Hesed Community Seder a Success!

After COVID-19 forced us to resort to virtual seders, on April 15th Temple Hesed members came back for our first in-person seder since 2019. Ranging in age from 3 to 80, we gathered for an evening of shared traditions, new teachings, good food, and the simple joy of being together again.

Congregation members helped out with set up, clean up, and activities for the children, including both a scavenger hunt (led by Jessica Levine) and an elaborate search for the afikomen, complete with rhyming clues. Rabbi Daniel prepared both Ashkenazic and Sephardic style haroset — and Suzy Kalman artistically sculpted the latter into small pyramids as a visual reminder of the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt.

Maddie Davison, who will become bat mitzvah next year, chanted the four questions, and everyone took turns reading from the haggadah and joining in the songs.

Sue Meyer, Carol Van Wie, Billie Jo Cornfield, Josh Levine and Hunter Gillow also helped with set up and cleanup — thanks so much!

The seder utilized “The Promise of the Land,” the beautiful new haggadah by Rabbi Ellen Bernstein, with lovely artwork by Gaila Goodman — which we’ve been waiting for two years to use in person! Rabbi Daniel served as an editorial consultant and advisor for the haggadah, and everyone at the seder enjoyed its unique take on the connection between the Passover story and Jewish teachings about caring for the environment.

The music ranged from the traditional to more contemporary tunes from Debbie Friedman, Rabbi Max Chain, and Joey Weisenberg. People took up timbrels to join in “Miriam’s Song,” and they went around the room (gently) hitting each other with scallions during Dayenu, enacting a custom of Iranian Jews.

Though the Toffee Matzah served as dessert was sweet, the truly sweetest part of the seder was being able at last to celebrate Passover together.
Donations to Temple Hesed

**ROSEANN SMITH ALPERIN ENDOWMENT FUND**
In Honor of the Yahrzeit of Joan Alperin
*Jim and Patty Alperin*

**BUILDING FUND**
In Memory of Michael Luger
*Steve and Ellen Seitchik*

In Memory of Patrick Leighton
*Steve and Ellen Seitchik*

In Honor of the Yahrzeit of Nellie H. Wooden
*Sherman F. Wooden*

In Honor of the Yahrzeit of Lillian Bernstein
*Arlene Michaels*

In Honor of the Yahrzeit of Edward Bernstein
*Arlene Michaels*

In Honor of the Yahrzeit of Relia Mates
*Richard and Marieann Mates*

**RABBI’S DISCRETIONARY FUND**
In Honor of the Yahrzeit of Dr. Carl Strauss
*Cheryl and Michael Friedman*

In Honor of the Yahrzeit of beloved Aunt, Grace Pawlan
*Deborah Orgill*

**TORAH RESTORATION FUND**
In Honor of the Yahrzeit of Grace Pawlan
*Esther B. Adelman*

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Multifaith Chanting Circle: Arise! 11:30 on May 7, 14, and 21

Our multifaith chanting circle will explore a new theme, “Arise!,” over three gatherings in May, on the 7, 14, and 21.

You can participate on May 7 either in person or online, while May 14 and 21 will be online only.

We’ll be looking at a variety of dimensions of “arise” — everything from noticing what arises within when we quiet our mind, to arising against oppression, to arising to new or renewed life.

Our diverse and welcoming circle comes together not only to chant, but to study, reflect, meditate, and support each other. So why not come and see what you’ve been missing.

Note: There will not be a chanting circle on May 28, due to Sascha Novak becoming Bat Mitzvah.
As I write this, I am in a hotel room in Queens, waiting to bring Alana to JFK airport early tomorrow morning for a flight to Hiroshima, where, after two years of COVID-related delays, she will study for the next four months.

Even before COVID, the “standard trajectory” of growing up — graduating from high school, leaving home to go to college or get a job, and never moving back — had become less and less “standard,” as families moved apart and then back together.

Adult children sometimes needed to move back home to figure out next steps and relaunch, or perhaps re-re-relaunch. Sometimes, aging or unexpectedly ill parents needed to move in with adult children. And sometimes, new combinations and permutations just seemed to work better than any simple “grow up and out” model did.

Then, as with so many disruptive changes, COVID accelerated this process. For our part, having our daughter live with us full time for months on end was a true delight, even as it raised any number of unexpected challenges.

Which got me to thinking: there seem to be a growing number of life stages, or at least Major Life Events, which are currently unrecognized by Jewish traditions. For that matter, as far as I can tell, the same holds true in other religious traditions.

Currently, we have the bar or bat mitzvah, perhaps confirmation, and then perhaps wedding or births, divorce and eventually death. But not everyone heads toward marriage nowadays, and even if they do, there are many important steps between 13 years old and wedded bliss. Not to mention that in modernity, far more people live long past child-rearing years, and there are major transitions in those years as well.

Most life cycle rituals, whether in Judaism, other faith traditions, or even secular practices, recognize and try to bring comfort and stability to what anthropologists call liminal moments, the moment in the gateway between two places or life stages. These rituals try to guide us from one side to the other — but increasingly, we are recognizing that these aren’t one-way doors, but rather true gateways that one can go back and forth through.

In the past, Reform Judaism did a lot of its “reforming” through elimination of what was thought to be outmoded or no longer meaningful. But if Judaism is to remain relevant amidst the rapid changes of today, we must invent as well as discard. And in our profoundly unsettled lives, I think the collective wisdom of Jewish thought through the millennia could bring deep spiritual guidance to these new liminal times.

