a carefully structured meal, and because escape from or avoidance of literal or metaphorical slavery is of the highest importance. Though the cost (again, in a literal or metaphorical sense) of such liberation may be great, it needs to be borne willingly and responsibly for the liberation to be meaningful.

The desert experience was not what most of the escapees had hoped for or wanted. But it was necessary. Rav Ezra Bick has some cogent reflections:

"[In parashat Va-eira,] 'They were Aaron and Moshe, whom God had told, take the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt 'al tzivotam' (6,26)... What does 'al tzivotam' mean? The phrase is repeated in parashat Bo in describing the exodus. "In that very selfsame day, God took out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt 'al tzivotam' "(12:51). One might be tempted to explain the verse in Bo as merely describing the order in which they left. But why was that part of the original mission - to take them out 'al tzivotam'? I believe that the phrase means 'in dignity', not as a horde of escapees, but as an ordered entity, with responsibilities, roles, acting with precision according to a plan. Moshe's role to the Jews is not just to move them but to take them out of Egypt 'al tzivotam'; i.e., as free individuals. 'After four hundred and thirty years, on that very selfsame day, all the hosts of God left the land of Egypt' (parashat Va-eira 12:41). After 430 years of enslavement, generations of abdication of personal responsibility, they ... didn't flee Egypt, they marched out."

"In order to receive the Torah, the Jews [had] to be free already, and not merely in the physical sense. The necessary prerequisite [was] that they be free in spirit, able to accept responsibilities (a slave has no personal responsibilities) and to make choices. The forty years in the desert can be understood as a long struggle with the slave mentality of the people. There are distinct phases in the process of liberation, beginning with the



Reflections on the Month of Nissan

Grace Fredkin, Havurah Member

Nissan, the first month of the Jewish year, takes up most of April this year; it runs from April 5-May 3. In this "miracle month" (Hebrew nun-samech = "miracle") we celebrate the miracle or series of miracles of our liberation from slavery in Egypt... to wander in the desert for the next few generations.

From autonomy in Persia to abject slavery in Egypt to freedom in the wilderness of nowhere: the times they were again a-changin' for the Jews. Out of the frying pan and into the fire, from one bad situation (slavery in Egypt) to another bad or worse one (wandering in the desert). Jewish history has been depicted as "inexorably cyclical, subject to erratic bouts of growth, progress, persecution, and decay, regardless of the externally different conditions under which Jews may live" (A. Norich, on Israel Joshua Singer). In this light it makes sense for the celebration of a Jewish holiday to take the form: "They tried to kill us, we survived, let's eat!" Or, as Israel Joshua's brother, Isaac Bashevis, put it, "With Jews, resurrection isn't a miracle, just a habit." (Thanks to Danny Steinmetz.)

exodus (and especially the fall of Egypt), followed by receiving the Torah, and continuing with the special conditions of desert life (manna, clouds of glory, a closed camp, Moshe teaching, etc.). Presumably, we [and the nation-state of Israel, adds this author] are still engaged in the process." (from The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash)

Chag sameach! May we remember and respect our own freedom and may the process of our individual and collective liberation be a conscious, ongoing one.

G-d: And remember Moses, in the laws of keeping Kosher, never cook a calf in its mother's milk. It is cruel.

Moses: Ohhhhhh! So you are saying we should never eat milk and meat together.

G-d: No, what I'm saying is, never cook a calf in its mother's milk.

Moses: Oh, Lord forgive my ignorance! What you are really saying is we should wait six hours after eating meat to eat milk so the two are not in our stomachs.

G-d: No, Moses, what I'm saying is, never cook a calf in its mother's milk!!!

Moses: Oh, Lord! Please don't strike me down for my stupidity! What you mean is we should have a separate set of dishes for milk and a separate set for meat and if we make a mistake we have to bury that dish outside...

G-d: Moses, do whatever you want....

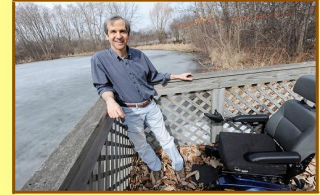
Marc Lerner Talks Sickness and Health

Marc Lerner, Havurah Member

After 30 years of dealing with MS, Marc Lerner wrote *A Healthy Way to be Sick* and developed a radio show of the same name, to be aired on WorldTalkRadio.com. It will begin on Tuesday, April 5, 2:00 pm-3:00 pm EST. The first guest will be Bernie Siegel, who will talk about his 30 years' experience empowering patient participation.

On the show, Marc empowers people to use inner resources in partnership with professionals. When inner and outer resources harmoniously work together, the best results happen. This program will develop the patient's role in healing, so they can become an active participant with their doctor. Guests will include doctors, authors and people who work with the chronically ill and disabled.

A Healthy Way to Be Sick



By Marc Lerner

The series will focus on first developing four main topics:

1. Controlling Your Self-Image and Connecting to The Wisdom of your Body;
2. Developing a Self Trust that Accepts Your Inner Wisdom;
3. Mastering Breathing so You Can Develop Freedom from Negative Thoughts and Habits and Connect to the Wisdom of Your Body; and
4. Using Your Brain as a Bio-computer to Combine All the Previous Techniques to Deal With Your Challenge.

Later shows will apply what was developed to different aspects of health care. *A Healthy Way to Be Sick* airs live every Tuesday at 11 AM Pacific Time on World Talk Radio Variety channel. It will also be archived for future reference.

If you would like to learn more, contact Marc at: marclerner@att.net or 734-913-0868.

