



## What the Sisterhood Seder meant to Marilyn Nathan

The Women's Seder at the Reform Temple provided me with an uplifting experience that I haven't felt since I was a child attending services on Saturday mornings at my Hebrew School.

Some of the highlights for me included listening to tributes to women from the Bible, modern history, arts and entertainment, business, education, and government and politics. I also was impressed by the different slant that this Seder offered on Egypt. Recognizing the various "Egypt's" people (particularly women) have to endure in order to cope with the environment they find themselves in was one of the major themes of this Hagaddah.

But perhaps the most valuable part of this Seder for me was the focus on inclusion and relevance. This Hagaddah with its eclectic songs and vignettes intermingled with the traditional ones made the holiday more relevant for us. And focusing on women throughout history – particularly Jewish women – made me feel like I had greater relevance to the holiday as well. In addition, it was heartwarming to see the relevance of women, again particularly Jewish women, to the progress and betterment of the world we now live in.

I was seated next to a recent convert whom I had met previously. As we talked throughout the meal, I realized that attending this Temple in many ways has been like a conversion for me as well. As a child growing up in a non-practicing but "Orthodox" family, I heard the typical disparaging comments about Reform Judaism. These were mainly expressed as "jokes" but the meaning was quite clear. Those who followed this branch of Judaism were regarded basically the same as Christians. Perhaps they were nice people but their religious beliefs were to be viewed with skepticism, if not outright scorn.

When I was planning my move from Baltimore, where I had never belonged to a synagogue (why would I? There was an Orthodox shul on every corner and I could attend whenever I chose – although I rarely did), one of the first things I did was to join a congregation. I checked out several in Chester County before deciding on Or Shalom the Conservative Synagogue of the Main Line. This gave me the comfort of familiarity in my new surroundings of a primarily Christian culture. I was about to marry a man who was of the Christian faith, the neighborhood I was going to live in was very much unlike the Jewish area I had grown up in and lived in for most of my life, and I was going to work in an organization that had probably less than 5% Jewish employees.

My membership and the friendships I cultivated at Or Shalom worked well for me for the nearly 20 years I lived in Malvern, PA. When I moved to Lancaster County, I spent years checking out one congregation after another and never felt quite at home. Surprisingly, I kept finding myself being drawn back to Shaarai Shomayim – The Reform Temple! The rabbi was exceedingly approachable and welcoming. The services had enough traditional music and feel to them to remind me of my past. In addition, there was a whole new component to this spiritual experience.

For years I had complained that the part of Judaism that bothered me the most was how proscriptive it is. You can't do this and you can't do that. You can't eat certain things that are really quite tasty. You can't mix certain foods with others. You can't use common conveniences. You can't participate in certain rituals in certain places because you weren't born a boy child! That was probably the one that bothered me the most. I didn't feel like a second-class citizen. I felt like I wasn't even a citizen of any stripe. Just an on-looker. That's probably what soured me on following my heritage in the first place.

And that's probably why I have never been keen on joining The Sisterhood at either Or Shalom or at Shaarai. I always saw it as the women's "auxiliary." An organization that was in existence to assist or be subordinate to the main attraction.

But the Women's Seder helped to crystallize for me all of the things that I do enjoy and appreciate about this Reform congregation. And probably the one that gives me the greatest comfort is the encouragement of inclusiveness. Women are actually appreciated for having thoughts and capabilities beyond bearing children and making matzo ball soup. Women are acknowledged for the contributions they make to society as a whole.

They are a part of the whole community; not "apart from" the important component.

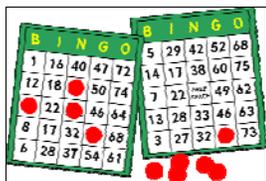
I still refer to visiting this building as "going to shul." "Temple" just doesn't roll off my tongue easily yet. I need to make a conscious decision to use this word and it still sounds foreign to my ears. But I finally feel very much at peace and comfortable with my Jewishness. This Women's Seder helped me recognize this transformation a.k.a. "conversion."

A note of great appreciation to the Women's Seder Committee for creating such a beautiful service and bringing together Sisterhood and Temple members, family, and friends from other congregations to enjoy this lovely event.

In addition, thank you to Carol Woodman and those who assisted in the religious school Seder.

Many thanks to all of our Sisterhood for the wonderful ways we support our Temple and each other.

## Reminders:



### Bingo & Dinner April 18 Wise Memorial Hall 6:30 P.M. - ?

Join us for a fun night of games, dinner, raffle, and cash prizes. \$15/PP includes dinner, bingo card, and tickets for a beverage or raffle. Congregants and friends are welcome.

RSVP by sending your check payable to Sisterhood to:  
Emily Ritholz, 674 Hershey Mill Road, Mountville, PA  
You may also reserve by emailing [Emily\\_ritholz@gmail.com](mailto:Emily_ritholz@gmail.com) and pay at the door.



Ladies Luncheon will be held Wed., April 22, at noon. Please reply to Miriam Baumgartner, 392-1245 or [jimnmir@verizon.net](mailto:jimnmir@verizon.net). Cost is \$7.



### Rings of Advocacy Needs Your Help

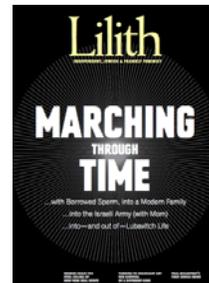
**Monday May 11, 6:30  
Wise Memorial Hall**

For years, ALL public schools have been at the mercy of an outdated and flawed formula which distributes state money to the schools.

The best opportunity to change this formula into an accurate one is NOW.

Join Sisterhood's Education Committee to learn about our state's bipartisan Education Committee led by Senator Smucker and Representative Sturla. Explore the ideas of the Campaign for Fair Education. Join us as we advocate for the best education for today's children.

For questions, contact Jill Weisberg at [bellallure1@aol.com](mailto:bellallure1@aol.com) or Rhea Starr at [rheafstarr@gmail.com](mailto:rheafstarr@gmail.com).



### Lilith Salon, Sunday, April 26, 5-7:30 p.m.

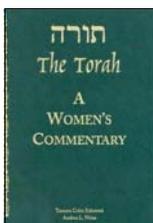
1949 Pine Drive, Lancaster,  
(off Eden Road) – Home of  
Laura Scheff's mother, Diane  
Heisterkamp  
Pot luck dinner

The three articles from the Winter 2014 issue that are up for discussion:

- Acharai! (Follow Me!): A Mother's Day in the Israeli Army
- One Woman's Resume
- Strange Comfort

Reply by April 23 to Rhonda Kleiman, 295-7267 or [rkhbiz@verizon.net](mailto:rkhbiz@verizon.net). Please let her know what you will be bringing for the dinner and if you need copies of the articles.

If you'd like to attend and need a ride let Rhonda know so she can arrange a ride.



### Women's Torah Study

Explore new perspectives from a woman's point of view on the great teachings of our faith.  
All are welcome!

No prior Torah experience necessary.

Thursday, April 23 in the Temple Teen Lounge.  
Read Shemini Leviticus (9:1 -11:47)

Meetings are held monthly alternating days between Sunday and Thursday evenings.

Each meeting begins with a short, beautiful Rosh Chodesh service.  
RSVP to Tama Etra, [tamaetra@gmail.com](mailto:tamaetra@gmail.com) or Jill, [bellallure1.aol.com](mailto:bellallure1.aol.com)

### Donor Dinner May 14, 6pm Shaarai Shomayim Wise Memorial Hall



Please join us for a seasonally inspired "Farm to Table" experience catered by The Scarlet Runner

*Invitations to Follow*