



THE SHOFAR  
שופר

United Synagogue of Hoboken

ADAR - NISSAN 5780

March 2020

## UPCOMING EVENTS

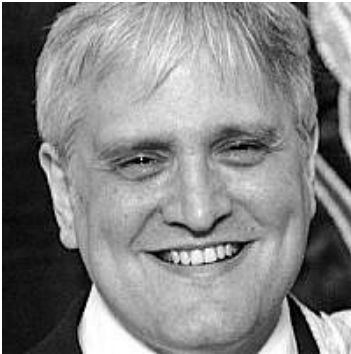
Daily Shacharit (Morning Minyan on ZOOM) SEE PAGE 6

Friday night services 7:00 pm  
Via Synagogue NESTCAM\*

Saturday morning services 9:30 am  
via Synagogue NESTCAM\*

\*Please speak with Rabbi Scheinberg  
for best practices to utilize the  
Shabbat cam in the spirit of Shabbat

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and the USH Facebook page for more  
info on these and other upcoming  
events! and access to USH LiveFeed



## Jews in politics, from the Purim story until today

By Rabbi Robert Scheinberg

*When I glanced at this Shofar column originally published in March of 2016, I realize that it remains mostly relevant to today. I have made just a few minor changes from my words from four years ago.*

Who will win the next presidential election? As the Biblical text says, "I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet" (Amos 7:14), so my predictions are not particularly valuable. Perhaps like you, there are candidates I like, candidates I dislike, and candidates I absolutely deplore. There is no doubt that this fall's presidential election will be a decisive moment for this country's present and future.

It is amazing to me, though, to see one under-reported theme of this year's presidential election. There are at least three candidates for the presidency who have strong family connections to the Jewish community... [Note for 2020: This is true in March 2020 as it was in March 2016, as the field now includes two candidates who identify as Jewish, and one candidate with close Jewish relatives.]

And it is also remarkable to me that these Jewish family connections are a non-issue for most voters. It was not long ago that a Jewish candidate would have been regarded with suspicion by much of the electorate simply by virtue of being Jewish, or even having a Jewish family connection. And it was not long ago that Jewish voters might give an edge to a Jewish candidate simply by virtue of that candidate being Jewish. In this election, and in American politics generally, there is no such presumption. Jews - actively involved, or not - serve in many government positions, elected and appointed, and their Jewish identity is usually a non-issue. Sometimes they espouse positions that are popular with Jewish voters, and sometimes they don't, and electoral decisions are most likely to be made based on the candidates' positions rather than their ethnicities. And numerous Americans have family members who are Jewish; this, too, appears to be generally irrelevant in most Americans' electoral decision-making. [Note for 2020: Even with the rash of antisemitic attacks in the last two years, I think this paragraph remains accurate.]

Politically speaking, our world could not be more different from the world described in the Book of Esther, that we read on the holiday of Purim, coming up later this month. Purim is the first Jewish holiday to describe the condition of the Jewish people living in exile, under the dominion of another nation. In this case, the Jewish protagonists of the story are living in Persia, under Persian rule.

The Jews in the story, Mordechai and Esther, continually make the most of their unfortunate situations. When we tell the story to the children in our community, we make it sound like Mordechai's cousin Esther won a beauty contest and was crowned as the next queen, which makes it sound like Esther possessed the extraordinary confidence necessary to compete for this leadership position. In truth, however (but don't tell your kids), this was anything but a beauty pageant. As Esther chapter 2 clearly indicates, this was a forced conscription of virgins into the king's harem. Esther did not sign up for a contest; rather, she was seized and taken to the palace. She was fortunate to be selected as the next queen, but she had to keep her Jewish identity a secret. It was inconceivable that she would have been chosen if it had been known that she was Jewish.

Throughout the Book of Esther, the only kind of power that Mordechai and Esther have is the power to curry favor with King Achashverosh, to cultivate a good relationship with him so that he will act with favor towards the Jewish people. When the wicked Haman is about to destroy the Jews, Esther is able to use her access to the king to call this to his attention. However, there is a reason why King Achashverosh is not a heroic figure in the story. He isn't presented as a bad guy, but he is never particularly concerned about the welfare of the Jews. He regards the Jews as "other," he feels no particular responsibility towards them, and he will protect their interests only if he makes the decision to listen to their advocates.