Torah Table Tapestry is in the Works, Hav Artists Say

Marcy Epstein, Grapevine Editor

Last summer, we took the opportunity to begin two major artistic projects affecting our Torah services: a Torah table and its tapestry. Over the course of summer and fall, several woodworkers in our community (led by Alan Haber, Jack Edelstein, Dale Sass, Danny Steinmetz, and

Debbie Zivan) found and tooled some beautiful local cherry and walnut into a beautiful, rustic new Torah table. The table is lovely in its simplicity, yet it is also versatile, for it is mobile and it is adaptable to Torah readers of many heights, including readers using wheelchairs.

As a companion to our table, several Have artists have been designing and working a tapestry to adorn its front. Our artists—Idelle Hammond-Sass, Chava Israel, Leora Druckman, Marcy Epstein, Janet Greenhut, Elena DeLoof, and Nancy Meadow—bring specialties of metalwork, beading, multimedia collage, clay, embroidery, and quilting, among other arts. We are working very slowly and mindfully with a variety of materials, from raw silks to baby blankets, any number of cloths that are meaningful to us and to members of our community.



A detail from the perimeter. Photo credit: Chava Israel

So far we are working a cyclical image of a Michigan cherry tree, depicted in its four seasons, with silver language beading and crazy quilting to suggest texture and depth to this symbol of Jewish life in Ann Arbor.

As the group progresses this year, we will bring more images to the Grapevine so that you will feel a part of this tapestry's evolution. Of course, anyone is welcome to come work with us. Judaica, the Havurah artists' group, tends to meet for tea, wine, talk, and work every other Sunday. Please contact Marcy at dr_marcy@hotmail.com or Chava at mcisrael@umich.edu if you would like to join us sometime. It feels like the best of deeply meaningful work and pleasant company,

all in the service of beautifying our space of worship.

Learning Springs!

Aura Ahuvia, Rosh Beit Sefer

Kudos to the Beit Sefer's middle class, the Yeladim, for leading the Havurah in Adon Olam so capably last Friday night!! The hard work and practice that the Yeladim had put into preparing really showed, as they articulated the words clearly and confidently. I asked them to offer a few words of advice to the Ketanim, the Beit Sefer's youngest class, who will be leading us in the Shema during our Second Sat. Service on April 9, and the Yeladim recommended practicing, a lot, as the ideal preparation. In the meantime, Brian's class, the Gedolim, are excited about re-visiting the Great Lakes Rabbit and Wildlife Sanctuary on Sunday, April 3. This was a field trip they first attended last year, in connection with the Jewish tenet to care for the earth and its creatures, ba'al tash-chit. They return this year by popular demand.

Second Saturday Learner's Service Takes Place in April, Combined in May

Aura Ahuvia, Rabbinical Intern

The Second Saturday service is a great place to try your hand at leading a small part of the service, be it a reading, a prayer (in Hebrew or English – you choose), or something else. The next service will be April 9, at the JCC, from 10 – 12:00 p.m. This is an ideal service for anyone who wants to daven in a small, informal and welcoming atmosphere.

Learner's Service

Come to the next Learner's Service! It's on April 2, from 10 a.m. – 12:00 noon at the JCC. April's topic is the Amidah. Why is the Amidah prayer regarded as the peak of the service? How is it qualitatively different than the prayers that precede and follow it? How has it evolved over time, from ancient history to the present? How can we work with it in a more meaningful way today?

In this Learning Service, we'll explore the answers to these questions and more: We'll compare and contrast the daily Amidah with the Shabbat Amidah, unpacking the theological implications of the difference as we go.

Then, in May, the Learner's Service will be combined with the Second Saturday service; both will take place on Sat., May 14. This is because we get to celebrate Max Kupperman's bar mitzvah on the first Sat., May 7!

On May 14, the topic of the Learner's Service will be: Great Books. What are the "Great Books" of the Jewish canon? Which prayers come from them, and why? Studying choices about what was included in the siddur, and its origin, can reveal some fascinating debates behind the scenes. Come find out how this, in turn, can illuminate core Jewish values.

Reminder! Bring a Friend "Membership Shabbat" will take place May 27th!

Marcy Epstein, Grapevine Editor

The membership committee, in coordination with services and events, is happy to announce that our kabbalat Shabbat on May 27th will be dedicated to sharing the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah with friends and prospective members. If you would like to help plan this evening of welcome, prayer, and song, please contact Sarai Brachman-Shoup at 734-476-0159 or by email at sbshoup@gmail.com.

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

Mark Schneyer, Board Secretary

At the March meeting the Board received a financial update from Treasurer Jeff Basch. Jeff reported that we currently have 65 member households comprising 182 people. The Havurah is in good financial shape, with expected expenditures for the 2010-2011 budget year

coming in very close to expected income. The Board made plans to create the 2011-2012 budget over the course of April, May and June meetings.

The new Board has agreed to divide up areas of responsibility this way:

Debbie Zivan--Programming

Pam Shore--Ritual

Josh Samuel--Communications/Inreach

Sarai

Brachman Shoup--

Membership/Outreach

Mark Schneyer--

Education/Beit Sefer

Jeff Basch--Finance

Mike Ehmman--Mitzvah Corps/Social action

The new vision statements and areas of focus for each Board member within his or her responsibilities will be topics of upcoming meetings.

SIMCHAS AND SORROWS

Mazel tov to Leora Druckman on her adult bat mitzvah coming up on this April 16!

Mazel tov to Dan Pesach on his success in establishing a residency with the University of Toledo medical system.



Haman never stood a chance against David Shoup's Jewfro. Photo credit: Stephanie Rowden.



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- Send your check to the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah, PO Box 7451, Ann Arbor, MI, 48107. We will log it in and send it on to the Jewish Community Foundation.

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