What do you think? Would you like a ritual for a major change in your life? A launch or re-launch? An empty nest — whether on the first go-round or after several times “back in the nest”?

A transition out of work, or at least from full-time work? I’d love to think this through with you and see what we can come up — we might well be able to pass on new traditions that will become an integral part of Jewish life in the future.

After all, we now think of b’nai mitzvah ceremonies as a key Jewish experience. But the bat mitzvah ceremony just turned 100 in March, and even the bar mitzvah of sort celebrated today is only a few hundred years old. So let’s fashion something for these important gaps!

Rabbi Daniel
We have lots of exciting programs coming up in June.

After COVID disrupted the past two celebrations of Shavuot, we will gather together with Temple Israel on the evening of June 4 for an in-person Tikkun Leil Shavuot, studying with Rabbis Daniel, Marjorie and Miriam into the night.

On June 5, we’ll be hosting a special Yizkor service, for all who lost someone in the past few years, whether to COVID or anything else.

And we are still deciding on what Adult Education class will start this summer — so it’s not too late to weigh in and make your suggestion to Rabbi Daniel.

Plus our annual Pride service, Shabbat under the Stars and more. Stay tuned!

May Family Program — a Jewish Journey into Nature!
May 14th at 10 a.m.

We’ve got a very special family program coming up in May, one near and dear to Rabbi Daniel: a Jewish Journey into Nature!

We’ll gather at Temple Hesed at 10 am May 14 and then hike into our own “backcountry,” learning what our tradition can teach us about everything from lichen to tadpoles!

Along the way, we’ll learn the inner meaning of the Sh’ma through a blindfold walk and trust exercises.

Make sure to wear shoes or boots that can get muddy! Everyone is welcome (especially, but not only families with young children) — just RSVP to the Temple office so we know how many to prepare for — templehesed@comcast.net or call 570-344-7201.

HUC to End its Residential Rabbinical Program in Cincinnati, Ohio by 2026

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's leadership made a difficult and painful, yet necessary decision in April to sunset its Cincinnati residential rabbinical program by 2026. HUC’s campuses in New York, Los Angeles and Jerusalem will remain open.

In the meantime, HUC-JIR will be designing an innovative, academically rigorous, low-residency rabbinical and cantorial program.

The deliberations by the Board of Governors were conducted with great sensitivity to the inspiring history of HUC-JIR in Cincinnati, Ohio, which remains the birthplace of the Reform Movement in North America.

“What we do today will help secure our movement for future generations, who will surely wrestle with how to meet the challenges of their day, as they go from strength to strength,” said the official statement from the school.
March 31, 2022, WASHINGTON – In response to reports that the Biden administration will end Title 42 asylum restrictions by the end of May 2022, Barbara Weinstein, director of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism and associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, released the following statement:

We welcome the Biden administration’s plans to end the inhumane, illegal Title 42 asylum policy by May 23, 2022.

Since the start of the pandemic, the United States has summarily expelled over 1.6 million asylum seekers under Title 42, a policy that used the guise of public health to prevent people from legally seeking refuge in the U.S. Title 42 is only the latest of more than a century of policies to traffic in tropes about immigrants and disease. It deprives asylum seekers of their legal right to pursue asylum protections, allows border officials to expel them with no due process, and disproportionately harms Black and Brown migrants and families.

This unjust, unlawful, and unwise policy has been a stain on American immigration policy for far too long. We learn from the Torah and our experiences through the generations of the importance of protecting those fleeing dangerous conditions. We urge the Biden administration to uphold U.S. and international law and to swiftly welcome all those seeking refuge without discrimination.

Help Ukraine

YAHREITS

May 1 – 7
30 Nissan – 6 Iyar
Service May 6


May 8 – 14
7 – 13 Iyar
Service May 13


May 15 – 21
14 – 20 Iyar
Service May 20


May 22 – 28
21 – 27 Iyar
Service May 27


May 29 – June 4
28 Iyar – 5 Sivan
Service June 3

May 2022

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*available on Zoom & YouTube **on Zoom

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Holiday Calendar

Rosh HaShanah — Sept. 6-8
Yom Kippur — Sept. 15-16
Sukkot — Sept. 20-27
Sh'mini Atzerer-Simchat Torah — Sept. 27-28
Hanukkah — Nov. 28 Dec. 6

Tu B'Shevat — Jan. 16-17
Yom HaShoah — Apr. 27-28
Yom HaAtzmaut — May 4-5
Lag BaOmer — May 18-19
Shavuot — June 4-5
Tishah B'Av — Aug. 6-7
Selichot Service — Sep. 17

Torah Portions

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More information available from URJ.org

Yiddish Saying:

“A fool goes to the baths and forgets to wash his face.”

From 1001 Yiddish Proverbs—By Fred Kogos
Sascha Novak, Bat Mitzvah, May 28

SASCHA LILY NOVAK, daughter of Ross and Jennifer Novak, will become a Bat Mitzvah on May 28, 2022. Along with her parents, her sister, Mia (15) is extremely proud and happy to share in Sascha’s Simcha.

Sascha’s Torah portion, Bechukotai, discusses how God promises blessings and curses to the people of Israel – depending on whether they keep God’s commandments.

Sascha is in 7th grade at Dunmore Middle School. She is an animal lover and is devoted to her dog, Hamish, and cats, Birdie and Giselle. Additionally, Sascha loves to discover and listen to music, read books, and hang out with friends and family.

Sascha Novak