For many centuries, this was the model of relations between the Jewish community and their local governmental authorities. Jewish communal leaders known as '*shtadlanim*' ("intercessors") had the job of getting along well enough with the authorities so that the community would not be in danger. The system sometimes worked well enough, though often it failed. But it's very different from the system that exists in the United States, where Jews live in freedom and confidence. When Jews lobby American elected officials (whether about religious freedom, Jewish humanitarian values, support for Israel, or other issues), we are not doing so as '*shtadlanim*' trying to curry favor. Rather, we are doing so as a constituency which is as fully a part of American society as any other, with as much right to express our voices and influence as any other. And Jews who want to run for elective office are welcome to do so and are often successful. Some become brilliant leaders, while others are disastrous; no one suggests that their Jewish identity dictates what kind of leader they would be. We may not often pause to contemplate how truly unprecedented this is in Jewish history, for Jews to live in a society in which they are a full part, with confidence in its institutions and freedoms, without the feeling of being guests in someone else's home.

Regardless of the outcome of this tumultuous American election, may it remind us of the blessings we enjoy, and how far we have come since Esther and Mordechai were the paradigms for Jews in politics☆

PURIM AT USH





## PURIM AT USH!







# Preparing for Passover in a time of pandemic

This two-part series, led by Rabbi Scheinberg and rabbinic intern Noam Kornsgold, will discuss traditional observances and themes of Passover, with a special focus on their meaning in our current context and suggestions for observing Passover amid our current challenges.

Thursdays March 26 and April 2, 8-9:30pm  
March 26: "Special foods and utensils: how and why, and what now"

April 2: "Creating a vibrant seder: in the best of times, and in ... other times"

by Zoom: access at  
<https://bit.ly/USHPrepareForPassover2020>



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and we'll be back to 115 Park Avenue just as soon as we can!



# CASINO NIGHT

February 29, 2020



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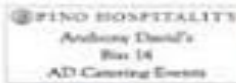
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## USH RESPONDS TO COVID-19: Volunteer opportunities

Please see <https://conta.cc/2IK9oEE> and <https://conta.cc/33s90o1> for previous updates that have been sent to the community.

**Response Team:** We are grateful for the more than 40 volunteers who have been calling our members and offering errands and other assistance.

We could use your help in one of our 3 subcommittees: (a) Phone contact with all people in the synagogue community; (b) Sharing expertise / being willing to be consulted by someone with a question; and (c) Errands / Shopping / Deliveries, especially to seniors and to people in quarantine.

If you want to volunteer, send a note to [chesed@hobokensynagogue.org](mailto:chesed@hobokensynagogue.org).

And if you or someone you know has a need that the synagogue community might be able to help with, send an email to [chesed@hobokensynagogue.org](mailto:chesed@hobokensynagogue.org).

If you have an idea for a livestreamed event for our community, contact [rabbi@hobokensynagogue.org](mailto:rabbi@hobokensynagogue.org) and/or Adam Laden at [adam@ebecsearch.com](mailto:adam@ebecsearch.com).

### PRAISE FOR CONGREGATIONAL SECURITY DUTIES!

Susie and I had the privilege of monitoring the synagogue entrance this past Shabbat morning.

Much to our surprise, it was actually fun!  
Who would know members and their extended families better than other members?

With the County Sheriff representative parked outside, I can confidently report to you there were no incidents or causes for alarm.

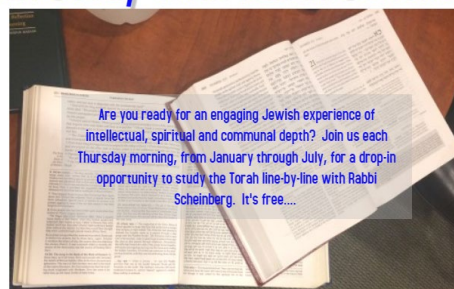
The one bit of potential excitement stemming from our greeting duties never materialized:  
Five leaders of a local mosque were scheduled to attend services, but unfortunately they had to cancel due to a loss in their community.

Our members and guests appreciated being welcomed and hand sanitized on their way in.

It seemed to mitigate the current anxiety over Corona Virus, which, apparently, overshadows the security risks which prompted the new procedures in the first place.  
Please stay safe, and avoid touching exposed surfaces!

Shabbat Shalom,  
Marty & Susie Cohen

### Thursday mornings, 9.30-11am Torah Study with Rabbi Scheinberg



115 Park Avenue, Hoboken NJ [rsvp.office@hobokensynagogue.org](mailto:rsvp.office@hobokensynagogue.org)

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### Women's Torah Study Group

Come join us to schmooze, nosh, and study torah and liturgy with a lively group led by Anne Pettit.

We meet at USH on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm



To RSVP or be added to our mailing list please email [ritual@hobokensynagogue.org](mailto:ritual@hobokensynagogue.org)

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- Laura Leonard
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- Eve Mensch

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- Susan Bensen
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## RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

- Scott and Jennifer Ostfeld
- Julie and Barry Weinstein, in memory of Alfred Holstein
- Robert and Pamela Strell, in memory of Howard Firestein
- Ceil Chait, in memory of Kenneth Golden

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- Russell Sandman, in honor of Ella and in memory of Sarah and Icek
- Elissa Aaronson and Seth Goodman

## YOM KIPPUR APPEAL

- Lynn Danzker and Joe Epstein
- Lauren and Daniel Braun

## Congratulations to:

Barry and Estelle Glasgow on their 55<sup>th</sup> wedding Anniversary!

## Thank you for sponsoring Kiddush:

- 2/1: Phil Cohen and Rebecca Kramnick in memory of her father Isaac Kramnick and his father Max Cohen
- 2/8: The Gan/Kindergarten LC class
- 2/15: Mimi Lavine and Jon Gellman
- 2/22: Rachel & Jonathan Katell and Barry & Estelle Glasgow in honor of Barry & Estelle's 55<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary
- 2/29: Eve Mensch

## Condolences to:

Tom Ahern on the loss of his sister, Liz Henry; and to his wife, Robin and their children Andrew and Hugh

Jordan Firestein and Sheera Glass on the loss of his father and her brother Howard and to Jordan's wife, Sarah Rosenblum and to Sheera's husband Mark and to their daughter, Samantha and her fiancé Drew Nathanson and to Howard's wife Sharon as well as all of their relatives

Michael Granit on the loss of his father Marvin, and to Michael's wife Carrie, and to their sons Alex, Sammy, and Noah



## Chesed (caring) Committee

Would you like to support and grow your community? Would you like to be a part of a force that mobilizes into action when a member of our community has a great need? If yes, consider being a volunteer for the Chesed Committee!

Whether your schedule is predictable or unpredictable, the Chesed committee has a place for any USH member who is willing to be called upon when life happens. We need people who can, for example: assist with shiva arrangements, visit the sick, drive or prepare meals for those who are dealing with stressful circumstances, or offer respite to a family with a challenging situation.

If you would like to contribute in any of these situations, or would like to discuss ways in which we can extend our outreach, please contact Elisabeth at [chesedcommitteeush@gmail.com](mailto:chesedcommitteeush@gmail.com).

## DAILY MORNING MINYAN ON ZOOM

We are now adding a daily morning prayer service to our calendar, at least for the duration of this crisis. It will meet each weekday morning at 8am, and Sunday morning at 9am. We will recite the daily Shaharit service, including music. Most days, the service duration will be about 30 minutes. People are welcome to join us for as much or as little as they wish. You can access it at <https://bit.ly/USHWeekdayMorningMinyan> or <https://zoom.us/j/777191497>.

Per new guidelines of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly, assuming we have ten people logged in to Zoom who can see and hear each other, we will be reciting the Mourner's Kaddish in its standard form (though we will not be doing other prayers that require a minyan).

Helpful hint about Zoom: If you ever want to join a Zoom session but only have a phone audio connection, you can call in as follows: call in at one of these #s (646 876 9923, 669 900 6833, or 408 638 0968) and enter the Meeting ID (which is the 9 or 10 digit number at the end of the Zoom internet address for the meeting. For example, Daily Shaharit's Meeting ID is 777191497.)



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